

Spirit and Creation

This *Sofia* begins with Clem Cook's account of the SOF Network. He was surprised that there was nothing about Don Cupitt or the SOFN in the recent book *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide* and wrote an article in two parts suggesting what might have been in the book. His Part I on Don Cupitt was published in the March *Sofia* and now here is Part 2, his account of the SOFN. He stresses that it is a personal account.

This *Sofia*, entitled *Spirit and Creation*, is published just before Pentecost, which this year falls on June 9th. Edward Walker looks at Luke's Ascension and Pentecost story in the light of the Hebrew scriptures, particularly the ascension of the prophet Elijah. In 'Not your Usual Sermon' Ben Whitney continues his series of online reflections on the Christian year which, he says, are 'intended to support those who are still hanging on to attending (or even leading) Christian worship, if only just! I also hope they will be an encouragement to those, like me, who hadn't darkened the doors for years, to give it another try, if they can find a welcome somewhere.'

Next we have James Dunstone contending with the story of Job and concluding with his poem 'Satan's Answer to the Daughters of Job'. The two other poems in this issue, 'Sound' by A.C. Jacobs and 'Let there be Commerce between us' by Kathleen McPhilemy, each relates in a different way to our theme – which encompasses creation by us, and spirit as communion, love, with some of its difficulties. My 'thinkpiece' this time is also on the theme of 'Spirit and Creation'.

Margaret Connolly revisits the *Iliad*. She discusses Browning's sense of betrayal as he learned that an ancient text he had been taught to regard as historically accurate was in fact a product of human creativity and how this relates to SOF. She says that she herself 'was never

particularly aware of any difference between the Greek gods and heroes, the Knights of the Round Table, Jesus and the Old Testament prophets, and the old women little Tom met in *The Water Babies*. All belonged to a glorious world of creative imagination, that conveyed some truths...'

Tony Carroll, who spoke at last year's SOF Conference, reviews *God Value and Nature* by Fiona Ellis. Fiona will be one of the speakers at the Progressive Christianity Network's London Conference on Saturday June 8th 2019 at the French Protestant Church, Soho Square, London W1D 3QD. – pcnbritain.org.uk/events or telephone 01594 516528. Tony Carroll and Richard Norman are organising a day conference on *Human Flourishing* at the Mirfield Centre (Yorkshire) on Monday June 3rd – mirfield.org.uk. Telephone: 01924 481920. Email: centre@mirfield.org.uk.

Pauline Pearson reviews Diarmaid MacCulloch's substantial biography of Thomas Cromwell. Canon John Fellows reviews *A Field Guide to the Clergy of the Church of England A Compendium of Diverse, Eccentrics, Pirates, Prelates and Adventurers; All Anglican, Some even Practising* by Fergus Butler-Gallie. Kathleen McPhilemy reviews *Nameless Country: Selected Poems* by A.C. Jacobs. John Pearson's *As I Please*, with which you may disagree, is on the great fire of Notre Dame in Paris.

Kindness and imagination are fundamental to humanity. One of the creations of the human imagination or poetic genius is a supernatural realm, whose stories, ideas and visions are the province of theology. Theology is thus a sister art to poetry. *Sofia's* task of exploring religion as a human creation includes engaging with that theology and offering strong poetry, not pious pap.