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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.

## ISCAST and Research

Research is an integral part of ISCAST's strategic direction.

The ISCAST strategic plan identifies four priorities for attention: Building up chapters, boosting our communications, developing a research function, and extending education and training in the science-Christianity interface.

Regarding the research function, ISCAST is planning to develop a research program based around the sciences we are working in and their interface with the Christian faith. For many of us, bringing Christianity into our science is seen to be a CLS (a Career Limiting Step): an embarrassment (maybe), an irrelevance (possibly) or even a betrayal of the principles under which we work. We acknowledge that there are times when there has been reason for this.

And yet there are examples where bringing the Christian faith into areas of human endeavour has broken new ground and provided rich and worthwhile insights with much to offer not only the church but society in general. Some examples of these include:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa: derived from a Christian understanding of the world that broke new ground in addressing past wrongs and provided a means for going forward.
- Brian Edgar's response to the Gene Ethics debate and his 7 point biotheology statements ([www.iscast.org/journal/articles/Edgar\\_B\\_2009-07\\_Biotheology](http://www.iscast.org/journal/articles/Edgar_B_2009-07_Biotheology)). These could further the discussion on this topic in a similar way the 4-principle approach has given a framework for biomedical ethics.

- Michael Wong's PhD thesis exploring the multilayered discourse of the person in the area of psychiatry.

Each of these have insights derived from our Christian faith but that can be offered to society as providing perspectives valuable to more than the Christian community.

How does this apply to Physics? Geology? Forest conservation? Global warming? We don't really know specifically but each of these and the other sciences and the technologies they spawn have an interface with human beings and affect the way we see ourselves, the way we see our relationship with each other, the planet we live on (and the universe in which that exists—note the plug for COSAC 2013!) and therefore the God who placed us here.

With the breadth and calibre of scholarship of its members, ISCAST is in a unique position to develop the means whereby we can identify such topics, set aside suitably qualified researchers in the relevant areas (note the plural!), identify resources to properly and adequately support such research, supervise the research and ensure its quality, and then publish and promulgate the findings so that they will lead beneficial insights and further enquiry.

The Board is currently compiling the Terms of Reference for a new Research Working Group. Please pray for us as we put these together. Please also consider carefully if you can offer support in this area in some way. We will keep you up to date as our thinking develops but feel free to contact the ISCAST office anytime that you feel you want to know more.

Christian regards,

Richard Gijsbers, Secretary ISCAST

### In this Issue:

- News Items
- Journal Abstracts
- Event News

[www.iscast.org](http://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 Science needs the Christian worldview

Christians can be confident in a discussion on the nature and use of science, precisely because only the Christian worldview can provide the necessary preconditions for the intelligibility of scientific inquiry. Science requires a significant number of philosophical assumptions just to conduct empirical investigation. [More](#)



### Mathematics experiencing 'identity crisis'

A peak body representing Australia's mathematical community is calling for the appointment of a national adviser to help revive the subject in schools and universities.

Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute director Geoff Prince says a lack of awareness about the opportunities in the field is turning away potential students. [More](#)

News items continued next page...

## News Items



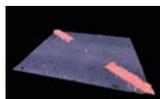
### Can Science End War?

The Fixed Point FIX blog examines Steven Pinker's thesis that violence within democratic constitutional states is in decline as a result of the spread of "Enlightenment humanism" ideals. [More](#)



### Top-down causation

Royal Society Publishing has just published an issue of Interface Focus: 'Top-down causation', organized by George FR Ellis, Denis Noble and Timothy O'Connor. [More](#)



### Nano-transistor breakthrough to offer billion times faster computer

Sydney scientists have built the world's tiniest transistor by precisely positioning a single phosphorus atom in a silicon crystal. [More](#)



### Science Has Not Killed Philosophy

Over the past couple of months, leading philosophers in the United States and Great Britain launched initiatives to develop a new field within the philosophy of science: the philosophy of cosmology. [More](#)



### Science no match for angels at our tables

What can feasting tell us about what it means to be human? And can it reveal the limits of science? Simon Smart digs in. [More](#)



### Am I My Keepers Brother? The significance of shared genetic errors

Dr Philip Pattemore, author of Am I My Keepers Brother? writes about a recent blog he posted on his website. [More](#)



### Knowing the Other through prayer

In The Guardian: "We are impoverished when we discount the evidence of our own experience merely because it is not 'scientific'", writes Brian Conway. [More](#)



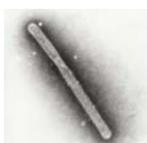
### Review – The Spirituality of Science

Review – The Spirituality of Science: How Science Strengthens Faith in God, Norton Herbst & Gabe Lyons (DVD & book, Zondervan, 2010). [More](#)



### Mixed report card for environment

Current government spending has been unable to arrest Australia's alarming decline in native animal and plant populations, one of the biggest probes into our environmental health has found. [More](#)



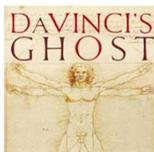
### H5N1 super virus debate

Scientists are debating whether or not to publish a recent H5N1 study after virologists said they had developed a bird flu virus - with a 60 per cent human mortality rate - that could spread as easily as the common cold. Some fear the virus, if it fell into the wrong hands, could be modified by bioterrorists into a weapon that kills billions of people. But supporters said publishing the H5N1 study would have the opposite effect, by helping governments and other scientists learn about how they could counter such pandemics - whether they occurred naturally or artificially. [More](#)



### Report finds Australian students are ditching science

The proportion of Australian students studying science in Year 12 has almost halved in the past two decades, with a report from the saying teenagers find the subject boring. [More](#)



### The story behind the world's most famous drawing

Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is the most widely recognised drawing on the planet, an iconic study of human form and proportion depicting a man standing with arms outstretched, framed by a circle and square. In his new book, Da Vinci's Ghost, Toby Lester uncovers its long and intricate history, explaining how the drawing built on the idea that the human form was a precisely proportioned structure representing the measure of all things - a

philosophy developed by the Roman architect Vitruvius during the rule of Caesar Augustus. [More](#)



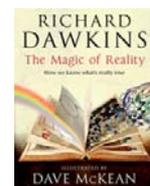
### Climate change is a matter of justice

The richest countries caused the problem, but it is the world's poorest who are already suffering from its effects, and the international community must commit to righting that wrong, argue Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson at the Durbin climate talks. [More](#)



### Where God meets physics

Eminent thinker and commentator Revd Dr John Polkinghorne, Fellow of the Royal Society, gives an overview of his talk at St Edmund's College, Cambridge, entitled A Destiny Beyond Death, sharing his understanding of the relationship between science and religion. [More](#)



### The Magic of Reality: Review

Ruth Bancewicz reviews Richard Dawkins' latest book "The Magic of Reality" on the Test of Faith website. The review finds that there is much to appreciate in this book, especially Dawkins' sense of wonder at the natural world and the many beautiful illustrations and analogies, notwithstanding his underlying reliance on a logical positivist philosophy and a rather blunt treatment of metaphysics and myths. [More](#)



### The State of Science

Australian scientists including Ian Chubb, Penny Sackett and Stephan Lewandowsky share their thoughts on science education, scepticism, self-criticism and other topics in an extensive twelve-part series called "The State of Science" published by The Conversation. [More](#)



### Florey Medal Winner Prof. Graeme Clark

Prof. Clark, a member of ISCAST, has received the Florey medal, which is awarded biennially to an Australian researcher for significant achievements in biomedical science and / or human health advancement. [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](http://www.iscast.org/journalpage))*



### Neuroscience, Addiction and the Gospel

Alan Gijbsers, November 2011

#### Author

Alan Gijbsers is an Honorary Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine, Royal Melbourne Hospital, University of Melbourne.

#### Abstract

How do concepts in the neuroscience of addiction affect the way the Christian Church shares the Gospel? Relevant neuroscientific concepts include:

- reductionism and complexity;
- mind-brain relationships as they apply to the emotions;
- the relation between reason and the emotions; and
- the concept of emotional dysregulation and how it appears to arise out of poor relationships.

These concepts challenge the way we treat addiction. If the relation between emotions and reason is as suggested, and if good emotions arise out of good relationships, this fundamentally challenges the way we as a Church speak and live out the Good News of the love of God in Christ towards all who are broken and in need of God's love. I particularly ask the question whether dispassionate rationalism robs the Gospel of vital elements and whether insights in neuroscience and addiction might point to a more passionate, integrated and relational way forward.



### What doubt is reasonable?

Bruce Craven, December 2011

#### Author

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

#### Abstract

A recent book (Oreskes and Conway 2010), entitled *Merchants of Doubt*, how a handful of scientists obscure the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming, has stated that the recent debate over the climate crisis and many other environmental issues was manufactured by the same people who brought you 'safe'

cigarettes. A number of reviewers have commended the book, and support its conclusions. A few others (who may have an association with the industries that the book criticises) seem to regard it a personal attack on several critics. There are also possibilities of political bias. Whether or not the Oreskes/Conway thesis is eventually accepted, there are lessons to learn from the episode.



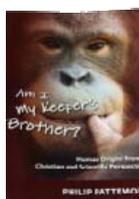
### From where I stand: a personal story about medicine and science

Alan Gijbsers, January 2012

#### Abstract

I am a specialist physician in Addiction Medicine. I see patients who suffer from alcohol or other substance abuse problems. It takes considerable courage for them to face up to issues which often cause shame and despair. I see myself as an agent of hope, helping people move out of a sense of shame and defeat into a sense of hope, direction and purpose.

How did I get to practise this specialty? It was a twisting journey with a number of unexpected turns. So often it felt as if I was stumbling about in the darkness, hardly knowing whether the next step was the right one. There were some strange turnings, including failures as a young registrar at specialist exams and a middle age retrenchment when the government cut back its commitment to public hospital care. But looking back I can see God's hand leading me, sometimes more specifically during times of doubt and failure than in the times of dizzying success when the world seemed to be at my feet. I can only recall fragments of why I became what I became, and even the retelling of the story alters the details.



### Review of Phillip Pattermore's book 'Am I my keeper's brother?'

Jonathan Clarke, January 2012

#### Review Abstract

This recently published book takes its title from the old joke about apes in a zoo pondering their relationship with their keeper. It is a welcome addition to the corpus of

antipodean writing on the subject of science and Christian faith. The author, a New Zealand medical researcher, joins a growing number of New Zealand scientists, such as Graham Finlay and Gareth Jones, who have written about the specific issues of science and Christianity from a bio-medical perspective. Like many such books it rises out of the author's own experience in the trenches as a practising scientist and Christian. Broadly comparable works might include Berry's *God and Evolution* or Lamoureux's *Evolutionary Creation*. The strength of these books lies in their personal dimension and in their engagement with the scientific issues. The theological side is from the perspective of practising Christians widely read in theology rather than as professional theologians. The book is a substantial work, over 400 pages.

It deals primarily with anthropology – biological, as pertaining to human evolution; biblical, as pertaining to the image of God; original sin, and the nature of the soul and afterlife, and the interaction between the two.



### Working hypotheses in science

Bruce Craven, January 2012

#### Author

B D Craven is a Reader in Mathematics at Melbourne University until retirement. Still active in mathematical research and writing.

#### Abstract

Is criticism allowed in scientific debate?

A scientist is constrained by the climate of opinion of others in his area. A recent journalist's article (Booker 2010) states that scientists are under strong peer pressure to conform to majority opinions. Specifically, he asserts that scientists are often not free to doubt aspects of Darwinian evolution, or of the prevailing model (CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere) of climate change. This author is perhaps himself a partisan of Intelligent Design (ID), (which is not being advocated here), or a climate sceptic; but something may still be learned from his viewpoint. Without listening to critics, no one can mend the holes in an accepted theory.

Many questions in the field of evolution turn on specialist issues in palaeontology; all that can be done here on such things is to cite references where these matters are surveyed.

**Do you have an article to submit to Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology?**  
Contact the editorial team via [www.iscast.org/journalpage](http://www.iscast.org/journalpage)

## Event News

### God and Science Seminars

Tabor Adelaide is running a series of seminars throughout Australia, 'God and Science: *In the Pulpit* for Christian leaders and *'In the Classroom'* for classroom teachers and education support staff.



### Cost and Booking

God and Science seminars, *In the Pulpit* and *In the Classroom*, are free and includes light refreshments on the day. However, a donation of \$10 per attendee would be gratefully accepted.

Bookings online: [www.taboradelaide.edu.au](http://www.taboradelaide.edu.au)

### Meeting Dates and Locations

- **Adelaide** | Monday 19th March  
Presented by Mark Worthing
- **Perth** | Wednesday 21st March  
Presented by Graham Buxton
- **Brisbane** | Wednesday 21st March  
Presented by Mark Worthing
- **Canberra** | Monday 26th March  
Presented by Chris Mulherin
- **Melbourne** | Monday 26th March  
Presented by Mark Worthing
- **Sydney** | Tuesday 27th March  
Presented by Chris Mulherin
- **Hobart** | Wednesday 28th March  
Presented by Graham Buxton

### ISCAST Victoria: 3-Day Intensive

ISCAST Victoria will running their Intensive on November 9, 10 and 11. Be sure to pencil these dates into your diary. More information will be available closer to the event.

### Test of Faith: Science and Christianity Discussion Panel

**Date:** Monday 16th April

**Venue:** State Library of Victoria (Village Roadshow Theatre)

**Time:** 7:00-9:00pm

**Cover charge:** \$5

**Website:** [reasonforfaith.org.au](http://reasonforfaith.org.au)

**Reason  
for Faith Festival**

## Other News

Look us up on:

 Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ISCAST](http://www.facebook.com/ISCAST)

 Twitter: [@ISCAST\\_Oz](https://twitter.com/ISCAST_Oz)

 Tune in to our [Podcast](#)

Keep an eye on  
the website for  
events in 2012  
[www.iscast.org](http://www.iscast.org)

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I would like to know more about being associated with ISCAST

**Annual Subscription by post: \$15** (Credit Cards add \$2 processing fee) **Total Due: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact the ISCAST office for payment details.

**ISCAST**  
CHRISTIANS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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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