

**ISCAST** is a think tank of Christian academics, scientists, professionals and theologians who explore the interface and interactions between science & technology and the Christian faith.

## Welcoming the new Executive Project Officer, Chris Mulherin



**Who are you? What have you done? Why did you apply for the job?**

I'm an Anglican minister currently doing a doctorate relating scientific and theological knowledge. My academic background

is engineering and philosophy of science. I worked for Scripture Union for three years, taught at RMIT and then took off to Argentina as a missionary for 13 years with my wife Lindy and our various boys.

**What did you do in Argentina when you served there as a missionary?**

I worked for the national student Christian group and pastored a church in the northwest in the city of Tucumán.

**What does a reverend and an ex-missionary know about science anyway?**

Well, I'm not a scientist but did study engineering and teach it at RMIT. I also did an MSc in philosophy of science, so I've thought a fair bit about how science works in both theory and practice. Currently at Melbourne Uni I tutor in both history of science and also introduction to climate change. And of course my doctorate is on the nature of science and how it relates to faith.

**What is the importance of the study of science and religion since many would argue that there is no overlap with the two in the first place?**

I think the importance lies in the fact that many would go further than saying there is no overlap; many would say there is a conflict. And it's the so-called 'conflict thesis' that is problematic. It's problematic for Christians if they think that there is some sort of incompatibility between their faith and science. And it's problematic for others who do not consider Christianity seriously because they believe there is a fundamental conflict.

**What do you see as the first things you will do in the new job given that no one has done it before?**

I think the first thing to do is to listen to all those people who are 'friends of ISCAST' and hear their thoughts on where we can go in generating public interest and conversation about science and faith.

I look forward to working with a small group of people as we converse about the best things to do in the short term (this year), while also thinking about strategies that encompass the next few years.

**Many people are walking away from science (perhaps because other subjects at school are much easier). Since science and religion are having such a tough time getting on with each other, does this (the walk away from science) leave space for religious people to believe what they want without all the trouble that science is causing?**

Yes, perhaps. In a cultural situation where people feel free to choose what they believe it's much easier to simply ignore the claims of universal truth. While not many people explicitly say "what's true for you is true for you and what's true for me is true for me", it seems that many people act that way. Seeking and believing in truth can be very uncomfortable. But of course the attraction of science to Christians ought to be that science (in theory at least) is dedicated to the ruthless pursuit of truth. So instead of encouraging people to walk away from science towards faith, we should encourage people to walk towards truth—in matters of science and of faith.

**What are your thoughts on the current state of the dialogue between science and Christianity in Australia? What do you see as ISCAST's role in this?**

I don't see a lot of serious dialogue happening. There are lots of skirmishes between, for example, the so-called new atheists and religious people, but that is not serious dialogue. I think there is a great opportunity for ISCAST to become a voice, even *the* voice, that generates serious conversation on the matter.

**Do you see ISCAST offering anything to the wider Australian community outside of the Christian church? How do you see us offering this to them?**

Absolutely. There are many many 'spiritual' people who don't go to church but would like to think about the science/religion relationship. Despite the public atheism of late, most people still have 'extra-scientific beliefs'. Interestingly, as climate change skepticism reveals, science has its own problem of credibility in the common mind... but that's another story.

### In this Issue:

- News Items
- Journal Abstracts
- Event News

## 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.



### Ancient Wisdom For A Modern Age

John Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, gives an insight into what the

Old Testament meant to its original audience, and what relevance these ancient texts have for modern readers today.

[Read more](#)



### Christian Women In STEM Careers Are A Vulnerable Minority

Rochelle was a high school biology student

who was excited about the advances in genetics... However, when her church youth leader told her that there were too many gaps in the fossil record to believe evolution... Rochelle's sense of direction began to waver. If she became a medical researcher, would she have to give up her Christian friends?

[Read more](#)

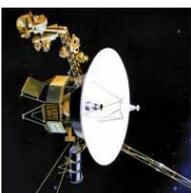


### Can A Scientist Trust The New Testament?

The written version and also a video of the last James Gregory Lecture

by Tom Wright on "Can a Scientist Trust the New Testament?" can now be found at [www.jamesgregory.org.uk](http://www.jamesgregory.org.uk)

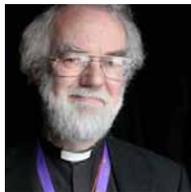
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### Are We Nearing The End Of Science?

Are we nearing the end of science? That is, are we running out

of answerable questions, leaving us with only some mop-up duty, working around the edges of the great scientific achievements of Darwin, Einstein, Copernicus, et al.? [Read more](#)

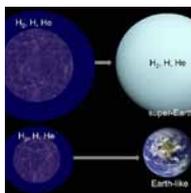


### Rowan Williams on 'Science, Faith and Knowledge'

The siege took place in a school, and few

could forget the harrowing images of the hall, in which the children were assembled, being rigged with explosives and flanked by armed terrorists. Humphrys' question was blunt and to the point: 'Where was God yesterday morning?' Williams' response and the ensuing discussion were played to the audience...

[Read more](#)



### Study Reveals It's Almost Impossible For Life To Exist On 'Super-Earths'

A newly published study reveals that many of the super-Earth planets discovered in the last twenty years may have captured the equivalent of between 100 and 1000 times the hydrogen in the Earth's oceans, but may only lose a few percent of it over their lifetime, making it almost impossible for life as we know it to exist.

[Read more](#)



### New Atheism- New Apologetics: The Use of Science in Recent Christian Apologetic Writings

The rise of the New Atheism has stimulated a new interest in Christian apologetics, both in the academy and the churches. The appeal to science in the writings of leading 'New Atheists', such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, is reflected in two apologetic strategies.

[Read more](#)



### International Congress on Science and/or Religion

The congress welcomes papers from all pertinent

academic disciplines that take a multi-/ interdisciplinary approach as well as religious, theistic, and philosophical scholarly pieces, and reports of comparative, cross-cultural and cross-religious studies.

[Read more](#)

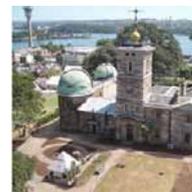


### AARE Conference: 'iConnect, iDiscover, I AM'

Australian Association for Religious Education 25th

National Conference, to be held at the Amora Hotel, Richmond, Victoria, from Monday, September 29th to Wednesday, October 1st, 2014.

[Read more](#)



### The Heavens Declare His Glory

Recently my wife Vivian and I went to the Sydney Observatory at night

for our first wedding anniversary. It was a wonderful experience. We managed to learn a bit about astronomy, but we also had a real sense of the 'heavens declaring the glory of God'...

[Read more](#)



### Pseudoscientists Podcast

Recently one of our ISCAST fellows, James Garth, has appeared as a guest on the Pseudoscientists

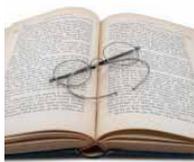
podcast. There is good discussion about science, faith, evolution, climate change, and other topics that may be of interest.

[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; 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))



### Opportunities offered by the national science curriculum for exploring the relationship between science and faith

#### Author

Dr Juhani Tuovinen  
Senior Research Fellow, Graeme Clark  
Research Institute, Tabor College Adelaide

#### Abstract

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has developed a new national curriculum on science for the whole of Australia. This national curriculum is scheduled to replace the individual state-based science curricula. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians includes educational spiritual development as a key priority. Yet the proposed science curriculum makes only slight connection with spirituality and faith, such as by mention of ethical considerations. In this paper science-faith connections are proposed for each curriculum topic and resources are cited for each connection.

[Read more](#)



### Review of *Resisting the Green Dragon: Dominion, not Death*

Cornwall Alliance, 2nd edn, 2013, Burke VA USA, 272 pp. + endnotes and index ISBN 13: 9781886568587

#### Reviewed by

Ian Hore-Lacy

#### Review Extract

This book claims to expose and challenge 'the religious machinery that forms the foundations of environmentalism' by detailing its values and contrasting them 'with the Christian virtues that built Western Civilization'. So no shades of grey are expected and the reader wonders about the treatment of possible congruence.

It's hard to disagree with the assertion that

the Christian community must be part of the solution but instead often abounds with unbiblical views of man and nature;

the book unpacks the author's view of all that. Copious end-notes (635 of them from 250 pages) indicate research, albeit highly selective, and lead us to expect the fruits of this rather than the simple assertions which turn out to be frequent.

The author acknowledges that many environmentalists are well-meaning people of goodwill and many profess faith in Jesus Christ. 'They care deeply about the world' and that 'should be a Christian virtue'. But many are duped by the environmentalist movement, the 'Green Dragon', which has diabolical origins and an agenda that has little to do with the natural environment.

[Read more](#)



### Richard Dawkins, science and the meaning of life

#### Author

Fergus McGinley,  
Secondary Deputy

Principal, Torrens Valley Christian School,  
Hope Valley, South Australia  
Based on a paper presented at COSAC2013,  
Tabor College, Adelaide 19-21 July 2013.  
Revised version January 2013.

#### Abstract

In this essay I will attempt to convince you that the world of science is a world of constructs, not a pre-existing world, and therefore certainly not the world we actually live in. So when Richard Dawkins claims, in his recent TV documentary series, Sex, Death and the Meaning of Life:

More and more of us now do not believe in God, or life after death. We live, and then we die, and that's it. We are born by chance, and our lives are shaped by chance events... Many people have struggled to come to terms with the reality of a **purely physical universe** [bolding added].

he is actually the victim of a cruel, although unintentional, hoax. Richard's purely physical universe is of course none other than the latest version of the age-old world-view of universal mechanism – the universe as giant clockwork machine – now, however, no longer with God, the unmoved mover, moving it; just a disembodied, blind watchmaker, at the controls.

[Read more](#)



### The Sense of an Ending

#### Author

Rev'd Dr Sidney Green is a retired Anglican Priest living in Adelaide and still

active in many ways in the diocese. He is an adjunct lecturer for Charles Sturt University. His ThD thesis, now published as *Beating the Bounds: A Symphonic Approach to Orthodoxy in the Anglican Communion* by Wipf & Stock, is available from Amazon. This article is based on a presentation delivered at COSAC July 2013.

#### Abstract

This article was written to fit with the COSAC 2013 theme of 'Faith, Hope and Quarks: Scientific and Theological Perspectives on the Future'. With that eschatological theme in mind it seeks to examine the prognosis for humanity in the light of the exponential growth and influence of technology in human life. It is especially concerned with the increasing adaptations of the human body through technology.

These developments have raised fears for some and excited vision for others as they contemplate what it means to be human and what it means to be god-like. It examines particularly the notion of theosis or divinization as presented by some of the early church fathers and the present day Eastern Orthodox Church.

It calls upon the church to take note of these developments and their influence on believers and to prepare suitable pastoral programs to help Christians in this complex moral maze.

[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](http://www.iscast.org/journalpage)

## Event News

### How To Make Up Your Own Mind

**Date:** Saturday 10 May 2014

**Time:** Meal at 6:30pm (bring your own 'brain' food to share), presentation starting at 8:00pm

**Venue:** Quartel's House, 2a Barloa Road, Mont Albert

Prof. Andrew Wood will reflect on Ray Kurzweil's book "How to Create a Mind" and Terrence Deacon's "Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter".

[Read more](#)

### ISCAST-CASE (Sydney) Lecture

**Lecture Title:** "Modern developments in archaeology and the Bible record"

**Date:** Thursday 15th May 2014 at 7.30 pm.

**Speaker:** Dr Karin Sowada, BArch, PhD

**Venue:** Main Common Room, New College, UNSW.

**Abstract:** Points of disconnection between the archaeological record and the Biblical narrative continue to fuel heated debate, particularly around sections of the Old Testament. This lecture surveys some current flashpoints and new evidence, underscoring the limitations of archaeological data in resolving issues of theology and Biblical history.

[Read more](#)

### Seminar - Anglican Precursors of Current Ecotheology

**Date:** Thursday 19 June

**Time:** 7.30 – 9.30 pm

**Venue:** St Peter's Hall, Eastern Hill

**Cost:** \$15 (concession: \$12)

**Speaker:** Dr Duncan Reid

The Rev'd Dr Duncan Reid served as the Dean of the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne from 2002 to 2005. He is currently the Priest in Charge of St George's Flemington and a chaplain at Camberwell Girls Grammar School. He is a member of the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox theological dialogue.

[Read more](#)

### Melbourne Annual Lecture and Symposium 2014

**Theme:** Putting Science in its Place: the Role of Science and Technology in Confronting Today's Environmental Crises

**Date:** 4 to 6 July 2014

**Venue:** East Camberwell Baptist Church, cnr Hunter and Highfield Roads, Camberwell, Vic.

**Time:** Annual Lecture at 8pm Friday. Registration from 8am Saturday and Sunday for the Symposium

**Keynote Presenter:** Ian Barns. Ian is a commentator on social and cultural issues and their relation to the Gospel. His passion is to see the community's concerns about the environment going beyond the mere technological and addressing the core values and mores of our society that caused the issues to arise in the first place.

[Read more](#)

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Keep an eye on the website for events

[www.iscast.org](http://www.iscast.org)

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## Executive Project Officer Team Support

Chris Mulherin has been appointed as the ISCAST Executive Project Officer. Chris will be actively leading ISCAST and developing and executing our strategy in accordance with our mission statement: "To develop and advocate a Christian perspective in the science-religion dialogue within the science community, the Christian community and society generally in the Australasian and international communities." Please donate to Chris' work in this area.

### I will:

pay \$300 as a one-off payment for 2013/14 in support of the EPO

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Please return this form to the ISCAST Office by post, fax or email (details in adjacent column).

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" (the ISCAST 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 are published to foster the discussions and debate. ISCAST does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed here.

Details of events published are 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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