

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 and Global Warming: A Reflection

Richard Gijsbers

As ISCAST's Secretary I am usually the person people contact when they don't like something ISCAST does. A few weeks ago I received a complaint from one visitor to the ISCAST website complaining about our "stance" on global warming as reflected by some of the papers on our site. One of his points was that being concerned about global warming denied "... God's power and ability to be in control of His world." I wondered if his argument was for us to continue to "... do evil so that good may come."

But the writer of the email, raised another issue that confronts me from time to time: ISCAST exists to promote dialogue between science and religion, confronting the challenges to each that emerges as our understanding of God's Creation expands through our science.

ISCAST has long ago acknowledged that this dialogue is not one of bludgeoning each other to determine winners and losers but to allow truth to emerge through the exchange of ideas as we follow the arguments where they lead. (i.e. the "Apostle Peter Principle" (see 1 Peter 3: 15 & 16)). Thus, we promised to provide a safe theological and academic space for these sorts of arguments!

But, how much time do we spend on these vexatious and time-consuming issues? Young Earth Creationism, global warming scepticism, logging of Old Growth forests, arguments for a flat earth even (I haven't had one of those...yet--although someone did try and sell me a revision of the Periodic Table!); do we allow "equal time" for each of these? At what point does the Law of Diminishing Marginal Returns apply?

In response, first, ISCAST is not a lobby group. We do not seek to establish a position to influence policy and legislation. Lobbyists have to see things in black and white (seeing another's point of view will water down one's capacity to bring about change effectively). Many of our members are active in lobbying in other forums. ISCAST wishes them well.

In promoting dialogue between science and religion, ISCAST aims to clarify issues with respect and dignity. We respect the person while strongly (robustly even) defending the insights (scientific and theological) that have been given to us. We do so to hone our insights and those of the church and our society while avoiding the disasters of the Church's reactions to scientific advancement in the past.

Thus we strongly uphold the principles of rigorous scientific endeavour. Our online journal's editorial team will not publish something that is submitted merely because someone feels strongly about an issue. Arguments must be marshalled, evidence presented, data and observations evaluated and all within the accepted framework of scientific rigour.

If something is published, we then expect that paper to be subject to the scrutiny of other experts in the area. Thus publication does not mean endorsement of the content of the article, rather that this is the next step in the debate. If the subject is contentious, the author should not be surprised if the response is robust. That is not a sign of apostasy or lack of Christian charity, it is the debate being carried out as it should be.

So, if anyone wishes to present their ideas to the ISCAST community, please feel free to do so but realise that your arguments need to be marshalled with scientific rigour. We would also expect some theological insight as part of your argument.

If a paper is rejected it will not be the first to be so – but it will be rejected on sound scientific and theological grounds, not just because of its conclusions. If a paper is accepted and published, this does not mean an endorsement of the paper's position. Thus a paper arguing that global warming is not a matter of concern will receive a robust response especially as many of the scientists in our community are very concerned about this issue.

This is not a sign of a "wicked and adulterous generation" or a lack of faith, this is the scientific and theological process at work.

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.



Conflict, What Conflict?

ISCAST fellow, Chris Mulherin, at the "In The Beginning" conference hosted by the City Bible Forum presenting with the topic "Conflict, What Conflict?" now available on Youtube. (approx. 35 mins) [Read more](#)

More news items on the next page

News Items

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Where Did We Come From?

How Milton, Paley, and Darwin help us answer the question.

...For Hawking, the only reason to believe in a creator is to explain the existence of the universe; when you find an explanation, the need for a creator disappears. For Dawkins, Darwinian evolution makes it "almost certain" that there is no God. At the same time, I know lots of Christians who argue the opposite: Since the Bible is true, you shouldn't believe in evolution, or the Big Bang, or whatever...

[Read more](#)



Can Christianity and population control co-exist?

Despite the views of some church leaders - such as George Pell - who deny global warming, most Christians understand the need to care for the natural world and have embraced the scientific consensus on global warming.

The Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I is known as the "green patriarch" and Popes Francis and Benedict XVI have regularly called for care for the world. Many Catholic bishops' conferences and Protestant churches have also taken up the challenge. But there is one thing that stymies Christians regarding the ecological crisis: they find it almost impossible to confront the issue of population...

[Read more](#)



Prof. Allan Day obituary

Allan Day's obituary has been published in The Age Friday, 1 November 2013.

A research pioneer in the pathophysiology of atherosclerosis and cholesterol metabolism, Professor Emeritus Allan J. Day has died in Melbourne in his 86th year.

Allan Day began a long association with Adelaide University at the age of 15 when he began studies in science leading to BSc and MSc degrees. Switching to medicine, Day qualified as a doctor (MBBS) and embarked on a career in medical research, ultimately achieving an MD degree. He then spent three years at Oxford University working at the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology under fellow South Australian, and Nobel laureate, Howard Florey, gaining the degree of doctor of philosophy in 1957. Many years later, Day was awarded the degree of doctor of science by Melbourne University.

[Read more](#)



Rodney Holder, Big Bang, Big God: Is the Universe Designed for Life?

A review of Rodney Holder's "Big Bang, Big God"

"The development of the Big Bang theory is an example of how faith responses can contribute to the scientific discussion in a positive way. Rodney Holder, an Anglican priest and former cosmologist, has contributed to this conversation for a number of years. He has just published a new book, 'Big Bang Big God: A Universe designed for life?' that aims to bring the debate to a wider audience."...

[Read more](#)



Exploring The God Question: Science, God and the Search for Truth

A review of the DVD "Exploring the God Question: Science, God and the Search for Truth"

"Exploring the God Question is a six-part documentary with accompanying group study material that explores the scientific evidence for and against God. This is a high production value series aimed at a wide audience, which challenges the viewers to decide for themselves whether God exists.

A three-part version has also been produced for TV. The six part study version is reviewed here.

[Read more](#)



Why the idea of God is not superseded by modern science

Associate Professor Frank Stootman, PhD

gave a lecture in the School of Physics at the University of New South Wales, on "Why the idea of God is not superseded by modern science"?, on Tuesday 22nd October.

Modern science is being used by the new Atheism to challenge traditional metaphysical explanations for the following:

- Something from Nothing
- Life from non-Life
- Morality from non-Morality

The necessity and sufficiency of naturalism to explain the above is their central thesis. This talk will examine whether such confidence is warranted and whether those who subscribe to the existence of God hold to a passé worldview.

[Read more](#)



Faith, Hope and Quarks: The Search for God in Contemporary Cosmology

The relationship of science and religion is often presented as one of conflict. However in cosmology, where the big question of the origin of the universe is discussed, science seems to raise questions which go beyond its own ability to answer.

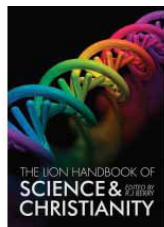
In this lecture, David Wilkinson will discuss the Big Bang model of the universe and the questions it raises for belief in God. From M-theory to an accelerating universe, do we see an absence of God or pointers to a deeper story?

[Read 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 *The Lion Handbook of Science & Christianity*

Lion, 2012, Oxford UK,
267 pp. + glossary,
references and index

ISBN 13: 9780745953465
ISBN 10: 0745953468

Reviewed by Ian Hore-Lacy, May 2013

This is a magnificent work, drawing on 26 contributors who are Christian and scientists to cover a wide scope very thoroughly. The chapters proceed from 'The nature of things' and 'Science, faith and the Bible', to Physical and earth sciences', 'Life sciences', then 'Humanity and humanness', and finishing with 'Science, ethics and Christianity'. The editing brings it all together coherently, and particular topics are broken out into boxed features. Profuse illustrations are both informative and make the book a design delight. The index is thorough.

The opening chapters canvass the nature of religious belief and the method of science, considering different kinds of knowledge and how these relate to both. The chapters include historical perspectives on major questions and how understanding of them has evolved, sometimes controversially.

[Read more](#)



The importance of realism in assessing technological possibilities: The role of

Christian thinking

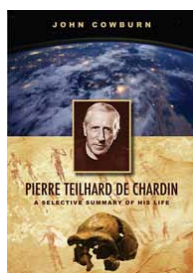
Author

Gareth Jones, Emeritus Professor, Bioethics and Department of Anatomy, University of Otago. He served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor over the years 2005-2009, and Director of the Bioethics Centre 2010-2012.

Abstract

Speculation is rife in bioethical debate. Transhumanism imagines a form of salvation in which, through technology, humans are less subject to the whims of nature, including disease and temperature extremes. The use of chemicals to achieve moral bioenhancement is also speculative, but is an extension of the use or abuse of drugs for cognitive enhancement that already occurs. Reproductive technology is currently available, and permits selection of embryos without the gene for conditions such as Huntington's disease, Duchenne's muscular dystrophy and haemophilia, but this fits within the paradigm of disease prevention and treatment.

[Read more](#)



Review of *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: A selective summary of his life (John Cowburn SJ)*

ISBN-10: 1743240856
ISBN-13: 978-1743240854

Reviewed by Mark Worthing

It is good to see the emergence of a new Australian publisher of theological books. The establishment of Mosaic Press makes books like this one by John Cowburn, a Melbourne Jesuit and retired professor of philosophy at the United Faculty of Theology, MCD, possible. Professor Cowburn's book is not a mainstream rehash of Teilhard's life and thought. Several of these already exist. The book is very folksy and informal, especially in the early sections, and tends to state information preceded by qualifiers such as 'it seems to me', 'I believe', 'presumably', and 'in all probability', far too often in relation to facts that should be able to be checked.

The author's approach is idiosyncratic, at times to distraction. At one point after devoting a small section to the attempts to invent a scientific religion, such as those by Mary Baker Eddy, he confesses that as far as he knows Teilhard had no interest in any of these.

So why then mention them? As the author explains, 'because I find them amusing'. Indeed, Professor Cowburn's work could have benefited from some editorial advice in several places. Yet despite all that, I found myself warming to the book and its approach, the further I read.

[Read more](#)



Reason or Religious Affections

A false dichotomy in divine revelation as a legacy of the early modern construction of

divine agency in the world

Robert Brennan, October 2013.

Author

The Rev. Dr Robert Brennan PhD, MAppSci, BA (hon), BTh, BSc is an ordained Uniting Church minister with a background in industrial physics and theology.

His doctoral thesis is entitled 'Augustine, Perfection and Inspiration: a stumbling block to the dialogue between theology and science'.

Abstract

The early nineteenth century saw the development of a dichotomy in affirming the notion of divine revelation in the world. On the one hand it was assumed that Christian faith could be supported by reasoned argument based on evidence from the books of nature or scripture or by appeal to the religious affections, the subjective inward sensation of God's action felt in the human heart. On the other hand,

it was assumed that if these under serious scrutiny were to become subject to doubt then the Christian faith would be relegated to intellectual limbo. The intellectual tension developed by this dichotomy is evident in the life and work of a number of significant figures in the nineteenth century, but also colours contemporary dialogue between theology and science.

[Read more](#)

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

SAVE THE DATES

Melbourne Annual Lecture and Workshops: 4 - 6 July 2014

Venue: East Camberwell Baptist Church

Speaker: Ian Barns

Call for papers will be announced early in the New Year. Stay tuned!



Executive Project Officer Update

The ISCAST Board met on Tuesday, 12 November, and decided to proceed with the appointment of an Executive Project Officer.

The donations that have been promised so far have exceeded \$24,000 – well in excess of the trigger point of \$20k decided earlier.

In accordance with this decision we have advertised for this position and are starting to receive applications. We expect to make an appointment early in 2014.

Our expectation is that this will be an ongoing project and so we will continue to invite donations for this work throughout the year (the initial budget will be \$35k per annum). Donations will be able to be made to a Charitable Fund which we are setting up.

Unfortunately, for the time being, donations will not be tax deductible as the criteria for this do not include ISCAST's activity at present. We will continue to explore this possibility as the EPO's role becomes established.

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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