

Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

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A recovered old Newsletter

SEA OF FAITH NETWORK (NEW ZEALAND)

Newsletter No 1.

November 1992

This comes to you because you placed your name recently on a list indicating your interest in the formation of a Network of people in New Zealand, who have similar interests to the Sea of Faith Network in UK. The latter was formed in response to the BBC Television documentary, The Sea of Faith, written and presented by Don Cupitt, an Anglican priest, then Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion.

The TV series drew its title from Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach", where Arnold found in the 1860's a symbol of the decline of religion, the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the Sea of Faith. Cupitt urged that we should cease to mourn the decline and fall of traditional beliefs. Instead he offered a vision of a new, dynamic religious faith, entirely human, no longer depending on a supernatural origin, and centred in spiritual and ethical activity.

This vision prompted a conference of like-minded radicals in 1988 which gave birth to the Network, with the aim of "exploring and promoting religious faith as a human creation". It describes itself in the following way:

The Sea of Faith Network...
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;

EXPLORES the implications of acceptance of religion as a human creation;

PROMOTES a broader acceptance of the legitimacy and validity of creative, human-centred religion.

The SOF Network has no creed. It draws its members from most of the major Christian churches and embraces men and women from other faiths and from those with no attachment whatever to religious institutions. It accommodates a similarly rich and diverse spread in the expression of spirituality. Many streams run into the Sea of Faith.

The Network is run by a Steering Committee elected by the membership. It holds an annual conference, open to all members, and publishes a regular Newsletter as well as the Magazine. Regional groups have been formed, and more are in the process of formation.

Finally, like the sea itself, the Network is fluid, always moving, always changing. The Sea of Faith has no fixed positions, no dogmas. It continually redefines itself and reformulates its attitudes, including, of course those set out above.

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Those who wish to share in the above are invited to contact the Network Secretary: Ronald Pearse,

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Middleton Place,

Loughborough, Leics. LE11 2BY,
U.K.

(See overpage for a New Zealand response)

We now have about 150 names and addresses (and some of these include more than one person, such as husband and wife couples), of people in New Zealand who would like to see the formation of something similar in this country. These names were gathered from seminars held successively in Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin.

As a practical start you are invited to return the accompanying questionnaire, so that we may ascertain from you the particular things in which you may be interested. If you do not return the questionnaire, it will be concluded that you do not wish to pursue your interest further.

The use of the term Network was chosen deliberately in UK to avoid giving the impression that this is a new movement or organization. It simply links together people who have similar interests which they would like to pursue together in whatever way proves to be practicable. The name "Sea of Faith Network (N.Z.)" has been adopted temporarily until people are convened to make decisions for themselves as to what would be the most appropriate title and as to the kind of activity they wish to promote.

There are three things, at least, which could emerge:

- (1) The production of a simple newsletter which draws attention to new books and any other subjects of common interest.
- (2) The formation of local groups for regular discussion, study and any other appropriate activity.
- (3) The organization of a short live-in conference. (To this end we have already received the offer

of a University Residential Hall at Waikato University.)

Items of Current interest

We regret to report that at the end of September Don Cupitt suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and underwent neuro-surgery to prevent a second one. He is now recovering and the prognosis is good.

This newsletter comes to you by the courtesy of the generous assistance of the Department of World Religions, Victoria University.

Books of interest within the SOF Network are:

Hugh Dawes, Freeing the Faith, SPCK, 1992

David Jenkins, Free to Believe, BBC 1991

John Spong, Into the Whirlwind, 1983, repr. 1992 by Desbooks, Aust.

" " Born of a Woman, Harper, 1992

Don Cupitt, Re-thinking Religion, St. Andrew's Trust, 1992

Lloyd Geering, Religious Trail-blazers, St. Andrew's Trust, 1992

St. Andrew's Trust Publications are available from:

St. Andrew's trust,
P.O. Box 5203,
Wellington.

The other books above are available from:

Anglican Bookshop, P.O.
Box 12-002, Thorndon, Wellington