



# Sea of Faith

Sea of Faith Network in Australia

## BULLETIN

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019



Seen from the committee boat at the Mirror dinghy world titles

photo Robin Ford

The SOFIA website and archive of articles: [www.sof-in-australia.org](http://www.sof-in-australia.org)

The SoFiA blog at: [www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php](http://www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php)

E X P L O R E  
religion faith meaning

## EDITORIAL

This *Bulletin* continues the conversation around our organization's name. "Are we being too self-preoccupied?" I don't think so; we are "openly exploring" the meaning of *The Sea of Faith in Australia*.

The first article (Lynne Renoir) nicely addresses issues that have been with us ever since SoFiA began. It starts with a question "Why are there are so many belief systems and different views on questions of ultimate reality?"

Next Glen Beasley sets SoFiA in its Chinchilla context, and has something to say about our name. He makes full use of a boat metaphor, so I've used boat images too.

In previous *Bulletins* I wanted the contributions on the name to speak for themselves. This time I thought I might comment on them, but in the end I have just

suggested one version of what the *Bulletin* might look like with the Management Committee's proposal for a new name and tag-line.

As usual, the AGM will happen at the end of a one-day conference. This year's topic is *All at sea on how to live* – more boats. Our one-day conferences have been great successes, so why not put Saturday 15 June 2019 in your diaries now?

There's plenty more in this edition, courtesy all those who have sent copy. Please keep it up. Send contributions (by your preferred method) via one of these addresses.

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### Feature

Truth, Fact And Transformation, L Renoir (3)

### Point of View

Burning Our Boats, G Beasley (5)

Moral Guidance, R Eivers (8)

### Conversation

My Story On The Name, J Lewis (9)

Possible Layouts For The *Bulletin*, Editor (13)

### Announcements and Notices

SoFiA One-day Conference *All At Sea On How To Live*, (7)

Obituary John Wessel, R Eivers (7)

SoFiA Victoria Meetings, (11)

## CONTENTS

### In The Gaps

What Is It To Be Human, P Wildman (7)

Faith, R Ford (12)

NASA And The Sea Of Faith In Australia, R Ford (14)

### Regular items

*Digitalia*, R Ford (11)

Science And Religion, G Spearritt (10)

Postlude, P Wildman (15)

Epilogue, R Ford (15)

Crossword Puzzle, G Spearritt (16)

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Feature

## Truth, Fact And Transformation

*Lynne Renoir.*

Why are there are so many belief systems and different views on questions of ultimate reality? In modern times it has generally been accepted that a set of propositions is either correct or incorrect. The former would constitute the basis on which a personal commitment could be made that the ideas are true. Christianity claims that since its doctrines are based on divine revelation, they are both true and factually correct. It also proposes that in addition to revelation, God has given humans the ability to reason, so that by examining the evidence around them, they are able to understand the existence of an all-powerful creator. A further claim is that a person who wholeheartedly embraces Christian teachings will experience a transformation of life that is not available from any other source. This article seeks to challenge this idea by separating the concept of truth from questions of fact, and by suggesting that truth, whatever its expression, is that which is life transforming for the individual.

The relationship between reason and revelation is a question that historically has exercised philosophers in various traditions. Christian thinkers in the medieval period sought to reconcile the insights of Ancient Greek philosophy with the teachings of scripture. For example, Aristotle had proposed that movement, including the motion of the planets, bodily movement, and the process of growth and decay, is the foundational principle of nature, and he reasoned that a 'Prime Mover' was required to create this movement without itself being moved. Aquinas equated this entity with the Judeo-Christian God, claiming that the knowledge of God is given both through divine revelation and through the exercise of reason.

Many of the later Christian philosophers also emphasised the importance of reason, but some of them sought to prioritise the need for experiencing the divine. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Blaise Pascal argued that since God is beyond anything we can comprehend, we are not in a position to produce evidence for his existence. On the other hand, we cannot prove that he does not exist. We should therefore exercise faith, acting as though he does exist. In Pascal's view, the benefits of such an approach would be the development of worthwhile qualities of character in this life, together with an infinity of happiness in the life hereafter.

The faith of the believer has always been regarded as an essential component in establishing a relationship with God. But little attention has been given to the experiences of those who try the faith and find that it does not deliver on its promises. According to the New Testament, a person who is "in Christ" is a new creature. This newness involves not only a change in beliefs but a sense of being transformed through the working of a divine power within. Because of the general tendency to link truth with fact, believers whose experiences serve to confirm their faith will hold that those who reject their ideas are in error and may incur the judgment of God. But for individuals who have

embraced these same beliefs and yet who do not experience a life transformation, religious leaders will suggest that such people are not availing themselves of everything that is on offer, and that they should simply continue to exercise faith.

An individual's religious experience will inevitably be affected by the kind of characteristics the deity is believed to possess, and the conditions under which access to him is said to be possible. This situation contrasts with the kind of relationships we form with other human beings, where we come to understand the way they think, their value system, their emotional responses and so on. But the only information we have about God that would be relevant to a relationship with him is contained in the sacred texts. Church authorities claim that the resulting deficits in our knowledge can be rectified through the exercise of faith. A problem here is the absence of consistent and persuasive evidence on which such faith could be based. Many of the greatest thinkers in history have reached widely differing conclusions about the nature of God and what he requires of us.

If transformation were the exclusive province of a relationship with God in Christ, an explanation would be required as to how millions of people have experienced similar kinds of transformation through their own belief systems, be they Eastern or Western. Unless a range of these experiences is dismissed as counterfeit, the claim by Christians that it is only their beliefs which represent the truth is called into question. If genuine transformation can occur through reliance on contrasting sets of religious propositions, no single set of ideas can claim priority over others with regard to factual accuracy.

Adherents of particular traditions hold that the correctness of their beliefs forms the grounds for their changed behaviour. If the beliefs were not true, they would suggest, these changes could not have occurred. However, the history of Western religions and Eastern philosophies contains examples of people who have been martyred because they held that a certain set of propositions was not only correct but life-changing. It seems unlikely that these acts of self-sacrifice would have occurred purely on the grounds that the relevant beliefs were valid.

The question to be determined is the relationship between concepts and experience. Whereas believers see the two as intertwined, the wide variations in concepts in contrast to the similarities of experience would suggest that this intertwining cannot be sustained. What I am proposing is that the domain of facts and propositions is that which engages the conscious mind, but that deep-seated changes arise from a level below consciousness. How a set of propositions will translate at that deeper level will depend partly on the life circumstances of the individual. For example, a person who follows Buddhist teachings will absorb an idea of love that is based in freedom and non-attachment, while a person who is drawn to Christianity will be moved by the sacrificial love of Christ.

The fact that devotees within the various traditions will often exhibit similar behaviours suggests that the validity claimed for the ideas of a tradition is inconsequential when compared with the power of those deep-seated processes through which an individual's life can be transformed. For those who try a particular tradition and find that the promised transformation does not occur, it may be that a different set of teachings, either within the tradition or elsewhere,

will activate those inner processes, bringing a fulfilment of life that may not have been possible when the previously accepted ideas were embraced.

Lynne's book, *God: Challenges from Philosophy and Science*, is available on e-readers.

Point of View

## Burning our boats

*Glen Beasley*

SoFiA needs to extract itself from Matthew Arnold's century-old retreating "Sea Of Faith". We need to burn our boats on the pebbly shore of Dover Beach using our compass and maps to fuel the fire and start to navigate the arid Australian landscape – a landscape where there are few (dare I say 'no') signposts and perilous distances between water holes.

In this new and more immediate landscape we should be in pursuit, not of a conversation about 'faith', but questions of greater significance. "What is it to be human", and "How should we live?" are questions which, like the Australian landscape, are both attractive and daunting.

Philosopher A H Almaas argues that:

If we are to mature into real human beings [humankind come of age?] we need to recognise and come to grips with the extent to which we ordinarily do not want to be fully responsible for our perceptions, our truth or our life. We are largely ignorant: we do not know much about ourselves, reality or life, and what we do know is often not true. The combination of not knowing and knowing falsely makes us feel scared and uncertain – as a result we constantly seek some kind of school, some kind of teaching, some kind of belief to follow [Should we add 'faith' to this list?]. We search for something to support ourselves.

Teachings are necessary, but these teachings are boats to cross the river of ignorance; they are not the other shore. Their descriptions of some of the features of the other shore are not the same as the shore itself. In order to get to the other shore we need to abandon our boats. If we stay in them we will never get to the shore. We need at some point to sink our boats. If we do it too soon, we will sink in deep water, but if we do not do it at all we will never arrive.

Teachings [belief systems, faith?] are boats with which to cross a river. You are not supposed to carry the boat with you on the other shore, otherwise you will end up with a greater load than when you started. To keep on looking at reality through the same lens will again blind and limit us. A teaching points towards a reality, but it is not reality and will not give you reality. No teaching on its own gives you certainty about what reality is. The final and ultimate judge is you (the lived experience?). You have to find your own certainty; you cannot borrow it, not even from the highest teachings.

*Sinking Your Boats*, A H Almas (from Diamond Heart Book V) excerpt available at <https://mettarefuge.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/a-h-almass-on-sinking-your-boats-and-becoming-the-universal-heretic/>

Unlike Almaas, I don't believe we ever find certainty – nor should certainty be our aim. In SoFiA we have a noble tradition of asking the question, and living the journey, of self-discovery and enquiry into what is.

I have some sympathy for the notion that we should reclaim the meaning of 'faith' (faith is knowledge, faith is not belief) but the word 'faith', like the word 'God', has been over-used, misused and corrupted beyond the point where

retrieval of meaning is possible. At the very least we should give both words a rest for a while. To have the word 'faith' slap bang in the middle of our name has become an impediment to others joining us in inquiring into what is. SoFiA runs the risk of slowly sinking into the sea of mediocrity.

Paradoxically, we cannot mature into real human beings in a vacuum. We may burn our boats, but the memory of the boats that served us well remains. Maybe SoFiA needs to take a lesson from the Jesus bird – so called because it can seemingly walk on water. Having webbed feet, the Jesus bird maintains buoyancy because its weight is spread over a large area and is supported not only by the ebb and flow of the water but also by debris and flotsam in the water.

I would like to see SoFiA's buoyancy supported by a range of disciplines and pursuits. Scientific inquiry with its evidence-based findings, history, sociology, philosophy, religion and the lived experience all need to be part of the mix.

With an eye to Ken Wilbur's concept of "Include and transcend", Paul Inglis' name of "Philosophia" or maybe "Philosofia" would be a reasonable compromise between retaining some of our history and at the same time going beyond our history. My preference would be to cast our net wider in pursuit of a name that better articulates our reason for being.

In Chincilla we recently changed our group's name from the 40-year old *The Thursday night study group* to *Philosophy group*. We all need to ask the fundamental questions: "Is my life as good as it can be?" and, "If not, what are the impediments to my quality of life and how might they be addressed?"

I will end with two quotes.

Freedom of the mind requires not only, or not even especially, the absence of legal constraints but the presence of alternative thoughts. The most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assure uniformity but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities, that makes it seem inconceivable that other ways are viable, that removes the sense that there is an outside.

Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*,

Found in <https://intothelifeofthings.com/>

Philosopher Bertrand Russell eloquently captures what I believe should be the essence of SoFiA's existence.

The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty. ... and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.

Bertrand Russell, the value of philosophy  
Chapter XV of *The Problems of Philosophy*,  
Free book published by project Gutenberg

(Curiously, it appears that this is not in the public realm in Australia, so the extract is brief. But it is in the public realm in the USA. You could try searching the web for the full quote [Ed])

**In The Gaps**

**What is it to be human?**

Paul Wildman's email signature block includes this comment that somehow prefigures Glenn Beasley's question: "What is it to be human?"

*For me a bike is a visceral elixir of aliveness with the ever-present potential for deathness – I have lost friends, and been put in hospital, by each.*

Selected by Robin Ford

**Obituary**

**John Wessel**

Rodney Eivers

John Wessel participated in a number of Sea of Faith activities (including the Gold Coast conference) and, I think, for a time may have been a member of SoFiA.

He could write a good article on the "progressive" Christianity side of things and had some personal struggles with antipathy from some of the Uniting Church people in northern New South Wales.

**Announcement**

**All at sea on how to live**

Greg Spearritt

How should we live nowadays? Where can we look for moral guidance? From our (once) most trusted institutions (e.g. churches and Cricket Australia, if not our councils, parliaments and banks) to individuals struggling with social media addiction and abuse, our society seems to be all at sea on this issue.

Is advancing secularisation a cause, or a ray of hope? Arguably, popular culture looms increasingly large in contemporary moral guidance, from Happy Potter (**the Harry Potter Alliance**) to **superhero films**. Can the churches or civil society claw back their moral authority? What other options are there?

Fear not! This is the issue we'll be grappling with at the 2019 Sea of Faith in Australia one-day conference. Maybe we'll find being 'all at sea' is not such a bad thing...

**Event:** Sea of Faith in Australia one-day conference

**Date:** Saturday, 15 June 2019

**Venue:** Qld Art Gallery lecture theatre, Southbank, Brisbane

Watch our [website](#) for details.



A rescue boat from the Mirror World Championships

**Point of View**

**Moral Guidance**

Rodney Eivers

“Young shift away from religion” was the headline of an article in the 2018 Christmas Eve edition of Brisbane’s Courier Mail.

I read this at a time when I was pondering an introduction to the topic proposed for the Sea of Faith in Australia one-day conference in 2019 (page 7). With the elimination of religion, specifically Christianity, what is to provide the moral guidance for young people in the future? Do we need moral guidance? Christianity has fallen away in the popular and intellectual mind for this generation. Perhaps it is time to do away with institutional codes for living. Currently we in the Western world are living on the ethical capital of 2000 years of Judeo-Christianity.

What happens when we make a fresh start? Some take a negative view. Others read the positive into how human beings come to relate to one another. William Golding’s classic “Lord of the Flies” depicts the outcome as anarchy. Anthropological studies, however, suggest that people from pre-literate societies do learn to band together and cooperate with one another. Such cooperation, though, tends to be restricted to within the tribal group. It is not necessarily the way to universal harmony. The tribalism of Israel’s Yahweh is a prime example familiar to us. While prescribing the community-building code for the ‘chosen people’ seen in the Ten Commandments and the Levitical codes, it allowed for, indeed exhorted, the slaughter of men women and children outside the tribe.

These early attempts at building community were backed up by supernatural entities as typified by the Gods backing religio (the binding rules and

practices) of the Roman Empire. Pre-literate societies had their animistic spirit worlds to keep people in line.

But in this 21<sup>st</sup> century of knowledge, enlightenment and travel to the moon, the supernatural is not tenable. Perhaps as my colleague Greg Spearritt suggests, being adrift “all at sea” (without a rudder?) is not a bad thing. “Doing the right thing” may just come naturally. We may not need institutionalised principles.

On the other hand, if we do see a need for bases for decision and action we may still seek to find that moral guidance from our secular ideologies and institutions as millions have sought to do down through the ages.

Examples include, Communism, democracy, culture (how often now do we define “doing the right thing” by whether it is ‘Australian’ or ‘non-Australian’?) family, atheism, humanism and so on. The big one on the broad scale is perhaps nationalism. We have been reminded of this currently with the centenary of the end of World War I and the emergence of Trump, Brexit, and Putin’s hypersonic defence system. The other day I drove past Clive Palmer’s latest bill board. “Put Australia first. Make Australia Great” it shouted.

I may expand on this later but for now you may, particularly when interacting with your grandchildren, like to reflect on how we may cope in a non-super-naturalist world.

So, what do you think? Come and join the discussion at the SOFIA 2019I mini-conference or by writing or posting to our various communication media.

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## Conversation

### **My Story On The Name**

Judy Lewis

Dear Robin, Greg and Rodney,

I am of the view that the name sofia is good, as it means wisdom and alludes to the ancient wisdom that is often seen as the foundation of Western thought. Also, it has the connection with groups outside Australia.

I liked Greg's idea of ditching the capitals and his long and short mottoes. The short one should overcome the unfortunate equating of faith and fundamentalist religion in the minds of those overly influenced by popular media, ie almost all Australians.

Shortly after I first attended the Melbourne Sofia I christened them 'all at sea about faith' and as I am in the same boat I felt like a fellow passenger.

Warm regards, Judy

Ps. almost got your crossword out, Greg. I have a little Indian girl as an orthodontic patient whose name is 11A. Thus, I had looked up the etymology recently.

## Regular Items

## Science & Religion

*The intersect between religion and science seems to be one of perpetual interest. In this column, Greg Spearritt draws attention to recent scientific research that may have implications for our understanding of religion, or for religious belief and practice.*

### Evil presence

If you've experienced a sensation of an evil presence, perhaps coupled with an inability to move, it's just possible you haven't been possessed. Dan Denis, post-doctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School, has been looking into sleep paralysis. The ABC reports his suggestions for explaining the symptoms we sometimes experience at particular stages of sleep:

As you become awake the amygdala is highly active or more active than it would be when you're in a non-threatening situation. You get this paradox where the brain is activating like there's some kind of fear that it needs to process while [in] the room around you there's no clear obvious sign of threat. The brain may try to resolve that paradox by assuming there is some kind of threat nearby that needs to be dealt with, even though you can't see it.

Web reference:

[www.livescience.com/63094-conservative-meaning-of-life.html](http://www.livescience.com/63094-conservative-meaning-of-life.html)

### Are scientists less religious?

In the UK, the answer appears to be 'yes'. Researchers from Rice University, Baruch College and West Virginia University have found that scientists at those institutions are significantly less religious than the general

population there. Moreover, UK scientists at elite universities are more likely to never attend religious services than those at less prestigious schools. The study also indicates biologists are more likely to never attend religious services than physicists. It would be interesting to see a study of American academics.

Web reference:

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/12/181219115525.htm>

### Hypocrisy rooles

No doubt it will shock you, and I'm sure it doesn't apply to SoFiA members, but it seems people generally apply different moral standards to themselves when making some judgements. Jack Cao, psychology researcher at Harvard University, summarises some recent findings:

People don't like it when someone uses group averages to make judgments about individuals from different social groups who are otherwise identical. They perceive that person as not only lacking in goodness, but also lacking in intelligence. But when it comes to making judgments themselves, these people make the same type of judgment that they had so harshly criticized in others.

This is important because it suggests that the distance between our values and the people we are is greater than we might think. Otherwise, people would not have made judgments in a way that they found to be morally bankrupt and incompetent in others.

Web reference:

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190102112857.htm>

Regular Items

**Digitalia**

*The Editor's review of activity on the SoFiA website, the SoFiA blog, and Facebook. See the SoFiA website [www.sof-in-australia.org](http://www.sof-in-australia.org) for instructions and links on accessing the SoFiA Facebook page*

SoFiA website [www.sof-in-australia.org](http://www.sof-in-australia.org) : In the last couple of *Bulletins* there hasn't been much about Christmas and the summer holidays, so I decided belatedly to include this [Why Australia's beaches are the spiritual centre of a secular nation](#) as my choice from Religion News (*The Guardian*, Australia) Jan 16 – (Opinion: Brigid Delaney) There is no place in Australia as egalitarian or as democratic as the beach.

SoFiA blog [www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php](http://www.sof-in-australia.org/blog.php) or via the website. In [All at sea on how to live](#), *Greg Spearritt writes* "Where can we look for moral guidance? ...our society seems to be all at sea on this issue. ...Fear not! This is the issue we'll be grappling with at the 2019 Sea of Faith in Australia one-day conference.

**Date:** Saturday, 15 June 2019

**Venue:** Qld Art Gallery lecture theatre, Southbank, Brisbane

Facebook Sea of Faith in Australia: Jim Norman reports that there are some 40 members of this Facebook group. You don't have to be a SoFiA member to join the SoFiA Facebook group, but it's only \$20.00 to join SoFiA for 10 years. What have you got to lose? Why not join now? The SoFiA website explains how to do it [www.sof-in-australia.org](http://www.sof-in-australia.org).

Announcement

**SoFiA Victoria**

Thursdays, 7.30pm. Gold coin donation appreciated.

Lectures are followed by questions, discussion and refreshments.

All viewpoints are welcome.

VENUE: Carlton Library Meeting Room,  
667 Rathdowne Street (corner Newry Street),  
North Carlton. Melways Map: 2B J2.

21 February 2019

Rosalie Tremaine (Evangelical Christian)  
*"Is Science the Answer?"*

1 March 2019

John Noack ([Carl Jung Society](#))  
*"Galilean Folklore in Judaism and Christianity."*

18 April 2019 - Topic to be announced.

16 May 2019 - Topic to be announced.

20 June 2019

Dr Joe Sampson (Humanist Society of Victoria)  
*"A Critique of the Biblical God."*

21 February 2019

Rosalie Tremaine (Evangelical Christian)  
*"Is Science the Answer?"*

In the Gaps

**Faith**

Editor

*The Faithless Shepherdess* Poem by William Byrd

Oh ye of little faith

Defender of the faith (Fid Def)

“Faith! we didn’t care a button if the odds were on the foe” (song *My old Shako*, words by Francis Barron)

“This is the sweetest victory of all. This is a victory for the true believers; the people who, in difficult times, have kept the faith.” Paul Keating

“Well done, good and faithful servant!”

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

In bad faith (or good faith)

Faith healing

Yours faithfully

Articles of faith (eg The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Of any faith and none

Followers of all faiths and none.

The Prince certainly caused a furore when he told Jonathan Dimpleby that he wants to be seen as a 'Defender of Faith' when he ascends the throne, rather than 'Defender of the Faith' (The Daily Mail)

Announcement

**Common Dreams**

**Common Dreams**

The Fifth Common Dreams Conference will be held on 11-14 July 2019 at Newington College in Stanmore, Sydney.

The conference theme is Sacred Earth, Original Blessing, Common Home.

Matthew Fox will be our distinguished international keynote speaker.

The conference will involve other inspiring speakers, musicians, performers, and artists who will engage with ...

You may view the latest post at <https://ucforum.unitingchurch.org.au/?p=2576>

## Possible layouts for the *Bulletin*

Editor

From the minutes of the Management Committee

Decision:

- i. to circulate John Carr’s proposal to members with the aim of generating further discussion in the newsletter to guide a decision on what to put to the AGM:

*That the name of the Australian Sea of Faith in Australia Network be changed to 'SOFIA', and the tagline/aim be changed to 'wisdom, ancient and modern', with the objective of 'openly exploring issues of life and meaning through reason, philosophy, ethics, religion and the arts', with just the short version 'openly exploring issues of life and meaning' as the motto on much of our publicity.*

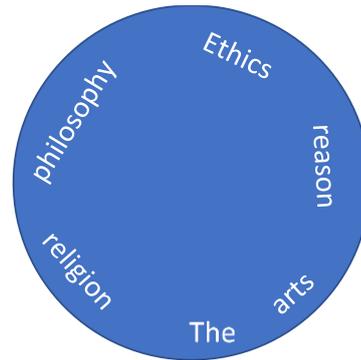
What might the Management Committee’s proposal mean for the *Bulletin*?

On the opposite page I present the current format with one possible alternative, “...with the aim of generating further discussion.” It’s just one idea. I have several others, but this should do for now.

Below I tabulate some explanations.

I hope this will spark your creativity.

Whatever else they do, I hope they will encourage you to write in to the *Bulletin*.



*When reduced these words became hard to read, so here it is enlarged.*

Existing name and layout	New name – SOFIA – and new layout
<p>History of this layout:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My first Bulletin: Sep/Oct 2012.</li> <li>2. Cover image first used: Sept/Oct 2013.</li> <li>3. Cover images standard: from Mar/Apr 2014.</li> </ol> <p>Other changes include: adding the <i>Afterword</i> and <i>Epilogue</i>, and a regular column on <i>Science and Religion</i>. But the lay-out has been more or less settled for five years.</p>	<p>This is close to John Carr’s proposal to the Management Committee.</p> <p>In this scheme, the new name is the old acronym. Rachel Matthews (among others) also suggested this (November/December <i>Bulletin</i>).</p> <p>The modes of enquiry (<i>through reason, philosophy, ethics, religion and the arts</i>), are in a disc; the motto and tag line are in the heading.</p>



Present front page and one possible alternative

In the Gaps

## NASA And The Sea Of Faith In Australia

A science program on Radio National saw one of their presenters in a Boeing 747 that had been refitted by NASA to take an infra-red telescope into the stratosphere to examine Triton – a moon of Neptune. The 747 cost over a billion dollars.

It is their Stratospheric Observatory For Infra-red Astronomy. They call it SOFIA for short.

See their logo at <https://www.sofia.usra.edu/>

R Ford

Postlude

## Another view

Paul Wildman

Even though I thought I would not, I enjoyed reading (y)our latest issue of SoFiA. I offer these outsiders comments/perspectives.

### Use of the word *Faith*

For me our cultural Techno-utopian drift has subsumed the word so now we don't think of it, yet have faith that the car will start and the trains will run and milk will be at the shop and the road rules will in general be obeyed. So that in a sense we have reverse engineered our declension towards the use of the word 'faith', in that our techno utopian culture has subsumed the word and every day makes millions of dollars from its application eg in Uber eats for an aircraft-flight, or downloading a latest app. Yet we get ourselves all in knots because someone does a bit of a theological [dump] on the word?! We are letting neo-liberalism define our lexicon! Now that is, well I have to say it, one heck of a (inflexi)Con..... (in saying this I am for instance aware, and respectful, of Greg's perspective and Rodney's perspectives).

### Book review

*Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress*, Steven Pinker, reviewed by John Carr

Pinker typifies the degeneration in Neo Liberal revisionism/revulsionism (for me). It is a no brainer yet he gets away with it and seems (to a point) to carry John Carr with him. We live in an era of the death of Nature, of environmental and political and social collapse, of over population, and the sixth great extinction caused by us Homo Sapiens, but hey, we had the enlightenment — so to one another we are all buddy-buddy now — what crap. This revisionist just does the beer hall putsch trick and redefines generic words like 'violence' etc to mean what he wants them to mean. So that, oh well, we all needed the enlightenment and, well, let's forget about our species' violent role in the death of nature. Let's just focus on this subset of a subset of a subset of human-to-human relations and 'poof' all these nasty inconvenient truths well, they just categorically vanish! Restrict it to 'in this manner', 'in this context', 'for this period', 'in this subset', and 'define violence as this but not that', so that – bingo; these are the results that show the premise (and the title of his book)! And he, and Neo-Liberalism, get away with it again.

I am delighted that SoFIA allows this type of discussion and examination of its basic DNA the word 'Faith' for instance..

Epilogue



Photo R Ford

**SoFiA Crossword #38**



**Across**

- 2. Sacred sounds
- 5. Palestinian American scholar, author of *Orientalism*
- 6. KJV for 'yes'
- 9. Non-believer (Islam)
- 11. Buddha's birthday and the most important Buddhist festival (SE Asian term)
- 13. Ritual prayer, one of Islam's 5 pillars
- 15. Way
- 16. Liturgical vestment
- 17. Danish particle physicist who implored Einstein to "stop telling God what to do with his dice"
- 19. Fixed belief(s)
- 21. Cross-bearer
- 23. Illustrative tale
- 26. Appointment-to-ministry ritual
- 27. Inhabitants of 22 Down will do this, according to Isaiah 51:6

**Editor's crib sheet**

When I check the crossword (a task I enjoy) I see how much I can do unaided, then I hit the web. *If you want to do it all by yourself, then read no further* but where the web alone is not enough you might find these oblique angles on Greg's clues helpful.

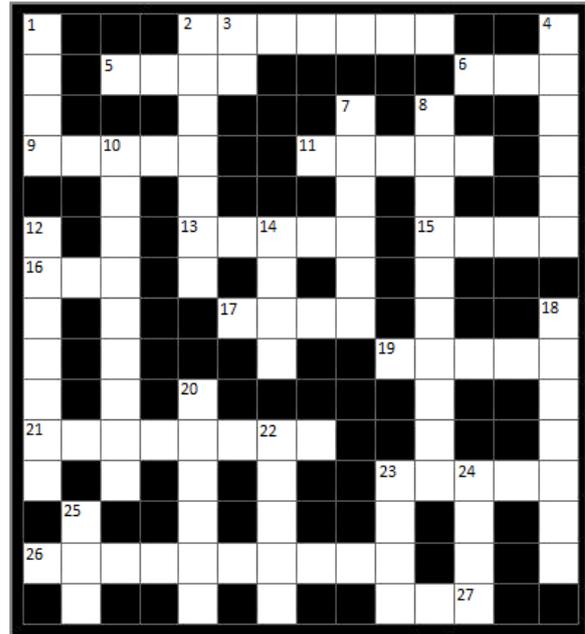
2A eg "Om".

9A Not infidel, but something else.

13A One to look up probably

17A One o the great names in particle physics.

**SoFiA Crossword #39** Prepared by Greg Spearritt



**Down**

- 1. Religious ascetic
- 2. Explanatory stories, sermons & parables
- 3. In the Year of the Lord (init.)
- 4. Elephant-headed deity
- 7. Elected pastor (Anglicanism)
- 8. Region where Gregory of Nazianzus abided (abode?)
- 10. Liturgical fan used to protect the Host (and the priest) from annoying insects
- 12. Priestly dress
- 14. Symbol of the tribe of Judah
- 18. Where the pointy-hats gather about every 10 years (last in 2008)
- 20. Major Hindu deity
- 22. That which is personified by Gaia
- 23. Seek and ye shall
- 24. English Catholic monk of the 7<sup>th</sup> century
- 25. God's lifeboat

2D Brought to Anglicanism by John Shelby Spong

8D Bonus marks if you got this without looking it up.

There were three amigos: two Gregories and a Basil.

10D Definitely one for a web search!

## Sea of Faith in Australia

*promoting the open exploration of issues of religion, faith and meaning*

SoFiA publishes a bi-monthly bulletin. It organises conferences, public lectures and regional meetings. Through its website it maintains an archive of articles and a blog. It also runs email discussion groups.

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**Brisbane Acacia Ridge** 3rd Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact:  
 Rodney Eivers (07 3273 2049)

**Brisbane Brookfield** 1st Sunday, 7.30pm. Contact: Helen  
 Mason (07 3870 8565)

**Brisbane Bayside** 3rd Monday. Contact: Judith Bore (07  
 3207 5428)

**Brisbane CBD** 3rd Sunday, 1pm to 2.30pm. Contact:  
 Rachel Matthews 0408 193 872)

**Chinchilla** 1st & 3rd Thursday nights. Contact: Glen Beasley  
 (07 4662 7738)

**Melbourne** 3rd Thursday, 7.30pm at the Carlton Library.  
 Contact: David Miller (03 9467 2063).

**Sydney** Under consideration. Contact: Lyndell and Robin  
 Ford (02 9427 7078)

**Toowoomba** Monthly on a Monday night. Contact: Greg  
 Spearritt (sofinau98@gmail.com)

### Sea of Faith in Australia Inc.: Membership Application/Renewal New Fee Structure (AGM 2016)

From January 2017 SoFiA will have a single membership category.

The fee is \$20.00 for ten years (non-refundable).

Those who joined at or after the June 2016 AGM will have already paid for the ten years from January 2017.

The standard method for delivering the *Bulletin* is email. Paper versions are available on request at no additional charge (donations towards printing costs are welcome).

*If your details have not changed there is no need to fill in this form. Just send your payment as described below, being sure to identify it as "SoFiA subs" with your name.*

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