

Religious convictions and philosophy

My parents were brought up as Anglicans and met at a church social. In later life they did not attend church. I went to Sunday School. My religious education was obtained at the school and I elected to be confirmed C of E when 16. I was married in church and my relatives have all had Christian burials.

About 10-15 years ago I decided to read more about religion. As a fellow of Downing College Cambridge, I heard about Don Cupitt and had lunch with him one day. He lent me a copy of the Sea of Faith tapes of his BBC TV programme and I became wholly in favour of his views. After these broadcasts an organisation was formed called the Sea of Faith (SoF) .I have attended about 5 annual conferences and a New York conference in March 2004 organised by the Westar Institute of Santa Rosa California. In addition I have been the speaker 3 times at the Cambridge group meetings.

I have attended recently as I spend most of my time in Cannes , France in my retirement home . Holy Trinity Cannes has a very large congregation ,most are orthodox but some are agnostic or atheists. The chaplain is very Cof E orthodox in his views. My partner & I enjoy going because we have met many good friends there .It acts as a social centre for our part of the Cote D'Azur.

We enjoy being Christian agnostics!

At Cambridge I have seen a huge change in religious faith during the last 60 years. As a scientist teaching chemistry in 1950 most if not all my fellow scientists were active practicing churchgoing Christians . Today it

is very rare indeed to meet any scientist (even Jewish ones) who believe in God

Our children were all in a church choir but are now non attenders . I believe the reason for the above changes is that people in general are more freely educated and find the orthodox church teaching unbelievable .I found the S of F philosophy of Don Cupitt and others stimulating and believable.

Often I am asked why I am still a Christian. My reply is I consider Christ my guru (like the Sikhs) and I try to live a Christian life without the theological beliefs.

Whilst orthodox Christianity requires attendance at church to worship, sing hymns, pray etc, there is nothing to replace it in the Sof . The latter has discussion groups, speakers and that's it!

Not really enough to attract people year in year out once they've been converted. Orthodox Christianity wins because it promises a life hereafter (which everyone would like to have).So members go to church to have holy communion and ensure their place in heaven. Sof says this is the only life we have, and we should live like the Sun (solar living) but that's the way most people in the UK live these days independent of the Sof.

Thus,I don't know if the Sof has a future,but I hope so!

What I believe Society needs

Children need to be taught ethics and citizenship, since Christian teaching in schools is now minimal.

I note that some schools are teaching more about spirituality. I like this idea.

Altruism which most people possess intrinsically needs to be promoted and encouraged.

Whilst the idea of solar living is OK, much of our excess energy should be devoted to helping others , especially within our local community. We need more ideas on how we can achieve these goals without believing in a deity. Our civilisation is becoming more secular and this meets with my approval .

Whilst the Sof is helping to promote secularisation , it doesn't in my opinion give guidance on ethics, morals and altruism which are badly needed in many sectors of modern society , especially our youth.

What is needed is Christianity without the theology! Attending Sof conferences I noted that many of the attendees were originally Christians, and quite a few still active professionals :priest, vicars, university professors. If you accept that religion is a human creation, then you are a humanist by my definition but I have no desire to join the Humanist Society. However if someone formed a "Society of Christian Humanists "I would join because that is what I am. But that is a huge project because one is the forming a new religious sect to add to the many already existing!