

Minding and Mental Fight

This year SOF'S annual conference in July is entitled *Out of our Minds* (see advert on page 7) . With that in mind, the theme for this June *Sofia* is *Minding and Mental Fight*. The articles broach this theme from various perspectives.

First Pope Francis, who has inherited the Petrine injunction: 'Mind my sheep.' In his review of Don Cupitt's latest (50th) book *Creative Faith* (p.21), Hugh Dawes notes that Don's 'second new travelling companion turns out to be Pope Francis...like so many other people Cupitt has been quite bowled over by the figure of this human Pope.' In our first article Frank Regan, the recently retired, long-serving editor of *Renew*, the magazine of Catholics for a Changing Church, asks *Can Pope Francis Change the Catholic Church?* This pope minds about the scandals and corruption and most of all he minds about kindness, but can he change the Church and if so how much?

Next we have Bobbie Stephens-Wright, a one-time spiritualist now confirmed secularist, discussing the feud between two mind doctors, Freud and Jung. Their quarrel was about what Freud called 'the black tide of the occult', for which Jung had a 'personal fascination'.

In these two 'mental fights' it is interesting that the religious battle of Pope Francis is about kindness, *minding* about the poor, the drowned migrants, those excluded or marginalised in the church, such as the divorced and homosexuals. It is a fight about ethics rather than theology. Neither Pope Francis nor the Roman Curia are disputing the existence of a personal God or even devil. It is the battle between Freud and Jung in the secular discipline of psychology that is a conflict about whether the supernatural realm exists or not.

Next Stephen Williams reflects on Mark's account of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. He asks us to bear in mind that the figures in the story 'were living in their own present' and the story should 'be treated seriously as the kind of things

that happen in real life and it's down to the protagonists, and to us reading the stories centuries later, to make what sense we can of them.'

In his article *Madness and Making Sense*, Phil Kershner asks 'Why the Cross?' What sense, if any, can we make of mindless violence, of the madness of Auschwitz, of crucifixion, of the wanton killing of the innocent?

Other articles and reviews pick up the theme of *Minding and Mental Fight* in their own way. For example in her review of Gail Hornstein's *Agnes's Jacket: A Psychologist's Search for the Meanings of Madness*, Helen Barrett discusses Hornstein's approach to people who hear voices. Rather than suppressing these 'crazy' voices with drugs, she favours listening to them to try and hear what they are telling the person. She regards these voices as neither unnatural nor supernatural but does think they should be taken as seriously as when in 'pre-enlightenment' times they were regarded as demonic possession.

Finally, two reminders: In the advert on page 7 you will find some details about the SOF annual conference: *Out of our Minds. What Can We Offer for a Healthier World?* The conference takes place in Leicester as usual, from 23rd – 25th July. Booking forms and further details can be found on the website www.sofn.org.uk or got from enquiries@sofconference.org.uk or by post from SOF Conference, 28 Frederick Road, Birmingham B15 1JN. The Trustees hope many of you will be able to make it this year.

On page 11 there is also an advert for the SoFiC (Sea of Faith in the Churches) Day Conference, which will take place in London on 10th October 2015. Please keep both these dates in mind.