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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.

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www.iscast.org

Frankly Speaking

Prof David Goldney
Fellow ISCAST and recently retired board member

I am in my twilight years, a professional scientist (landscape ecologist), now an adjunct professor and, from birth, immersed in the evangelical tradition. I am a long-time mail-order(!) member of Christians in Science (UK) although a fifth generation Australian and I have a personal history of engaging with my university colleagues and the wider community about aspects of science and faith by way of public seminars and personal conversation. I have been a member and fellow of ISCAST for less than five years—how so?

'Coming in from the cold' perhaps allows one to view the ISCASTian Christian sub-culture with a fresh pair of eyes. In this article I attempt to throw some light on my enigmatic behaviour by engaging further with two aspects of ISCAST's strategic plan—'communications' and 'building up chapters'.

Choosing to live and work in Bathurst for 40 years in a small university city has its drawbacks in pursuing 'science and faith' matters. The relatively few 'Christian' scientists and technologists I come across are usually very committed to their local churches or thinly scattered across neighbouring towns and villages.

I have over the years found time to visit 'as a stranger' a number of ISCAST groups either in nearby cities within 3-4 hour's drive of Bathurst or during my professional travels to other Australian cities. The meetings I attended were often in out of the way places, with 20-40 participants present. Rarely was I made to feel welcome and usually I found myself in conversation with another uncomfortable 'outsider'. Is this a continuing characteristic of ISCAST meetings or was I simply unlucky or was it a situation of my own making?

I continue to wonder whether we think strategically enough as to where our major meeting places are located within our cities. Do we expect people to come to us rather than the more confronting option of seeking to be relevant in more adventurous ways? Are we at times self-serving rather than a 'servant' organisation?

Perhaps in the steps of St Paul we might experiment with groups in 'faraway places' such as Wollongong or Newcastle or even Sutherland Shire or the equivalent cities and suburbs in other states or in various locations within NZ, or even in the local Pub? Developing groups need much more than the offer of financial help—mentoring and offers of available speakers for example!

My experience informs me that there is a real hunger in the wider community regarding matters of science and faith that is not being adequately addressed by the Christian Church in general and us in particular. Is it time to leave the Ivory Towers and to tap more realistically into this groundswell of community interest? It surely represents an ever increasing opportunity to address matters of the 'Word of God in Nature' as well as the 'Word of God in Scripture'.

I also wonder (for the first time out loud) about ISCAST as an effective acronym to flagship our organisation. Our 'split' personality on this matter appears to be revealed by the need to provide an explanatory sub-title 'Christians in Science and Technology' that seems to me to be a much clearer mode of communication, as to what we are on about, so why not become CISAT!

I am delighted to witness the success of the ISCAST web site and the opportunities opening up to us in various media outlets. Given the depth of understandings and experience of our fellows and member's, here are a few challenges that we might consider:

- Someone take responsibility for negotiating a weekly article on science and faith in at least one major newspaper;
- Become more visible in public media presentations such as 'Encounter' and 'Occam's Razor' and even 'Q and A' (How embarrassing was George Pell!);
- Take time to grow our numbers by communicating our presence within local churches via Sunday morning presentations;
- Identify members who are willing to travel to other states or locations to deliver an address that they have already prepared (that would be very welcome in the Bathurst-Orange chapter);
- Be more active in identifying and nurturing Christian university students who are studying science/technology/medicine etc;
- Encourage our community to be more active in writing books on 'science and faith matters' with an Australasian perspective; and
- Seek to increase the number of women members and fellows within ISCAST.

I will try and practice what I am preaching – how about you?

Editor's Note: We asked, on David's retirement from the board, to submit his thoughts. We will miss him and his provocative (and yet wise and thoughtful) input. Some of his challenges are to the board and we will need to think and respond to them. Some of them however are to the members of ISCAST and we ask that you consider how you would respond to them as well. -Richard Gijbers

News Items



Melbourne researchers rewrite Big Bang theory

Melbourne researchers believe they may be on the brink of rewriting the history of the universe. A paper being published in a US physics journal suggests it may be possible to view "cracks" in the universe. [More...](#)

News items continued next page...

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.

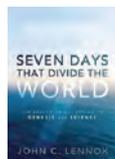


Why bother? On fighting a losing battle

Is the prospect of technological success the motivating factor for ecological concern, or does Christian eschatology give a hope that transcends consequentialist reasoning? [More](#)

TED 5 Designers Working Hard to Save Babies

Designers are fighting neonatal mortality with a variety of innovative inventions, including a sleeping bag that saves lives, an infant respirator designed by students, jaundice treatment for rural hospitals and a sleep apnea monitor made from bike parts. [More](#)



But Does it Move? John Lennox writes for BioLogos on Science and the Bible

Dr Lennox writes: "Most of us would surely agree that it is important to distinguish between matters that belong to the core message of the Bible and issues that are less central, where there is room for variation in opinion. [More](#)



Curiosity Video Update Shows Descent Of Heat Shield

The Wired (8/9, Mann) "Wired Science" blog reports, "This new video from NASA gives you the chance to experience that pit-of-the-stomach feeling right before dropping down to the surface of Mars with the Curiosity rover. An update to their previous film of the harrowing descent, it provides a higher frame rate to let you watch the spacecraft's heat shield plummet away." [More](#)



Images from Curiosity Landing Sent Back To Earth

"NASA's Curiosity rover on Monday transmitted a low-resolution video showing the last 2 1/2 minutes of its white-knuckle dive through the Mars atmosphere, giving Earthlings a sneak peek of a spacecraft landing on another world." reports Alicia Chang, AP Science Writer. It is a "sneak preview" of the high-resolution video to come that has yet to be transmitted back. [More](#)



Test of Faith website update for iPad

After four years of activity, the Test of Faith website (www.testoffaith.com) has been given a face-lift, and is now iPad friendly. New resources this month are a series of interview clips with Professor Peter Harrison (<http://tinyurl.com/crzz9vu>) and a review of BioLogos's new DVD, 'From the Dust: Conversations in Creation' (<http://tinyurl.com/c5zyfu>). [More](#)



Interview with John Updike

A conversation with the novelist John Updike about the mystery of existence and the Origin of the Universe and what constitutes 'Nothing'. [More](#)



Interview with Chris Mulherin

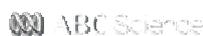
Chris Mulherin, featured on Eureka Street TV, is an Anglican clergyman with a substantial academic background studying and lecturing in science and the philosophy of science. [More](#)



Australian Government resists calls for nano-materials register

The ABC's revelations that some sunscreen brands are inaccurately promoting themselves as nanotechnology-free have prompted calls for better regulation of nano-materials.

But the push for a mandatory register has suffered a blow, with a Federal Government report labelling it questionable. [More](#)



The science games

Behind every elite athlete is an army of scientists helping them shave seconds off world records. ABC science journalist Stephen Pincock looks at how science helps athletes get faster, higher and stronger. [More](#)



Astronomers find rare spiral galaxy in early Universe

Astronomers have stumbled upon an astonishing spiral galaxy that was born nearly 11 billion years ago, a finding that could spur a rethink of how galaxies formed after the Big Bang. [More](#)



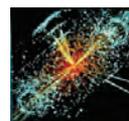
Test of Faith Video now available

Video is now available from the "Test of Faith: Science and Christianity Discussion Panel" event held on Monday 16th April 2012 at the State Library of Victoria. The event was organized by ISCAST and the City Bible Forum as part of the Reason For Faith Festival 2012. [More](#)



Am I My Brother's Keeper - A book by Dr Philip Pattemore

How did human life come to be? Can a scientific view of human origins ever be reconciled with the Biblical account of human nature? When scientific ideas appear to contradict the Bible, how do we react – and how do we evaluate what is true? [More](#)



Why Scientists Don't Like the Term 'God Particle' for the Higgs boson

Scientists claim they have discovered the Higgs boson, also called the "God particle," that could help explain what gives all matter in the universe size and shape. Christianity Today's blog on how the term evolved. [More](#)



'Higgs Boson helps us find out more about God', says Christian scientist

Physicists have announced they believe they may have found the elusive "God particle". [More](#)



Science, superstition and rational belief

Nancey Murphy is professor of Christian philosophy at Fuller Seminary. Her areas of interest include theology and science, philosophy of mind, Christian anthropology, and neuroscience. She is the author of Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning, Did my neurons make me do it? and Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies? [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)



The cognitive science of religion and Christian faith: some preliminary considerations

Jonathan Jong, June 2012

Author

Jonathan Jong, Centre for Anthropology and Mind, University of Oxford

Abstract

The 'cognitive science of religion' (CSR) is an inter-disciplinary research programme, predominantly involving anthropologists, psychologists, religious studies scholars, and philosophers. The aim of the research programme is, in Boyer's (2001) titular phrase, to 'explain religion'. That is, CSR endeavours to understand the psychological underpinnings of religious belief and behaviour, thereby explaining the ubiquity of religious belief and practice and the similarities and differences across religious traditions. While the empirical and theoretical research has been going on for nearly two decades, little attention has been turned to the implications of CSR for Christian belief and practice. In this paper, I shall (begin to) explore the potential implications of CSR for traditional Christian theism.

The cognitive science of religion

Religion is historically and cross-culturally ubiquitous; we incorrigibly and promiscuously believe in supernatural agents: in gods and ghosts, angels and demons, souls and spirits, and their ilk. But why should this be so?

Why is religious belief—as costly and counterintuitive as it so often is—so irresistible, so pervasive and persistent despite political persecution (for example in Soviet Russia, Communist China, Socialist Albania) and the protestations of public intellectuals (e.g., d'Holbach 1770; Hitchens 2007; Russell 1957)?



The Enlightenment and Joseph Priestley's disenchantment with science and religion

Kevin de Berg, June 2012

Author

Kevin de Berg BSc DipEd BEd MAppSc PhD MRACI MACS MACE is A/Professor in Chemistry and Director for Interdisciplinary

Studies in Science, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW 2265. Paper originally presented at COSAC2011, Launceston, Tasmania, 26 August 2011.

Abstract

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) is largely known for his discovery of oxygen or, as he called it, dephlogisticated air. He is less well-known as a minister, educator, and theologian. The established church of the day presented many challenges to Priestley because of its control functions in government, university education, and Christian belief. Priestley, influenced by the 18th century enlightenment principles of reason, justice and equity, made a significant contribution to the dissenting academies in England to the extent that an education in a dissenting academy was regarded by many as superior to that obtained at Oxford or Cambridge. France was the centre of 18th century chemistry but, for reasons to be outlined in the paper, Priestley resisted Lavoisier and his new chemistry. The paper demonstrates how Priestley's disenchantment with religion revolved very much around the role of tradition in the orthodox church and its relationship to the sacred text of scripture; and his disenchantment with French science arose from what he saw as a kind of scientism. The paper finally draws some implications of these issues for today.

Introduction

Priestley's aversion to ideas which had become fashionable in his day revolved around the way these ideas disempowered the individual. These issues exercised the mind of Priestley not only because he was interested Kevin de Berg in pursuing truth but also because he vigorously opposed the State mandating religious belief. The State required adherence to the principles of the Church of England if an individual sought public office or an appointment to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or, for that matter, sought admission as a student to these universities...



Review of "The Faraday Papers" (various authors)

Ian Hore-Lacy, August 2010.

Faraday Papers 1-16 at this stage

Faraday Institute for Science & Religion, St Edmund's College, Cambridge, UK.

Extract

This is a wonderful collection of papers, each four A4 pages, covering a range of topics

relevant to ISCAST. Their diversity allows each author to write according to interest without any imposed editorial homogeneity, and in my view this enhances their appeal.

John Polkinghorne leads the way with an overview of 'The science and religion debate' and how it has been manifest as argument and conversation. While most of us have read plenty along this line, he manages to bring a fresh treatment. Paper 4 by him extends the natural theology part of this to an excellent exposition of the anthropic principle, in simple language. It highlights the quandary of scientists who recognize the importance of the specific conditions for carbon-based life — the finetuning — but have no inclination to look outside science for any explanation.



Evolution—a short guide for the perplexed

Bruce Craven
October 2008

Author

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

Abstract

Some people 'believe in' evolution, as if it were a religion. Some conclude from it that predatory human behaviour ('winner takes all') is justified. Some say that, because mutations are random, there can be no purpose or meaning in the world, or ourselves. Some strongly disbelieve in evolution because it conflicts with an interpretation of a sacred text. All these are serious distortions of a scientific theory.

Note that 'theory' means a coherent set of ideas, with substantial evidence to support them. It does NOT mean a dodgy conjecture, with little to back it.

It is a big misunderstanding to put evolution in that dodgy class. Nonetheless, evolution includes a whole package of ideas, and they are not all equally supported by evidence. No one need swallow a whole package without considering its various ingredients.

The sacred text mentioned (Genesis) is worthy of respect. But it has been interpreted quite differently, in ancient times (long before our current disputes) as well as now. A literal six-day creation of a 'young earth' is not the only tenable interpretation.

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 Melbourne: 3-Day Intensive

The "Intensive" (mini conference) is planned for the weekend of the **10-11 November 2012**. This will follow our annual lecture scheduled for Friday 9 November.

Keynote Speaker: Rev Dr Mark Worthing, Research Fellow, Graeme Clark Research Institute, Tabor Adelaide.

Topic: Divine Disclosure in an Age of Science and Technology

How Can God Be Known in the Modern Age?

Science and technology raise many challenges for Christian thought, not the least of these is how God can be known in the modern age, and the extent to which the Bible remains relevant as a source of that knowledge. This weekend is a time to explore such issues from pastoral, theological and professional perspectives. Students in particular are invited.

Parallel Sessions: A number of parallel sessions will also be offered on a wide range of topics by Australian scholars and members of ISCAST.

Venue: Center for Theology and Ministry, 29 College Crescent, (corner Morrison Close), Parkville 3052

Time: 9am–5pm Saturday & 9am–4.30pm Sunday

[Register online now](#)

Phone 03 9535 7045 with enquiries or go to:

www.iscast.org/Intensive2012

Conference On Science And Christianity (COSAC 2013)

Date: 19 - 21 July 2013

Venue: Tabor Adelaide, South Australia

Keynote presenter: David Wilkinson

Topic: "Faith, Hope and Quarks: Scientific and Theological Perspectives on the Future"

Call for presenters NOW OPEN! See the website for details

www.iscast.org/COSAC2013



Other News

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 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

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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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