

ISCAST BULLETIN 26

(incorporating VISCAST News)

February 1999.

Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology

*The views in this Bulletin are those of the individual authors or the editor.
They do not necessarily reflect the official views of the ISCAST Board*

Editorial:

COSAC 99

Where will you be in July? We pray that the second National Conference on Science and Christianity will be a further opportunity for scientists who are Christian to meet with others with a similar outlook. We barely knew each other at the first conference and we were surprised and delighted by the diversity of interest and points of view, but a unity of desire to honour God the creator of this wonderful world as well as the one who showed his compassion on us by assuming humanity and dying for us.

This edition will introduce our main speakers Professor Sam Berry and his wife Dr Caroline Berry. We will look at some of the themes for the conference and the book review section will suggest some helpful preliminary reading. We hope to publish another edition of the Bulletin before the conference so that those who would like to contribute further can start the discussion.

God, genes and the environment. Dare we push our thinking beyond familiar territory to the growing edge? I am looking forward not just to the lectures and seminars but also to the informal interchange over food and drink. Hopefully this will inspire pen and paper or keyboard and mouse and continue to make ISCASTian thinking and discipleship as well as the Bulletin better and better!

Allies and enemies

This Bulletin will centre on COSAC but there has been correspondence arising in part out of an article in the November 1998 *Answers in Genesis Prayer News* published by the former Creation Science Foundation concerning perceived links between the Sceptics and ISCAST. As Bulletin editor I felt my main reply to this attack on ISCAST was the editorial in the last Bulletin, where I looked at principles for handling disagreement between Christians. However those more intimately involved would like to "Set the record straight."

Such an entrenched debate seems so often to be so futile, neither side seems to give an inch, and positions become harder and harder! When will they see the truth! I personally am concerned by the "goodies/baddies" theme of the current debate. It seems so much easier to attach a label to someone and then dismiss anything they say or write, than to engage in any meaningful discussion. I am also concerned that such labelling can create a guilt by association by linking our name with the Sceptics. As if our disagreement with the modern and extreme form of Biblical interpretation espoused by AiG reduces our commitment to the Bible and to the Good News of Christ!

The Sceptics are a group of rationalists whose mission is to expose fanciful thinking in the cold light of their reason. This follows the Macquarie Dictionary definition of sceptic as "one who questions the validity or authenticity of something purporting to be knowledge." Sceptics take particular delight in challenging para-normal and other extreme claims, to produce supporting evidence. Their membership is heterogeneous and would include some who would have no bar of religion along with others who would see religion as outside the scope of Sceptical evaluation. The latter is the position of the current president.

One of the targets of the Sceptic's attacks is the creation science movement. When the latter attempted in the mid-80's in Queensland to introduce creation science as an alternative scientific theory of origins in schools, they were opposed not only by the Board of the Faculty of Science at the University of Queensland and the Sceptics but also by a number of Christians such as Dr Ken Smith, currently an ISCAST board member. Following a meeting in early 1985, Dr Martin Bridgstock and he were asked to prepare a book, mainly for schoolteachers. For their efforts, they were named joint "Sceptics of the Year". This has raised the ire of the then Creation Science movement, who have taken to labelling ISCAST as allies of the Sceptics.

Although ISCAST has no formal links with the Sceptics, Ken Smith continues to be on their mailing list and from time to time we hear of their activities. Some of these we would agree with but there would be others over which we would show considerable reservation.

The alleged link between ISCAST and the Sceptics first surfaced to my surprise (we don't know all that all our fellows are doing!) in a strong correspondence between ISCAST and AiG in the conservative Melbourne Christian newspaper, *New Life* last year and has been repeated in their recent prayer letter.

The AiG article also surprised the Sceptics who have asked, "Who is ISCAST?" We have thus received some free publicity not only in the AiG newsletter but also in the Sceptics newsletter.

The AiG article goes on to warn its readers of the influence of ISASTians (shades of Acts 11:26!) in a number of Evangelical organisations. Rather than damaging us, it has reminded the AiG prayer news readership of the influence of ISCAST in Christian organisations around the country, although they left out a number of organisations.

The AiG article has also attacked the perceived ISCAST position on Biblical interpretation and the theology of Prof Allan Day who has sent a reply to the AiG. That letter is published later in the Bulletin.

It would be much easier if the world could be divided simply into the goodies and the baddies. This is just not possible. Sometimes there are surprising allies. Thus both the AiG and scientific reductionists agree that accepting the theory of evolution means you cannot believe in God. We disagree with both at that point, but we agree with AiG against the scientific reductionists that God created the universe for his own loving purposes, and that that makes us see the universe as a place of order and meaning. We share with scientific reductionists their passion for modern science and their dislike of superstition and disagree with the literal interpretative position taken by the AiG. We would stand in the mainstream of Biblical scholarship and interpretation, as accepted in most theological colleges including Evangelical colleges around the world.

They see us as enemies and allies of their critics. The truth is more complicated, but if we are seen as enemies they have a duty to love us and to pray for us! We are happy we have appeared in their prayer letter and are confident that God who judges the secrets of human hearts will answer their prayers about us justly and with mercy and compassion.

Alan Gijsbers

Profile:

Professor RJ (Sam) Berry MA, PhD, DSc, CBiol, FIBiol, FRSE.

Professor Sam and his wife Dr Caroline Berry are the keynote speakers at the second Conference on Science and Christianity to be held in Melbourne on July 2-4 1999.

Sam Berry was born on the 26 October 1934. He was educated at Shrewsbury School (1948-53), Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge (1953-56) (BA 1956, MA 1959), and the University College London (PhD. 1959).

He started as a Lecturer, Reader, and then Professor of Genetics, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine (1962-78) after which he became Professor of Genetics at the University College London (1978 on).

He gained the higher degrees of FIBiol in 1974, a DSc in 1976, and an FRSE in 1981.

He has held numerous biological, zoological and ecological positions in the UK and Europe internationally and has been on a number of editorial boards of biological, evolutionary and environmental journals including *Ethics & the Environment and Science & Christian Belief*. He is a Fellow of the Linnean Society, the Zoological Society of London, the Royal Society of Medicine, and the Royal Society of Arts.

He has travelled and lectured widely including to Kerala, South India, to study the genetical effects of background radiation in 1961-2. He was Visiting Senior Biologist with the British Antarctic Survey (1969 and 1978) and Visiting Biologist with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (1971).

He has lectured in the UK and the US, including the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Glasgow, 1997-8.

He was Chairman, Research Scientists' Christian Fellowship, 1968-87 and President, Christians in Science (1993-95). He was a Member of the General Synod of the Church of England (1970-90) and its Board for Social Responsibility (1976-90); Chairman, Environmental Panel of BSR (1980-91); Chairman, Environmental Issues Network of the Council of Churches of Britain & Ireland (1992 on); Chairman, Higher education Committee of the Diocese of London. (1987-97), responsible for the Anglican Chaplaincies of the London University (s); licensed Lay Reader.

In 1958 he married Caroline Berry, MB, PhD, FRCP, Consultant Geneticist Emeritus at Ouy's Hospital, London, with three children.

He received UK Templeton Award in 1996 for "Sustained advocacy of the Christian faith in the world of science"

He has written about 200 scientific papers and a number of books including among others:

Teach Yourself Genetics (1965)
Adam and the Ape (1975)
Inheritance and Natural History (1977)
Neo-Durwinism (1982)
God and Evolution (1988)
God and the Biologist (1996)
Science, Life and Christian Belief (1998) (with M. A. Jeeves)

He is the editor of (among others):

Ecology in the Antarctic (1980) (with W N Bonner)
Biology of the House Mouse (1981)
Real Science, Real Faith (1991)
Environmental Dilemmas (1992)
Genes in Ecology (1992) (with T. Crawford & G.M. Hewitt)

Dr. A. Caroline Berry, MBBS, PhD, FRCP.

Prof Berry writes the following about his wife:

Qualified from the Middlesex Hospital in 1961 and after registration, worked for a part PhD in Genetics at UCL whilst she took time out breeding. (One of the fruits of that era is a paper she and I wrote on "Genetical change in ancient Egypt" which has achieved fame through being a footnote in Gray's Anatomy).

She worked as a schoolteacher for a few years while the children were small, and then went to work in the (then) Department of Paediatric Research at Guy's, under Paul Polani. She remained there until retirement in 1997, the last 20 years or so she was Consultant in Clinical Genetics (and Clinical Director of the Guy's Unit). Her most significant non-clinical publication was *The Rites of Life* (Hodder 1988); part of this was later revised and reprinted as *Beginnings* by the Christian Medical Fellowship.

Prof and Dr Berry's Lecture Outlines:

God, Genes and the Environment - Sam Berry

1. Chance or Purpose

The scientific and biblical accounts of creation are very different. This difference has been used by many to claim that the Christian faith is irrelevant mythology, and by others that the scientific understanding of the history of the world and mankind is dangerous materialistic propaganda. In fact the Bible does not describe the mechanism of creation (which is the province of evolutionary Science, the study of God's Book of Works), but does discuss the meaning of creation (which is outside and beyond science). Darwin destroyed the deism of Paley and made possible a more scriptural understanding of God as both imminent and transcendent.

2. Genes and Genesis

Humans are a special creation of God through being "made in God's image", which is a relational, not a genetical or anatomical trait. We are genetically very like the chimpanzees. This does not prove relationship, but strongly implies it. But the key is not physical descent nor the origin of the biological species *Homo sapiens* but God's sovereign act. The Bible suggests that "*H. divinus*" arose fairly recently in Neolithic times. This understanding has implications for understanding the "Fall" as more than a mysterious myth, but as something which affects our relationships with God, each other, and the rest of creation. It should also colour our interpretation of the nature of life and its manipulation.

3. A Groaning Earth

How should we interpret God's commands to have dominion over the rest of creation, to tend the garden, to fill the earth? There is growing evidence that we are damaging the world on a global scale, not merely local. Can we rely on some Gaian mechanism to regulate natural systems and reverse the damage? Encouragingly there now seems to be growing convergence between secular and religious attitudes about a proper, non-aggressive way forward. But the Christian has something further to offer, because Christ has reconciled all things to the Father. The Christian doctrine of the environment involves God's dynamic relationship with His creation, not a mere transcendentalism which is close to deism.

The Human Genome Project - Caroline Berry

The Human Genome Project is proceeding rapidly and there must be a real possibility that in the next 5-10 years we will have before us the complete molecular sequence of a human person. At present the genes being discovered are those responsible for the rare single gene disorders but most of those are now identified and the more common conditions such as asthma and diabetes and mental illness are becoming the focus of attention. It can safely be predicted that out of these developments important insights into our mental and emotional functions will emerge. How should Christians respond to this new knowledge and its implications? Should we decry the research saying that these areas should not be explored as we are incapable of handling the spin-offs safely? Is this the Tree of Knowledge whose fruit should remain untasted? Or should we endeavour to apply the principles taught in both Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures to our new understanding of the way we have been created?

To retreat seems to be a denial of our calling to be Salt and Light in our generation. Surely our role is to endeavour to redefine our understanding of personhood and personal responsibility in the light of the new knowledge. There are few guidelines. We are the first generation to grapple with these issues but as Christians we have a real responsibility to search out the truth and influence our community so that the benefits of the Human Genome Project can be harvested and the opportunities for its misuse highlighted and - decried. As has so often been said: All that is needed for evil to prevail is for good men¹ to do nothing.

The lecture(s) will:

1. review the concept of personhood in relation to genetic make-up
2. consider the potential of the new genetic technologies
3. endeavour to develop Christian attitudes to these developments and their far-reaching implications.

International News

Professor Jim Ward, Professor of Physics at James Cook University, Townsville attended the 25th Anniversary of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji December 1998. He writes:

"I was the Foundation Professor of Physics in USP 1977-8 and External Assessor for two years after that. The Christian Union was founded in 1973. It was the spread of evangelical witness by the students to other Pacific countries that made it relevant to adopt the name Pacific Students for Christ. It was gratifying indeed for the organisation to become a member of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in 1978. It has upheld those traditions ever since. At the conference I was able to speak on Science and the Christian Faith and was able to emphasise the importance of ISCAST in the Australian and wider academic scene. The time might come when a USP scientist could be considered for ISCAST Fellow!

"In 1968/69 the initiative was taken to set up the University of the South Pacific situated in Suva, Fiji. From the outset the vision was to advance University status education for the whole Pacific region of island nations. For the South West Pacific countries Fiji had a suitable location and basic infrastructure so Suva was chosen as a base. In 1973, arising from the faith of a Tongan student Meleana Puloka, a Christian Fellowship began and grew steadily under its own initiatives. The vision of the university was confirmed by the enthusiastic support within the undergraduate population of students from Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. In various ways New Zealand, Australian and British IFES Fellowships gave encouraging support leading in 1978 to the IFES membership of the incipient Pacific Students for Christ.

"Graduates of the founding years have now engaged in post-graduate studies in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and France earning masters and doctoral degrees and enjoying the invigorating fellowship of the student organisations in these overseas countries.

"On the solid foundation of the witness to the Lord for twenty-five years the graduates and current fellowships within PSFC are expanding their vision for 2000AD onwards. This was the emphasis of the 1998 reunion."

James Ward, Past Professor in Physics, USP.

Visit of Ted Peters

Ted Peters is Professor of Systematic Theology at Pacific Lutheran Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. He is also the new Director of the Templeton Course program on Science and Religion. He served as principal investigator on behalf of the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences for the research project "Theological and Ethical Questions Raised by the Human Genome program" funded by the National Institutes of Health. Among other science faith publications he is author of "Playing God ? Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom."

He is visiting Australia in a personal capacity. Details of his visits to the various states can be obtained from local contacts, but he will be in Melbourne on Wednesday 17 March, giving a public lecture on *Human Cloning - Some Theological Implications*.

A detailed biography and some of his writings can be obtained from the internet: www.counterbalance.org and clicking on the info and then the genetics options.

Science and Christian Beliefs

the Journal of Christians in Science (UK). It comes out twice a year and contains many thoughtful articles. Cost: \$A36 per year. For subscription contact Allan Day.

Book Reviews

I have been casting around for suitable books to be put on a list for the upcoming COSAC 99 conference on ecology and theology. Here is a start. Some have been reviewed in the Viscast News. Other reviewers will need to add to our list. Contributions are welcome. The last review on Cyber theology is abridged from the now defunct Church Scene 1994 by permission from its last editor, Charles Sherlock.

AG.

BERRY RJ (Sam). *God and Evolution: Creation, Evolution and the Bible.* Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1988.

Sam Berry, Professor of Genetics at University College, London writes both as a distinguished geneticist and a committed Christian. This book, an updated version of his earlier work "Adam and the Ape", explores both the historical background and the scientific data associated with the development of the currently held "Neo Darwinian" theory of evolution. This is placed in the context of the "scientific" claims for Creation Science. Berry discusses the perceived conflict between evolution and creation and presents cogent reasons why Christians need have no problems either biblical or theological in espousing "Theistic evolution."

AJD.

MOLTMANN J. *God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation.* SCM Press. 1985. 365pp.

This is my first book about a theology of nature as opposed to natural theology. Discussing this book with various friends have elicited varying responses. Some describe the book as speculative, others as trendy - finding in theology affirmation of current democratic ideas about the environment. Others describe it as an important book to grapple with. I personally have been challenged to think more deeply about many issues. Thus the sabbath, not man, is the crown of creation. This has implications about how we view the world and our activity in it. The triune God made the world and filled it with his presence. Thus the world was not made by an almighty tyrant for humankind to exploit but by the three-in-one bound by love who create out of love. Theologies of time and space have taken my thinking into new dimensions, as has the recognition that we understand our doctrine of creation through the doctrine of salvation (ie as Christ's people), hence through Christological eyes rather than as a creation in its own right. The outstanding theme is the ecological one - that unless we as human beings work cooperatively together to deal with the current ecological crisis, we are doomed. It might have been a bit trendy but it may also be true. We are challenged to responsible stewardship over the earth.

AG.

REICHENBACH BR, ANDERSON VE. *On Behalf of God: a Christian ethic for biology.* Eerdmans Michigan, 1995. 355pp.

This book looks at the science/faith interface in the area of biology and ethics. Its main theme is stewardship especially of the environment, assisted reproduction, the human genome project, biological determinism and sexuality. Such a broad overview by a philosopher and a geneticist may be a little thin in some places but it is comprehensive in others and always thoughtful. It is prepared to move out of stereotypes and take a fresh look at complex issues, many of which will be dealt with at the forthcoming COSAC. Thoroughly recommended.

AG.

RUSSELL. CA. 1993. *The Earth, Humanity and God.* Univ Coll Press. London UK. 193pp.

An historian of science gives a Christian and an historical perspective on environmental problems. As a historian he helps to put current scientific and environmental ideas into historical perspectives as well as documenting the frightful damage scientific development has wrought on the world and the hope for responsible care of the world through science. He evaluates current scientific and post-scientific philosophies and their potential to provide hope for the world's future, which Russell finally finds in the care of God for his creatures.

AG.

HEIM M *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality.* OUP 1993. 176pp.

What a mouthful of a title! In less technical English: "what is happening to the way we think and live because of telephones, computers and other technology" Or "theology and the computer". This book is the most significant reflection on the effect of computers on human life that I have yet read.

Michael Heim is a philosopher who has paid sustained attention to the way in which thinking is changing due to changes in technology. This book is a collection of eight papers now brought together in a reasonably integrated whole. The book is very clearly written but the concepts are not simple. An extremely full and helpful glossary is included.

Chapter one, "Infomania", asks "what have computers done to the English language in the last decade?" Heim traces the emergence of word-processing, and the resultant "stream-of-consciousness" approach to writing, followed by re-arrangement and editing of thought. A handwritten or typed piece needs to be planned before writing begins. With a word-processor the whole composition process begins to change - and someone who has never used other than a word-processor begins to write without any awareness that things were once different! Chapter two, "Logic and Intuition" pursues this line of thought further: the point is not that computer-based writing is a bad thing, but that

without awareness of new relationships between logic and intuition which arise, we are in danger of reducing thought to mere word-lists.

"Hypertext heaven" (chapter three) explains that a new kind of literacy is emerging. "Hypertext" is a written piece which is cross-referenced to other writing, so that the reader can "jump" from the first text to others, and keep jumping. The effect of using hypertext is that information appears to be instantly available, rather than a process of logical steps being needed to access something: youngsters under 25 are growing up with "a new kind of literacy".

Chapters four and five consolidate these insights, tracing the emergence of thinking about these issues, especially through Heidegger and McLuhan. What I found fascinating was Heim's use of Heidegger with apparently no realisation of his influence in contemporary theology (eg on Bultmann and John Macquarie). The point again is not to condemn cybernetics, but to argue that without an understanding what it is doing to thought processes, we are in danger of becoming cramped and disabled.

Chapter six considers the concept of "interface", the transition point from daily reality into the virtual world of cyberspace. For instance, when we use a telephone, the conversants are in the ordinary world clearly enough - but where is their actual speech? It is in "cyberspace", the quite real yet intangible "virtual" realm. The phone handset is the interface we use to access this space - and takes on new significance when you link a computer to a telephone (eg via the Internet).

Or consider writing once more. A handwritten letter comes about through a pen: what you have written remains in the same "world" as the author, and is the personal expression of the author's own writing. In computer terms, everything remains "hardware". With a word-processor, however, what you write is somehow "in" the computer, stored in a memory chip as a list of zeroes and ones. You have access to it only via the interfaces of a keyboard (input) and screen (output). These interfaces require the computer's word-processing programme to operate, however, the programme is "software" which has no tangible existence in the ordinary world. It, and your writing, "exists" only in cyberspace, the "virtual" reality of the computer's memory. A printed copy of your writing is referred to as a "hard copy" - note that the printed version is not the reality itself!

Heim makes a brilliant jump in chapters seven and eight into the realm of psychology: the way we dream comes into play in understanding virtual reality, using the philosophy of Plato and Leibniz. Chapter eight then pursues this further, asking "what inner vision unites and propels the technology?" Heim's answer is in my view inadequate, largely because he has an impersonal understanding of God, as a sort of "necessary being" that holds together the worlds of ordinary and virtual reality. Yet his demonstration of the necessity of keeping these worlds together is of critical importance - and many computer users do not respect the need for this. He notes that "Alternate World Disorder" is appearing in people who are unable to make the transition from cyberspace to reality, for example the experience of a pilot who has spent too long in a simulator, or a young

person who so lives in the world of a computer game that the line with the real world becomes blurred.

A "virtual reality check" is thus needed - and this is what Heim provides in chapter nine. Once seen it seems obvious enough, but is clearly needed. The main problem is the dissociation of mind and body: cyberspace is a mental world, which may be why it appeals far more to men than women. Heim does not take into account a feminist critique of mind-body dualism, but it would strengthen his case considerably.

The last chapter is pitched at a popular level, and relates virtual reality issues to wider cultural questions, especially through considering film. He argues that film, itself an easily accessible form of cyberspace, has an enormous influence on modern culture, especially in the never-ending bombardment of television. In particular, he contends that *Star Trek* has had a profound effect on modern self-understanding, and discusses the film *Lawnmower Man* as a useful exploration of "the reasons for both fear and fervor (sic)" about virtual reality.

While reading this book, all sorts of ideas floated in and out. What is the "reality" we enter in Christian liturgy? How is sacramental theology to be understood in today's terms? The theory of "virtual presence" in the holy communion is usually excoriated a "real absence" theology: is this a portent of how we should treat "virtual reality"? Does the use of computers for biblical study reinforce a narrowly technological method of understanding, regarding exegesis as a mind-game? I have a fair idea of how over-50s think (pre-television people), and some understanding of 30-50s, raised on the instant culture of television and the pervasive individualism of affluence. But how do the under-30s think (let alone feel), growing up with high unemployment, living with video clips, and highly computer-literate?

In short, what is to be the shape of Christian theology in a world of virtual reality? Or is virtual reality a dangerous denial of truth, truth known through incarnation rather than disembodied thought?

Charles Sherlock

My Vision for ISCAST

Allan Friend is a member of the ISCAST Board of Directors. He writes:

As far as I am concerned I should like to see ISCAST recognised in the Christian community (especially among evangelicals?) as a body which, as a result of its study of the expressions of the Christian faith and its application to the issues raised in this scientific and technological age, presents a sound Biblically based perspective from which to view such matters. Further, I want Christians who are teachers, in whatever kind of school they work, to be able to give their pupils (who often think that they need no advice) an intelligent Christian world-view with which to confront the dismissive attitudes of such popular gurus as Richard Dawkins and Philip Adams (to name but two).

That we have a long way to go is evident from the papers delivered to the November meeting of the Sydney Chapter by three experienced science and mathematics teachers. Two of the papers are reproduced in the Summer 1998 issue of *Nexus*, the newsletter of the Australian Forum on Christian Education. And I should like to see a greater sense of the importance of such matters among the theological students in our colleges.

Allan Friend.

Letters

Allan Day's response to the Answers in Genesis article November 1998, written by Dr Julian Safarti. See also the editorial for extra comments.

Firstly, we like the label ISCASTians used by Sarfati. We are already using the term and feel that we will look back to the fact that "ISCAST Fellows were first called ISCASTians in Brisbane in 1998".

The fact that ISCAST - to quote from the article - "has been able to gain the confidence of reputable evangelical organisations (see box)" may easily be read as a criticism of the credibility of Answers in Genesis and an affirmation of the integrity of ISCAST in evangelical circles. The Creation Science Movement seems to have very transparent "emperor's clothes" - their lack of credibility, not only with regard to the scientific community but also the theological community is being revealed. The article lists only a small number of Evangelical organisations with which ISCAST cooperates. There are in fact many others not mentioned. Many of our Fellows have been active personally in such organisations for many years. We are of course more than happy both as individuals and as an organisation to be associated in ministry and fellowship with them. It seems that far from condemning ISCAST the attempt at denigration has a rather flattering ring about it.

ISCAST is not as claimed in the article "a vocal theistic evolutionary organisation that spend much time attacking biblical creationism and creationists". Nor does the claim "The major purpose of ISCAST seems to be to promote the teaching of theistic evolution" bear much resemblance to our aims which are clearly stated in our literature. We have a much wider agenda concerned with the integration of science and theology - seeking to explore ways in which science might inform theology and theology provide a context for science.

It is true however that ISCAST, in contrast to Answers in Genesis, would consider that scientific investigation of origins should be pursued by appropriate methods of rational inquiry and that such investigation should be approached without any presuppositions of the truth or falsity of scientific theories based on particular interpretations of Scripture. We should not feel threatened by truth determined in this way since God is the author of all truth. These views relate to cosmological and biological evolution as well as to other aspects of scientific inquiry.

It is also true that ISCAST would consider that the interpretation of the Biblical creation accounts espoused by "Creationism" to be neither consistent with appropriate exegesis nor consistent with the expressed role of the Bible. The latter is given not as a source of scientific information but rather as an authority on matters of faith and conduct (2 Tim 3:15).

We do not consider Creation and Evolution to be alternatives. God's creative activity is not compromised by an understanding or investigation of the mechanism of such activity. We would therefore also take issue with scientists such as Richard Dawkins, who while agreeing with Answers in Genesis in setting creation and evolution up as alternatives, seek to dismiss the concept of God as creator on scientific grounds. This is a clear misuse of science, which does not bear philosophical examination as has repeatedly been brought out in debate with Dawkins by Christians who are scientists (See e.g. The Poole/Dawkins debate *Science and Christian Belief* 1994 6(1) 1995 7(1))

Fellows of ISCAST would all subscribe to an orthodox Christian position as expressed in the Nicene Creed or the Apostles Creed, with their affirmation of God as Creator. Espousal of a literal 6-day account of creation would not be considered an essential of the Christian faith.

The statements attributed to me re Genesis need some comment. They need to be quoted in context however - an exercise that is often lacking in A in G quotes. The first re Biblical inerrancy is taken from a circulated paper. The principles of interpretation are discussed fully in the paper. The limitation of the Biblical authors by the primitive science of the day expresses a fundamental principle in relation to the "humanity" of Scripture and is restated constantly by biblical Scholars. I am in good company.

The second gives no reference other than "when confronted withŠDay claimedŠ" By whom and when? I can only imagine this as part of a three hour discussion with Carl Wieland in March 1998. Dr. Wieland was at pains to insist that none of our discussion should be quoted publicly because of difficulty with accuracy. I have been at pains to adhere to Dr Wieland's stipulation and have made no public statements about his statements. He and his colleagues have apparently not been so meticulous. As with the previous quote the issue needs to be seen in context and in relation to the humanity of Christ, an orthodox doctrine that appears to be poorly understood or even implicitly denied in Creation Science circles. These issues were discussed with Dr. Wieland.

The crux of the matter seems to be an unwillingness by the leaders of Answers in Genesis to include as acceptable any interpretation of Genesis which does not incorporate a "young earth, flood geology" even though such an interpretation would be espoused by few Biblical scholars, of whatever persuasion. Perhaps A in G would be better served by a critical examination of their position than by a somewhat desperate criticism of ISCAST, in relation to its acceptance by the established Christian community.

Allan J. Day, Exec Sec ISCAST (Vic).

An Evangelical ISCAST?

Dear Alan,

The latest ISCAST Bulletin has your pen all over it - for much profit! Congratulations, and keep up the good work.

Two comments in response. First, though its general contents indicated (to those who are aware of such things) an evangelical orientation to ISCAST, I had not realised previously that ISCAST had any particular 'evangelical' platform. To me, your work has followed out your aims very faithfully - and the visits of John Polkinghorne (would he identify himself as an evangelical?) have done much good for a wide circle of Christians (and others). On subjects such as CAST it would seem to me that using the term 'evangelical' in your official stance may limit the scope of the work undertaken, particularly as regards 'creationism'. Many 'orthodox' Christians - Roman Catholics for example, or the Australian Theological Forum - would be wholly onside about the work you are doing, but not understand (or misunderstand) what 'evangelical' means. And some Anglicans may interpret the term in a 'church party' sense, and so not be open to ISCAST's work for false reasons.

Secondly, and more positively, I would much appreciate work being done in the areas of virtual reality / cyberspace, and in 'chaos' (ie non-linear) approaches to scientific method. (I do not like the term 'chaos', which some in theology seem to use as an excuse to be mystifying and vague, but I am sure that you know what I mean!). To me, ISCAST has thus far concentrated in the areas of biology, medical ethics and 'modernist' scientific method, whereas the issues raised for myself (and others with whom I am in contact) have widened to these 'post-modern' areas of science and technology. Are there Christians in these areas who can interpret their insights to 'laymen' like me who are both fascinated and anxious about the implications for the doctrines of providence and revelation?

Every blessing on the committee's work.

Charles Sherlock.

In Reply:

Dear Charles,

Thank you for your note. The nature of ISCAST tends to vary from state to state. I agree with you that sometimes the word evangelical can be misunderstood especially in Anglican circles. I understand an Evangelical to be a person committed to a theology based on the Good News preached by the apostles and clarified by the creeds, with a strong commitment to Scripture and to mission.

I think we need to maintain an approach which openly appreciates people like Polkinghorne. I chaired the meeting he spoke at St Jude's Carlton, Victoria. John and I prayed together, commended Christ together, enjoyed each others fellowship and I did not even check to see whether he was evangelical or not. This does not make us less evangelical - just more maturely so, less self-consciously so, less aggressively so and more robustly so!!!. We hope such a shift does not alienate either our more conservative or more radical siblings! Incidentally Frank O'Dea (who wrote in the last Bulletin) is an RC priest. We enjoy his contributions very much.

I can recall previous talks with you about the need to be Christian full stop rather than Christian (variety x.....whether Bible believing, spirit filled, etc). Party spirit a la 1 Corinthians has my distaste also. I hope I will continue to try to be inclusively Christian as an editorial policy but at the same time be strongly committed in my outlook as a Gospel person.

The ISCAST Board is currently debating the nature of ISCAST and what we should call ourselves. Thank you for your contribution to the current debate.

Incidentally, have you read Margaret Wertheim's book on Cyberspace? Might be just up your alley. Another insightful review like the one you wrote in this issue would be very welcome. Will I see you at COSAC 99?

AG.