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ISCAST is a think tank of Christian academics, scientists, professionals, and theologians, which explores the interface between science, technology, and the Christian faith.

The Role and Place of ISCAST

Dear members and friends of ISCAST,

Recently I received a phone call from a member in a state where there is currently no active ISCAST chapter. He enquired as to how we could support him as there was no immediate fellowship with other Christian scientists in his area. As the secretary of ISCAST I am the person that people contact with these sorts of enquiries.

I replied that we could not provide support to him directly as there simply wasn't the critical mass of ISCASTians for us to link him to in that area. Having said that, I told him about the other organisations that he knew of there.

After the conversation, I recalled another phone call from a retired scientist living in the country. He had been approached by his local congregation to be their pastor and agreed to shepherd that little flock on their journey in faith.

One Sunday some church members asked him to commend the literature of a young-earth creation group to the congregation. He did so, commenting that there were also other perspectives on the biblical creation story. This created a stir, and his role in that congregation was reviewed by the church leadership. Eventually, he was 'allowed' to continue his ministry but his sermons were required to be vetted each Sunday prior to preaching. He was devastated but grateful that he could talk to me about his situation.

We at ISCAST are acutely aware of how passionate some people can be about certain interpretations of the biblical creation stories. ISCAST itself takes no official position on this matter, although the majority of ISCAST members hold the mainstream scientific view that biological evolution occurred over millions of years, and that such a view is compatible with the Bible.

We also recognise that some scientists not only face difficulties with work colleagues who misunderstand or are hostile to Christianity, but they also face pain and loneliness in their own congregations arising from these matters. Such cases highlight that while it is exciting and important to reach out and make a significant public impact, our pastoral role is also important.

Our mission statement identifies four groups of people whom we serve: our members, the church, the wider community, and the international science-Christianity community. Part of this service means ISCAST exists to support Christians in their workplaces and their places of worship. Even if you are remote from any local ISCAST group, we exist to help you insofar as we can.

I am also aware of many well-qualified scientists who feel that they cannot become ISCAST Fellows because they feel they cannot 'mix it' with some of our more high-profile members. We do not want to recruit only articulate scientists and academics, well versed in the cut and thrust of public debate; we also want our membership to include those who can support one another, each in our own particular callings and challenges.

God bless each one of you in your vocation, in your faith and in the delight (and challenge) of bringing the two together.

Richard Gijsbers

ISCAST Secretary

In this issue:

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News Items

News about the interface between science and Christianity, and of significance to the ISCAST community. Your submissions are most welcome.



Washington Post features symposium on transhumanism

As a sign of growing interest in transhumanism, *The Washington Post* recently featured a symposium with several distinguished writers. It may indicate a growing interest in its aspirations, in an election year when a transhumanist, Zoltan Istvan, is seriously running for President.
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atlas displays in rainbow hues how individual words and the concepts they convey can be grouped together in clumps of white matter.
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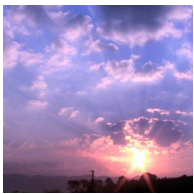
Have you ever seen a three? Mathematics joins the science-religion dialogue

For the scientist and the mathematician, the question of 'what is real' is very strongly linked to proof. In his Faraday seminar last month, "Is There a Place at the Science-Religion Table for Mathematics," the mathematician and philosopher P. Douglas Kindschi, pointed out that proofs are the building blocks of mathematics so, historically, maths has had the strongest claim on what is real. Great scientific and mathematical minds of the past have been quoted saying similar things.
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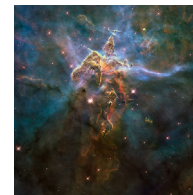
Did we just discover aliens? Scientists aren't ruling it out

Aliens are not a thing. We know this, right? Well, maybe. Turns out that, almost despite themselves, some of the world's leading astronomers are taking seriously the question of whether or not we are alone on Earth.
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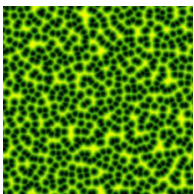
Space, the brain and natural disasters - challenges in communicating science and faith

Eleanor Puttock has spent the last few years building up a successful podcast series on science and faith. It's time to turn the tables and ask her a few questions about her own views on science and faith.
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Scientists unveil new 'Tree of Life'

A team of scientists unveiled a new tree of life on Monday, a diagram outlining the evolution of all living things. The researchers found that bacteria make up most of life's branches.
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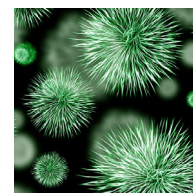
Confronting stem cell hype

The way science is represented to the public can influence understanding and expectations, frame policy debates, and affect the implementation and use of emerging technologies.
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The death of moral relativism

Considered by conservatives to be one of postmodern society's greatest threats, moral relativism may now be a relic of the past.
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Beyond matter: Why science needs metaphysics

What did you do on your leap day this year? I listened to a talk by Roger Trigg, who is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick and a Senior Research Fellow of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion in Oxford.
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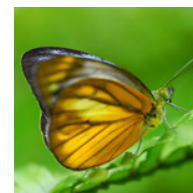
Neuroscientists create 'atlas' showing how words are organised in the brain

Scientists have created an "atlas of the brain" that reveals how the meanings of words are arranged across different regions of the organ. Like a colourful quilt laid over the cortex, the



Scientific regress

The problem with science is that so much of it simply isn't. Last summer, the Open Science Collaboration announced that it had tried to replicate one hundred published psychology experiments sampled from three of the most prestigious journals in the field.
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Stories of life

We want you to tell your stories of life and faith. That isn't easy at the best of times, and to do so in an interesting way is doubly difficult. But a competition like this provides a clear forum for doing just that, and a way for each of us to start thinking about the difference Jesus makes in our lives, and how to put that into words.
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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.

Books and Resources

Books and articles relevant to the interface between science and Christianity.



Gravitational waves with Prof. Tom McLeish

On Saturday 2 April, Prof. Tom McLeish (UK) joined ISCAST Vic via webinar to

discuss gravitational waves.

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The Penultimate Curiosity: Oxford launch

The Penultimate Curiosity / Roger Wagner and Andrew Briggs

Abstract

The Penultimate Curiosity sets out to answer one of the most profound questions about the development of human thought: why it is that throughout the long journey from cave painting to quantum physics what we now refer to as 'science' and 'religion' have been so closely entangled.

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Inventing the universe: Why we can't stop talking about science, faith and God

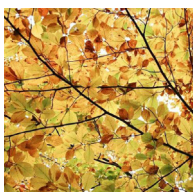
Author

Alister McGrath

Excerpt

We just can't stop talking about the big questions around science and faith. They haven't gone away, as some predicted they might; in fact, we seem to talk about them more than ever. Far from being a spent force, religion continues to grow around the world. Meanwhile, Richard Dawkins and the New Atheists argue that religion is at war with science - and that we have to choose between them. It's time to consider a different way of looking at these two great cultural forces.

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Contextual approaches in the dialogue between theology and science and their implications for understanding the development of doctrine

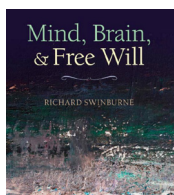
Author

Edwin El-Mahassni

Abstract

The dialogue concerning Christian theology as a science is not new. However, it is only relatively recently that the importance of the context within which theology is conducted has been discussed.

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Mind, brain and free will—book review

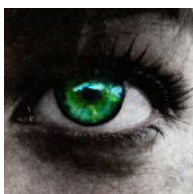
Author

Jim Stump

Excerpt

Richard Swinburne, who was until 2002 Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford University and is a Fellow of the British Academy, has examined several important issues at the intersection of contemporary neuroscience with personhood.

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Am I significant in the universe, or just an accident?

An article originally published in *IDEA* magazine, Jan/Feb 2006 / Mike Poole

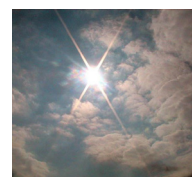
Author

Mike Poole

Excerpt

Are we alone in the universe? Two metres tall and only lasting about 70 years, can we matter in a universe that is so big and so old, so dark and so cold? Christians, and others, have argued both for and against our uniqueness in space. Surely, say some, God would not have put all his animals and plants on one planet, leaving all others empty.

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The Big Question: Why we can't stop talking about science, faith, and God—book review

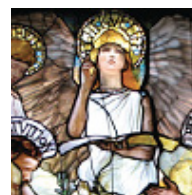
Author

An article originally published in *The Church Times*, 19th February 2016 / Gillian Straine

Excerpt

Alister McGrath has written a lot of books. Critics suggest that not all are of even quality, but that is an almost inevitable consequence of the volume of his output. I've read quite a few of his books carefully, and I almost always come away with an appreciation for how he draws together threads of insight from a wide array of fields.

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Falling stereotypes open up paths to cooperation among science, religion

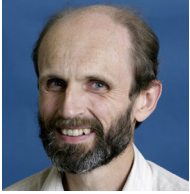
By Elaine Howard Ecklund

Still, we live in an age when a presumed irrevocable gulf between science and religion is perpetuated in the public sphere (despite its inconsistency with what most scientists around the world actually think).

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*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



Dr Graeme Finlay Visit

Dr Graeme Finlay will be visiting Australia in July 2016. He will be speaking at events across the country.

[Read more...](#)

Dr Graeme Finlay Events

NSW Events

Tuesday 5th July 2016

[Dr Graeme Finlay ISCAST-CASE \(Sydney\) Lecture 1](#)—7.30 pm

Wednesday 6 July

CPX Interview - 10.00 am

Thursday 7th July 2016

[Dr Graeme Finlay ISCAST \(Sydney\) Lecture 2](#)—7.30 pm

Friday 8 July

[Speaking at the Simeon Network's "Write" Conference](#)—morning

Saturday 9 July

Speaking at "Write" Conference - morning

QLD Events

Tuesday 12 July

[Public talk at Newlife Uniting Church, Gold Coast](#)—7.00 pm

SA Events

Wednesday 13 July

Public GCRI/ISCAST Lecture—evening

ACT Events

Thursday 14 July

Technical talk followed by general talk—7.30 pm

VIC Events

Friday 15 July

[ISCAST Annual Lecture](#)—5.30 pm

Other Events

VIC Events

Friday 8 July

[Medical Science: Playing God? Presented by Prof. Gareth Jones](#)—7.30pm

Saturday 9 July

[An Evening With Gareth Jones](#)—6.30 pm

International Events

Thursday 15 September—Thursday 6 October

[History of the Scientific Revolution](#)

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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Annual Subscription by post: \$22 (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 community 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 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 \$22 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST office.

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