

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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ISCAST President's Report 2012-2013

A/Prof Alan Gijsbers.

The following is an edited version of the report presented by Alan at COSAC this year.

It is my pleasure to present this report to the ISCAST community for the 2012-13 year.

The Board

In the past year the Board consisted of Alan Gijsbers (President), John Pilbrow (Past President), Michael Wong (Treasurer), Richard Gijsbers (Secretary, ex officio), and Peter Barry, Jonathan Clarke, Peter Eyland, James Garth, and Mick Pope (as ordinary members). I note with regret that John Pilbrow will be retiring this year and we will miss his experience and wisdom. John will continue as editor of CPOSAT - our online journal.

As well as regular board meetings we had a Saturday retreat facilitated by Richard Gijsbers which enabled us to clarify our next steps beyond our vision, mission and ethos.

The Administration

We owe an enormous debt to Stockdale ACS who provide a more than professional service, maintaining our finances, mailing lists, and administrative momentum. In the overall hierarchy of governance, execution and admin (as well as facilitating COSAC) we find that Richard (as Board Secretary and de facto EO), Glenys and the team add greatly to the direction and finishing of ISCAST decisions.

Finances

These are reported elsewhere in more detail. The only thing to say is that we have some assets and we believe it is time to invest these in ventures to yield a greater return than just bank interest. Accordingly we have decided to appoint an Executive Project Officer drawing, as required, on those assets. The EPO will work with the Chapters to develop our ministry. This is outlined further below.

Fellows, Members and Associates

We currently have four life members, 43 Fellows, 73 associates, seven corporate/family members and three student members. Their subscriptions represent about 20% of our total national income. Other income includes Events Revenue (50%), Donations & Grants (12.5%), Donations (6.6%), and Science & Christian Belief subscriptions (4.4%).

Chapters

It is important for members to be salt and light both in their vocation and their churches. The Chapters are key to this, and we wish to see them flourish. We have active chapters in Melbourne, Sydney, Gippsland, and in Orange NSW. Other states have interested fellows and associates without formal

programs.

Encouraging these and building them up is now a priority for ISCAST.

Communications Working Group

We are grateful to James Garth for his administration of the ISCAST website and for the successful way he has completed the project funded by the Templeton Grant of \$30K. Our next step is to set up a new website dedicated to the Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology online journal.

It is vital that we encourage the ISCAST community to develop their thinking on the challenges posed by their sciences to their faith and vice versa. The purpose of CPOSAT is to enable us to publish on this thinking and enhance the dialogue that is taking place.

COSAC

We thank the Graeme Clark Research Institute and Tabor College for hosting this year's COSAC. It was an outstanding success. While we had budgeted for 100 delegates, only about 60 attended but, through careful stewardship, we will at least break even.

There are some organisations which make a major profit from their annual conferences but this is not the ISCAST experience so far. If we had doubled our numbers we would have widened our influence and income.

Research Projects

We were part of a successful GCRI/ISCAST project looking at Science and Religion in the Pulpit and the Classroom. A number of lectures--one set aimed at science teachers and one at pastors--were presented in different states. Mark Worthing, Chris Mulherin and Graham Buxton have published a book of the lectures they presented.

We were unsuccessful in winning a Templeton Grant for a combined GCRI/ISCAST project, organised by Mark Worthing, Belinda Garth, Michael Wong and Alan Gijsbers. We put a lot of effort into this application and we have to think carefully about future ones.

The Executive Project Officer

After a failed attempt to gain Templeton Funding for an Executive Officer in which the Board spent \$3K, we decided that we would aim to fund an EPO from within our own community. This will be a one day a week position and we have budgeted \$35K for this.

This represents an estimated \$300 per member per year. The board have decided that if we can raise \$20K by October 2013 we will go ahead. We have a position description and will advertise for candidates soon after the end of October.

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.



Templeton Report: Where Science and Religion Can Overlap

It is a common thought that the worldviews of science and religion are very different and are best not mixed.

This is one way to summarize the “non-overlapping magisteria” view of the relationship between these two great quests for understanding, associated with the late American paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould. But is this assessment accurate?

Owen Gingerich, a former colleague of Gould and Professor Emeritus of Astronomy and History of Science at Harvard University, discussed this model in his Herrmann Lectures on Faith and Science, delivered last week at Gordon College...

[Read more](#)



Towards Belief for your Church

Looking for a fresh idea for your church outreach program? Something to use in small groups and/or your services?

Towards Belief is a contemporary resource that is perfectly suited for a variety of uses within a church context.

[Read more](#)



RIP Prof. Allan Day

17/12/1927 - 29/7/2013

Friends and members of ISCAST will be sorry to hear that Allan Day died on Monday 29 July after

a short illness.

Allan was very active in ISCAST and, before that, the Research Scientists' Christian Fellowship. He was Victoria's first Executive Officer and very much the reason for its strength here.

He left behind a legacy of writing (including the notes of his Science and Christian Belief (www.iscast.org/notes_on_science_and_christian_belief) and memories of (very) long discussions about his passion of relating science with his Christian faith.

ISCAST will miss him greatly and he leaves a

big space for the next generation to step into.

[Read more](#)



RIP Prof. Jim Ward

We at ISCAST note the passing of Prof. Jim Ward, physicist and Christian. We thank God for his scholarship and his commitment to

Jesus Christ his Lord. Attached is the eulogy presented by Brian Bayston at the interment of his body. It is exciting to think that all that knowledge he pursued in his lifetime is now available to him and that he now “knows fully even as he is known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

[Read more](#)



The Challenge of Cosmology

Originally published on the BioLogos Forum:

<http://biologos.org/>

In the past century, our knowledge of the universe has grown at an extraordinary rate. Distant “nebulae” thought to be objects in our own galaxy were found to be entire galaxies of their own. Later observations unveiled galaxy clusters, clusters of clusters, massive filaments and superclusters, and giant walls of galaxies millions of light-years in length.

[Read more](#)



Biblical Credibility and Joshua 10: What Does the Text Really Claim?

Originally published on the BioLogos Forum: <http://biologos.org/>

In Joshua 10:12-15, we read of a prayer made by Joshua in the heat of battle requesting that the sun and moon stop, stand still, and wait so that the Israelites could defeat the Amorites that day.

This account ranks as one of the most frequently invoked passages for how the credibility of the Bible fails in the world of science.

President's Report *continued from Page 1...*

The ISCAST Travelling Fellow Program

We have a range of fellows who have lectures and will travel. I strongly urge Chapters to think about their programs for the year and to look to Fellows in other States as a resource to speak to issues of concern in your Chapters.

Strategic Link with Schools

The GCRI/ISCAST project has highlighted the need to be more involved in secondary schools and we need to develop this further. The Science Camps run in the past jointly by Scripture Union and the then Research Scientists Christian Fellowship is a model I would dearly love to resurrect.

Research Strategy

Conducting research in this area is difficult and expensive. It is something ISCAST wishes very much to encourage but we will need champions and financial support before we can do this at any level.

Test of Faith Promotion

This excellent course needs to be more widely promoted. One of the ways would be to bring Ruth Bancewicz out as a visiting lecturer (we have yet to ask her!).

And so the Good Ship ISCAST continues to sail through uncharted waters. I am very aware that we are feeling our way but am also confident of God's oversight. Our role as an institute is to provide an atmosphere where scientists, academics theologians and others can come together and test each others' thinking and then present that to the community be it the wider church, the international science-faith community or our own society.

There is much that we can offer and I ask for your continued prayers and support that we can make this possible and that the dialogue in which we partake will flourish for the sake of God's kingdom and his glory.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

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)



Temple theology and creation

Gregory Jacobs SJ, 2013

Author

(Fr) Gregory Jacobs SJ, MTS, GradDipArts (HPS), GradDipEd, BSc, BTheol is an Australian Jesuit priest who has worked in school and parish ministry. He is currently doing further study in Edinburgh in Master of Science (Science and Religion).

Abstract

The modern scientific method of reductionism does not always work when we investigate creation stories. Here science is not so much the common tool, or the most useful instrument. When we begin to examine the language of the Genesis creation story with that of the tabernacle and temple language of the early Israelite community we gain a clearer sense of what they might have understood about God's place in creation, and our role to maintain that unity of creation with theology.

[Read the full article online](#)



'Fine tuning' explored within a Christian understanding of reality

John Pilbrow, February 2013

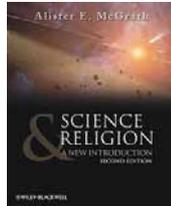
Author

John Pilbrow, Emeritus Professor of Physics, Monash University, Fellow of ISCAST

Abstract

We live in a remarkable 13.7 billion year old universe, on a 4.55 billion year old planet! Surprising as it may seem, it took some 10 billion years of cosmic evolution and the emergence of a vast universe for carbon-based life even to be possible. There is strong evidence that special conditions, or fine-tuning, have operated to enable a universe such as ours, containing intelligent life, to exist...

[Read the full article online](#)



Review of Science & religion: a new introduction (Alister E McGrath)

Colin Goodwin, February 2013

Wiley-Blackwell, second edition, 2010, 264 pp. ISBN: 1405187913

Extract

A brilliant exploration of science/religion debate. Let me say at once that the more I read of Alister McGrath's exceptional output of theological writing the more I am tempted to say that he is to 21st century theology pretty much what Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was to 18th century music. In terms of broadness of scope, sustained brilliance, variety of expression, and challenging nuances, these two giants of high culture reveal in their respective domains a striking degree of similarity.

The second edition of Alister McGrath's *Science & Religion: a new introduction* underscores this point. Any of an array of laudatory adjectives might be employed to evaluate the book. I shall employ wondrous in its standard sense of 'causing amazement and admiration' to do so, just as one might use the same adjective to praise, say, Mozart's flute and harp concerto in C, K 299. That McGrath's *Science & religion: a new introduction* is capable of 'causing amazement and admiration' is clear for at least the following reasons.

[Read the full article online](#)



On why we should agree with contemporary atheists — or why a generic god does not exist

Robert Brennan, May 2013

Author

Rev. Dr Robert Brennan. Ordained Uniting Church minister with a background in industrial physics and theology.

Abstract

This paper discusses why Christians ought not believe in the god that atheists do not believe in – but often do. It is argued that there is a problem in assuming the existence of a generic all powerful good 'god'. Three typical well argued cases are examined which arrive at differing conclusions about the nature of 'god'. Barth argued that any such generic case was weak. He favours the specific God of Jesus Christ. In siding with Barth, it is concluded that a form of agreement with contemporary atheism should stand in affirming that a generic class of god does not exist.

[Read the full article online](#)



Can the computer be a substitute for humanity?

Mark Worthing, May 2013

Author

Rev. Dr. Mark Worthing. Lutheran pastor and theologian, with doctorates in both theology and the history and philosophy of science. He is also a fellow of ISCAST and Senior Researcher at the Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics, Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide.

Abstract

When world chess champion Garry Kasparov was beaten by the IBM computer Deep Blue in 1996, concerns were raised about our relationship with computers and how human uniqueness could be under threat. Mark Worthing reflects on artificial intelligence and its theological implications.

Extract

In the early years of computing there was a very real fear among some, expressed in both academic essays and sci-fi writing, that computers might achieve consciousness, and rise up to challenge human beings. Even though recent films like the Terminator and Matrix series have been built upon this scenario, few now realistically consider such a revolt of the machines a possibility. The present concern is rather that elements of our humanity will be all too easily allowed to diminish as we happily allow computers to do much of our thinking, remembering and decision-making on our behalf.

[Read the full article online](#)

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

News and Events



23 November, 2013: The legacy of Allan Day

Date: Saturday, 23 November

Time: 6.30 for a meal - please bring something to share or at 8:00pm for the meeting

Venue: At the home of Andrew and Frances Wood, 26 Lynnwood Pde, Lower Templestowe, 3107

The legacy of Allan Day: moving forward in the Science-Faith Dialogue

At this meeting we will honour the contribution the late Emeritus Prof Allan J. Day BSc, MSc, MBBS, MD, DPhil, DSc, BTh made to science and faith relationships, especially through his work with ISCAST. Three people will reflect on aspects of Allan's work and lead discussion regarding future possibilities.

"Why all the fuss about Bioethics?"

Dr Denise Cooper-Clarke (with reference to Allan Day's "Why all the fuss about stem cells?")

"Allan, Anthropology and the Human Person"

Assoc Prof Alan Gijsbers (with reference to Allan Day's "Adam, Anthropology and the Genesis Record")

"Allan Day on Science and Christian Faith"

Emeritus Prof John Pilbrow (with reference to Allan Day's "Science and Christian Faith")

RSVP: Please come in any event, but preparations would be helped by using the [RSVP form](#) found on the ISCAST website.

Any other enquiries to Brian Edgar on 03-98122294.

Executive Project Officer Update

The pledges in support of the Executive Project Officer have continued to come in. In addition to the \$9,400 promised so far a donation of \$15,000 has also been promised subject to ISCAST setting up a Charitable Fund, properly constituted to receive and manage donations. This is currently being set up.

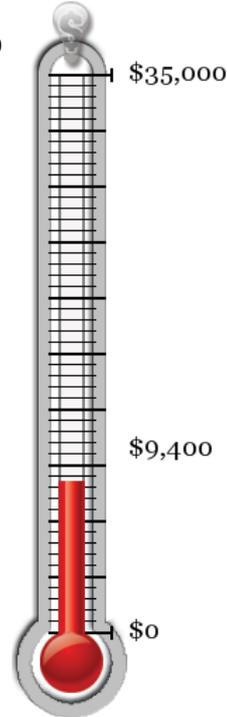
This will bring the total amount promised to \$24,400 – well in excess of the "trigger point" determined by the Board at which we will proceed with the project.

The Board will make a final decision on this at its next Board meeting. Provided that it decides to go ahead with this we will issue a call for Applications and expect to appoint the EPO to start work with ISCAST by 1 January 2014.

Your prayers and continued support for this project are greatly valued.

Richard Gijsbers.

Secretary, ISCAST



Other News

Look us up on:



Facebook: 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

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.

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 \$15 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST Victoria office.

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