

Speaking for Myself

Following the SOF Network March meeting in London, whose title was *Speaking for Myself*, that is also the title of this *Sofia* issue. The first article, which was the main talk at the meeting, is Edward Nickell ‘speaking for myself’ on ‘The Inessentials of Faith.’ Robert Boucnik follows with his piece ‘Creative with our Faith’. Bobbie Stephens-Wright speaks for herself about her struggle with spiritualism. Then, as Pentecost and the feast of Corpus Christi come in June, Stephen Mitchell, an Anglican priest, gives his take on ‘Real Presence and the Spirit’.

The front and back cover pictures both show famous examples of ‘speaking for myself’. The front cover shows the young poet John Milton on his 1638 travels in Europe meeting the astronomer Galileo, who was under house arrest for saying the Earth moves round the sun. Galileo was forced to recant at his trial by the Inquisition but afterwards famously declared ‘*Eppur si muove: It does move.*’ Milton mentions him in *Paradise Lost*.

Milton later also spoke out bravely for himself and for liberty in his February 1660 pamphlet opposing the restoration of the King – Charles II – whose father Charles I had proclaimed the divine right to rule absolutely. Milton wrote: ‘What I have spoken is that which is not called amiss the Good Old Cause.’

Historically, it has been harder for women to speak for ourselves. The Epistle to the Corinthians declared: ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches: for they are not permitted to speak’ (1 Cor. 14:34). But as shown on our back cover, Queen Elizabeth I gave her brave example when she addressed the troops assembled at Tilbury to resist invasion by the approaching Spanish Armada – ‘when that great fleet invincible against the bore in vain/ the richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.’

King Philip II of Spain had first proposed marriage to her and she had refused him. So then he tried to invade her (and England) by force of arms. Elizabeth rallied her troops: ‘I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too. I think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.’

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Below this Editorial there is a notice of SOF’s forthcoming National Day Conference, live after the pandemic. We hope plenty of people will come, meet face to face and enjoy real presence.

SOF Network National Day Conference 2023

In the Beginning was Music? – Music and Religion

Patti Whaley

Stephen Mitchell

Katie Hainbach

Monday 24 July 2023. 11.00 – 4.30pm

St John’s Church, Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8TY

Pay £20 online at sofn.org.uk/shop/shop.html

and email Janet Seargeant jseargeant3@gmail.com to tell her you have paid and wish to register.

Or post a cheque for £20 to Janet Seargeant, 61 Fordington Road, London, N6 4TH
with your name and address saying you wish to register.