



**Sea of Faith Network (NZ)**

**Conference**

**2009**

# **Who Needs Jesus?**

**Life in the 21st century**

**BACKGROUND**

**NOTES**

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## Introduction

This short document was put together to help attendees at this year's Sea of Faith Conference to deal with some technical terminology that is bound to arise. 'TJS' is The Jesus Seminar. My contributions are identified by 'NC'.  
*Noel Cheer*

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## Allegory

A story in which one series of events and persons is intended, obliquely and indirectly, to stand for another series. Examples: Pullmans *His Dark Materials*, CS Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*.

The tendency to see Jesus' parables as allegories has been criticised, at least since Jülicher in 1899 . A famous example is Augustine's allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant; *Jerusalem* is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; *Jericho* means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. *Thieves* are the devil and his angels. *Who stripped him*, namely, of his immortality; *and beat him*, by persuading him to sin; *and left him half-dead*, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called *half-dead*. The *priest and Levite* who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the *Old Testament*, which could profit nothing for salvation. *Samaritan* means Guardian, and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The *binding* of the wounds is the restraint of sin. *Oil* is the comfort of good hope; *wine* the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The *beast* is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being *set upon the beast* is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The *inn* is the Church, where travellers returning to their heavenly country are refreshed after pilgrimage. The *morrow* is after the resurrection of the Lord. *The two pence* are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The *innkeeper* is the Apostle (Paul). The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him to live by the *Gospel*.'

This interpretation of the parable in question prevailed down to the time of Archbishop Trench, who follows its main lines with even more ingenious elaboration; and it is still to be heard in sermons. To the ordinary person of intelligence who approaches the Gospels with some sense for literature this mystification must appear quite perverse. [Source: TJS, Augustine and NC]

## Apocalyptic

Apocalypse is Greek for 'lifting of the veil' or 'revelation' and is a term applied to the disclosure to certain privileged persons of something hidden from the majority of humankind. Today the term is often used to refer to the end of the world.

The historical Jesus was a Galilean Jew living in a time of messianic and apocalyptic expectations. Scholars are divided as to whether Jesus looked forward to an apocalypse — to God breaking in and bringing the present age (world) to an end. The alternative view attributed to Jesus was that God's Kingdom would come — that is there would be an *eschaton* or end of the age, but that it would emerge slowly .

Albert Schweitzer saw Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet — a failed, would-be Messiah whose ethic was suitable only for the short interim before the apocalypse. Many other historians concur that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet, most notably Paula Fredriksen, Bart Ehrman, and John P. Meier. E. P. Sanders portrays Jesus as expecting to assume the 'viceroy' position in God's kingdom, above the Twelve Disciples, who would judge the twelve tribes.

In North American scholarship, the view that Jesus did not prophesy an imminent apocalypse is common. Historians associated with the Jesus Seminar, such as John Dominic Crossan, are often associated with this view. They reject the view that Jesus was apocalyptic, but that the kingdom was present and accessible for all Jews. Crossan emphasizes that Jesus' movement did not have a leader, as John the Baptist's movement had taken John as their leader. For Crossan, Jesus called people to emulate him, and travel as itinerant preachers. Jesus' eschatology is one of personal action and social transformation, like Gandhi's, rather than apocalyptic. These scholars also explain Jesus' apocalyptic statements as later, Christian additions to the biblical narrative, likely introduced by followers of John the Baptist (who did prophecy an imminent apocalypse) who later joined Jesus' movement.

From the Second Century A.D. onward, the term 'Apocalypse' was applied to a number of books, yet in the process the meaning has vastly changed from the unveiling of new or unseen ideas in ancient Greek to today's meaning of the destruction of earth as we now know it, both Jewish and Christian, which show the same characteristic features. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Aphorism

The word aphorism (literally 'distinction' or 'definition') denotes an original thought, spoken or written in a laconic and easily memorable form. Jesus is credited with speaking in aphorisms and in parables. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Atheism, see Theism

## Barth, Karl (1886-1968)

Karl Barth was a Swiss Reformed theologian whom critics hold to be among the most important Christian thinkers of the 20th century; Pope Pius XII described him as the most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas. Beginning with his experience as a pastor, he rejected his training in the predominant liberal theology typical of 19th-century Protestantism. Instead he embarked on a new theological path initially called dialectical theology, due to its stress on the paradoxical nature of divine truth (e.g., God's relationship to humanity embodies both grace and judgment).

Other critics have referred to Barth as the father of neo-orthodoxy — a term emphatically rejected by Barth himself.

The most accurate description of his work might be 'a theology of the Word.' Barth's theological thought emphasized the sovereignty of God, particularly through his innovative doctrine of election. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Borg, Marcus J. (1942- )

Borg is an American Biblical scholar and author and a fellow of the Jesus Seminar. A best-selling writer whose works have been translated into nine languages, he has been national chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature, co-chair of its International New Testament Program Committee and president of the Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars. Borg is among the most widely-known and influential voices in Progressive Christianity.

He did graduate work at Union Theological Seminary and obtained masters and DPhil degrees at Oxford under G. B. Caird. Anglican bishop N.T. Wright had studied under the same professor and many years later Borg and Wright were to share in co-authoring *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, an amicable study in contrast. Following a period of religious questioning in his mid-thirties, and numinous experiences similar to those described by Rudolf Otto, Borg became active in the Episcopal Church, in which his wife serves as a priest and directs a spiritual development program at the Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland, Oregon.

Borg advocates entering into relationship with God as more important than belief about God. He has a panentheist understanding of God, which sees God as both indwelling in everything and transcendent.

He distinguishes between the pre-Easter Jesus, who was a Jewish mystic and the founder of Christianity, and the post-Easter Jesus who is a divine reality that Christians can still experience personally.

Borg does not believe that the Bible has to be taken literally if it is to be taken seriously, an idea he develops in *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, subtitled *Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally*. He claims that truths can be found in the many messages and metaphors of the Bible stories even though he states that such stories may not have actually happened at all. Rather than asking what the events in certain New Testament stories actually were, he challenges his audience with another question, 'What effect must this man Jesus have had on the people he came into contact with for so many rich stories to have been written about him after his life?'

In *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, Borg describes the historical-metaphorical approach to reading the Bible as a post-modern response to biblical scholarship, cultural diversity, and religious diversity. Specifically, Borg asserts that the Bible is a library of books (the Greek *ta biblia* means 'the books,' plural) that, while of human origin, were written in response to real experiences of the divine. The Bible is sacred because of its centrality to a particular community, rather than any divine origin. As such, the Bible has authority because it is a text that records our ancestors' dialogue about God, and is the foundation for our ongoing dialogue today. This stands in contrast to the traditional view of the Bible as a monarchical decree. Additionally, the Bible is sacred because it is a 'means of grace,' a 'vehicle by which God becomes present.'

Borg summarizes his description of the historical-metaphorical approach by stating that the Bible is the Word of God metaphorically. That is, 'Word' is singular and uppercase instead of plural and lowercase (i.e. the words of God). Thus, the Bible is like a lens. It's what the lens helps us do (see God), and not the lens as an object that is central. The Bible, therefore, is a mediator - the means, not the end. More precisely, the Bible is 'the foundation of the Christian cultural-linguistic world.' By cultural-linguistic, Borg means that language, among other things, consists of symbols that represent a culture's values. Religion emerges from this and can take on an existence independent of that culture, becoming a cultural-linguistic world of its own. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Boulton, David

David has had a long association with the UK Sea of Faith Network and has been both editor and committee member. He is best known today for his books and articles exploring and promoting a brand of open-minded humanism that rejects supernaturalist religion but respects and celebrates the best of our religious heritage and tradition in so far as it offers an enabling dream of what he calls 'the republic of heaven'. He is a member of the British Humanist Association and of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

As a Conference Speaker, David will be speaking about material from his book *Who on EARTH was JESUS?*

David has written for many publications, including most recently *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *New Internationalist*, *New Humanist*, *Sofia* and Quaker journals including *The Friend*, *Friends Quarterly*, *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* and *Proceedings of the Quaker Theology Seminar*.

David has a website at [www.davidboultonbooks.com/publications1.htm](http://www.davidboultonbooks.com/publications1.htm)

[Source = Self]

## Bultmann, Rudolf (1884-1976)

Rudolf Karl Bultmann was a German theologian of Lutheran background, who was for three decades professor of New Testament studies at the University of Marburg. He defined an almost complete split between history and faith, writing that only the bare fact of Christ crucified was necessary for Christian faith.

His *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921) is still highly regarded as an essential tool for gospel research, even by scholars who reject his analyses of the conventional rhetorical pericopes or narrative units of which the Gospels are assembled, and the historically-oriented principles called 'form criticism,' of which Bultmann has been the most influential exponent:

'The aim of form-criticism is to determine the original form of a piece of narrative, a dominical saying or a parable. In the process we learn to distinguish secondary additions and forms, and these in turn lead to important results for the history of the tradition.'

In 1941 his lecture *New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Message* called on interpreters to replace traditional supernaturalism with the temporal and existential categories of Bultmann's colleague, Martin Heidegger. Bultmann believed this endeavor would make accessible to modern audiences — already immersed in science and technology — the reality of Jesus' teachings. Bultmann thus understood the project of 'demythologizing the New Testament proclamation' as an evangelical task, clarifying the 'kerygma,' or gospel proclamation, by stripping it of elements of the first-century 'mythical world picture' that had potential to alienate modern people from Christian faith:

He carried form-criticism so far as to call the historical value of the gospels into serious question. Some scholars criticized Bultmann and other critics for excessive skepticism regarding the historical reliability of the gospel narratives. The full impact of Bultmann was not felt until the English publication of *Kerygma and Mythos* (1948).

[Source = Wikipedia]

## Canon

A Biblical canon or canon of scripture is a list or set of Biblical books considered to be authoritative as scripture by a particular religious community, generally in Judaism or Christianity. The term itself was first coined by Christians, but the idea is found in Jewish sources. The canons are usually considered closed, i.e., books cannot be added or removed. The closure of the canon reflects a belief that public revelation has ended and thus the inspired texts may be gathered into a complete and authoritative canon. By contrast, an open canon permits the addition of additional books through the process of continuous revelation. In Christian traditions, an open canon is most commonly associated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

A full dogmatic articulation of the canon was not made until the Council of Trent of 1546 for Roman Catholicism, the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 for the Church of England, the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 for British Calvinism, and the Synod of Jerusalem of 1672 for the Greek Orthodox.

[Source = Wikipedia + NC]

## Christ, see Messiah

## Crossan, John Dominic (1934- )

Crossan is an Irish-American religious scholar known for co-founding the Jesus Seminar. He is a major figure in the fields of biblical archaeology, anthropology and New Testament textual and higher criticism. He is also a lecturer who has appeared in television documentaries about Jesus and the Bible. He is especially vocal in the field of Historical Jesus studies.

Crossan suggests that Jesus was an illiterate 'Jewish Cynic' from a landless peasant background, initially a follower of John the Baptist. Jesus was a healer and man of great wisdom and courage who taught a message of inclusiveness, tolerance, and liberation.

'His strategy . . . was the combination of free healing and common eating . . . that negated the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power . . . He was neither broker nor mediator but . . . the announcer that neither should exist between humanity and divinity or humanity and itself.'

Central to Crossan's methodology is the dating of texts. This is laid out in *The Historical Jesus* in one of the appendices. He dates part of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas to the 50s CE, as well as the first layer of the hypothetical Q Document. He does not date the synoptics until the mid to late 70s CE, starting with the Gospel of Mark and ending with Luke in the 90s. As for the Gospel of John, he believes part was constructed at the beginning of the 2nd century CE and another part closer to the middle of the century.

Crossan was, along with Robert Funk, a co-founder in 1985 of the Jesus Seminar. He served as co-chair for its first decade. Crossan is also a member of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). He is also featured in a number of Living the Questions programs, including 'Eclipsing Empire' and 'First Light.'  
[Source =Wikipedia]

## Cupitt, Don (1934- )

Don Cupitt is an English philosopher of religion and scholar of Christian theology. He is an Anglican priest and an emeritus professor of the University of Cambridge, though is better known as a popular writer, broadcaster and commentator. He has been described as a radical theologian, noted for his ideas about non-realist philosophy of religion.

Cupitt was educated in both science and theology at the University of Cambridge in the 1950s and was ordained as a deacon in the Church of England in 1959 and priest in 1960. He was Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Although still a priest, he is better known as a writer, broadcaster and populariser of innovative theological ideas. He has written more than forty books which have been translated into many languages, as well as chapters in more than thirty multi-authored volumes.

He came to the British public's attention in 1984 with his BBC television series *The Sea of Faith*, in which orthodox Christian beliefs were challenged. As a consequence he is the somewhat accidental founder of the Sea of Faith Network.

In his writings Cupitt sometimes describes himself as Christian non-realist, by which he means that he follows certain spiritual practices and attempts to live by ethical standards traditionally associated with Christianity but without believing in the actual existence of the underlying metaphysical entities (such as 'Christ' and 'God').

A recent book, *Jesus and Philosophy*, firmly positions Jesus in the category 'sage' promoted by The Jesus Seminar.  
[Source = Wikipedia, NC]

## Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea scrolls consist of about 900 documents, including texts from the Hebrew Bible, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves in and around the Wadi Qumran near the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran, on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea.

The texts are of great religious and historical significance, as they include some of the only known surviving copies of Biblical documents made before 100 BCE, and preserve evidence of considerable diversity of belief and practice within late Second Temple Judaism. They are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, mostly on parchment, but with some written on papyrus. These manuscripts generally date between 150 BCE to 70 CE. The scrolls are most commonly identified with the ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes, but recent scholarship has challenged their association with the scrolls.

According to *The Oxford Companion to Archeology*, 'The biblical manuscripts from Qumran, which include at least fragments from every book of the Old Testament, except perhaps for the Book of Esther, provide a far older cross section of scriptural tradition than that available to scholars before.'

A few scholars have argued that the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect similarities with the early Christian movement. While there are certainly some characteristics shared with certain Jewish sectarian groups, most scholars today deny that there is any real connection between the Christians and the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

See also Nag Hammadi.  
[Source =Wikipedia]

## Docetism

In Christianity, Docetism (from the Greek 'to seem') is the belief that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was his crucifixion; that is, Jesus only seemed to have a physical body and to physically die, but in reality he was

incorporeal, a pure spirit, and hence could not physically die. Docetism has historically been regarded as heretical by most Christian theologians.

This belief is most commonly attributed to the Gnostics, many of whom believed that matter was evil, and as a result God would not take on a material body. This statement is rooted in the idea that a divine spark is imprisoned within the material body, and that the material body is in itself an obstacle, deliberately created by an evil, lesser god (the demiurge) to prevent man from seeing his divine origin. [Source =Wikipedia]

## Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a book of the Hebrew Bible. The English name derives from the Greek translation of the Hebrew title.

The main speaker in the book, identified by the name or title Qohelet, introduces himself as 'son of David, and king in Jerusalem.' The work consists of personal or autobiographic matter, at times expressed in aphorisms and maxims illuminated in terse paragraphs with reflections on the meaning of life and the best way of life. The work emphatically proclaims all the actions of man to be inherently 'vain', 'futile', 'empty', 'meaningless', 'temporary', 'transitory', or 'fleeting,' depending on translation, because the lives of both wise and foolish men all end in death.

While Qohelet clearly endorses wisdom as a means for a well-lived earthly life, he is unable to ascribe eternal meaning to it. In light of this perceived senselessness, he suggests that one should enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life, such as eating, drinking, and taking enjoyment in one's wife and work, which are gifts from the hand of God. [Source =Wikipedia]

## Ephesus

Ephesus is a New Zealand organisation which has a theological "style" broadly compatible with both Sea of Faith Network and St Andrews Trust for the Study of Religion and Society.

While Ephesus has, as it were, one leg inside liberal Christianity, Sea of Faith has no such affiliation, but neither is it hostile either.

Here are some statements from the website Wellington Ephesus group at [www.ephesus.dns2go.com](http://www.ephesus.dns2go.com)

- The name stems from the tradition that it was at Ephesus that John took the Jewish understanding of the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and transposed it into the Greek understanding of the world and ultimate reality. The result was John's Gospel.
- Ephesus in Wellington suggests that in the secular culture which has evolved over the past 200 or so years, a transposition of similar proportions is necessary if the truths at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition are to be known and experienced today.
- The starting point for all participants is openness in the faith search. They may or may not have a current association with the Church.
- It is centred on the Jesus of the gospels.
- Each person is free to think of God and express that understanding in his or her own way.
- It takes for granted that we are secular people in a secular culture.
- Ephesus sees itself as rooted in the life of the Churches - a shoot from the stump.
- Most participants belong to a local congregation: for them, Ephesus complements parish worship and church activities.
- Others have no church connection.
- Both groups are comfortable to explore together.
- Ephesus is ecumenical, looking beyond denominations and denominationalism.

From the beginning, Ephesus has had close links with the SOF. When (Sir) Lloyd Geering took the initiative that led to the Network's formation at the Hamilton conference in 1993, all but two of the first organising committee were members of Ephesus. The overlap is such that there has never been any sense of rivalry between the two, though there are clear points of difference.

One is that Ephesus continues to focus consciously and constructively on the Judaeo-Christian tradition, whereas SOF likes to cast its net much wider. The very name Ephesus is a metaphor reaching back into the first century of Christianity. It stems from the tradition that it was at Ephesus that John took the understanding of Jesus in a Jewish context and transposed it into a Greek understanding of the world and of ultimate reality. In New Zealand the name is used to suggest that in today's secular culture a transposition of similar proportions is necessary if the truths at the heart of the Judaeo-Christian tradition are to be known and experienced in the modern world.

Another key difference in Wellington is that we work on ways of expressing faith through occasional liturgies or rituals that we create ourselves. The word liturgy seems to induce tremors of disapproval, even hostility, among some SoFers, but the Ephesus liturgies bear little resemblance to traditional church services. In practice, they have proved an invaluable growing edge.

Another Ephesus group meets at Raumati, near Paraparaumu and can be contacted at [wandmroxburgh@actrix.gen.nz](mailto:wandmroxburgh@actrix.gen.nz)

[Source = Website, Ian Harris, NC]



## Eschatology

This is a part of theology and philosophy concerned with what is believed to be the final events in the history of the world, or the ultimate destiny of humanity, commonly referred to as the end of the world.

In many traditional religions it is taught as an actual future event prophesied in sacred texts or folklore. More broadly, eschatology may encompass related concepts such as the Messiah or Messianic Age, the end time, and the end of days.

Many eschatological schemes talk of an apocalypse, that is a sudden and violent intervention by God.

Jesus is generally said to have a belief in an end time, but it is not agreed by all scholars that Jesus thought that the end would be apocalyptic. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Exegesis

The critical interpretation of the biblical text to discover its intended meaning. .... doctrinal and polemical intentions have often influenced interpretive results; a given text may yield a number of very different interpretations according to the exegetical presuppositions and techniques applied to it. [Source = Encyclopaedia Britannica]

## Faith

Faith is the confident belief or trust in the truth or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing. The word 'faith' can refer to a religion itself or to religion in general. As with 'trust', faith involves a concept of future events or outcomes, and is used conversely for a belief 'not resting on logical proof or material evidence.'

Informal usage of the word 'faith' can be quite broad, and may be used in place of 'trust' or 'belief.'

Faith is often used in a religious context, as in theology, where it almost universally refers to a trusting belief in a transcendent reality, or else in a Supreme Being and/or said being's role in the order of transcendent, spiritual things.

Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true. It is the belief and the assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, based on his or her authority and truthfulness.

A certain number of rationalists criticize what they perceive to be religious faith. They argue that it is irrational, and see faith as ignorance of reality: a strong belief in something with no evidence and sometimes a strong belief in something even with evidence against it. Bertrand Russell noted, 'Where there is evidence, no one speaks of 'faith'. We do not speak of faith that two and two are four or that the earth is round. We only speak of faith when we wish to substitute emotion for evidence.'

Whether or not 'faith' is qualified by 'blind' it is taken by some to name a reprehensible credulity. [Source = Wikipedia + NC]

## Fundamentalism

"[Religious] Fundamentalists are swift to condemn people whom they regard as the enemies of God: most Christian fundamentalists see Jews and Muslims as destined for hellfire and some regard Buddhism, Hinduism and Daoism as inspired by the devil. Jewish and Muslim fundamentalists take a similar stance, each seeing their own tradition as the only true faith. Most fundamentalists have toppled governments and some extremists have been guilty of terrorist atrocities. Jewish fundamentalists have founded illegal settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with the avowed intention of driving out the Arab inhabitants, convinced that they are paving the way for the Messiah; others throw stones at Israelis who drive their cars on the Sabbath.

In all its forms, fundamentalism is a fiercely reductive faith. In their anxiety and fear, fundamentalists often distort the tradition they are trying to defend. They can, for example, be highly selective in their reading of scripture. Christian fundamentalists quote extensively from the Book of Revelation and are inspired by its violent End-time vision, but rarely refer to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus tells his followers to love their enemies, to turn the other cheek and not to judge others. Jewish fundamentalists rely heavily on the Deuteronomist sections of the Bible and seem to pass over the rabbis' injunction that exegesis should lead to charity. Muslim fundamentalists ignore the pluralism of the Qur'an and extremists quote its more aggressive verses to justify violence, pointedly disregarding its far more numerous calls for peace, tolerance and forgiveness. Fundamentalists are convinced that they are fighting for God, but in fact this type of religiosity represents a retreat from God. To make purely human, historical phenomena -- such as 'Family Values', 'the Holy Land' or 'Islam' - sacred and absolute values is idolatry and, as always, their idol forces them to try to destroy its opponents." [Source = Karen Armstrong 2009 [The Case For God](#)]

## Funk, Robert

A distinguished teacher, writer, translator and publisher in the field of religious studies, Robert Funk retired from the University of Montana in 1986 to found the Westar Institute. Funk further influenced the course of biblical scholarship by insisting that Fellows of the Jesus Seminar communicate the results of biblical scholarship directly to the literate public. He died on September 3, 2005 at his home in Santa Rosa, California. see also Westar Institute, The Jesus Seminar. [Source = Westar]

## Geering, Sir Lloyd

Sir Lloyd was the Foundation Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington between 1971 and 1984. Since then he has been Emeritus Professor. In 1998 he was awarded C.B.E. In 2001 he was awarded PCNZM and in 2007 was awarded his country's highest honour, the Order of New Zealand. In 2009 he elected to accept the title 'Sir Lloyd Geering', being eligible to receive it.

He was instrumental in setting up the Sea of Faith Network in New Zealand and is a Life Member and is a Keynote Speaker at this Conference. [Source = Misc]

## Gnosticism

Gnosticism were diverse, syncretistic religious movements in antiquity consisting of various belief systems generally united in the teaching that humans are divine souls trapped in a material world created by an imperfect god, the demiurge; this being is frequently identified with the Abrahamic god, and is contrasted with a superior entity, referred to by several terms including Pleroma and Godhead.

Gnosticism was a dualistic religion, influenced by and influencing Hellenic philosophy, Judaism and Christianity.

The gnōsis referred to in the term is a form of revealed, esoteric knowledge through which the spiritual elements of humanity are reminded of their true origins within the superior Godhead, being thus permitted to escape materiality.

Whereas formerly Gnosticism was considered by some a heretical branch of Christianity, Gnostic sects may have existed earlier than the First Century BC, thus predating the birth of Jesus. [Source =Wikipedia]

## Gospels

A gospel (from Old English, gōd spell, = 'good news') is a writing that describes the life of Jesus. The word is primarily used to refer to the four canonical texts: the Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke and Gospel of John, probably written between AD 65 and 100. (There are some scholars who date them even earlier). They appear to have been originally untitled; they were quoted anonymously in the first half of the second century (i.e. 100 - 150), but the names by which they are currently known appear suddenly around the year 180.

The first canonical gospel written is thought by most scholars to be Mark (c 65-70), which was according to the majority used as a source for the gospels of Matthew and Luke. In modern source criticism, Matthew and Luke are generally thought to have used a common source, the Q document.

These first three gospels are called the synoptic gospels because they share similar incidents, teachings, and even much language. The last gospel, the Gospel of John, presents a very different picture of Jesus and his ministry from the synoptics. In differentiating history from invention, historians interpret the gospel accounts skeptically. The synoptic evangelists demonstrated reserve in altering or inventing stories about Jesus, and historians regard the synoptic gospels as including significant amounts of historically reliable information about Jesus. Scholars maintain that the gospels and all the books of the New Testament were written in Greek.

The synoptic gospels are the source of many popular stories, parables, and sermons, such as Jesus' humble birth in Bethlehem, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the Last Supper, and the Great Commission. John provides a theological description of Jesus as the eternal Word, the unique savior of humanity. All four attest to his Sonship, miraculous power, crucifixion, and resurrection. Portions of the gospels are traditionally read aloud during church services as a formal part of the liturgy. (see also Jesus, Gospel portraits of, Q Documents). [Source = Wikipedia]

## Gospels, Synoptic

The synoptic Gospels (from the Greek 'syn,' meaning 'together,' and 'optic,' meaning 'seen') are three Gospels in the New Testament: Mark, Matthew and Luke, that display a high degree of similarity in content, narrative arrangement, language, and sentence and paragraph structures. These gospels are also considered by Biblical scholars to share the same point of view. The fourth canonical Gospel, John, differs greatly from these three, as do the Apocryphal gospels. [Source = Wikipedia]



## Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel According to Thomas, also known as The Gospel of Thomas, is a New Testament apocryphon, nearly completely preserved in a Coptic papyrus manuscript discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt.

The text is in the form of a codex, bound in a method now called Coptic binding. It was written for a school of early Christians who claimed Thomas the Apostle as their founder. Unlike the four canonical gospels, Thomas is not a narrative account of the life of Jesus and is not worked into any overt philosophical or rhetorical context. Rather, it consists of logia, or gospel sayings, with short dialogues and sayings attributed to Jesus.

The work comprises 114 numbered sayings attributed to Jesus, many of them composites of multiple sayings. Some of these sayings resemble those found in the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), while others were not known until its discovery.

The complete Coptic text was first published in a photographic edition in 1956 followed three years later by the first critical edition (with English translation). In 1977 the James M. Robinson translation was first published, as part of The Nag Hammadi Library in English, (E.J. Brill and Harper & Row). The Gospel of Thomas has been translated and annotated in several languages. The original manuscript is the property of Egypt's Department of Antiquities. [Source = Wikipedia]

## Heresy

Heresy is the act of proposing some unorthodox change to an established system of belief, especially a religion, which conflicts with the previously established opinion. It is sometimes confused with 'apostasy' which is deserting the system of belief and 'blasphemy' which is defamation of orthodox opinion.

The word 'heresy' comes from the Greek 'to choose', which means either a choice of beliefs, or a faction of believers, or a school of thought. It was given wide currency by Irenaeus in the 2nd century in his tract *Contra Haereses* (Against Heresies) to describe and discredit his opponents in the early Christian Church. He described his own position as orthodox (from ortho- 'straight' + doxa 'belief') and his position eventually evolved into the position of the early Christian Church.

The development of the Christian creeds helped provide a definition of deviant, and therefore heretical, beliefs.

Used in this way, the term 'heresy' has no purely objective meaning: the category exists only from the point of view of speakers within a group that has previously agreed about what counts as 'orthodox'. Any nonconformist view within any field may be perceived as 'heretical' by others within that field who are convinced that their view is 'orthodox'; in the sciences this extension is made tongue-in-cheek.

Heretics usually do not define their own beliefs as heretical. Heresy is a value judgment and the expression of a view from within an established belief system.

The way in which the Sea of Faith Network operates with its somewhat free-wheeling speculative approach, especially its claim to draw 'freely upon our spiritual heritage without being bound by it' is seen by traditionalists as somewhat heretical. [Source = Wikipedia, NC]

## Holloway, Richard (1933- )

Richard F. Holloway is a Scottish writer and broadcaster and was formerly Bishop of Edinburgh in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Holloway is well-known for his support of liberal causes, including campaigning on human rights for gay and lesbian people in both Church and State.

A Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Holloway was Professor of Divinity at Gresham College in the City of London.

Holloway has been a reviewer and writer for the broadsheet press for several years, including *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Sunday Herald* and *The Scotsman*. He is also a frequent presenter on radio and television, having hosted the BBC television series *When I get to Heaven*, *Holloway's Road* and *The Sword and the Cross*. He currently hosts the BBC Radio Scotland book review programme, *Cover Stories*. Holloway lives in Edinburgh with his American-born wife Jean. They have three adult children; two daughters and a son.

Recent works include:

- *Doubts and Loves: What is Left of Christianity* (2001)
- *On Forgiveness: How can we Forgive the Unforgivable?* (2002)
- *Looking in the Distance: The Human Search for Meaning* (2004)
- *How To Read The Bible* (2006)
- *Between the Monster and the Saint* (2008)

[Source =Wikipedia]

## Humanism

Humanism is a perspective common to a wide range of ethical stances that attaches importance to human dignity, concerns, and capabilities, particularly rationality. Although the word has many senses, its meaning comes into focus when contrasted to the supernatural or to appeals to authority. Since the nineteenth century, Humanism has been associated with an anti-clericalism inherited from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment *philosophes*. Twenty-first century Humanism tends to strongly endorse human rights, including reproductive rights, gender equality, social justice, and the separation of church and state. The term covers organized non-theistic religions, secular humanism, and a humanistic life stance.

It is widely agreed that the 'style' of the Sea of Faith Network is humanist. Many, though not all, members qualify that to 'religious humanist'. But some Humanist see that as a contradiction.

In a review of Don Cupitt's *The Meaning of the West* a member of the SoF UK, Rob Wheeler observed:

'Following current lines in radical biblical scholarship Cupitt takes the view that the teaching of Jesus was originally largely secular and utopian (there are few theological presuppositions in his sayings in the Synoptic Gospels) and that in essence the message of Jesus has flowered, over time, into modern secular humanism. Cupitt relies on the idea that the teaching of Jesus contains a kind of inner logic that unfolds into something quite different through the historical process. This leads Cupitt to conclude that in many ways the modern, western state is more 'Christian' than the Church ever has been, because it more successfully embodies the values and beliefs of Jesus. These values and beliefs include the unique value of the individual, mutual love and forbearance, care for the weakest and most vulnerable members of society, a high estimation of human creativity, belief in the uniformity of nature and a belief in social and moral progress.' [Source =Wikipedia, SoF(UK), NC]

## Jenks, Greg

The Rev. Dr. Greg Jenks is an Anglican Priest who is currently serving as Academic Dean and Lecturer in Biblical Studies at St Francis Theological College in Brisbane. He is a Keynote Speaker at this Conference.

His special interests are Christian origins and the quest for the historical Jesus, and his current teaching areas are NT Greek, Judaism and Early Christianity, and Synoptic Gospels.

Greg is a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar and a former Associate Director of the Westar Institute in California. As executive trustee for the FaithFutures Foundation, a long-time member of Sea of Faith in Australia and one of the planners for the inaugural 'Common Dreams' gathering in 2007, Greg has been deeply engaged in progressive religion in our part of the world. [Source=Self]

## Jesus, Gospel Portraits of

For more in-depth analyses see *Profiles of Jesus*, Polebridge Press, ed Roy Hoover

### The Synoptic Gospels

- Begins with John the Baptist or birth and childhood stories
- Jesus is baptised by John
- Jesus speaks in parables and and aphorisms
- Jesus is a sage
- Jesus is an exorcist
- God's imperial rule is the theme of Jesus' teaching.
- Jesus has little to say about himself
- Jesus espouses the causes of the poor and oppressed
- His public ministry lasts one year
- The temple incident is late
- Jesus eats last supper with his disciples

### The Gospel of John

- Begins with creation; no birth or childhood stories
- Baptism of Jesus presupposed but not mentioned
- Jesus speaks in long, involved discourses
- Jesus is a philosopher and mystic
- Jesus performs no exorcisms
- Jesus himself is the theme of his own teaching
- Jesus reflects extensively on his own mission and person
- Jesus has little or nothing to say about the poor and oppressed
- The public ministry lasts three years
- The temple incident is early
- Foot washing replaces last supper

[Source = 'the Five Gospels' Funk and Hoover, p11]

## Jesus Seminar, The

The Jesus Seminar is a group of about 150 individuals, including scholars with advanced degrees in biblical studies, religious studies or related fields as well as published authors who are notable in the field of religion, founded in 1985 by the late Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan under the auspices of the Westar Institute. One of the most active groups in biblical criticism, the seminar uses votes with coloured beads to decide their collective view of the historicity of Jesus, specifically what he may or may not have said and done as a historical figure. In addition, the seminar popularizes the quest for the historical Jesus. The public is welcome to attend the twice-yearly meetings. They produced new translations of the New Testament and apocrypha to use as textual sources. They published their results in three reports *The Five Gospels* (1993), *The Acts of Jesus* (1998), and *The Gospel of Jesus* (1999). They also run a series of lectures and workshops in various U.S. cities.

The seminar's reconstruction of the historical Jesus portrays him as an itinerant Hellenistic Jewish sage who did not die as a substitute for sinners nor rise from the dead, but preached a 'social gospel' in startling parables and aphorisms. An iconoclast, Jesus broke with established Jewish theological dogmas and social conventions both in his teachings and behaviours, often by turning common-sense ideas upside down, confounding the expectations of his audience: He preached of 'Heaven's imperial rule' (traditionally translated as 'Kingdom of God') as being already present but unseen; he depicts God as a loving father; he fraternizes with outsiders and criticizes insiders.

The seminar treats the gospels as historical artifacts, representing not only some of Jesus' actual words and deeds but also the inventions and elaborations of the early Christian community and of the gospel authors. The fellows placed the burden of proof on those who advocate any passage's historicity. Unconcerned with canonical boundaries, they asserted that the Gospel of Thomas may have more authentic material than the Gospel of John.

While analyzing the gospels as fallible human creations is a standard historical-critical method,[8] the seminar's premise that Jesus did not hold an apocalyptic world view is controversial. Rather than revealing an apocalyptic eschatology, which instructs his disciples to prepare for the end of the world, the fellows argue that the authentic words of Jesus indicate that he preached a sapiential eschatology, which encourages all of God's children to repair the world.

See also Westar Institute.

[Source = Wikipedia]

## Josephus (37CE-c.100CE)

Josephus was a first-century Jewish historian and apologist of priestly and royal ancestry who survived and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE. His works give an important insight into first-century Judaism.

Josephus was an important apologist in the Roman world for the Jewish people and culture, particularly at a time of conflict and tension. He always remained, in his own eyes, a loyal and law-observant Jew. He went out of his way both to commend Judaism to educated Gentiles, and to insist on its compatibility with cultured Graeco-Roman thought. He constantly contended for the antiquity of Jewish culture, presenting its people as civilised, devout and philosophical. Eusebius reports that a statue of Josephus was erected in Rome.

Josephus's two most important works are *The Jewish War* (c. 75) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94). The *Jewish War* recounts the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–70). *Antiquities of the Jews* recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective. These works provide valuable insight into first century Judaism and the background of early Christianity.

[Source =Wikipedia]

## Kingdom of God

The categories 'Day of the Lord', 'End of the World/Age/Order', 'Kingdom of Heaven' and 'Kingdom of God' overlap and are sometimes casually interchanged. Their precise meanings (even when they can be established) depend on context.

In the context of the traditional New Testament reading, 'the Kingdom of God' is an eschatological ('end time') expression used by Jesus and which the NT writers give different weightings to. Scholars believe that they can discern a range of attitudes attributed to Jesus:

- **Apocalyptic:** God will make it happen soon. (some of Mark, Revelation). Apocalyptic writings are typical in times of stress.
- **Inaugurated:** God's 'imperial rule' has started, though it is barely visible yet. (This view is found in some of Jesus' sayings and in the later Paul)
- **Realized:** its already here as the teachings of Jesus or, as with Augustine, the Church.
- **Mode of Living:** liberal/radical Christian/PostChristian effort to avoid super-naturalism. Some Jesus' sayings can be read in this way.

Many writers, especially liberal and radical, object on a number of grounds to 'Kingdom', preferring instead Empire, Domain or even Republic.

[Source = various, NC]

## Mayman, Margaret

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mayman has been senior minister at St. Andrew's on The Terrace since February 2002. She was ordained in 1982 after studying at Victoria University and Otago University for a BA in political science and religious studies, and a BTheol in Biblical and Pastoral Studies. After a short-term interim ministry, she moved to New York where she gained STM and M.Phil degrees in Christian Ethics and began PhD studies at Union Theological Seminary. She also taught feminist theology and ethics at Maryknoll School of Theology, and undergraduate Religious Studies at the New School for Social Research.

In 1995, after 12 years in New York, Margaret returned to New Zealand and was inducted as minister at St. Ninian's in Christchurch. During that time, she completed her PhD, which was awarded in 2001. Her doctoral dissertation was titled '*Raising Voices: Re-Visioning Moral Agency in Intimate Violence Discourses.*'

During her ministry in Christchurch, Margaret came out as lesbian and has been involved in working to promote the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the Presbyterian Church.

From 2002 to 2005, Margaret participated in the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meeting in New York, representing the Association of Presbyterian Women. She founded Christians for Civil Unions and advocated for the passage of the Civil Union Act.

Since 2006, Margaret has been working with the Kettering Foundation in the United States, a non-partisan foundation which fosters citizens participation in democracy. She has undertaken training in deliberative democracy and now applies this in interfaith dialogue and community justice work.

Margaret's interests include politics and economics, queer spirituality, human rights advocacy, refugee issues, peace issues, sexual justice, reading fiction and theology, film, listening to eclectic music and podcast documentaries, camping, and café culture.

Margaret is a speaker at this Conference.

[Source = Self]

## Messiah = Christ

In Jewish messianic tradition and eschatology, *messiah* refers to a future King of Israel from the Davidic line, who will rule the people of united tribes of Israel and herald the Messianic Age of global peace.

Christians believe that prophecies in the Hebrew Bible refer to a spiritual saviour, partly evidenced in passages from the Book of Isaiah: 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.' and 'He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed,' and believe Jesus to be that Messiah (Christ). The (Greek) Septuagint version of the Old Testament renders all thirty-nine instances of the Hebrew word for anointed *Messiah* as *Christos*.

The Apostle Paul, and later the writer(s) of the fourth gospel assigned a cosmic significance to Jesus' messiahship even though it is generally thought to be apparent from the synoptic gospel records that Jesus was reluctant to be thought of as any sort of messiah. By his time, to claim to be one who would liberate the people from Roman oppression would have been a dangerous claim to make, or admit to. Paul's 'Christ Jesus', 20 years after Jesus' mission, was offered to the Hellenised peoples of Asia Minor who were steeped in mystery religions and divinised emperors. To them, a divine Messiah/Christ would have more clout. [Source = Wikipedia + NC]

## Metaphor

Metaphor in its broadest sense is any figure of speech. One definition is "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them". . Ian Barbour, professor emeritus of physics and religion, points out in his book, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms* (1974) that a metaphor "proposes analogies between the normal context of a word and a new context into which it is introduced". Some of the familiar associations of a word are transferred to another word, and the associations "then act as a kind of screen or lens through which the new subject is viewed; some of its features are ignored or suppressed while others are emphasized or distinctively organized. It is seen in a new way and new attitudes are evoked....A metaphor can order our perceptions, bringing forward aspects which we had not noticed before." He goes on to explain, "A metaphor is not literally true. Imagine someone getting out the scales when his friend says 'My heart is heavy', or asking for salt and pepper upon hearing 'She has been in a stew all day'. A metaphor is absurd if interpreted literally because the two contexts are widely disparate; there is a flagrant crossing of what philosophers call 'type-boundaries'. It is a great mistake to dismiss metaphor as merely artistic language or as a useful fiction, a mere pretence, a game of make-believe with no relation to reality because it asserts that there are significant analogies between the things compared.

Myths, parables, and allegories are all story forms subsumed into the category of metaphor

Barbour distinguishes parable from allegory: "In an allegory, every person or part represents something else with a 1-to-1 correspondence; in a parable, however, the story as a whole conveys the comparison". Parables, he adds, call for decision, suggesting attitudes and policies and provoking a response from the hearer. Some, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, are useful fictions; others, such as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, seem to make claims about reality, implying that God is like a father. Parables, like myths, are open-ended and communicate vivid images.

See also Parable and Allegory. [Source = [www.neweverymoment.com/articles/article/3114323/46891.htm](http://www.neweverymoment.com/articles/article/3114323/46891.htm)]

## Myth

The underlying categories of myth are narrative, story, tale and anecdote. These forms differ either in the size or complexity of the work.

A myth is a narrative which recounts the doings of gods, heroes and humans, usually before the dawn of history. Myths often serve as explanations of how the race, its customs, institutions, and taboos came into being.

Legends and sagas may be seen as myth which contains at least some historical material.

Karen Armstrong wrote: "There were two ways of arriving at truth, which Plato called 'mythos' and 'logos' (reason). They complemented each other and were of equal stature; both were essential. Unlike myth, logos had to relate accurately to the external world: from the very earliest days, we used it to create effective weapons and to run our societies efficiently.

But humans are also meaning-seeking creatures, who fall very easily into despair. When faced with tragedy, reason is silent and has nothing to say. It was mythology and its accompanying rituals that showed people how to acquire the strength to go on." [Source = Miscellaneous]

## Nag Hammadi

The Nag Hammadi library (popularly known as The Gnostic Gospels) is a collection of early Christian Gnostic texts discovered near the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1945. That year, twelve leather-bound papyrus codices buried in a sealed jar were found by a local peasant. The writings in these codices comprised fifty-two mostly Gnostic tractates (treatises), but they also include three works belonging to the Corpus Hermeticum and a partial translation / alteration of Plato's *Republic*. In his 'Introduction' to The Nag Hammadi Library in English, James Robinson suggests that these codices may have belonged to a nearby Pachomian monastery, and were buried after Bishop Athanasius condemned the uncritical use of non-canonical books in his Festal Letter of 367 AD.

The contents of the codices were written in Coptic, though the works were probably all translations from Greek. The best-known of these works is probably the Gospel of Thomas, of which the Nag Hammadi codices contain the only complete text. After the discovery it was recognized that fragments of these sayings attributed to Jesus appeared in manuscripts discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1898, and matching quotations were recognized in other early Christian sources. Subsequently, a 1st or 2nd century date of composition circa 80 AD for the lost Greek originals of the Gospel of Thomas has been proposed, though this is disputed by many if not the majority of biblical matter researchers. The once buried manuscripts themselves date from the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The Nag Hammadi codices are housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Egypt.

See also Dead Sea Scrolls; Thomas, Gospel of [Source = Wikipedia]

## Parable

A parable is like a metaphor that has been extended to form a brief, coherent fiction. These characteristics are shared by the fable and are the essential core of allegory, neither of which should be confused with parable.

Most of the memorable sayings of Jesus, that are thought by The Jesus Seminar to be authentic, are delivered as aphorisms or as parables. Almost all references to the Kingdom (Empire, Republic, Domain ...) of God are found in the parables of Jesus.

Jesus' parables are now understood, at least by TJS scholars, to be narratives which lead the hearer to a moral quandary and which invite the hearer to declare a position. Unlike the situation with a simile, a parable's parallel meaning is unspoken and implicit, though not ordinarily secret. [Source = Wikipedia + Augustine + NC]

## Progressive Christianity

This is the name given to a movement within contemporary Protestant Christianity characterized by a willingness to question tradition, acceptance of human diversity (including the affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people), strong emphasis on social justice or care for the poor and the oppressed, and environmental stewardship of the earth. Progressive Christians have a deep belief in the centrality of the instruction to 'love one another' (John 15:17) within the teaching of Jesus Christ. This leads to a focus on compassion, promoting justice



and mercy, and working towards solving the societal problems of poverty, discrimination, and environmental issues.

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of a progressive Christian point of view is 'Progressive Christian Beliefs: An Introduction...' found at <http://progressivetheology.wordpress.com>, by Delwin Brown, apparently a reformed liberal theologian. While it frequently takes stands on the liberal side of the ideological spectrum, it should be noted that progressive Christianity is not necessarily synonymous with political liberalism.

The characteristics of Progressive Christianity, and its distinction from Liberal Christianity, have been articulated in an article by Hal Taussig. These can be summarized as:

A spiritual vitality and expressiveness, including participatory, arts-infused, and lively worship as well as a variety of spiritual rituals and practices such as meditation

- Intellectual integrity including a willingness to question
- An affirmation of human diversity
- An affirmation of the Christian faith with a simultaneous sincere respect for other faiths
- Strong ecological concerns and commitments
- Social justice commitments

[Source = Wikipedia]

## Prophet

In biblical language, a prophet was not concerned with predicting the future but with being God's spokesperson. Of course this might incidentally have had a future orientation. Both the Hebrew *nabu* and the Greek word *prophetes* means 'to speak on behalf of'. In Deuteronomy 18:18, God says that he will raise up a prophet and 'I will put my words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him.' The Old Testament records 55 prophets (48 male, 7 female), the greatest of whom was Moses. [Source = NC + Wikipedia]

## Q Document

The Q document or 'Q' (from the German *Quelle*, 'source') is a postulated lost textual source for the Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke. It is a theoretical collection of Jesus' sayings, written in Greek. Although many scholars believe that 'Q' was a real document, no actual document or fragment has been found.

In 1988 John Kloppenborg published *Q Parallels* and in 1993 Burton Mack made a more colloquial translation: *The Lost Gospel*. Q material features in David Boulton's book *Who On EARTH Was JESUS?* [Source = NC + Wikipedia]

## Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph, on Jesus

Pope Benedict XVI, using his pre-papal name of Joseph Ratzinger, has written a book: *Jesus of Nazareth*. It is the first of a planned two, with this volume bearing the subtitle 'From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration'.

Though presented as a work of scholarship the author quotes the works of theologians familiar to him and in agreement with his position, but does not acknowledge the vast body of work on this subject from before Schweitzer up and through The Jesus Seminar. The author prefers 'canonical exegesis' to 'historical critical exegesis'. A Peruvian seminary student, Ignazio de Vega, offered this definition: 'Canonical exegesis uses all of the critical, factual armature of ordinary exegesis, but it uses them in the assumption that 'a voice greater than man's' ... speaks through the whole of the Bible, uniting the individual books and turning their apparent incongruities and contradictions into matters of faith, of unity.'

Geza Vermes, writing in *The Times* May 19, 2007, said of the Pope's book:

'In the absence of a stringent linguistic, literary and historical analysis of the Gospels, especially of their many contradictory statements, the identification [of 'the Jesus of History' with 'the Christ of Faith'] is without foundation. One must declare groundless Benedict's appeal to 'canonical exegesis', an exercise in biblical theology whereby any text from the Old or the New Testament can serve to explain any other biblical text. Such an approach to biblical studies would force back Catholic Bible experts, already the objects of frequent papal disapproval in *Jesus of Nazareth*, to a pre-Copernican stage of history.'

Gerd Lüdemann, in his critique of this book (*Das Jesusbild des Papstes*, Springer: zu Klampen Verlag, 2007, 157 pp.) points out (p120) that the Pope offers

'no convincing arguments against the scholarly consensus that the Johannine discourses have nothing to do with what Jesus himself actually said' ... [I]t is .... baffling to hear Benedict assert that '[t]he Jesus of the Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of the Synoptics is one and the same: the true 'historical' Jesus'.



The Catholic Modernist, Joseph Loisy, gets a passing mention on page 48 with his ironic and perhaps sad observation of a century ago: 'Jesus came preaching the Kingdom, and what arrived was the Church'. We see this most strongly in the Kingdom-focussed Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke when contrasted with the Jesus of John's Gospel who would deny entry to those who would seek the Kingdom other than through him.

Rather than a scholarly work, *Jesus of Nazareth* may be seen as a 374-page sermon. Seen from within the Roman Catholic cultus, it all hangs together. But apply post-Enlightenment critiques and 'all its varying rainbows die away'. [Source = NC in Newsletter 75]

## Sage

A 'sage' is a person who dispenses wisdom — not the conventional wisdom of Oprah and life coaches, but radical and subversive wisdom. Such a contrast is seen in the Old Testament with Proverbs providing conventional wisdom and Job and Ecclesiastes providing subversive wisdom. Just as the Zen koan destabilises the mind and clears the way for fresh insight, so too does the unfamiliar logic of Jesus' aphorisms and parables in which the dead are left to bury the dead, or we are urged to turn the other cheek to an aggressor, or where the most recent vineyard hires get the same pay as those hired earlier, or the narrow gate is to be preferred, or the last ends up first. Jesus' vision was utopian. Rather than a detailed prescription for action, he provided an open invitation for each listener to work out how to make God's reign work 'on earth'. [Source = NC + Wikipedia + TJS]

## Schweitzer, Albert (1875-1965)

Schweitzer was a German-French theologian, musician, philosopher, and physician. He challenged both the secular view of Jesus as depicted by historical-critical methodology current at his time in certain academic circles, as well as the traditional Christian view, depicting a Jesus Christ who expected and predicted the imminent end of the world. He received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize in 1953 for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life" which he expressed in many ways, but most famously in founding and sustaining the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné, now in Gabon, west central Africa (then French Equatorial Africa). As a music scholar and organist, he studied the music of German composer Johann Sebastian Bach.

In 1899 Schweitzer became a deacon at the church Saint-Nicolas of Strasbourg. In 1900, with the completion of his licentiate in theology, he was ordained as curate, and that year he witnessed the Oberammergau Passion Play. In the following year he became provisional Principal of the Theological College of Saint Thomas (from which he had just graduated), and in 1903 his appointment was made permanent. Since the mid-1890s Schweitzer had formed the inner resolve that it was needful for him as a Christian to repay to the world something for the happiness which it had given to him, and he determined that he would pursue his younger interests until the age of thirty and then give himself to serving humanity, with Jesus serving as his example.

In 1906 he published *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* ("History of the Jesus-life research"). This book established his reputation, and it is worth reviewing its publication history. The original edition was translated into English by William Montgomery and published in 1910 under the somewhat aberrant title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. This title stuck however, and the book became famous under that name in the English-speaking world. A second German edition was published in 1913, containing theologically significant revisions and expansions. This revised edition did not appear in English until 2001.

In *The Quest*, Schweitzer reviewed all prior work on the question of the "historical Jesus" starting in the late 18th century. He pointed out how Jesus' image had changed with the times and with the personal proclivities of the various authors. He concluded with his own synopsis and interpretation of what had been learned over the course of the previous century. He took the position that the life of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of Jesus' own convictions, which he characterized as those of "late Jewish eschatology."

Schweitzer wrote that Jesus and his followers expected the imminent end of the world. He became very focused on the study and cross referencing of the many Biblical verses promising the return of Jesus and the exact details of this promised event, as it was originally believed that it would unfold, in the First Century. He noted that in the gospel of Mark, Jesus speaks of a "tribulation," with his coming in the clouds with great power and glory," and even tells his disciples exactly when all this will happen: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."(Matthew 24:34) The same story is told in the gospel of Matthew, with Jesus promising his rapid return: "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."(Matthew 23:36)

The publication of *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, effectively put a stop for decades to work on the Historical Jesus as a sub-discipline of New Testament studies. This work resumed however with the development of the so-called "Second Quest", among whose notable exponents was Rudolf Bultmann's student Ernst Käsemann.

[Source = Wikipedia]

## Sea of Faith Network (NZ)

The Sea of Faith Network began in New Zealand in 1992. It followed the formation of a Sea of Faith Network in Britain in 1989. It is an association of people who have a common interest in exploring religious thought and expression from a non-dogmatic and human-oriented standpoint

### The Sea of Faith Network (NZ)

- AFFIRMS the continuing importance of religious thought and practice as a vehicle for awe and wonder and for the celebration of key social and spiritual values;
- DRAWS freely upon our spiritual heritage without being bound by it;
- PROMOTES the quest for meaning and fulfillment as a human activity;
- PROVIDES encouragement, stimulation and support in fellowship with others engaged in the quest.

The Sea of Faith Network itself has no creed. It draws its members from people of all faiths and also from those with no attachment to religious institutions. It publishes a regular Newsletter, assists in setting up local discussion groups, maintains a website and holds an annual Conference.

The name of the Network comes from a phrase in Matthew Arnold's poem *Dover Beach*:

#### ***The Sea of Faith***

***Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore,***

***Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.***

***But now I only hear***

***Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,***

***Retreating, to the breath***

***Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear***

***And naked shingles of the world.***

The phrase was used in 1984 as the title of a BBC television documentary series and book by the English theologian Don Cupitt. The book and the television series trace pivotal changes in western science, philosophy and religion over the past 350 years, which together call for a radical re-thinking of our faith traditions.

The website at [www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz) gives details of Local Groups contacts throughout New Zealand and access to a large library of interesting papers.

Membership is offered at either or (preferably) both the Local and National level. Local Group contact details appear on the website. Anyone can become a member of the national organisation by paying an annual subscription of \$20 *per household* (within NZ) or \$30 if overseas. If the member elects to receive the six Newsletters each year as pdf files attached to an email the annual charge is \$15 anywhere. [Source = Brochure]

## Sellman, Doug

Doug Sellman, MBChB, PhD, FRANZCP, FACHAM, is a psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist. He has been Director of the National Addiction Centre (NAC), University of Otago, Christchurch, since a successful tender process in 1996, a Centre which has developed into the lead research and training unit within the national addiction treatment field, dedicated to improving treatment for people with addiction-related problems in Aotearoa New Zealand.

He was promoted to a Personal Chair in Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine in 2005. Academic highlights are: a national postgraduate training programme for a multidisciplinary student group in addiction and co-existing disorders; a two-week Addiction Medicine block course for senior medical students; ten PhD students investigating a wide range of addiction-related topics; and internationally recognized research on the effectiveness of motivation interviewing and the optimum treatment for people with 'alcoholic depression'.

His clinical work since 1994 has been primarily as consultant psychiatrist to the addiction treatment stream of the Youth Specialty Service in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Doug is a speaker at this Conference.

[Source = Self]

## Son of Adam

In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase 'son of Adam' is used in three different senses: 1) to refer to the human species as insignificant creatures in the presence of God (see Job 24:4-6) 2) to identify human beings as next to God in the order of creation (see Psalm 8:3-6) 3) as the agent to exercise control over every living creature (see Gen 1:28). See also Dan 7:13-14. In the gospels the term is employed in three senses: a) to refer to the heavenly figure who is to come b) to refer to the one who is to suffer, die and rise c) to refer to human beings. The confusion is how this phrase is to be understood owes to the fact that the Christian community tended to understand the phrase messianically or apocalyptically. [Source = *The Five Gospels* ed. Funk and Hoover]

## Spong, John Shelby (1931- )

Spong was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, United States and is the retired American bishop of the Episcopal Church Diocese of Newark, New Jersey). He is a liberal Christian theologian, Biblical scholar, religion commentator and author. He promotes traditionally liberal causes, such as racial equality. He also calls for a fundamental rethinking of Christian belief, away from what he defines as theism and from the afterlife as reward or punishment for human behavior.

Spong's writings rely on Biblical and non-Biblical sources, and are influenced by modern critical analysis of these sources. He is representative of a stream of thought with roots in the medieval universalism of Peter Abelard and the existentialism of Paul Tillich, who he has called his favorite theologian.

A prominent theme in Spong's writing is that the popular, supposedly 'literal' interpretation of Christian scripture does not speak honestly to the situation of modern Christian communities, and that a more nuanced approach to scripture, informed by scholarship and compassion, can be consistent with both Christian tradition and a contemporary understanding of the universe. He believes, as did his theological predecessor, Bishop John A.T. Robinson, that theism has lost credibility as a valid conception of God's nature. He explains that he is a Christian because he believes that Jesus Christ fully expressed the presence of a God of compassion and selfless love, and that this is the meaning of the early Christian proclamation, 'Jesus is Lord'. He rejects the historical truth claims of some Christian doctrines, such as the Virgin Birth and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In 2000, Spong was a critic of the Holy Office's declaration *Dominus Iesus*.

Recent works include:

- *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile* (1999)
- *Here I Stand: My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love and Equality* (2001)
- *A New Christianity for a New World: Why Traditional Faith Is Dying & How a New Faith Is Being Born* (2002)
- *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* (2005)
- *Jesus for the Non-Religious* (2007)
- *Eternal Life: A New Vision: Beyond Religion, Beyond Theism, Beyond Heaven and Hell* (due 2010)

[Source = Wikipedia]

## St Andrew's Trust for the Study of Religion and Society

SATRS is hosted by the Progressive Presbyterian Church of St Andrews on The Terrace in Wellington. It engages lecturers, tutors and researchers, arrange seminars and study groups. It also publishes many of the lectures in book and/or CD form. The theologian in residence is Sir Lloyd Geering. Details of current and past activity, as well as a catalogue of publications, can be found at [www.standrews.org.nz/satrs](http://www.standrews.org.nz/satrs)

SATRS and SoF often cooperate in sharing visiting lecturers from overseas. [Source = Website + NC]

## Strauss, David Friedrich (1808-1874)

Strauss was a German theologian and writer who scandalized Christian Europe with his portrayal of the "historical Jesus," whose divine nature he denied. He was a pioneer in the historical investigation of Jesus.

His *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1837) was a sensation. One reviewer called it "the Iscariotism of our days" and another "the most pestilential book ever vomited out of the jaws of hell." When Strauss was elected to a chair of theology in the University of Zürich, the appointment provoked such a storm of controversy that the authorities decided to pension him before he began his duties.

What made his book so controversial was his analysis of the miraculous elements in the gospels as being "mythical" in character. This book closed a period in which scholars wrestled with the miraculous nature of the New Testament in the rational views of the Enlightenment. One group consisted of "rationalists", who found logical, rational explanations for the apparently miraculous occurrences; the other group, the "supernaturalists", defended not only the historical accuracy of the biblical accounts, but also the element of direct divine intervention. Strauss dispels the actuality of the stories as "happenings" and reads them solely on a mythic level. Moving from miracle to miracle, he understood all as the product of the early church's use of Jewish ideas about what the Messiah would be like, in order to express the conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. With time the book created a new epoch in the textual and historical treatment of the rise of Christianity.

As Albert Schweitzer wrote in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Strauss's arguments "filled in the death-certificates of a whole series of explanations which, at first sight, have all the air of being alive, but are not really so." He adds that there are two broad periods of academic research in the quest for the historical Jesus, namely, "the period before David Strauss and the period after David Strauss." Marcus Borg has suggested that "the details of Strauss's argument, his use of Hegelian philosophy, and even his definition of myth, have not had a lasting

impact. Yet his basic claims - that many of the Gospel narratives are mythical in character, and that "myth" is not simply to be equated with "falsehood" - have become part of mainstream scholarship." [Source = Wikipedia]

## Theism etc,

### Theism

In theism, 'God' names the supernatural personal being who created the world and who continues to have oversight (providence) over its affairs. Being personal, he enters into personal relationships with humans who are made in his image. Christian orthodoxy today strongly affirms theism. Evangelical Christians use it as one of the essential tests of orthodoxy. 'Do you believe in a personal God?'

### Deism

In deism 'God' is the name of the creator of the universe. But this God is not involved in the world in any personal way. Deism appealed to thinkers in the time of the rise of modern science. It became quite widespread at the Enlightenment. There was even a deist Archbishop of Canterbury. It is now strongly rejected in theological circles but lingers on quite widely as a vague popular belief. It is the type of God referred to by some modern physicists.

### Pantheism

Pantheism identifies God with all that there is, regards all finite things as parts, modes, limitations, or appearances of one ultimate Being, which is all that there is. It originated with the Jewish philosopher Spinoza who was roundly condemned by Jew and Christian. Yet it has continued to surface from time to time. Teilhard de Chardin and Paul Tillich were both accused of pantheism.

### Panentheism

Panentheism is a belief system which posits that God exists and interpenetrates every part of nature, and timelessly extends beyond as well. Panentheism is distinguished from pantheism, which holds that God is synonymous with the material universe.

Briefly put, in pantheism, 'God is the whole'; in panentheism, 'The whole is in God.' This means that the Universe in the first formulation is practically the Whole itself, but in the second the universe and God are not ontologically equivalent. In panentheism, God is not exactly viewed as the creator or demiurge, but the eternal animating force behind the universe, with the universe as nothing more than the manifest part of God. The cosmos exists within God, who in turn 'pervades' or is 'in' the cosmos. While pantheism asserts that God and the universe are coextensive, panentheism claims that God is greater than the universe and that the universe is contained within God.

### Agnostic

'Agnostic' was introduced by Thomas Henry Huxley in 1860 to describe his philosophy which rejects Gnosticism, by which he meant not simply the early 1st millennium religious group, but all claims to spiritual or mystical knowledge.

More generally, agnosticism is the philosophical view that the truth value of certain claims — particularly metaphysical claims regarding theology, afterlife or the existence of deities, spiritual beings, or even ultimate reality — is unknown or, depending on the form of agnosticism, inherently impossible to prove or disprove and hence unknowable. It is not a religious declaration in itself and the terms are not mutually exclusive.

### Atheism

Though it is primarily the rejection of 'God' as understood by theists, atheism is often used to deny that the concept of 'God' has any meaningful use.

### Antitheist

Stefan Baumrin defines an 'antitheist' as 'one who actually espouses atheism and would try to convince theists of the error of their ways. A mere atheist might think, or even write, as in a diary or a wellworked manuscript to be left in a locked desk drawer these words but would never broadcast them.' [Source = Lloyd Geering] + Wikipedia]

## Westar Institute

A non-profit research and educational institute dedicated to the advancement of religious literacy.

Westar's first project, The Jesus Seminar, renewed the quest for the historical Jesus begun by David Friedrich Strauss in the nineteenth century and later taken up by Albert Schweitzer at the beginning of the twentieth. At the opening session of the Jesus Seminar in 1985, Funk defined its mission as follows: 'We are going to inquire simply, rigorously after the voice of Jesus, after what he really said.' The Jesus of Nazareth discovered by the Jesus Seminar was a wisdom teacher whose parables proclaimed the arrival of God's kingdom. He was not, in the judgment of the Seminar, the messiah of the end-times. These and other findings of the Seminar drew widespread attention throughout the 1980s and 1990s. [Source = Westar]