

100th Birthday Edition

Welcome to the hundredth edition of the SOF magazine, whose name for the last five and a half years has been *Sofia*. In order to celebrate this milestone, we have a full-colour, four-page, centrefold spread of all 100 covers, so that readers can look back over its development. Our archivist Ronald Pearse has kindly supplied me with the magazines missing from my collection, so that I could scan them all for this display.

For this centenary edition, two founder members of SOF, David Paterson and Stephen Mitchell, have written special articles, reminiscing and looking forward. David, who runs the Oxford SOF group, which is very active in that university city, has *A Vision to Offer* and Stephen, Rural Dean of Mildenhall, Suffolk, who chaired the Network for many years, looks back on the magazine's beginnings using the technology of the period: *In the Beginning was the Amstrad PCW*. In *Sofia: the Pursuit* I have written about editing the magazine.

Stephen has also reviewed Don Cupitt's 'final' (hmm!) book *The Fountain*, which is dedicated 'To the members of the Sea of Faith with my gratitude'. Don Cupitt, of course, has been a major influence on SOF, and the Network is named after his 1984 BBC TV programme *Sea of Faith*. The two core images in *The Fountain* are the fountain itself and the sun (water and fire), both pouring out. Don Cupitt has certainly followed his own advice and poured himself out with great generosity, publishing many books and in other ways. Thinking about these images, I remembered that they were both used of Christ. In the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus offers 'living water' which is 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life'. And in the Advent liturgy he is 'Sun of Justice', invoked at the solstice to 'Come and give light to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death'.

Although I have sometimes strongly disagreed with Don, like so many others I have been inspired by his writing, especially about the death of God and, more recently, the point of God. To express my gratitude, although I think editors should use the utmost restraint in publishing their own poems, for this centenary issue of *Sofia* I've taken the liberty of dedicating a little poem to Don, which I hope he will like.

In the matter of editorial restraint, poet

Anne Ashworth was exemplary when she edited *Universalist*. I have had many very positive comments about her *Spiritual Journal*, extracts from which have been appearing in *Sofia*.

Unfortunately there is no space for the next extract in this centenary edition, but there will be more to come next time.

At the recent well-attended London SOF Conference, Kenan Malik gave a talk on *God, Science and the Quest for Moral Certainty*. We publish two extracts from it, in which he reflects on the strange similarity between relying on God or Science for moral certainty. The whole talk will be published on SOF website.

On page 6 we have an announcement once again of this year's annual SOF Conference, *Brain, Belief and Behaviour*. Full details and an application form are also on the website www.sofn.org.uk. There is a strong line-up of speakers and the event is set to be challenging and enjoyable. Do come if you can.

Whether or not you can get to the Conference, I hope you will raise a glass to *Sofia's* hundredth birthday edition and wish her many happy returns. I wanted two particular images for the front and back covers. I have a small, unsophisticated camera and am certainly no expert but decided to revisit two London churches with unusual twentieth-century artwork behind the altar. In Notre Dame de France, the round French Church near Leicester Square which also has a Cocteau mural, I snapped the tapestry of Wisdom playing, looking rather like Snow White. And in St Botolph's without Aldgate, which stands just where the East End meets the City of London, there is a modern batik of the Tree of Life with a transformed golden city in the background, which could be London. As in Blake's visionary poem: 'There Jerusalem's pillars stood' – on Earth. Perhaps because it was near Pentecost, there was a dove suspended on a wire over the altar. There was no way I could keep this dove out of the picture and I balked at photoshopping out the Holy Ghost. As we used to sing:

You can't kill the Spirit
She's like a mountain, old and strong.
She goes on and on and on...