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ISCAST is a think tank of Christian academics, scientists, professionals and theologians who explore the interface and interactions between science & technology with the Christian faith.

Membership of ISCAST

Further to Alan Gijbsers' message in the last Digest, I can report on the following developments in ISCAST.

My company, Stockdale ACS, has been asked to extend its services from ISCAST Vic to the whole of ISCAST nationally. Accordingly we are working with State and Chapter representatives to build up a data base of people connected with ISCAST whom we will be soon contacting.

The aim of this will be to invite you all to become formal members of ISCAST paying a subscription and supporting ISCAST's ministry in exploring the interface between science and the Christian faith.

Alan has prepared a letter that will be sent out to you in the near future (when we have the contacts list sorted out) and I hope that you will prayerfully consider this.

The membership and fee structure is now:

Category	Annual Fee
Fellows	\$150
Associates	\$50
Corporate/Family	\$70
Student	\$20

These fees will fund the secretariat with Chapters raising their own funds from the activities they host.

The secretariat's functions will largely be to provide support for the Board, maintain membership and finances and provide a focus for contact for ISCAST nationally.

We are taking over this role from Robert Stening who has faithfully discharged there duties for many years.

Strategic Initiatives

The ISCAST Board sees that we now have three immediate priorities:

- To build up and re-invigorate the Chapters

- To develop a suite of strategic initiatives in keeping with our [vision and mission](#)
- To seek funds to enable us to pursue our strategic initiatives.

We are keen to hear from you regarding these. Assuming we have the funds, how can we best use our talents to explore God's books (scripture and nature) in a way that glorifies him and benefits his Creation while at the same time building up ISCAST as a community supporting one another?

Should we focus on research or training? Should we focus on conferences, inviting international speakers or should we cultivate our own talent?

Please feel free to contact me using the details on the last page.

Current Events

I also encourage you to read the back page regarding ISCAST events. The main ones are:

A presentation in Sydney by **Dr Larissa Aldridge** on "God's Deputy: Divine Law and the Laws of Nature".

An "Intensive" (not quite a conference) in Melbourne on "**Who Says? The Use and Misuse of Scripture in an Age of Science and Technology**". We will explore the way scripture has been used to address challenges posed by advancements in science and technology.

Planning is also underway for next year's COSAC (Conference on Science and Christianity) on 26 to 28 August 2011, at Launceston, Tasmania. Nancy Murphy from Fuller Theological Seminary has agreed to come and be our keynote speaker. I look forward to seeing you there.

Christian regards,

Richard Gijbsers
Secretary, ISCAST

In this Issue:

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- Journal Abstracts
- Event News

News Items

Items of interest to the interaction between science and Christianity and of significance to the ISCAST family. Your submissions of these are welcome.



The Synthetic Cell

The BioCentre website discusses the impact of Dr Craig Venter's recent pioneering achievement in synthesizing a bacterial genome and using it to create the world's first "synthetic cell". Dr Venter believes the organism - nicknamed Synthia - offers the potential to pave the way for beneficial developments; including complex synthetic organisms that can transform environmental waste into clean fuel, vaccinate against disease and soak up pollution. [More](#)



Dembski's "The End of Christianity": Review by Falk & Blake

Darrell Falk and Stephen Blake from The BioLogos Foundation have provided a fascinating, positive review of William Dembski's recent book "The End of Christianity", in which Dembski shifts gears from his traditional concern of ID and instead focuses on the question of theodicy. Blake notes that "Dembski examines the perspectives of both Young and Old Earth Creationism, and finally dismisses both as fatally flawed on theological grounds". [More](#)

News Items



Invitation to the ASA Annual Meeting, USA

TO: All members of the Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology:

We are pleased to invite all members of ISCAST to register for the 2010 ASA annual meeting at ASA member rates. [More](#)



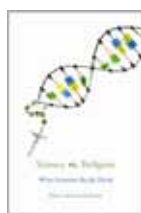
ISSR Libraries to be distributed worldwide.

Applications are solicited from universities, research centers and other institutions for complete sets of hundreds of the most important books in science and religion. [More](#)



DNA molecular 'spiderbot' created

US scientists have created a molecular robot made out of DNA that walks like a spider along a track made out of the chemical code for life. The achievement, reported in the journal Nature, is a further step in nanoscale experiments that, one day, may lead to robot armies to clean arteries and fix damaged tissues. The robot is just four nanometres, four billionths of a metre, in diameter. [More](#)



Are Scientists Really Anti-Religious?

In her new book, Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think (Oxford University Press), Elaine Howard Ecklund provides the first systematic study of what scientists actually think and feel about religion. A sociologist at Rice University, Ecklund surveyed nearly 1,700 scientists and interviewed 275 of them, with the support of a grant from the Templeton Foundation. [More](#)



The Mind - Brain or Spirit?

Video and slides from Dr Bill Newsome's public lecture on "The Mind - Brain or Spirit" on Thursday, 29 April 2010

are now available from the James Gregory website. [More](#)



Nasa's Solar Dynamics Observatory returns first images

Nasa's Solar Dynamics Observatory has provided an astonishing new vista on our turbulent star. "When we see these fantastic images," said Lika Guhathakurta, the SDO programme scientist at Nasa Headquarters, "even hard-core solar physicists like myself are struck with awe, literally." [More](#)



'The Bible in the Life of the Church' project - what's it all about?

Extract from an article written for Brisbane's FOCUS monthly by Charles Sherlock.

The immediate need: sex and the scriptures Anglicans around the globe have been arguing about women, men and God for a generation, but mostly managed to live together. In the past dozen or so years, however, as the argument has focussed on same-sex relationships, divisions have appeared. [More](#)



Royal astronomer urges Australia to 'step up' on climate change

Noted cosmologist and astrophysicist Martin Rees, president of the Royal Society of Britain and Astronomer Royal, said yesterday that although Australia accounted for only 1 per cent of global emissions, it was a country with great capacity for innovation, and, as such, should "step up". [More](#)



Hadron test goes off with a big bang

The world's biggest atom smasher last night collided particles at record power, mimicking conditions close to the Big Bang and opening a new era in the quest for the secrets of the universe. [More](#)



Special announcement: Francisco J. Ayala Wins 2010 Templeton Prize

Francisco J. Ayala, an evolutionary geneticist and molecular biologist who has vigorously opposed the entanglement of science and religion while also calling for mutual respect between the two, has won the 2010 Templeton Prize. [More](#)



Future science: the next 10 years

New worlds, new life, new bodies: just some of the breakthroughs we may see by 2020, predict a panel of leading Australian scientists interviewed by ABC Science. [More](#)



Einstein's God: Conversations About Science and the Human Spirit

Krista Tippett, host of the award-winning public radio show Speaking of Faith has recently released a new book, Einstein's God: Conversations About Science and the Human Spirit which presents ten Speaking of Faith programs exploring the relationship between science and religion. [More](#)



Baby Congratulations

Catherine and Jack Holland are delighted to announce the arrival of Hannah Dorothea on Sunday 6th June at 9:23pm. She weighed in at 7 lbs 6 oz and was nearly half a metre long. Hannah has red hair and is now resting, feeding and sleeping well with her mother at home.

Jack Holland is an Associate member of ISCAST.



New ISCAST Fellow

We welcome James Garth as a Fellow of ISCAST.

James Garth [BEng (Aero) (Hons), MAIAA, AMRAeS] is a practising aerospace engineer and is the Project Officer for the ISCAST Website.

No access to the internet and want more information? Contact the ISCAST office (see back page) and we will forward the full item to you. Postage and handling fees apply.

Christian Perspectives on Science and Christianity: Journal Abstracts

The ISCAST Online Journal – Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology is a forum for those exploring the interaction between science, technology and the Christian faith. Submissions are invited and they may be academic articles, less formal discussions aimed at non-academic readers, opinion pieces, or book reviews. Articles and discussions will be refereed. The intended readers are Christians interested in science and technology, and scientists and technologists interested in the Christian faith. Specialist knowledge is not assumed. Below are selected abstracts from the journal. (see www.iscast.org/journalpage)



Review of Michael Poole's book 'The new atheism: ten arguments that don't hold water'

Lion Hudson, 2009, 96 pp.

ISBN 978 0 7459 5393 9

Reviewed by

Bruce Craven, May 2010

Review extract

In some former times, most European countries were Christian countries, in the sense that many people were Christians, most went to church, and the Christian religion was generally held in respect. I'm not sure whether Australia was ever quite a Christian country by that definition. But now, Christians are a smaller minority, and there is a group of dedicated atheists who are trying hard to propagate their creed. I say creed, because it is as much a system of belief as the tenets of any small religious sect. It is necessary to reply to their statements, lest some shaky arguments go by default. However, Christians should be much more concerned about the majority who are neither theists (believers in God) nor committed atheists, but are indifferent to the matter (like the Roman governor who 'cared for none of these things').



God, persons and machines: theological reflections

Brian Edgar, May 2010.

Author

Brian Edgar, Professor of Theological Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, and Fellow of ISCAST.

Abstract

The desire to transcend the limitations of human nature along with the development of new biological technologies, nanotechnology and an increasing understanding of genetics is transforming the human person and leading towards the development of cyborgs. The process of merging the mechanical with the biological has begun, the re-creation of the self is underway and the future holds even more changes in store. A symbiotic relationship between humanity and machinery already exists. There is now a debate between trans-humanists who are looking towards a shift in human nature, perhaps moving towards a post-human condition and bio-conservatives who see trans-human

initiatives as nothing other than de-humanising.

In developing a theologically appropriate attitude towards these changes there are three important issues relating to the nature and action of God and the nature of humanity which have to be resolved. The first issue concerns the value of the various orders and structures of the natural world, the species and kingdoms and other previously impenetrable barriers which exist within in the natural world between various forms of life. To what extent are these appropriately blurred or overcome? The second concerns the nature of God's action in the world, the role that humanity plays in representing God and the appropriateness of understanding humanity as co-creators or, preferably, as pro-creators with God. The third concerns the meaning and status of human nature and the limits to our future human-controlled evolutionary development.



How useful is unpredictability?

Bruce Craven, April 2010.

Author

Bruce Craven, Reader in Mathematics at Melbourne University until retirement. Still active in mathematical research and writing.

Abstract

How has gambling become so important, and embedded, in human culture? Does it stem from former conditions when physical risks were necessary? Some unpredictability seems built into the world. What might be a Christian attitude to risk-taking? Could some gambling impulse be directed to better ends?



Exploring questions of origins

James Garth, April 2010.

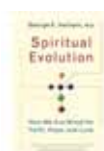
Author

James Garth, Practising aerospace engineer [BEng (Aero) (Hons), MAIAA, AMRAeS] and member of ISCAST

Abstract

It has now been 200 years since the birth of Charles Darwin and 150 years since the publication of the Origin of Species. And yet, controversy still persists within large parts of the Christian community as to whether evolutionary processes are 1) supported by the best available scientific evidence and 2) pose a threat to the tenets of traditional Christianity. This short discussion piece is

presented as a kind of distilled primer for the benefit of those wishing to explore questions of origins, perhaps for the first time. It is written from the perspective of someone who has come from a physical sciences background, whose formative years were largely untainted by the raging controversies concerning evolutionary biology. The so-called 'conflict hypothesis' – that Christianity and science (in general) and Christianity and evolution (in particular) are incompatible – is examined and discredited. Such a conclusion may be of interest to those outside the scientific community who are watching from the sidelines, wondering what all the fuss is about.



Review of George Vaillant's book 'Spiritual evolution: how we are wired for faith, hope and love'

Broadway books, New York. 2008. 231pp.

ISBN: 0767926587 (ISBN13: 9780767926584)

Reviewed by

Alan Gijbers, June 2010.

Review extract

Harvard psychiatrist George Vaillant's book on the positive emotions is a welcome addition to the growing literature on spirituality in medicine. He has studied a cohort of about 320 'Grant men' for nigh on fifty years, so he has a wealth of life-experience behind him. Further he describes that experience using a narrative approach, telling the surprising stories of men of promise who did badly and of those with little promise who did well because they experienced transforming grace and love during their lives. Most recently Vaillant has been involved in the positive emotion movement. This book is the result of five years of reflection on the positive emotions.

Vaillant's thesis is that the positive emotions, faith, love, hope, joy, forgiveness, compassion, awe and mystical illumination have been neglected not only in the psychiatric textbooks studying diseases of the mind (or psyche = soul) but also in the psychology textbooks studying normal human behaviour. Both the negative and the positive emotions lie in the limbic system of the brain rather than in the neocortex. Vaillant argues that while the negative emotions work immediately to protect a human from harm, the positive emotions build up long-term relationships and community.

Do you have an article to submit to Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology?
Contact the editorial team via www.iscast.org/journalpage

Event News

“God's Deputy: Divine Law and the Laws of Nature”

ISCAST (NSW) Meeting

Date: Monday 5 July 2010, 7.30 pm

Venue: Physics Library (Room 64), Old Main Building, The University of NSW

Presenter: Dr Larissa Aldridge. She has a PhD in History & Philosophy of Science, UNSW.

Science and Theology - the Way Forward in the 21st Century

As a part of the Centenary celebrations of the Melbourne College of Divinity in 2010, eminent Australian scientists and theologians will take part in a forum on science and religion.

Date: Tuesday 6 July, from 10:45am

Venue: Trinity College, Melbourne

The scholars include: Rev'd Merrill Kitchen, Rev'd Dr Stephen Ames, Professor John Pilbrow, Professor Bruce Tonge and Professor Paul Komesaroff.

ASA Annual Meeting - USA

Date: 30 July - 2 August 2010

Venue: The Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

They have extended an invitation for ISCAST members to attend at ASA member rates.

Thinking

ISCAST (Vic) Thinking

Date: 21 August 2010, 6:30pm for Dinner (bring food to share) & 8:00pm start discussion

Venue: Clarke's place, 32 Fordham Ave, Camberwell, Vic

Presenter: James Garth will do a presentation on

“New Developments in Military Technology: The convergence of Swords and Ploughshares?”.

ISCAST Vic Annual Lecture

Date: Friday 29 October 2010

Venue: Queen's College, Melbourne, Vic

The 2010 ISCAST Victoria Annual Lecture is being held in conjunction with the ISCAST Intensive and will reflect the Intensive's theme "Who Says? The Use and Misuse of Scripture in an Age of Science and Technology".

The speaker will be: Professor D. Gareth Jones of Otago University, New Zealand.

Prof. Jones, as Director of the Bioethics Centre and Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology at the University of Otago, has an international reputation in his field and is eminently qualified from study and direct experience to speak on this subject.

INTENSIVE (Mini Conference):

Who Says? The Use and Misuse of Scripture in an Age of Science and Technology

Date: 30-31 October 2010

Venue: Queen's College, Melbourne, Vic

This will follow our annual lecture scheduled for Friday 29 October.

The Intensive is titled "Who Says? – The Use and Misuse of Scripture in an Age of Science and Technology". It will explore the way in which Christians apply scripture to the challenges thrown up by Science and technology. Prof D Gareth Jones from The University of Otago in NZ has agreed to be the Keynote speaker.

For more details on events visit

www.iscast.org

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I would like to know more about being associated with ISCAST

Annual Subscription by post: \$10 (Credit Cards add \$2 processing fee) **Total Due: \$** _____

Contact the ISCAST office for payment details.



This is an official organ of ISCAST (The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology, a not for profit organisation registered in New South Wales, Australia).

It is published quarterly in both hard copy and digital formats. It includes news items of relevance to both the ISCAST family and to the engagement of science and Christianity in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

It also includes abstracts of articles submitted to "Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology", ISCAST's online journal and the latest information of events hosted by ISCAST Chapters around Australia and New Zealand.

Items published on the ISCAST website and in this Digest explore the interaction between science and the Christian faith and will be published to foster the discussions and debate. ISCAST cannot endorse any or all of the opinions expressed here.

Details of events published will be correct as at the date of publication but you are encouraged to check the website or with the relevant contact before the event.

Hard copy versions of the Digest are available at the cost of \$10 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST Victoria office.

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