



Sea of Faith NETWORK N.Z.

NEWSletter

From the new Chairperson

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL CONFERENCE has passed. The participants departed from Havelock North reluctantly—a superb venue and a superb programme with an outstanding line-up of keynote speakers; **Martin Prozesky** from South Africa, our founding figure **Don Cupitt** from the U.K., with **Ruth Smithies** and **Michael King** to help focus the theme in our own land. Backed by a rich selection of group activities, it was a feast—so was the catering at Woodford House. The Hawkes Bay Arrangements Committee did an outstanding job in setting up this Conference, the first in a provincial area away from a main centre.

At the conclusion of the Conference the newly elected Steering Committee met briefly to continue the process of maintaining the Network in good shape and to begin planning for next year's Conference. We are **Marjorie Cox**, **Jean Holm**, **Owen** and **Joy Lewis** from Auckland; **Suzi Thirlwall** from Tauranga; **Keith Fuller** and **Alan Goss** from Napier; **Barrie Allom** from Masterton; **Noel Cheer**, **Yvonne Curtis** and **Hugh Gilman** from Wellington; **Bruce McMillan** from Dunedin. Hugh is Membership Secretary and Treasurer, Suzi is Minutes Secretary and keeper of the Resource Centre, Noel edits the Newsletter and Yvonne will distribute it. Noel has been elected Vice-Chairperson.

I want to record a special word of thanks to outgoing Chairperson **Jane Griffith**, Treasurer **Roy Griffith**, Secretary **Yvonne Chisholm** and Newsletter distributor **Janet Davidson**.

I have no doubt that the Network has a strong future—a self-generating future arising from its membership who seek a forum for exchange of ideas and enjoyment of like-minded company. We live on the cutting-edge of faith, not bound by dogma or institutionalism, an exhilarating place to be, where answers are always the raw material for the next question. What we hold in common is the desire for freedom to think and question and to paddle our waka of faith into unknown waters.

The Steering Committee and the Auckland Arrangements Committee are committed to providing members with an equally good Conference next year. Please write it in your diary now: **Auckland, 21-23 September 2001**.

Barrie Allom, Chairperson 2000-2001

Editorial

I WAS ABLE TO ATTEND TWO SoF conferences this year: the UK Conference in Leicester in July and the NZ Conference in Havelock North in October.

Both had about 200 attendees, excellent speakers, stimulating workshops and wall-to-wall camaraderie.

The Sea of Faith is in good heart. We agonise from time to time about the demographic skew towards 60+. Some even suggest that, once the present generation of escapees from conventional religion have died off, or have completed their detox sessions, the SoF will fade away.

But, would that matter? Comes the need, comes the Network to meet it. In 1984, Don Cupitt presented his memorable TV series *The Sea of Faith* and, as a result the SoF Network sprung to life in the UK—to be followed by similar groups in New Zealand and Australia. As long as there are people of faith who are prepared to rattle their cages in the name of faith, there will be Networks like ours so that they can keep in touch.

Noel Cheer, Editor

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Regular features such as reports from Local Groups and Book Reviews have been held over to the next issue: deadline November 15.

Faith in Cyberspace

On the interface ...

... between religion and everyday life:

<http://www.firstthings.com/>

A New Online Magazine

... about sex called (appropriately or otherwise) **The Position** has as one of its regular correspondents, Bishop John Spong. Recent contributions discuss 'How women lost power as the church evolved' and challenge Jerry Falwell on homosexuality.

<http://theposition.com/>

A Mine of Information and Stimulation ...

... is to be found at **Beliefnet** ("we all believe in something"). John Spong is there, too. They give coverage to the recent documentary by ABC's Peter Jennings on the "Search for Jesus".

<http://www.beliefnet.com/>

Who's Online?

At this year's New Zealand SoFN Conference, a show of hands of almost all the attendees indicated that about 80% had email and World Wide Web facilities.

The UK Conference

The Redundancy of the Church

This is an excerpt from Don Cupitt's Keynote Address: *Christianity After The Church*.

"In addition, the 'ecumenical' attempt to build a new and globalized world-order, a United Nations, and a range of international institutions, has gone much further in the secular sphere than it has in the churches. Humanitarian ethics of the 'Kingdom' type is much more developed in an organization like

Medicins sans Frontieres than it is anywhere in the churches. And finally, secular culture is becoming intensely communicative on a global scale, and is much more committed to freedom of speech than is the church.

I conclude from all this that in the Western tradition secular culture has since the Enlightenment continued to pursue the ancient religious dream of a new world at the end of historical time, and with considerable success. The world it has been building, the world of the United Nations, international law, democratic politics, ceaseless global communication and humanitarian ethics, a world now committed to the struggle for the emancipation of women and the reconciliation of ethnic and religious differences—this new world of ours represents a very much further-developed version of the original Christian programme than anything available from the churches.

And that is the reason for the so-called 'decline of religion'. It might be better called the redundancy of the church, if it is indeed the case that by the church's own criteria what it thinks of as 'the world' is now becoming much more truly Christian than is the church itself.

The church has been left in the past, as Christianity has moved out of it and has continued to develop in the larger world outside."

A Mess of Postmodernism

Don had built on this theme in his recent book *Kingdom Come in Everyday Speech*. He set it against a background of "a whole series of structural resemblances between ... the world of our post-modernity and the traditional ideal world-at-the-end-of-the-world that religion has called the kingdom of God."

"It is conventional to criticise the multinationals [businesses] for being mobile, rootless, anonymous, and interested only in profit, but I'm pointing out that it's precisely these



features that make them morally superior to our old locally based national and religious identities."

This annoyed UK "Poet, author, activist and SoF member" Dinah Livingstone who wrote a dissenting article in the UK "SoF" Magazine (number 42, July 2000) and who was part of the final panel discussion at the UK Conference where she continued her disagreement with Don. In her article she wrote:

"Cupitt is a distinguished heir of half this English radical tradition: the struggle to de-supernaturalise God. But by ignoring the struggle for justice, he squanders the other half of his birthright for a mess of postmodernism."

Reported by Noel Cheer

In Brief

The Breakfast Food of Saints

Remember eagerly searching for the trinkets in your new packet of Rice Bubbles? 'Cheerios', a prominent American brand of cereal, has something much more substantial to offer: several CD-ROMs which include the New International Version of the Bible.

Zondervan Publishing House called it "the largest distribution of Bibles to date".

However, the cereal-maker has since been making apologies. It says: "While inclusion of the Bible may be seen as added value by some, it is the company's policy not to advance any particular set of religious beliefs. Inclusion of this material does not conform to our policy, and we apologize for this lapse."

Sea of Faith in Australia Bulletin
August 2000

Sea of Works?

One of the NZ Conference "Focus Groups" looked at ways in which the SoFN might become more active and/or activist and listed these possibilities:

1. education: on application provide reading lists of "necessary knowledge"
2. advertise our presence and characteristics
3. provide public lectures on matters that demonstrate SoFN ideas using, e.g. Lloyd Geering, Don Cupitt and others
4. officially pronounce on the controversial issues of the day by official press releases.
5. do good works: raise money for charities. etc
6. social activism: march, protest.

The broad consensus of both the Focus Group that deliberated on the matter and the audience for the plenary report-back session was that 2 and 3 were desirable. Other possibilities, especially 3 and 5 were definitely undesirable, partly because we haven't tested SoFN for a consensus on the matters likely to be available to protest about or causes to support.

Overall it seemed that most of those present agreed that the main value of the SoFN was as a "talk shop" and that social activism would compromise that value.

Clone Jesus?

This is such a good idea that even if it's a bad idea, it's a good idea. There's an organisation in California [where else?], that wants to clone Jesus Christ.

The idea is that the technology is there (Dolly the sheep), the DNA is there (in relics), and the biblical imperative is there, and it's about time to get this Second Coming thing moving. Even a young virgin woman has volunteered to bring the baby Jesus to term in a second Virgin Birth.

Reported by Noel Cheer
refer <http://www.clonejesus.com>

Dominus Who?

In September the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published **Dominus Jesus**, a document which declared that churches which do not have a "valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery are not churches in the proper sense."

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued the document as part of what appeared to be an ongoing but urgent effort by the Vatican to reassert traditional Catholic doctrine.

The secretary of Ratzinger's congregation, said the document carried the full authority of infallibility because it was "explicitly approved and confirmed by the Pope." Hans Kung, a prominent Swiss Catholic theologian often at odds with the Vatican, told an Italian news agency that

Dominus Jesus was "a mixture of medieval backwardness and Vatican megalomania." In London, *The Tablet*, a leading independent Catholic publication, described **Dominus Jesus** as "a public relations disaster—what a pity that it sounds notes of triumphalism that the sympathetic style and way of acting of Pope John XXIII ... seemed to have dispelled forever."

From SoF In Australia Newsletter

Give a Book (or Two) for Christmas

Bridget Williams Books offers Sea of Faith Network members and St Andrews Trust members

Lloyd Geering's

"Tomorrow's God"

and

"The World To
Come"

at the special price of
\$19.95 each
or both for \$30

inclusive of GST and postage (within NZ) paid. Send your name, address and cheque to:

Bridget Williams Books
P.O. Box 5482
Wellington

Overseas members should either fax (64-4-473-8417) or write for a quote for postage.

Local Groups — A Suggestion

Why not take over a local coffee bar (with permission, of course!) and hold an open meeting? Invite the general public to hear your guest lecturer and to join in discussion.

Something like this happens under the auspices of "Spirited Conversations" at the Alleluya Bar and Cafe, St. Kevin's Arcade, K'Road, Auckland. Their next event is on "ecology and future generations", 7pm November 24.

The Conference — Your Recollections

Send them to "The Editor, SoFN Newsletter, 26 Clipper Street, Titahi Bay" by November 15.

From Creed to Conscience & The Constitution of South Africa

Martin Prozesky

Director: Unilever Ethics Centre

University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

The following are excerpts from this keynote speech. The full speech can be obtained either from the Resource Centre or from our website at

<http://www.futuresgroup.org.nz/sof.html>.

What happens when 30 years of intense nurture and fellowship in the Christian tradition are exposed to a growing appreciation of the spiritual and moral power of the other great faiths? What happens to your Christian sense of right and wrong and your belief in the reality of a God of perfect goodness when your bishop doesn't agree with you that the slum is a more important place for a Christian priest than the sanctuary ...? What happens when that Christian nurture and the convictions it generates come up against a growing recognition that the ethical problems of your religion are not just marginal but central and inherent? ... And what happens when all of this takes place amidst apartheid with a very strong conviction that you have to play your part to help remove that evil system from the face of the earth, joining the many others who took that step before you, however small that part may be? This paper is one person's answer to those questions. And in a nutshell the answer is this: creed bows to conscience; theology bows to ethics; prayer bows to praxis. And then ethical praxis begins to recreate forms of faith consistent with its values.

* * *

Around the age of 30, Christian creed and conscience were a harmonious unity for me, and it seemed clear that the moral values of that faith were what South Africa needed most. Today I see the selfsame Christianity in which I was nurtured as arguably our greatest moral and spiritual liability ... Why the change? Why ... did I find it necessary to deny creed in order to make room for conscience? What was it that liberated ethical values from their doctrinal prison for me? Let me mention the main liberating factors. ... Probably the most influential factor in the journey to my present life as an ethics activist-academic was the sheer strength of the early ethical influences on me.

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Another factor that in my student years encouraged this way of experiencing Christianity was the dictum attributed to William Temple, that "moral progress means enlarging the circle of your concern."

* * *

... I experienced my first sustained contact with black African people as equals, in the form of the Shona people. Apartheid South Africa had successfully prevented anything like that from happening. ... it was only in the rather less fanatically anti-secularist climate of what was then called Rhodesia that I was able to get to grips with what Karl Marx and the Marxists really stood for.

* * *

In South Africa virtually all the perpetrators of apartheid were God-fearing theists, most of them Christians ...

* * *

[In my] first book ... I sought the explanation for religion in nature and in human nature. I also wanted to argue that what

apartheid deemed irredeemably separate and inferior, namely world-views other than that of white, Christian South African, could in fact be shown to be the branches of a single tree ... This was, for me, even more an ethical statement than an academic one. ... My conclusion in that book was that the whole of religion can quite adequately be explained in naturalistic terms - that religion would have emerged on this planet exactly as it did if there were no deity causing it to emerge by acts of revelation or incarnation of the kind posited by theistic believers.

* * *

Since my field was Religious Studies, that amounted to a methodological policy of turning the subject into something explicitly critical and reconstructive, and not just descriptive, comparative and phenomenological ... It was unthinkable not to place the following question at the top of the Religious Studies agenda: "is religion really the force for good that believers assume it to be, and if it isn't, how should it be changed?" And ... "Is Christianity really the force for good that Christians think it is?"

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Does Christianity - orthodox, credal Christianity - pass the most rigorous tests for truth, and does it pass the most demanding tests for moral quality, tests such as fairness, justice and maximum inclusivity?

* * *

[My ideas] were based on the claim that what is morally noblest in Christianity is the example and message of perfect love given by Jesus of Nazareth. This is the norm by which to judge everything else in that religion. [But] what emerges from that judgement is that the heart of orthodox church teaching, its doctrines of salvation and incarnation, is logically and above all morally incompatible with that norm.

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At a time when many of my Christian friends and colleagues in South Africa were joining forces to declare apartheid a heresy, I found myself driven to the much more radical conclusion that Christian orthodoxy is itself a heresy, a moral heresy, because it makes claims that are ethically repugnant and logically self-contradictory. ... Like the apartheid state, the church creates a favoured elite, those who have access to the greatest benefit of all - eternal life - mostly because of an accident of birth.

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The very evil that made apartheid a crime against humanity - gross injustice on the basis of something nobody can help or change, namely their skin colour - emerged as an inherent part of Christian salvational orthodoxy and thus of the religion itself, because of gross injustice towards the human majority which is born outside any real chance of coming to faith in Christ.

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For me, then, the very conscience that I owed to my early Christian nurture ... meant the absolute end of any faith in orthodox, traditional Christian doctrine. I had reached much the same conclusion in my first book on philosophical and factual grounds. Now I had reached it far more powerfully on ethical grounds.

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It was therefore with open arms that we welcomed the new wave of feminist religious and ethical thinking that began to engage people like me from the mid-1980s onward. What I had seen on the basis of religious pluralism - injustice towards people of other faiths - feminists ... were seeing on the basis of injustice towards women, the difference being that my sympathies were more with the position of radical, post-ecclesiastical feminism than with the kind that found it possible to continue inside the church.

* * *

... apartheid was a heresy - but so is the belief-structure that fathered it.

* * *

It cannot be emphasized enough just how powerful Christianity was (and is) in South Africa. Coming to the country in 1652 from Protestant Europe as the religion of the whites, and thus of those who imposed themselves by force on the African populations, this is a tradition of belief and practice that had enjoyed over three centuries of massive power and influence during which to shape South Africa, exercising a virtual monopoly over access to legislation, wealth, education and the media.

* * *

For me, the key target therefore became the constitutional status of religion in the new South Africa, and I began a process of public campaigning that the only morally defensible arrangement would be a secular state with freedom and equality for all forms of belief, including non-religious ones. ... The campaign began with articles in leading newspapers and a radio interview in Johannesburg with a highly popular station. Here now [are excerpts from] the text of the first of these articles, published in 1990 in Durban's Sunday Tribune:

"I will argue that both politics and religion will benefit if we transform South Africa into a constitutionally secular society. ... Roughly speaking there are three ways of handling the relationship between religion and the State. At one extreme is theocracy. Here religion absorbs and wholly controls the state. Calvin's Geneva, modern Iran and the Papal States before Italian unification are well-known examples. ... The opposite of a theocracy is the modern, secular state where religion is entirely independent of the State and operates through the unaided efforts of its own members, enjoying full freedom of belief. The United States, France and India are examples. In between are the countries where a particular religious group enjoys official status of some kind, but without officially blurring the distinction between religion and government. We could call this a semi-secular system. Britain and South Africa, despite certain differences, are in this middle category, but at opposite ends both legally and in practice. ... [A] united religious influence acceptable to most South Africans is extremely unlikely. ... A secular state is also religiously preferable to its alternatives. It alone would free the churches and religions from that great underminer of true faith, pressure to conform. Nothing is more at odds with real religion than this.

* * *

... vigorous support came from our Muslims, Jews, Hindus, liberal Christians, as well as from secularistic people. Happily for us, the campaign was taken up and supported by the

African National Congress (ANC), so that South Africa now has a democratic constitution, adopted in 1996, which has put an end to the unethical, erstwhile, legal hegemony of Christianity or any other belief-system. ... For us in South Africa the basic legal battle for an ethically sound society is thus over, but the educational, ethical and spiritual struggle to make those legal and constitutional principles work has just begun. ... This attempt to put belief into practice has involved the setting up of a new structure in my university, an Ethics Centre dedicated to promoting social transformation through ethics education both on and off campus. Generous funding has come from the Unilever Foundation, so this new structure is now called the Unilever Ethics Centre, focussing on comparative and applied ethics, not philosophical ethics.

* * *

What, then, can faith learn from conscience and conscience learn from faith or spirituality? The convergence ethic I am advocating can contribute the following to the transformation of spirituality: total inclusivity, the transcending of obedience, the best truth-finding, and effective social and environmental activism aimed at justice and fulfillment for all.

* * *

[T]he convergence ethic calls for a spirituality that transcends obedience. Itself a transcending of the top-down mode of moral functioning that we see in what Lloyd Geering has helped us identify as ethnic and axial ethical cultures, the convergence ethic expects the same of progressive spiritualities, precisely because its passion for a moral commonwealth of equals extends also to spirituality. There too, people have an equal right to contribute creatively to the enrichment of the soul along with all other people, walking shoulder to shoulder with them and bowing down before none.

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The selfsame active concern for the well-being of all means that an ethically rich spirituality must be an inspiration that engenders active social and environmental concern, and not an alternative to it. Least of all must it be an escape from such activism. Here I must confess to a good deal of uneasiness at a pietistic tendency in some of the spirituality that I have encountered, where the heightening of personal consciousness seems to be all that is sought.

* * *

Most of us experience a need to see our existence as having value and meaning, and this, it seems, is best achieved by seeking the most encompassing of frameworks for our lives. This takes us into metaphysics, not the weary old ones of the past but into new visions of wholeness within which moral effort can find a deeper meaning and a stronger motivation.

* * *

... I think that spirituality can help ethics move from justice to love, from a balancing of self-actualization and the interests of others to an ability to accept self-sacrifice in order that others may flourish. There is such a thing as love of power and domination. As a result, there are many who will oppose an ethic of planetary well-being because it threatens their privileges and self-indulgence.

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If South Africa taught us anything, it is that the struggle against such people cannot be won if those who wage it are unable to accept real danger to themselves, and even death.

* * *

Beyond Belief -- The Social Responsibility Dimension

Ruth Smithies, former Director of the Office for Justice, Peace and Development,
Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand. email: smithies@globe.net.nz

The following are excerpts from this keynote speech. The full speech can be obtained either from the Resource Centre or from our website at

<http://www.futuresgroup.org.nz/sof.html>

In the Judeo-Christian tradition the test of true spirituality or religion is not whether we feel we have a relationship with God or not. It is whether we keep God's commandments. True spirituality is not just about 'God and me'—though it is that too, otherwise we would end up turning the Jewish and Christian faith into a philosophy, an ideology, and a moral code. My spirituality would soon degenerate into mere private therapy, an 'opium of the people' if I made it a privatized matter, cut off from my daily living and interactions with others. It is beyond belief; it moves beyond what I study and hold true. Action not words, walking the talk, or praying with our feet.

Arising out of the theme of this conference we can ask: What are the consequences for daily life of the beliefs held by members of the Sea of Faith, by practicing Catholics, by adherents of other religions, and by the non-religious? In particular, what does it mean to say that all citizens should, as members of the community, have a sense of social responsibility? Can people of quite different beliefs agree on a Code of Social Responsibility or even on new legislation—a Social Responsibility Act? Can the majority of businesses agree on a complementary Code of Business Responsibility?

Responsibility makes sense if we understand that we are relational beings, not independent but interdependent. To use traditional Christian language: God has created us in his image. That means not only as rational and free beings, but also as relational ones. The Christian dogma of the Trinity is an attempt to state that the fundamental essence of God is relatedness. We are interdependent, not because we like it better that way nor because that way we function better. We are interdependent because that is how we were created.

Those who hold that the individual is independent, autonomous and free from others, will see social responsibility (that is, living in solidarity with others) as an option rather than an obligation. The influential economist von Hayek held that: the essential basis of the development of modern civilization is to allow people to pursue their own ends on the basis of their own knowledge and not be bound by the aims of others ... To me this way of thinking negates the truth that each of us was born into a family, into a community, and into the single human race. These are not associations of individuals which we choose to join. We are irrevocably bound to them through birth—bound but not determined.

Freedom to the fullest extent is not having many options from which to select, but rather about acting responsibly and wisely. In the latest Harry Potter book the wise, old professor Dumbledore, headmaster of his school, tells Harry: It is our choices, Harry,

that show who we truly are, far more than our abilities. True freedom is not being free from others, but being free for others.

Yet blaming others, in the present or past, for one's own actions is not valid. It is also not healthy. As Bruno Bettelheim, a concentration camp survivor wrote: *If an adult denies responsibility for his own actions, it is another step towards personality disintegration.*

Catholic teaching holds that individuals are not the only ones who have responsibilities. Organizations or structures have them too. Structures and organizations can and do develop a life, a culture, a morality of their own, which—while introduced by individuals—has consolidated and is subsequently difficult to change or remove by individuals. Catholics talk therefore not only of personal sin but also acknowledge the existence of structural or social sin.

All individuals have responsibility, but not all of it is in the private or family realm. Yet it was on the responsibilities in those areas that the National Government focussed in their 1998 Towards a Code of Social and Family Responsibility. ... To understand the controversy that the draft Code generated, it is important to realize that the Code had its genesis in worries about increased budget spending. ... Critics denounced it as individualistic, hypocritical and unfairly targeting people on benefits. They pointed out that much of the so-called dependency that the government was railing against had been caused by their policies.

Sometimes the verse from St Paul's letter to the Thessalonians: if anyone is unwilling to work, neither shall he eat, is quoted to show that attempts to reinforce reciprocity are nothing new. It is an example of lifting a Bible verse out of its historical context. As the rest of the Paul's letter makes clear, some members of the community in Thessalonica regarded the parousia (the second coming of Christ) as imminent and had therefore ceased to work for a living. This was a distortion of Paul's teaching. Their behavior was causing disciplinary and doctrinal problems. Paul therefore tells the community to shun anyone who conducts himself in such a disorderly way.

The draft Code of Social Responsibility was highly selective even if we would accept it is limited to personal responsibility in the private and family realm. For example, it was silent over what social responsibility we have as consumers and the impact of our consumption patterns on others and on our environment.

In August 1998 [Dick Hubbard] launched his Businesses for Social Responsibility... It currently has more than 200 businesses, both small and large, throughout New Zealand as its members. He explained that social responsibility means that businesses recognize that they are a moral entity with a soul, not simply a legal entity; that not only shareholders' but also stakeholders' interests and perspectives are taken into account—the workers, the suppliers, the customers, the community in which the

business operates, and even the physical environment. Businesses do not exist exclusively to make a profit but to serve society and ought to look at the social consequences of their actions.



One of the reasons for this development in business ethics is the emergence of an anti-mechanical, post-modern world view. People have started to question the portrayal that markets operate according to natural laws which are like nature's law immutable. People have started to question that corporations are mechanical models made up of tools, materials and capital which have no choice but to follow the market laws.



In the 1990s a more aware and wary citizenry has realized that economic theory is not a natural science like mathematics. The view has become mainstream that markets are cultural and political institutions that depend for their success on harnessing forces of trust and solidarity as well as competition.



What responsibilities does the Government have? ... A number of leading philosophers ... have argued that the state's role is that of umpire to ensure that its citizens play by the rules of the game. They hold that the state should protect the rights and liberties of citizens rather than seek to encourage, let alone impose, any specific conception of the morally good. They make a distinction between what is 'right' and what is 'good', that is between principles of justice and right conduct on the one hand and conceptions of the good life on the other.



Other philosophers argue that it is more reasonable to hold that the right and the good are logically connected. Already the claim that all citizens are worthy of equal respect is to make a moral judgement. The question then is how we can reach consensus on ethical viewpoints in pluralistic societies such as ours. Traditional sources of moral teaching have lost much of their public standing. No generally accepted alternative sources of guidance have as yet emerged.



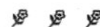
Some believe that this apparent ethical vacuum is of no concern. But a well-ordered, peaceful and stable society needs a shared moral understanding or at least a sufficient degree of common ground about the basic values that should guide human behavior. In this respect it can be argued that the state has a vital role to play in fostering public morality.



The debate, as mentioned earlier, was not meant to cover what the responsibility of government itself would be. Many of the responses however described just that. Would it be possible for New Zealanders to agree on what social responsibility for government would entail? Would their views change over time?



For more than a decade the New Zealand Study of Values has been monitoring political and economic values, as well as spiritual and ethical ones held by New Zealanders. In its 1998 survey over 1200 people answered more than 300 questions. One of the questions was: What should be the responsibility of government?

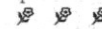


How could we ensure that governments would act socially responsibly -- irrespective of which Government is in power?

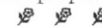
In the second half of the 1990's community groups and Church social justice workers lobbied for the introduction of a Social Responsibility Act. The model for such legislation would be the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1994. ... The Act would require governments to produce regular social policy statements, identify their social objectives and strategies and monitor their performance. ... Nothing came of it [but] community and Church social justice advocates still hope that this or a future Government will consider introducing a Social Responsibility Act.



In Catholic social teaching the human person, operating in family and other social groupings, is prior to the State. The relationship between these intermediate groups and the State is governed by two key principles. The first principle is that of subsidiarity where the State enables intermediate groups to get on with what they are doing in contributing to the common good. The second principle is that of solidarity where the State acts directly on its own responsibility for the common good.



There are people who would like to limit social responsibility to personal involvement in private organisations. Some go so far as to suggest that the government should get out of welfare and leave poor people to private charities. If we left it to communities and individuals to take over welfare we would, in effect, largely abandon poor people.



In the lead-up to the 1993 general election, the leaders of the ten main Churches brought out a Social Justice Statement to promote that form of social responsibility. ... Our ten churches, they wrote, have combined in this election year to reflect deep concern for one of the values taught in the Scriptures: social justice.



At long last, in June this year a Treasury-commissioned report takes seriously that New Zealand has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the OECD and the author of the report states that the overall picture should be a concern for policy makers.



Those who walked in the Hiko of Hope—and not all of them were Christians—were moving beyond belief. They acted on their belief that as human beings we are interdependent.



In conclusion let me summarize the points I have made:

1. True spirituality leads to action
2. As relational beings we have a social responsibility
3. We remain personally responsible for what we do
4. Over the last few years three quite different initiatives in New Zealand have explored what social responsibility would mean: the draft Code of Social and Family Responsibility, the Businesses for Social Responsibility, and a Social Responsibility Act.
5. Social responsibility has many dimensions, including being a socially responsible consumer and investor
6. We need to take collective responsibility for New Zealand's 'social deficit'
7. Churches have drawn attention to the social deficit through the Social Justice Statement, the Open Letter on Poverty and the Hiko of Hope. They have called on people to take their social responsibility seriously.

Allegiance to One's Origins: the Consequences of Belief

Michael King
Historian

The following are excerpts from this keynote speech. The full speech can be obtained either from the Resource Centre or from our website at <http://www.futuresgroup.org.nz/sof.html>

♦ ♦ ♦

The broad query I want to raise is "who do Pakeha people believe they are? What is the nature of their culture? How does that culture relate to the land of Aotearoa New Zealand? And how does it relate to the *tangata whenua* culture, that of Maori?"

♦ ♦ ♦

Depending on the answers to these questions, which of course are questions of belief, one then asks "what are the consequences of those beliefs. How might behaviour reflect them, or how ought it do so?"

♦ ♦ ♦

... at the beginning of the twenty-first century A.D., I noted a ... pressing need: to help explain Pakeha New Zealanders to Maori and to themselves; and to do so in terms of their right to live in this country, practise their cultures and values and be themselves. And I was impelled to move in this direction by a variety of stimuli, including the anguished cry of children's writer Jack Lasenby, who asked ... "Does belief in pluralism mean one must betray one's own civilisation for another's?"

♦ ♦ ♦

What I did feel, however, and tried to convey in the book [*Being Pakeha*], was a welcome congruence of some of the inclusive qualities of *tikanga Maori* and *taba Maori* with aspects my own Irish-Catholic experience ... This was in no way tantamount to saying I was Maori, or wanted to be Maori—because I couldn't be Maori and had no wish to be. It was rather something we all take consolation from at some stages of our lives: celebrating those things that have resonance from one culture to another—those things that remind us that, in addition to being Maori and Pakeha, male and female, gay and straight, we are also human. And there are times when we need to be reminded of that fact, and to cross the bridges to one another with which experience provides us.

♦ ♦ ♦

Culture began when our ancestors started to tell stories to explain who they were and where they had come from and how they related to the world around them, seen and unseen; and to paint pictures on cave walls to illustrate the textures of those stories for the eye and the mind.

♦ ♦ ♦

In using the word "Pakeha", I refer to those things that relate to New Zealand but which are not specifically Maori or Pacific Island in character. I refer, in other words, to mainstream New Zealand culture—which is not unaffected by "things Maori"; but which is not in itself Maori. And I prefer to use the term Pakeha because it is positive (as opposed to "non-Maori"); because it is an indigenous New Zealand expression; and because the words "European" or "Caucasian" are no longer accurate or appropriate (and the word Caucasian never was).

♦ ♦ ♦

After several generations of my family's occupation of this land, my own sense of belonging to it ... includes the following ingredients: a strong relationship with the natural world intensified by living by the sea, boating, fishing, tramping and camping; an engagement with the history of the land, ... a relationship with the literature of this country ... and a relationship with Maori people, Maori writing and Maori history, which affects my view of all the preceding elements.

♦ ♦ ♦

My identification with Pakeha culture is also a consequence of an accumulation of other New Zealand attitudes, values and habits which accrue to one living here like iron filings to a magnet. I am referring to such things as the rugby culture, which absorbed almost all New Zealand males of my generation and those immediately preceding it; a willingness to have a go at any kind of job opportunity that presented itself, and to learn about the job on the job ... a concern for the underdog; compassion for those in need or in trouble; an unwillingness to be bullied, or to be intimidated by class or status; not undertaking to do something without seeing it through ...

♦ ♦ ♦

Another ingredient in this equation is having New Zealand heroes and heroines ... There were also Maori who were part of my personal pantheon ... and, one would have to say, having access to Maori experience and Maori role models is one of the features that distinguishes Pakeha culture from its cultures of origin.

♦ ♦ ♦

Pakeha culture shares some ingredients with its largely European cultures of origin: such as the English language, the Westminster Parliamentary system, the traditions and the conventions of the Open Society, in which every person is entitled to seek truth through a process of unfettered investigation and open disputation. But the forms and the proportions in which those imported ingredients have coalesced in New Zealand has made them somewhat different in character from their antecedents and hence characteristic of Pakeha culture rather than of European culture.

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Among the subsequent experiences that have sharpened that feeling for me are being informed by members of the Aahi Kaa group that I was in fact a *tau iwi* or foreigner in this land; and, just as offensively, listening to Cabinet Minister Doug Graham say that Maori people had spiritual feelings for lakes, mountains and rivers, and that Pakeha people did not.

♦ ♦ ♦

It is for all these reasons that I would say now what I did not go as far as to say two decades ago: that Pakeha culture can no longer be considered an imported culture; it has now been here long enough, in interaction with the land and the *tangata whenua*, to be considered a second indigenous culture. And it has become indigenous in the same way that East Polynesian culture became Maori culture in New Zealand: by turning the attention of migrants away from their land and culture of origin, and focussing their sense of commitment to this land.

♦ ♦ ♦

Allegiance to One's Origins: the Consequences of Belief

Michael King
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The Sea of Faith Network (NZ)

The Sea of Faith Network (NZ) 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 itself has no creed. It draws its members from people of all faiths and also from those with no attachment to religious institutions.

Its WWW home page is at www.futuresgroup.org.nz/sof.html

It publishes a regular Newsletter, assists in setting up of local discussion groups, and holds an annual Conference.

Members may obtain tapes, books etc from the SoF Resource Centre at 34 Briarley St, Tauranga.

For membership details and for the address of your nearest local group, contact the Membership Secretary, 133 Orangi Kaupapa Road, Northland, Wellington. You may fill in and detach the form on the reverse of this.

To offer a comment on any material appearing in the Newsletter or to submit copy for publication, contact the Editor:

Noel Cheer, 26 Clipper Street, Titahi Bay, Phone 04-236-7533, Fax 04-236-7534, email: noel.cheer@attglobal.net

The only copy appearing in this Newsletter that may be construed as reflecting Sea of Faith policy is that which is accompanied by a by-line of a member of the Steering Committee.

Other Papers

These are brief excerpts from other papers presented at the Conference. The full papers can be found on the website or can be obtained for \$2 each from the Resource Centre: see the panel on the left of this page.

Don Cupitt: "Beyond Belief"

"... today the 'Western culture' that has triumphed everywhere is secular. It is liberal democratic politics, it is science-based industry, it is human rights and free trade—but it is not religion any more. The church is relatively weak and unpopular, and Christian doctrine is widely rejected. It has broken down under philosophical criticism, under biblical and historical criticism, and through the general shift of Western culture towards a this-worldly and libertarian view of life."

"Today Church-religion, as a symbolic language and as a long-term disciplinary system is fading fast. It's too late for reform. We should be pressing on to develop the immediate, beliefless sort of religion that in the old Christian language was called 'the Kingdom of God'. At first people will find it hard to accept that just in a beliefless and immediately-lived religion they can find now the sort of indestructible happiness that the older church religion said we couldn't have till after death. But we must work it out. ...

Here is a brutally-sharp contrast: ecclesiastical religion was believed, but kingdom religion is simply lived."

Lloyd Geering: "Christianity Without Theism"

I am going to fly two kites. They are both on the same string. I am going to contend:

- That traditional Christianity, when examined, is not really theistic anyway.
- That Christianity should be seen, not only as humanistic but also as the rejection of theism."

"The purpose of this subtle transition from God to Godhead [as seen, for example, in the 39 Articles of the Church of England] is to enable the theism to become modified into something else. Pure theism is now being transformed into trinitarianism.

The Christian view of God is not belief in one divine creator, full stop. (That would be theism). The Christian

view of God is that of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one Godhead."

"Through church history people have attempted to reform the church. Their critics have warned that they are throwing out the baby with the bathwater. That is a misleading metaphor. Christianity has no permanent and absolute essence. **There is no 'baby'; there is only the bath water**, or what is preferably called the on-going cultural stream, broadly known as Judeo-Christian."

"The implication of the doctrine of the Incarnation in the context of the global secular world is that the mythical throne of heaven is empty. The God, once conceived by humans as sitting upon that throne, has come down to dwell in human flesh—in all human flesh".

Joy Cowley: "The Mystery of Paradox"

"The hunger persists. The pursuit goes on—ecclesiology, hermeneutics, eschatology, ontological and teleological arguments—fine collections of words, thought cutting thought like butter cutting butter."

"I must say I am on the side of Catholics who mourned the loss of the Latin Mass, Protestants who lost the the King James Bible. Poetry was taken away. Mystery removed. Language became prisoner to its meaning."

"I recently read a Native American metaphor for spiritual journey: it said that there is only one great river but there are many canoes. A person cannot go down the river in two canoes but he or she can paddle alongside other canoes and thus gain companionship and increased insights into the river and the journey."

"Self-abnegation is about the fullness of living, not its denial. It's about freedom, about dissemination, it's about the heart finding its home ground. An anonymous 15C monk described the process beautifully:

"Know thyself, 'tis half the path to God, then lose thyself and the rest of the way is trod."