

# Thank you, Life!

As I write, at last there are signs that this winter is nearly over. The first crocuses are peeping. Soon the daffodils my grandson planted for me last autumn will flower. The March hares will be leaping. Soon my son, so long locked down in Holland, will roar through the Channel Tunnel on Eurostar and burst into St Pancras Station. He will bring his trumpet with him. Easter is on its way. Thank you, Life!

This March *Sofia's* front cover shows a leaping hare. She is a female and this year may give birth to leverets. *Sofia's* back cover shows the risen Christ leaping from the grave. He reminds me of a dancing figure from the sixties, when we often danced. We liked to dance to *Rock my Soul* and *The Yellow Submarine*. In January, after a belated Christmas dinner – delayed by the Covid beast – we had a little dance again to *Rock my Soul*. I fell over but stood up again and carried on dancing. Next time it will be *The Yellow Submarine*, in whose theology of ‘Love and peace, man!’ even the Blue Meanies finally join the dance. Thank you, Life!

In our first article, *Generosity and Gratitude*, Dominic Kirkham takes another look at the ethics of Jesus. He says: ‘Even without the specifically theistic element, this attitude of Jesus translates easily into a sense of the ‘givenness’ of nature/existence, of the glory of life and the need for an underlying gratitude.’ As for ethics: ‘The Law is not only oppressive and unper-suasive but was indeed dismissed by Jesus... I see the morals of Jesus as the aspiration of possibilities...reaching beyond ourselves to the unattainable goal of perfection.’

In our next article *Well, that's Human Nature!* David Rhodes disputes the way this mantra ‘is used as a reason for things being bad...and also as a reason why things won't change.’ The next piece looks at the Christ poem in Paul's Letter to the Philippians, where Christ Jesus ‘empties himself’, giving an example of massive generosity.

Then Don Murray discusses Bonhoeffer's challenge to traditional theology and considers

the insights of Carl Jung (particularly his *Answer to Job*), whose ‘primary contribution to Christianity, especially in relation to the “Bonhoeffer Challenge”, was translating religious/super-natural language into psycho-logical language.’

In response to the three SOF Annual Conference talks last summer on *The Future of God and Organised Religion*, Mark Dyer enquires into what ‘his first followers thought of the young Jewish Rabbi, who sought to teach and interpret the faith of his forefathers,... anew for his contemporaries.’

After that we have the talk Rabbi Jonathan Romain gave at the SOF Conference on *Assisted Dying*, about which a bill is going through Parliament.

There are the usual letters and reviews. Stephen Mitchell reviews *Hope* by David Gee and John Pearson's *As I Please* this time is on *Age*.

Finally, the title of this *Sofia* is taken from the famous song by the Chilean songwriter Violeta Parra, *Gracias a la Vida* (‘Thank you, Life’ or ‘Thanks to Life’). You can hear it on YouTube sung by the great Mercedes Sosa. It is quite a long song celebrating the many things life has given her. Here is my English version of the first and last verse:

Thank you, Life, that's given me so much,  
given me two open eyes, with which  
I perfectly distinguish black from white.  
I look up to the starry sky above.  
Among the crowd I see the man I love.

Thank you, Life, that's given me so much,  
given me laughter, given me crying, which  
allow me to express the joy and pain;  
they are the two components of my song  
and your song too that is the same as mine,  
the song of everyone I make my own.

Thank you, Life!