

Hardcopy \$10 pa
Softcopy free

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.

God is Bigger than Big

'Our concept of scale undergoes a complete transformation. Things that we think of as big become tiny specks We ask "What's bigger than big, and what's bigger than that?"'

This quote comes from one of the Swinburne Centre for Astronomy and Supercomputing 3D movies. Many of my colleagues don't have an answer to that question. "Its not meant to have an answer" they tell me, "Its meant to inspire imaginations". That's true enough but I do have an answer to that question ... God is Bigger than Big.

On the evening of Saturday the 21st of May a group of Christians in Science met at Swinburne for a 3D tour of the universe. ISCAST hosted a talk and dinner event "God is Bigger than Big". We started from a grounded perspective, grounded on the moon admittedly. Exploring what astronomy has discovered about the our sun, planets in our solar system, our own galaxy and others very different from it. Wandering to the furthest reaches of knowledge, including what we think about large scale structure of the universe, what space or gravity are and what astronomers mean when they refer to dark matter and dark energy.

After a little while longer than the schedule strictly permitted we packed up and made our way back to Cafe Lark at St Columbs Anglican church in Hawthorn. Over nibbles, dinner and coffee the conversations and questions continued, taking a definite turn to the philosophical. It was a real treat for me to be able to chat to people about some of the questions that really bug me. What do people think of spending money on pure 'unhelpful' research? Did God make us stewards of other planets too? What would it mean for our faith if we found communicating life on other planets and they know Jesus? What would it mean if they didn't?

Thank you to everyone who attended for your curiosity, wonder and questions. This PhD student will not be running out of questions any time soon.

Christina Smith



In this Issue:

- News Items
- Journal Abstracts
- Event News

www.iscast.org

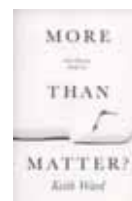
News Items

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



Why God won't go away: Lunchtime talk in St Margaret's Church with Prof. Alister McGrath

Prof. Alister McGrath, one of the world's leading authorities on Richard Dawkins and the New Atheism, speaks about the challenges of radical secularism. Beginning from the premise that New Atheism is the start of an important theological conversation, Prof McGrath moves on to discuss some of the major themes and a Christian critique of them. [More](#)



More than matter?

Mark Vernon reviews Keith Ward's latest book "More Than Matter?" in the May/June issue of Philosophy Now magazine. In his book, Ward comes down squarely on the side of the dualists and idealists in the major intellectual battle currently underway about what it is to be human, suggesting that materialism is inadequate in areas of scientific investigation such as quantum physics and consciousness. [More](#)

News items continued next page...

News Items



God's Undertaker: has science buried God?

Professor John Lennox will deliver a stimulating and provocative lecture on the alleged conflict between faith and science on July 22nd, 2011 from 7:30pm - 10:30pm at Melbourne City Conference Centre, The Auditorium, Melbourne. [More](#)



Hawking's view of heaven "sub-biblical", argues Wright

Prominent scholar N.T. Wright has weighed into the debate over Stephen Hawking's recent comments dismissing heaven as a "fairy story for people afraid of the dark". According to Wright, Hawking's views on heaven are very low-grade and bear little resemblance to the sophisticated views of Christian theism. [More](#)



Is There a God?

This summer Fixed Point will be sponsoring a debate in Melbourne, Australia on the topic "Is There a God?" on When: July 20th, 2011. The debate will feature Princeton University Bio-ethicist and atheist Peter Singer and Oxford University Professor and Christian John Lennox. [More](#)



Christians In Science Northern Conference

Talks and resources from CiS's recent Northern Conference are now available online. [More](#)



Australia develops hypersonic spacecraft

Australia wants to show the world it is serious about space and is using years of well-honed hypersonic know-how to prove it by developing technology for a scramjet-based system for access to space, writes Guy Norris of Aviation Week. [More](#)



Fractals and the Mind of God

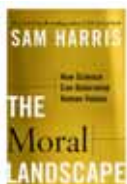
Sir John Houghton discusses fractals, their intricacy, beauty and uncanny similarity with patterns found in nature, in the May 2011 edition of Third Way magazine. [More](#)



Science, certainty and value judgements

Australian intellectual Ian Lowe discusses philosophy of science and the political impact of scientific uncertainty in his essay from

Edition 31 of the Griffith Review; entitled "The crumbling wall: Science, certainty and value judgements". [More](#)



On the 'Moral Landscape'

Cultural and intellectual historian Jackson Lears has published a comprehensive critique of Sam Harris' "The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values" in the May 16th edition of The Nation. [More](#)



Christianity and Science in Historical Perspective, by Ted Davis

Ask the person on the street for an opinion about science and religion, and you are likely to hear something about a confrontation. This article by Prof. Ted Davis turns the debate upside down, and shows how Christianity played an important part in the emergence of science as we know it. [More](#)



Faith confronts the 'why' of disaster

While Science can tell us how an earthquake or tsunami happens, faith asks 'why?', writes Canon Dr Andrew McGowan, Warden of Trinity College, the University of Melbourne. [More](#)



Graeme Clark Research Institute Launch

Graeme Clark Research Institute Launch is on 29 August 2011, 4pm at Tabor Adelaide. The Graeme Clark Research Institute (GCRI) is a new initiative that is being established to conduct, facilitate and promote research and development within Tabor Adelaide in the broad context of Christian service to the community. [More](#)



Tabor-Faraday Conference 2011

Science and Faith: Conflict or Conversation? On 30 August to 1 September 2011 at The Science Exchange, Exchange Place, Adelaide, SA. [More](#)



The Elusive Notion of Proof

How do non scientists assess scientific evidence? How certain is the science or can it be? Murray Hogg, engineer and theologian, discusses these issues in the latest Engage.mail. [More](#)



University of Cambridge Video Archive

The University of Cambridge has developed a special section on their website where an extensive archive of lectures and seminars from the Faraday Institute can be streamed or downloaded in a number of convenient formats. [More](#)



McGrath on ABC Blog

In a new blog on the ABC Religion and Ethics site, Alister McGrath answers the question "Has Science Killed God?" with a resounding No, drawing on William Lane Craig, Peter Medawar, and even Stephen Jay Gould to make his case. [More](#)



A Rosy Future For Planet Earth?

Marek Kohn writes for The Guardian on a new book by Tim Flannery entitled "Here on Earth: A New Beginning". He reviews it critically, questioning the weight which its author assigns to the argument that the ideas of Alfred Russell Wallace hold the key to sustainable existence on earth. [More](#)



Look, no embryos! The future of 'ethical stem cells'

For years, ethical issues hampered progress in stem cell research. Now, experts believe that developments in reprogrammed induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells will truly revolutionise the treatment of life-threatening illnesses. [More](#)

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 Technology: 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 Darwin and Evolution - Interfaith Perspectives: Interface 12/1&2

ATF, Hindmarsh SA, 2009 pp. iv+184
Vol 12, Numbers 1&2, 2009 (double issue)
ISSN: 1329-6264

Reviewed by

Charles Sherlock, May 2011

Review extract

My copy of the quarterly Interface: A Forum for Theology in the World arrived a couple of weeks back, and stayed in my 'read in the train' satchel until I was indeed on VLine three days ago. A theme issue on 'Darwin and Evolution — Interfaith Perspectives', my first thought was 'OK, but I'm getting tired of Darwin analyses'. I should have read this issue as soon as it arrived!

An Introduction (translated from Jacques Arnould OP's French original) notes that the controversial volume *Essays and Reviews* by seven Anglican theologians, issued in the same year as *The Origin of Species*, outsold it ten to one and in a fifth of the time. Which — knowing the former better than the latter volume — made me think, and keep reading. It is followed by an excellent opening chapter by Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlette, reviewing the 'long, strange trip' of Darwin's work in the 150 years since, notable for setting 'anti-theism' within their scale of religious responses. This essay would be an excellent introduction to debates over evolutionary ideas for undergraduates struggling with creation, 'creationism', ID and the like.



Doppelganger planet: Astrobiology and contrasting Christian and transhumanist eschatologies

Jonathan Clarke, May 2011

Author

Jonathan Clarke is a Geologist and Mars researcher who lives and works in Canberra. He is a Director and Fellow of ISCAST, and worships at St. Matthews Anglican Church, Wanniasa, ACT.

Article Extract

Two of the great questions in space science and astronomy are: 'Is there life beyond Earth?' and: 'Are we alone?'. The first question is the province of Astrobiology, the

science of life in the universe of which we so far have one example. The second is the subject of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (abbreviated to SETI). Both have been speculated about since the ancient Greeks, and more recently been the subject of scientific research. Both astrobiology and SETI raise fascinating philosophical and theological questions, for example, Graham Phillips of Monash University and presenter on the ABC Catalyst program wrote an article in *The Age* on the 3rd of October 2010 regarding the challenges they could raise for optimistic views about the material future of humanity.

The peak of optimism about both was perhaps in the 18th century, when most scientists thought that life was universal. Sir William Herschel (who discovered the planet Uranus) even thought there might be life on the Sun. But as our knowledge of the scale and complexity of the universe increased, the likelihood of life, at least in our solar system has diminished. At present astrobiology aims to find potentially present or past habitable environments on Mars, Europa, Enceladus and perhaps elsewhere. But 'potentially habitable' has yet to translate into 'definitely inhabited', despite some ambiguous clues from Mars.



Review of Michel Onfray's book 'The Atheist Manifesto' The case against Christianity, Judaism and Islam

Melbourne University Press, 2007, 219 pp.
ISBN: 9780522853964, ISBN: 0 522 85396

Reviewed by

James Garth, March 2010

Review extract

I have a confession to make. Immediately after reading *The atheist manifesto* I remarked to my wife that I was sorely tempted to brand it as 'intellectual sewage' and consign it to oblivion on the bookshelf. But, shocked by the astonishing harshness of my own initial assessment, and determined to strive for objectivity (lest my subliminal theistic sympathies be unfairly biasing my critique), I sought out other learned reviews, desperate for some sort of confirmation that *Manifesto* really was as bad as it appeared.

Regrettably, it was. *The Age* was scalding, stating 'It is another deliberately distorted, bile-filled jeremiad' (Zwartz 2007), while *The Sydney Morning Herald* was succinct,

labelling it simply as 'a bad, bad book' (Windsor, 2007). This is a shame, since one would be well within reason to expect much, much more from Michel Onfray, lauded as 'France's most popular philosopher' (Melville 2007).



Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change

Richard Gijbers, September 2007

Author

Richard is a forester by training having worked in Victoria, Nepal, India and Cambodia. He also spent some time working on forest policy and planning before moving into consulting. He now works with his wife Glenys as an information management consultant helping businesses and organisations make the most of their information resources.

Abstract

With Climate Change, the time has come for those who can to start to make things happen. While prophetic words are still needed and will continue to be needed, the community is largely convinced of the reality and importance of the matter. We need to move beyond rock concerts, spelling out messages on the beach and preaching sermons warning of what is to come. The question now is 'How should we then live?'

This paper explores this question, looking for pragmatic and effective courses of action for the wider community, including the church in Australia.



What does Genesis tell us?

Bruce Craven, June 2008

Author

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

Abstract

Genesis 1 describes the creation of a coherent world by a single Creator, and humans with something Godlike in them. Days of creation are secondary. While the development took a long time, it was not just random. For chemical elements, and life, to exist, physical constants had to be set with great precision, showing God's purpose.

**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

ISCAST Public Lectures 2011

Dates:

Melbourne - 19 August
Canberra - 20 August
Bathurst - 21 August
Sydney - 23 August
Brisbane - 24 August
Adelaide - TBA
Hobart - TBA

Topic: Did my Neurons Make Me Do It?

Keynote presenter: Nancey Murphy

About our presenter: Nancey Murphy is Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA. She received the B.A. from Creighton University (philosophy and psychology) in 1973, the Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley (philosophy of science) in 1980, and the Th.D. from the Graduate Theological Union (theology) in 1987.

More information at:

http://www.iscast.org/event_2011_Public_Lectures

COSAC 2011 - Conference On Science And Christianity

Date: 26-28 August 2011

Keynote Speaker: Nancey Murphy

Venue: Aspect Tamar Valley Resort, 7 Waldhorn Drive, Grindelwald Tasmania (near Launceston)

Topic: Disenchantment: Faith and Science in a Secular World

From the time of the Enlightenment, Western society has become progressively disenchanted, as a sense of the transcendent and of spiritual forces, which pervaded mediaeval life, was lost, even repudiated. Modern science was part of the cause and is now, in its reductionist form, a result of this process. Paradoxically, in this secular age, there is a new "disenchantment" with such science: post-modern skepticism. Are we now disenchanted with disenchantment? How do Christians who are scientists speak into this world?

Call for presentations have now closed.

A draft program is now available on the website.

Registrations can be made online by filling in the form at www.tinyurl.com/29tkomy. Early bird prices are available if paid by **24 June 2011**.

More information at:

www.iscast.org/cosac_2011

For more details on these events
and other state events visit
www.iscast.org

Other News

ISCAST Shop

The online shop has been revamped and now includes a list of books with links to online book stores. When purchasing your next product through Amazon or the Book Depository, follow the links provided in the ISCAST Shop and earn ISCAST a percentage of sales!



Baby Congratulations

James and Belinda are pleased to announce the safe arrival of Evan Brian Garth, born on May 14th. "Evan" means "God is gracious" and has Welsh origin.

Digest Subscription and Renewals

Please fill out the form if you would like to subscribe to the Digest for the first time or continue your subscription and return it to us by mail or by fax with any payment that might be required. Renewals apply to subscribers who are not members of ISCAST and who have elected to receive the Digest by post, or those wishing to change their subscription from email to post. The digest is issued quarterly. You can also register online at www.iscast.org/Digest_Registration.

Yes, I would like to subscribe to the ISCAST Digest

Yes, please renew my subscription to the ISCAST Digest

Preferred format: Email (no cost) Post (\$10 annual subscription for hardcopy format)

Name: _____

Address: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Chapter: Sydney Bathurst/Orange Victoria Sth Australia Tasmania Queensland

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.

Contact ISCAST:

C/- Stockdale ACS,
300 Huntingdale Rd,
Huntingdale VIC 3166

Phone: (03) 9535 7045
Fax: (03) 8610 1936

Email: admin@iscast.org

www.iscast.org