

SOFiA Newsletter 179 August 2025

Exploring Values, Meaning and Spirituality



Limestone cliffs like those at Dover, scene of the poem “Dover Beach”

2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SOFiA AGM will be held on Saturday the 27th September at 2pm via Zoom
Click on JOIN and enter Meeting ID: 223 135 8426 then the Passcode: sofia

Or phone in by your location:

- +64 3 659 0603 South Island
- +64 4 886 0026 Lower North Island
- +64 9 884 6780 Upper North island

Speaker: Dr David Gwynn.

Dr Gwynn is an expert historian on the Council of Nicaea, responsible for the Nicene creed, still recited in churches around the world. 2025 is the 1700th anniversary of that Council.

Dr Gwynn will speak on the debates surrounding that council and on its legacy for modern Christians.

There will be a short Q & A afterwards.

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Meeting Agenda items are:

Ratification of 2024 AGM minutes

Report from the Chair

Report from the Treasurer

Report from the Newsletter Editor
Report from the Local Groups coordinator
Report on Membership
Report on web site statistics
General Business



Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Spy, Assassin.

That's the title of a movie that did the rounds a few months ago. It would have been good to do a review of it, but we operate in a much slower timeframe than mainstream media, so as a result nobody would be able to see the movie after reading the review. However, Glyn Cardy, minister of St. Lukes Presbyterian Church in Remuera, Auckland, has published a well-written review on Facebook, which you can read here:

<https://www.facebook.com/100000305773342/posts/pfbid02ByBKQbWe7VDUYcaprGRC38oqyre55WJ9AHrHnU5fH9Q1BoZr9SS16TiSbiHfwByyl/?app=fbl>

However, what I can do is comment on the controversy that arose over the film and add some views of my own about Bonhoeffer, that can stand as a correction to the sometimes egregious distortions of his story.

The marketing poster for the movie (in America, not in Germany) showed Bonhoeffer holding a gun, suggesting that he was potentially a violent activist. People have consequently seen parallels between Bonhoeffer's opposition to Hitler and evangelical Americans' opposition to 'woke' or liberal causes. As a result, open letters have been written protesting any similarity between the two. Not only Bonhoeffer scholars but also descendants of the wider Bonhoeffer family and even the actors in the movie itself were motivated to warn in this way. The author of a popular recent biography of Bonhoeffer, Eric Metaxis, turns out to be pro-Trump, anti-abortion and in agreement with Trump that the election was rigged, and to have been propagating a similar (mis)interpretation of Bonhoeffer's life and work after the publication of his book, which has a similar title to the movie.

Now Americans probably have little appetite for the subtleties of German politics and so it is understandable that the movie provides a simplified version of history, but this does not justify manipulating it in the interests of a right-wing version of current American politics.

Now some insights into Bonhoeffer from my reading of him.

1. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Bonhoeffer was very clear from the beginning that he was in unconditional opposition to the 'Arian paragraph' in Nazi legislation, which excluded Jews from public office and church ministry. While most churches caved in and removed pastors of Jewish ethnicity from service, and the Confessing Church was mainly concerned with the purity of its gospel, seeing such exclusion as anti-gospel, Bonhoeffer said "Only he who shouts for the Jews can sing Gregorian chant" (Bethge p 361). In other words, don't work on making the liturgy more relevant and interesting without at the same time being adamantly against racist anti-Jewish policies.
2. The movie showed Bonhoeffer giving the Nazi salute, but in a very different setting. His companion Bethge was shocked when this happened and wondered what was going on. Once they were alone together, Bonhoeffer explained that the time was past when one could publicly oppose the Nazi regime. Opposition now needed to be hidden and secret. He was already involved with the circle of conspirators but could not reveal this.
3. Bonhoeffer wasn't just a 'spy' but a full-on double agent. He was employed by the German Abwehr and his role was to report on Allied troop movements for which his participation in ecumenical conferences was useful. That was his overt role and was ethically ambivalent as you can imagine. Any hints that other conference attendees might drop could be passed on to the Abwehr and used to further the German war effort. His covert role was as one in a circle of conspirators within the Abwehr that aimed to eliminate Hitler. Bonhoeffer explained that if it fell to him to do the deed, he would resign from the church beforehand, to avoid the church being caught up in the controversy that would follow. It's probably hard for us to appreciate how difficult it would be for any German to assassinate Hitler, given that it meant helping to defeat one's own country. Just to make it clear: Bonhoeffer was a double agent, first as an agent of military intelligence (which was traditionally German but not pro-Hitler) but also as a secret conspirator in the failed assassination of Hitler.
4. In this double role, Bonhoeffer visited Bishop George Bell and tried through him to get the British Parliament to declare itself willing to negotiate with the rest of Germany if Hitler was assassinated. Bell

worked hard at this but the result was clear: Britain required the unconditional surrender of Germany and was inclined to dismiss any conspiracy to take out Hitler as the egoism of disgruntled army officers. It is important to realise how difficult this made it for the conspirators. Elsewhere, those working against the German occupation were well supported by the Allies. For any opposition within Germany, there was no support.

5. The movie goes into almost no detail about Bonhoeffer's theology. Indeed, it has him declare at one point, "I'm done with theology." In fact it was an egregious error to oppose theology and activism; for Bonhoeffer the activism flows from his theology. Particularly annoying is the absence of any mention of his theologizing in prison, in which he developed the concepts of religionless Christianity, God-of-the-gaps and humanity come of age. Since I read Bonhoeffer decades ago, more of his work has been published, including the sixteen volumes of *the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*.
6. *The Cost of Discipleship* is the first theological work I want to draw attention to. In it, *Bonhoeffer* articulates what it means to be a follower of Jesus. In particular it means rejecting the 'cheap grace' common in the Lutheran church of his time. Cheap grace means cut price forgiveness, the absence of any need to change your life and a bland following of one's political leaders. Real discipleship is costly and it involves political action.
7. In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer articulates the result of his work leading a seminary for the training of Confessing Church pastors. While such training in Germany typically was very academic, individualistic and emotionally empty, Bonhoeffer emphasized the practical business of reading the bible, confessing sins, even face-to-face with another and just generally being a Christian community. While the German Lutheran church was practically a state church and required little financial support from its members, the Confessing Church was completely dependent on such support. This was a new experience and the seminary found help from well-meaning lay people until the Nazi authorities shut it down.

What is needed is in-depth study of Bonhoeffer, rather than a polemical and one-sided portrayal, whether by liberals or American evangelicals. He has much to teach us.

“Bonhoeffer was deeply pious in a way that some liberal Christians (again, in the contemporary U.S. sense of that word) might find hard to connect with and it’s that piety that speaks directly to evangelicals around the world. At the same time, he was a highly intellectual and critical Christian and therein lies his appeal for Christians on other points of the spectrum.” (Clifford Green)

Eberhard Bethge *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* London and New York 1970.

Hijacking Bonhoeffer by Clifford Green in The Christian Century October 19, 2010 .

Laurie Chisholm

Living on the Fault Line – Aotearoa’s Bicultural Future

Author: John Bluck

Publishers: Quentin Wilson Publishing, Christchurch, 2025

In 2022 John Bluck published *Becoming Pakeha – a journey between two cultures*. In my review in the April 2023 SOFiA Newsletter I highlighted the author’s life, the historical framework of the bicultural journey, and key issues for race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Why is the new book necessary? The answer is given in the opening lines of Chapter One titled ‘More urgent than ever’. The key words are edited:

As life shaking as any earthquake, colliding harder than tectonic plates, the fault line of ethnic divide shapes everyone who lives here in Aotearoa New Zealand... Though earlier conversations have been restrained, they have been cranked up to alarming levels since the arrival of the 2023 coalition government. Led by Act’s David Seymour with New Zealand First singing along, a chorus of protest swells against ‘Maorification’, unfair privilege, reviews of te tiriti and a counter-protest from Maori and sympathetic Pakeha.

From the 300 page *Becoming Pakeha* to the 136 page *Living on the fault line*, the Reverend John Bluck issues a prophetic call that Aotearoa faces a tipping point.

The book is organised into three sections: Part One: Untangling our Heritage; Part Two: What Brings Us Together?; Part Three: How to Live on a Fault Line.

Part One looks at the history of our people. It discusses the choice of names we give ourselves: New Zealander, Kiwi, Pakeha, tangata tiriti. It explores cultural identities, contrasting the ease with which Maori own their iwi

whakapapa with the competing and sometimes confusing assumptions made by Pakeha settlers.

In Chapter 4, A Heritage that Waits to be Valued: 'We took the ground beneath our feet for granted and the stereotypes inside our heads were slow to change. Now time has run out. We need to read these signs more urgently than ever, come to terms with the racism and injustice of our history and learn to live as partner rather than proprietor.'

And then, as a bridge to Part Two: 'But not all the mental images are bad and need to be discarded. Discovering identity is about cleaning up the house you come from, not burning it down. Repentance where it's needed, but no self-destruction.'

Part Two digs more deeply into cultural ways that divide and unite Māori and Pakeha. Among the 11 chapters the headings tell us the focus: What about the weather? (climate change), Dressed up but not too flash (clothing fashions), Who speaks like that? (accents), Town and Country (the urban/rural divide), What's for dinner? (food tastes), A Place to come home to (homelessness) Who's the underdog (respect for the underdog).

The author explores the differing way that the 'underdog' image impacts on Pakeha and Māori. For Pakeha successes against the odds – from the sports field to the opera stage – are enjoyed 'vicariously but are not straightforward'.

Bluck continues: 'For Māori the underdog label seems to carry a different, darker resonance – the legacy of a history of dispossession and denial, borne by a whole people and individuals. That underdog description becomes an inevitable burden as successive governments treated Māori as a dying race and saw assimilation as the only sensible policy. It wasn't until the 1970's that the treaty regained centre stage and the tino rangatiratanga it promised was taken seriously again. The renaissance of language and culture that followed has created a tidal wave of confidence in being Māori. The explosive reaction to the coalition government's policies is a testament to that confidence.'

Part Three's heading echoes the book title: How to live on a fault line? In the 20 final pages, Bluck offers practical ideas on the way forward, which can only be through a diversity of co-governance communities. It's exciting reading! Chapter 21 titled Honestly Speaking sums up the bicultural/multicultural history of Aotearoa in two pages.

Chapter 22 titled We've come too far not to go further explores co-governance with a return to the signing of the Treaty at Waitangi in February 1840 as the founding of our bicultural journey.

As Bluck writes: 'More than being a legal document, the treaty was an act of mutual consent, following the orders of the Colonial Office, which said it had to be an 'amicable negotiation with, and the free concurrence of the chiefs'. One hundred and fifty year later Justice Robin Cooke in the Court of Appeal in Wellington ruled that the treaty 'created an enduring relationship of a fiduciary nature akin to a partnership'. And that's not just a legal ruling. It's a pithy summary of the spirit and intent of te tiriti. And it's the heart and soul of what co-governance is all about.'

The steps taken by mainline churches starting in the 1980's are covered – Anglicans and Methodists are mentioned. 'But the dream of a uniting church that reflected the values of both the gospel and te tiriti had slipped away, with little sign of returning any time soon'. Bluck's judgement is sobering: 'Maori leaders were the bellweathers in this process, pointing the way ahead for two peoples forming one church in one nation. Pakeha were not ready or willing to listen.'

In this review I intentionally chose a summary of the skeletal bones of the 25 chapters with very generous quotations giving the spirit of the writing. The latter reflect the life experience of the author, including as director of communications for the World Council of Churches in Geneva (1976 to 1986), journalist positions with church publications in Aotearoa New Zealand, and postings within the Anglican Church from parish priest to bishop. His ability to straddle the secular and sacred worlds give his writings a unique quality.

There are many gems of writing and wisdom that readers of this timely book will relish – not the least the image of dancing the tango on the fault line!

A final challenge: 'Chasing normality becomes a dead-end game when looking for a future Aotearoa. It's going to have to be found through embracing our entanglement, living between as well as inside our different cultures, ensuring one doesn't try to dominate and define the other. And that's hard work.'

John Thornley

Our Future *IS* in Our Own Hands

Semper reformandi ... sed non restitui
(Always to be reformed but not restored)

My original thesis was that Theology always has undergone change and adaption in the past and it will do so in the future. Today, it simply requires defining which direction and how it will continue to change, and thus flourish.

A '*Neo-Reformation*' Revolution entails that process start from what is common to everyone: we ALL have powerful emotional 'experiences'. Awareness of these confirms the continuing validity of our 'experiences' of our Christian faith journey. Unfortunately, any good intentions will be opposed by authoritarian institutional structures imposing further regulations and financial demands. In the past, these generated a form of 'inertial' energy through 'Pious Prayer and Passive Hope'! We need far more. We actively need to do practical things first to make Christianity fulfilling and intelligible to the thinking of our remaining members.

Church 'Mission' policy is no longer "Get people into the pews and all will be well!" THAT is a failing 'institutional' response to replace the already missing [referred to as "... B's-on-S's ..."]! Somehow, the Church authorities believe that they can replace the youth's interest in their addictive mobile phones! (Parents might suggest otherwise!) Past Church policy spectacularly failed because of three factors. Firstly, the ever-declining numbers: - ask yourself honestly Why? That factor has ensured financial predicaments. In turn, insecurity has caused both 'flight' from pastoral Ministry into 'Chaplaincies' as well as giving rise to the acute shortfall of replacement students. Together, these have induced 'infectious' feelings of failure and despair at every level within the Churches! Belatedly, we have learned the wisdom of "... *never put all your eggs into one 'College-trained' basket ...*"

Christianity's survival has now become *our* personal priority (because there is no-one else.) We (ourselves) must first need to learn to adapt and change. I am taking the liberty of suggesting and illustrating what needs be done in this modern '*Neo-Reformation*' as the first steps in a 'Faith Rescue and Reconstruction.'

A COMMUNITY THAT MEETS TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP

Over several decades, the Church has changed from being a social hub organisation and has become a 'Sunday-hour – only' event. We must re-

establish our acting together corporately in one or more ways in the public domain. Change is to be actively encouraged, but only after proper discussion.

Ecclesia was the fancy Greek language for 'assembly'. We use the word 'congregation', which has lost sight of the COMMUNITY aspect of our Worship. Puritan influences in the 17th century created a distinct and individualistic concept of 'personal salvation'. This concept has been our unwitting co-traveller for many years in Western Christian 'Worship'. Today's ideologies enhance the milieu of 'individual rights'. Our Christian 'Worship' necessarily needs we restore the COMMUNITY aspect of our Worship for it is in this manner that we are strengthened in *our* Christian faith. *Christianity is CAUGHT, not TAUGHT!* If we insist upon speaking a language from another age, others will continue to not listen for they do not understand it any more.

Any Worship SERVICE should aim never to exceed 55-60 minutes. Starting on time creates the opportunity for a shared coffee afterwards. We do need to be aware of Lunch 'time-tabling' for our elderly members living in Care & Retirement Villages.

The biggest INNOVATION is discussing the total DYNAMICS of a Worship service from its very first principles. Abandoning the 'Pulpit' (or formal standing behind a lectern) is nowadays *de rigour*. Colleagues in Scotland independently have adapted their modes of leading 'Worship'. Personal 'mobility' issues meant that I could only lead a Service if allowed to sit throughout. It was truly a discovery that this was not only acceptable but changed the whole 'dynamic' of services. Instead of a 'Pronouncement' or 'Formal Address', it became a 'conversation between friends'. I also 'normalised' everyone else remaining seated throughout and that was also appreciated!

We need to be prepared to examine and adapt our traditional RITUAL. Some is necessary, but some is questionable as to its purpose. 'Orders of Service' do help us keep the place. But some Rituals completely lack explanations: e.g. a candle(s) lit before each Service; standing AT the Offertory; the reading of printed Notices.

It would be better that 'Greeting and Welcoming' duties be divided into an entry 'greeting,' but more importantly that someone 'ushers' people into the forward seating area creating a sense of TOGETHERNESS and COMMUNITY. Worship is a corporate act requiring participation at each stage. Technically,

ALL the people present are ministering to each other. [*“.. where two or three are gathered together ...”*].

One problem facing Traditional Worship is its repetitiveness. It has resulted in PASSIVITY: *‘... come, attend, sing, sit, then go home ...’*! THIS may be a simplistic critique, but it is an assessment based on years of active but ineffectual ministry. Modern people are no longer totally engaged by speech, but by visual-inputs. Today’s youth are not alone in using mobile telemetry! The Church must learn HOW TO ENGAGE congregations through VISUAL stimuli! This is not a repudiation of the Gospel, but of the way in which we deliver it. Instead of the traditional 15/20-minute sermon, we should ‘explore’ topical themes together being freed from the ‘doctrinally-biased’ 3-year Lectionary cycle.

One useful method is to use what I term ‘GOBBET-IDEAS.’ with ‘Power-point’ VISUALS. This method breaks the ‘topic’ into discrete segments containing ONLY one or two simple ideas in each part. The use of Hymns between Gobbets allows movement forward to the next part of the structure intended. Thus, the GOBBET is a useful method for *varying* the actual ‘format’ each week: a very deliberate attempt to remove the criticisms levelled at ‘Ritualised Traditional Worship’!

REVISING OUR WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

The actual WORDS and LANGUAGE used in our worship must be chosen carefully avoiding some of the once favoured doctrinal formulations or former language usages that simply do not resonate with modern people as they previously did years ago.

References to ‘Heaven-wards’ or ‘up-there’ are meaningless unless used ‘metaphorically’ nowadays. A Benefactor/-trix, type Deity, residing somewhere above the fluffy clouds, has been displaced by Science’s Hubble telescope, NASA and quantum physics. Thus, the choice of scripture(s) used should avoid ‘talk of Heaven /Hell and the accompanying ‘moralism’ which implies some future judgement and repercussions based upon our behaviour!

Much of the Hebrew Scriptures are in fact ‘nuanced’ historical records of whatever befell the emergent peoples of Israel and Judah. I use the word ‘nuanced’ because they portray successes and disasters as purely the result of their own frequent abandonment of the moral high-ground (or Yahweh).

Prophets testify to the resulting attitudes but usually only after events have moved onwards. As to the facticity of the historical details, scholars are *clearly 'back-at-the drawing-board.'* Even the creation account in Genesis is simply an early attempt at explaining human existence and evolution and can be set alongside other modern-age hypothesis about Big-Bang and any number of quantum universes. So let us now consider separately the discrete parts of our Neo-Reformed service.

THE OFFERING

Being curious, I asked myself first why -in many Presbyterian congregations - we stand up when the Offering' is brought forward. Common opinion suggested that "... We have always done it that way! ...". I think the more likely reason was the Old Church [R.C.] stood when the Sacramental elements were 'Offered'. More to the point, it is clearly not 'filthy lucre' being revered? Surely it is 'our-selves' and our minds and thoughts which count here, and we are 'offering' these by our being present together. It is my serious suggestion that this becomes the central focus which precedes any act of corporate worship together.

If there is a need to have Church Notices, let these be just before the closing Hymnody. [They will be better remembered by being so placed!] Roster information should be 'texted/e-mailed' to personnel before their actual 'Duty-Sunday'.

GATHERING WORDS

Instead of the Traditional CALL to Worship, I suggest that some familiar piece from the Book of Psalms is used as the Gathering Words signalling the Worship which follows at once. Saying that does not imply that it necessarily is at the beginning or opening of the service; merely that it becomes a familiar practice following the TOPIC Introduction or some other preceding Hymn or familiar chorus choice,

Using a couple of verses only, it is possible by 'adapting' the words, to produce (perhaps) two shortened two-line couplets; the first spoken by a reader]; the second couplet by ALL participants.

READINGS

There are many words and sayings contained in the Bible. Many of these are the product of another age and *weldbilds* and, as such, bear the imprint of

HOW they thought at that time. [Now referred to as the Context.] Pauline material is particularly difficult to understand (despite translations)! John's Gospel is often obscure and lengthy and needs deep Theological 'Contextualisation' when used

The first three Gospels; Mark, Matthew, and Luke; have the illustrative parables which people do remember, and as such, are easier to use in any address. I think that the PARABLES were everyday examples of how people 'got-it-all-wrong' then, and we still do in today's society! Time spent seeking out the Modern-Day parallels is time well rewarded with 'topics and subject material for RELEVANT topics analyses.

To ensure the ease of understanding(s), I cite below a most useful web site whose search-engine includes the ability to review DIFFERENT BIBLE Translation versions. It also has 'commentaries', maps, and historical details at: <https://biblehub.com/>

PRAYERS

The language of Prayer(s) ought to be examined. It is one thing to praise our wonder of the nature around us and its bountiful store of food and resources. It is right to acknowledge each day and what it brings anew or fresh. That is proper praise! However, It is quite another thing to request or to expect some form of aid from a Deity who dispenses benefits and suffering, either intentionally, or randomly. We must find words that have corresponding equivalents to our current usage of: Father / Mother, God, Son of, Angels and Devil. I personally have used the terms Lord, Spirit of God, Lord Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Creator God and Your Spirit. By using these independently, I have avoided invoking concepts like the Trinity and all the potential arguments which stem from that doctrine. Judicious use needs be made of the use of the words Messiah [translated as Christos in Greek] because this implies a particular Jewish concept. Neither is it Jesus' surname!

We should consider carefully the removal of what has previously been known as the "Prayer of Approach, Confession and Absolution"

For this I offer the following critique:

- (1) We have this post-Judaism 'Sin' notion, (in the 16th century language of *being* "... miserable sinners and offenders ...!")
- (2) Does saying THAT *really* make it more real? It is simply a ritual.

- (3) Are we saying anything that our Lord does not know already?
- (4) All our regular attendees already have this personal awareness.
- (5) It can be replaced by a single, all encompassing "Prayer of Thanksgiving" which always recognises the following:

Acknowledging God's constant presence in our Worship.

Incorporating the 'Theme' in the opening words.

... and references to the world in which we live.

Recognising 'Life' has been good to us and towards us.

Incorporating our notional "Daily Bread" and well-being.

Considering how we show compassion for 'xyz'

Recognising fully our memories of deceased loved ones.

Giving 'Thanks' for the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

And finally, a recognisable, 'liturgical' ending e.g.,

MAY we always present our praises to you,

Giver of all good things who works within us,

– and always through us,

by your Spirit, in the here and in the now. AMEN"

[The ABOVE EXAMPLE is merely a pattern; not an instruction!]

It helps to think of Prayer as a community process which also involves articulating some particular aspect(s) of our ethical teaching or thinking.

MUSIC AND HYMNS ARE WORD PICTURES

These have always played a useful, didactic role for either mood setting or remembered mental visuals. (The Reformers of Britain's Parish churches white-washed over all vestiges of visual representations which had instructed the illiterate populace.)

Hymns have always been sung since antiquity as 'Praises.' Their words have been 'Teachers of Theology' for many people - writers included. It is to be noted that some Hymn words are now regarded as expressions of dubious and dated theological ideas. Many were written in the early 19th century and seem fixated on the effect of 'Redeeming blood'. Even some so-called modern hymns express vague ideas not in accord with the directions advocated.

What may be needed here is a genuine 'mix' of styles, using classical, modern, and even podcasts (where these are 'suitable' or topical;) - to reflect the chosen topic area. Introducing variations of either known words or diverse cultural settings is unexpectedly welcomed! A most useful EMERGENCY source is *Chett Valley Hymns* (Anglican words + known Music) Link:

<https://youtu.be/MI9V8owRTA4>

POWER POINT USAGE / VISUALS

These are best used visually. There is no objection to using Music's emotional possibilities to enhance the visual experience of worship. Here there is a vital lesson. The visual illustration not only enhances interest, focus and mental engagement. They are remembered by an audience (recent Research suggests that 'topic retention' is 85% enhanced over the spoken word!)

ETHICAL TEACHING AND EXAMPLES

The stress is to be placed totally upon the 'teachings' of Jesus of Nazareth and especially on his interactional relationships between us and God but also our attitudes towards 'others.' PARABLE material in the first three Gospels provides examples of ethical teaching. Constant attention needs be drawn to our own attitudes towards others. Simple things like smiling and greeting each other by exercising KINDNESS and expressing GRATITUDE for their friendship.

This ought to be extended to encouraging 'small-talk and chatter before the service begins. This would replace at a stroke, the forbidding silence which has dominated Sundays previously as some equivalence of induced Holiness. THAT is why we need 'our neighbours' sitting alongside us and being with one another.

Our homes are constantly 'invaded' by intrusive TV News commentators often regurgitating current 'Headline-items' from distant disasters, places, and cultures. Much of this material causes considerable angst through its 'sensational' or dramatic appeal, and these are therefore topics which may be directly addressed as 'concerns'! From time to time, these opportunities are there to engage congregational minds taxing them with the question of "What are we able to do in this instance?"

'Charitable Thinking' addresses the need to aid those suffering and truly less fortunate than us. It follows that topics of ethical interest and involvement are suitable subjects for use in 'intercessory' Prayers about 'others'. This might be thought of as 'Corporate Kindness in Christian-action.'

CONCLUSION

I readily admit that my thoughts are the result of personal disquiet concerning the fixity of present Theology, and our inability to adapt our Worship practice to a 21st century perspective. We are not discussing Renewal: nor is it

Restoration: but a Resumption of personal 'Spirituality' for this Age and our population.

In laying out the above suggestions, I would welcome any further improvements and comments. We are really like the first followers of Jesus who lived as a minority within a context of cultural belief diversity. We too must learn afresh to be humble and pilgrims; ready to adapt to our 'alien' situation, yet keeping our focus on, and continuing to witness to what is the essential elements of all religion, namely, the two commandments of Jesus of Nazareth!

C.B. Yates, BA., BD., Ph.D., S.Th..

About SOFiA

SOFiA (The Sea of Faith in Aotearoa) is a network of people interested in the non-dogmatic discussion of values, meaning and spirituality. We want to explore for ourselves what we can believe and how we can find meaning in our lives. SOFiA is not a church: it is a forum for discussing ideas, experiences and perspectives. SOFiA itself has no creed; its members come from many faiths and from those with no attachment to any religious institution. If you are in sympathy with our aims, you are most welcome to join us; receive our Newsletter, and/or attend a local group. We follow similar organisations in the UK and Australia in taking our name from “Sea of Faith”, the 1984 BBC TV series and book by the British religious academic, Don Cupitt.

Committee

Our national Committee oversees the work of SOFiA.

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Copy deadline for the next Newsletter is 1 October.