

# Coming Home

You will be receiving this issue of *Sofia* in Advent, which means ‘coming’. In the days leading up to Christmas the great ‘O Antiphons’ each pray ‘O Come’ – at the solstice on December 21<sup>st</sup>: ‘Come, Sun of Justice’. It is a prayer for ‘salvation’, which is a kind of home-coming. This *Sofia*’s title is *Coming Home*.

It begins with an article by Kathleen McPhilemy reflecting on what home means, both your own place to live and rest in, and a community in which you feel at home, at ease. The article considers the complementarity and also some of the tensions between an individual’s home, which may be thought of as a ‘property,’ and the community.

Next we have two extracts from a new book *Reclaiming the Common Good* (reviewed on page 23). In ‘The Shrinking Safety Net’ Bernadette Meaden looks at the changes brought in by ‘austerity’ policies, which have resulted in many people losing their homes or living with insecurity and in poverty. Then there is an extract from the book’s editor, Virginia Moffatt, entitled ‘Rolling Back the Market’, which describes how ‘designing public policy based on market forces is resulting in the worst outcomes for everyone’.

The Advent liturgy laments ‘Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation’ and one disgraceful aspect of London, as well as our other great cities, is how for an increasing number of people it is a ‘city of dreadful night’, where they have no home to go to, sleep rough in the cold and are exposed to many perils. For both individual and *polis* ‘Coming Home’ means everyone having a home to go to and also the city itself being a home, where everyone lives comfortably and can also realise their human potential. So ‘Coming Home’ can be seen as a goal for a decent society to aspire to.

This *Sofia* then gives extracts from three visions of such a society, the beautiful city where

‘tears are wiped away’: the New Jerusalem coming down to Earth at the end of the book of Revelation, and two poems inspired by that vision, William Blake’s *Jerusalem* and Ernesto Cardenal’s *Oracle upon Managua*. Both God and humanity come home. ‘God’s home is among humans’ and humanity reaches ‘home’ in a good society.

As well a review of *Reclaiming the Common Good*, we have reviews of two other books relating to the theme of the city or *polis* as home. David Boulton reviews *Utopia for Realists* by the Dutch historian Rutger Bregman and Kathryn Southworth reviews Michael Symmons Roberts’ new poetry collection *Mancunia*, dedicated to the victims of the Manchester terrorist attack this year and to those who helped the victims. The title *Mancunia* ‘is a name sometimes used fondly by Mancunians but it suggests a partly fictional city, a place of phantasmagoria, both Utopia and Armageddon, but always with “man” at its centre.’

Giving a different ‘take’ on the theme of Coming Home, Salley Vickers’ talk at the SOF London Conference looks at Hermione’s home-coming in *The Winter’s Tale*, when her ‘statue’ comes to life. The talk also discusses two Old Testament stories with angels in them, the ‘initiation story’ of Tobias and the angel, and the story of Abraham and Sarah entertaining angels. For Salley Vickers ‘Gods and goddesses, angels and spirits, ghosts and demons are imaginative representations of the unseen realities which affect, and have always affected, human decisions at the deepest levels.’

We hope you will enjoy this *Sofia* and the Editor always welcomes Letters with your comments on any of the articles.