

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

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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. To submit articles contact the editor. Articles are best submitted in an electronic format by e-mail.

Editorial:

Time and finitude

This will be my last editorial. Jonathan Clarke has agreed to take over. Thank you to all who have sent in such a variety of articles. A good debate makes lively reading. Thanks to all who have been charitably provocative, and for your patience in waiting for this Bulletin. I apologise to those who submitted articles months ago without response.

Some are wondering what ISCAST does. We have not been idle. There has been quite an email discussion on the mind-brain, dualism-monism issue. ISCAST (Sydney) had a recent discussion with Dr Jenny Beer on her recent *Kategoria* article "*Should Christians be Environmentalists?*" In Victoria ISCAST has had two public meetings on the drugs of addiction question - the first on the science of addiction and the second, a high profile public meeting on the ethics of addiction. The latter is being published as a *Zadok* paper and should be out in September-October this year.

ISCAST (Vic) will run its first annual lecture this year on God and SETI by Mark Worthing. Its *Fire in the Belly* meeting (reported herein) was an outstanding success and there will be another later in the year. In Queensland there has been a public meeting reported here on the mind-brain issue. Mark Worthing and Hilary Regan have put together a world standard conference on science-faith issues, which will be held in January 2001 in Adelaide under the sponsorship of the CTNS. Plans for COSAC 2001, also in Adelaide later next year have undergone considerable modifications, but the final program (when it can be announced) will include theology and sci-fi!!

Check out our [draft statement on evolution](#). Thanks to all who contributed. Comments are appreciated.

I have enjoyed editing the Bulletin and regret that other responsibilities force me to relinquish the post. Jonathan Clarke however must be one of the most avid readers of a wide variety of books and internet sites on these issues. The best way to wish him success is to submit quality articles, book and internet reviews etc. God Bless

Alan Gijsbers.

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News

First CTNS Workshop in Adelaide in 2001

The Australian component of the CTNS (Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences) Science and Religion course program will be run in Adelaide, 26-31 January 2001. Supported by ISCAST, ATF, AUSREN, and CTSC, and directed in Australia by ISCAST Board member, Dr Mark Worthing, this will be an opportunity for university, seminary and college faculty to learn how to teach interdisciplinary courses in science and religion. The program awards prizes for outstanding courses and it is hoped that the interest this program creates will increase the number of courses in Australian tertiary institutions.

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The Ethics and Science of Addiction ISCAST (Vic)

Reflections of a participant.:

Two very different meetings on addiction were held this year. The first, on the science of addiction asked questions like, What is scientific methodology in relation to addiction? Are humans simply receptors? Is depression simply serotonin deficiency? How far do animal models work? What is the neuro-biology of addiction? Are moral dimensions helpful? What of spirituality?

Chaired by Dr Denise Cooper-Clarke, the discussants were Dr Alan Gijsbers Specialist Physician in Drug and Alcohol Studies, and Assoc. Prof David Clarke, Psychiatrist at the Monash Medical Centre, Monash University.

As one of the discussants I think the meeting only touched the surface of a very large topic still in the process of developing appropriate scientific methodology to its activity. As David Clarke admitted, a lot of our clinical activity lacks a good scientific base and the prior questions of what constitutes good clinical science in a discipline like addiction studies still needs to be worked out. There are some encouraging signs in the development of neurobiology, but there is a long way to go. This is an open field for those interested in the science-faith dialogue to move away from the simple sciences of physics and rocks to the much more taxing sciences of human addiction with its strong ideological overlay.

This overlay was somewhat explored by the public meeting on the ethics of drug and alcohol care in May 2000. ISCAST broke new ground in bringing together a number of people from different denominational and policy persuasions. It was good to have Major Brian Watters, the chair of the Prime Minister's Drug Advisory Committee, there to give an outstanding apologetic on what motivates him as a Christian in this area. Rev Tim Costello challenged us to think of the social messages underlying our attitudes to drugs. Rev Dr Norman Ford, director of the Caroline Chishom Institute of Ethics in Melbourne presented a broad overview of modern ethical understanding as a way of dealing with drug issues, Rev Dr Gordon Preece, director of the Centre of Applied Christian Ethics applied the three C's approach (conduct, character and consequences) to ethics to the drug issue. My mentor and colleague Prof Greg Whelan raised the issue of the ethics of basing management policies on sound science. The highlight for me was that Christians for and against injecting rooms could disagree in charity. The focus of the meeting was however much broader. Addiction ethics raises broad lifestyle issues which need to be addressed in any comprehensive treatment program.

The ethics meeting was in my mind simply the first turning of the sod. There are major ethical issues which need to be explored further. Here's hoping some bright ethicist will look at our efforts in the next [Zadok](#) paper and will guide us through the maze of issues the whole field raises.

Alan Gijbers.

Articles

Neuroscience and the Soul - Dr RL Maddox

This lecture given in Queensland, is reviewed by Rev David Parker ordained Baptist minister, Consultant Theologian and editor of Evangelical Review of Theology, formerly Academic Dean of the Bible College of Queensland.

Dr R.L. Maddox, Paul T. Wells Professor of Wesleyan Theology at Seattle Pacific University, presented a stimulating lecture with freedom and enthusiasm summarising some recent developments in neuroscience and showing how they challenge some traditional Christian views, yet at the same time could open up the horizons of faith in a creative and dynamic way.

Dr Maddox has received a Templeton Science and Religion course award and currently participates in the Oxford Seminar on Religion and Science.

The main areas of neuroscience mentioned were localization of various cognitive and affective functions in specific brain regions, deeper recognition of integrated action of various neural subsystems in cognitive and affective functions, and recognition of biological developments of the brain through early childhood.

In an apologetic mood, Dr Maddox then went on to assess three challenges posed by these developments. The first of these was the challenge of reductionist accounts of religion which dismiss religious claims on the grounds that some physical causes can trigger specific neural structures related to religious experience.

The second was the challenge of biological determinism in which popular presentations argue that the evidence of a biological substrate or foundation to human cognitive and affective powers fully accounts for these powers in mechanistic terms.

The third challenge was reductive materialism which draws on recent discoveries in neuroscience casting doubt on a dualistic account of human beings to argue for the view that humans are fundamentally material in nature and consequently mind/soul functions must be considered merely as epiphenomena of deterministic physical states.

Specific theological matters were emphasised in the next part of the lecture, where Dr Maddox discussed the impact of neuroscience on beliefs about the origin of the soul, hope for an afterlife and the idea of an intermediate state between this present life and the resurrection. He drew attention to some alternative interpretations of these beliefs that harmonised more closely with developments in neuroscience, a situation which had positive implications for Christian faith.

In the last section, practical matters dominated, first of all in areas such as spirituality and character formation where there were positive benefits to be found from some of developments in neuroscience. On the other hand, in matters such as cloning, abortion and the care of the mentally and spiritually disabled, the lecturer warned that neuroscience raised grave ethical problems which needed serious attention.

Despite the obvious challenges, it appears from the lecture that Dr Maddox welcomes research and discoveries in the field of neuroscience, at least in the areas discussed, because they often offer better explanations of human behaviour and religious and moral experience. But he is even more interested in the deeper philosophical and theological questions. For example, he finds that the Wesleyan doctrine of human freedom is greatly illuminated by the idea that for the young the structures of the brain are in a process of development and that there is a "feed-back" feature whereby the development is a product of experience as well as the brain's own growth.

But he is even more interested in the problem of dualism and the way in which Christian faith at both popular and theological levels has been unduly influenced by Greek Platonic ideas. He is especially concerned that Christian faith has been almost inextricably linked with the idea that humans are considered temporary unions of two distinct and ultimately

non-interdependent realities, soul and body. This is a particular problem because neuroscience, especially in popular parlance, requires the view that we are fundamentally material in nature, particularly in relation to the localisation of various functions usually associated with the soul in particular regions of the brain. So instead of non-interdependent dualism, Dr Maddox opens up the possibility of an holistic monism in which there is a necessary connection of the soul with the body/brain.

This means that he disfavours Christian doctrines based on or assuming a dualistic approach, such as creationism (the view that body is the result of physical procreation but the soul is created directly by God and instilled into the body at some point such as conception) or a purely spiritual or disembodied model of the intermediate state and afterlife. Instead he favours traducianism (the view that both body and soul are the result of human procreation), and, more importantly, a radical view of the resurrection of the body (rather than any idea influenced by Greek idea of immortality) which is patent to interesting interpretations in the light of DNA research and the link between body/brain and the soul.

This same link also accounts for Dr Maddox's interest in the value of physical activity in spirituality and character formation, since physical well-being and soul functions are closely related. At the same time, the traducian view of the origin of the soul and the idea of the biological development of the brain would tend to remove serious problems about the full humanity of clones. Yet the same ideas could be interpreted in such a way as to remove prohibitions on abortion (and even infanticide) which are often predicated on a strictly creationist doctrine. However, in defence of traditional Christian views on this point, Dr Maddox briefly sketched an argument based on the Christian ethic of love and compassion, which would sidestep the apparent approval neuroscience might offer.

The emphasis of Dr Maddox's lecture was on the apologetic and theological implications of neuroscience for the soul. However, as it became apparent during the lively question time, he follows a tripartite view of the human person (body, soul and spirit) rather than a Greek oriented bipartite position (body and soul/spirit). Since his presentation focused on the soul, he was referring throughout to memory, imagination, volition and emotion et al which are traditionally associated with the soul. Although he referred frequently to religious experience and the neural structures associated with it, his case lacked any systematic treatment of issues relating to the spirit in the strict, tripartite sense, thus leaving the listener ignorant of the impact of neuroscience on this important matter.

Copies of this enormously interesting and stimulating tape are available for \$7 plus postage from Professor Lawrie Lyons, 2172 Moggill Rd, Kenmore Qld 4069. Email L.Lyons@uq.net.au.

Fire in the Belly

Abridged report from Helen Joynt, ISCAST (Vic) Administrative Secretary.

"One of my strongest impressions from the evening was that Christian professionals in the areas of science and technology are grappling with very difficult questions in their

work, and it is very important that we support one another in any way possible. One way is to pray for one another. Let's do so."

The Fire in the Belly evening was an opportunity for ISCASTians to expound what fired them in life. To add to the fire each person brought a curry to share. I cannot imagine that the casseroles of thirty years ago would have had such a diversity - surely we have culinarily matured! About 30 people heard five ISCAST Fellows share their deepest concerns and driving passions.

Don Stewart, agricultural engineer and Head of International House began by referring to the passage from Isaiah 61 which Jesus read in the synagogue of Nazareth. He mentioned the need to bring good news to the poor of the world, and the impact of technology on the poorer nations of the world. In teaching engineers from developing countries, Don has the opportunity to encourage professional people from these countries to be aware of the plight of the poor in their own country.

Ross Macmillan, another agricultural engineer continued the theme of technology for development. He is concerned about the maldistribution of resources and skills, magnified by the fact that technologies that accentuate this maldistribution are more heavily financed than the more appropriate technologies that would decrease the maldistribution. Ross reminded us that a child born in Australia today will have forty times the impact on the environment compared with that of a child born in Bangladesh today. He posed the question: What difference is there between Christians working with technology who do good work, and other scientists who are not Christians who do good work? This of course buys into the perennial missiological issue, is a missionary there to do good works or to preach the gospel? Newbigin's, "The word expounds the deed and the deed explains the word," strikes a healthy balance.

Murray Seiffert, science educator, missiologist and social researcher spoke on 'supporting faith with goodness and knowledge'. He reminded us of the heritage of evangelicals as strong critics of society, but noted that at present in Australia, the Church has done little to challenge the Government on its treatment of refugees. The example set by the Church in South Africa underlines the fact that Christians can make a difference.

Jia-Yee Lee, a virologist, has a passion about how best to be true to Christ in the scientific world. Her hope is to be able to encourage her colleagues to think about their world view, and the impact this has on their daily living. Another interest for Jia-Yee is her contact with overseas students at the university. She suggested that ISCAST could be aware of these students' needs, and one way of catering for them would be to have the material on the ISCAST web site translated into relevant languages. A growing area of interest for Jia-Yee is that of bio-ethics, in particular, stem-cell cloning and research.

Ian Hore-Lacy, environmental scientist, brought the evening to a close by posing a number of questions. How ambiguous is technology for the Christian? Is technology the epitome of human creatureliness, or is it an expression of sinful technique? He went on to marvel at the bounty of God's creation, and the responsibility of human beings as good stewards, to make that bounty available to everyone. So there needs to be a balance

between the utilitarian attitude to creation, and the attitude of respect/awe/wonder. A comment referred to Moltmann's point that the pinnacle of creation is not the creation of humankind on the sixth day, but the seventh day when God 'ceased from his work' and enjoyed his creation. However Ian was critical of Moltmann for uncritically embracing a "Green romantic position." He called for the churches to develop a well-thought-out theology of creation, thoroughly informed by good science.

One of the papers appears below:

Fire in the Belly seminars: **Christians must grapple in the created world**

Murray Seiffert

The instructions given to the first two CMS missionaries, who were German Lutherans, sent to Sierra Leone in 1804, included the following:

"The temporal misery of the whole Heathen World has been dreadfully aggravated by its intercourse with men who bear the name of Christians... [they have] received from us our diseases and vices... [and the Western Coast of Africa has] been the chief theatre of the inhuman Slave Trade; and tens of thousands of its children have been annually torn from their dearest connections to minister to the luxuries of men bearing the Christian name, and who have no more right to exercise this violence than the Africans had to depopulate our coasts with a similar view... the British Nation is now, and has long been, most deeply criminal"

These are extraordinarily strong political words were probably read to a public gathering of over two thousand people! Indeed rather than this missionary outreach being a puppet of Britain, Cuming argues that through the Sierra Leone settlement, the Evangelicals altered the British view of Africa. Not only that, but a consequence was that Africans stopped cooperation in the Slave Trade as well.

The community is looking to churches to help it solve matters of human value. Most churches are either unprepared to accept this responsibility or when they do speak out, they are ineffective, doing little more than show that they are narrow sectional interest groups. By using the word 'church', I am especially concerned with denominations, but recognise that we are all included.

My main concern is that we are not paying sufficient attention to social research to be an effective contributor to government policy. It is only the Church of Rome, and to a limited extent the Brotherhood of St Laurence, who maintains a research capacity to be able to act as an informed analyser and critic of society. Recently the new Archbishop of Melbourne issued a statement saying: *The issue of whether children can be successfully brought up by single people. is open to question and needs further research.* The issue of single parent families has been researched for decades. Yet, as the sources of advice to the Archbishop are so strained, his advice is often poorly informed, so he makes such a ridiculous statement.

Rarely do the other denominations indicate that they have any more than a cursory understanding of the issues at hand. Issues of God's creation are simply not on the agenda of most churches. Because it is on the agenda of a high proportion of young people, this is yet another area in which the church shows it is irrelevant.

The church's failure to engage with issues of community life are important, because people who separate their spirituality from their life in society are a menace, and potentially dangerous. There are many examples from Hansie Cronje and Ronald Reagan, to the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches in WWII, who did not speak out against the Nazi menace.

The New Testament is mainly, but not only, about personal issues. This is not because issues of society did not matter, they did, but most probably because the organization of society was not a matter for the ordinary citizen. Israel was not a democracy.

The 19th century English evangelicals were a major social force, influencing matters of slavery, prisons, industrial law and even land tenure in Australia.

The personalised religion of the American evangelicals has, from an Australian perspective, peculiar interactions with politics, so that it displays intense interest towards the President's sexual habits, and ignores injustice at home and overseas.

The present Australian government's dealing with refugees is one of the most unbiblical policies on its books, but the churches have been half-hearted and ineffective in their criticism.

The church is failing God and his creation when it fails to act as a watchman, a role that political parties and citizens want to see happen. A brilliant alternative has been the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, led by an Anglican and a Methodist.

In the ensuing discussion, Alan Day agreed with Murray's point, but passionately added that there was a need for members to work harder at trying to educate the churches.

Footnotes:

1. G. J. Cuming [Edit.], *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith* Cambridge University Press, 1970:107.

Reviews

Web Site Reviews

Christianity and Science

American Scientific Affiliation <http://asa.calvin.edu/index.html>

The ASA is an evangelical organisation in the United States for Christians in science. It is one of the oldest groups involved in science-faith discussion. Their web site is one of the best I have seen, with numerous articles, book reviews, and links. The ASA host a very

active discussion forum. Anyone can subscribe to the forum, however the archives can be browsed on the net without subscription. The ASA also publish a good journal called "Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith". Some of the papers on this site are from this journal.

Christians in Science <http://www.cis.org.uk/>

CiS is the UK counterpart of the ASA in many respects. They have some good stuff on their site too, though it is not as extensive as that of the ASA. They publish a first rate journal twice a year called "Science and Christian Belief". CiS have links to two related groups, one for Christian science teachers, which operates mainly through its journal, and a group called Christian students in science.

Christian Students in Science <http://www.csis.org.uk>

CSiS have a really great site ideal for students, with a discussion forum, weekly topical editorials, question and answer facilities, links, resources written at a range of levels, and web books. They are sponsored by a very wide group of evangelical youth organisations in the UK, including Scripture Union, Operation Mobilisation, Fusion, YWAM and the Institute for Contemporary Christianity. If there is one web site I would recommend to almost everyone (especially young people) it would be this one. **Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences** <http://www.ctns.org/>

This web site is not for the faint hearted! Much of it deals with the activities of CTNS, but there are articles "written for the layman" who would appear to be people with university training in a field other than the one under discussion. They cover a wide range of topics.

Science & Christianity http://homepages.tcp.co.uk/~carling/main_sci.html

Dr Bob Carling has set up this private site. Although small, it contains a number of useful articles that make it worth visiting.

Science and Spirit <http://www.science-spirit.org/index.cfm>

This is the companion site to the Science and Spirit Journal. It has strong links with the Ian Ramsey Centre in the UK and the Templeton Foundation. As its name suggests it is interested in the interaction of science with spirituality in general, not just with Christian theology (or even a subset of Christian theology). It offers discussion fora, articles, and tutorials on a diversity of issues.

Glenn Morton <http://home.flash.net/~mortongr/dmd.htm>

Glenn Morton, a former young earth creationist, underwent a crisis of faith when he discovered that it was unable to deal with the scientific issues he encountered while working as a geophysicist in the petroleum industry. This web site offers a number of articles and two web books, dealing with various issues of evolution, the age of the earth, the flood, and the interpretation of Genesis 1-11. His understandings of the context of

Genesis 1-11 are unique. The critiques of creation science are the most valuable aspect of the site.

Faith and science <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~newman/sci-faith.html>

This very useful web site provides a catholic perspective on science-faith issues. It consists of links to papers on a range of diverse topics. Authors include such well-known figures as John Paul II, Stanley Jaki, and Michael Behe. Unfortunately, not all links are functional, so a degree of trial and error is needed to determine which ones work.

Book Reviews

The Cambrian "Explosion"

Morris SC. *The crucible of creation.* Oxford University Press. 1998. **Gould SJ.** *Wonderful Life.* Norton New York, 1989.

Between about 500 and 570 million years ago there was a remarkable diversification in life on earth. Before this time fossils are of single celled organisms, filaments and chains of such organisms, and simple seaweeds. After this time there is an enormous diversity of marine life, swimming through the water, burrowing beneath the seabed, crawling over it, or attached to it. Every phylum of animals with a fossil record, with the exception of the bryozoans, is present. This event, occurring in such a small fraction of this history of life on earth (2%) has been popularly called the Cambrian explosion. Even so, it is still a 70 million-year period, a longer interval since the extinction of the dinosaurs, so the term "explosion" contains a degree of hyperbole.

A key window into the Cambrian is the Burgess Shale fauna, originally found in the Canadian Rockies, and since recognised from China, Greenland, Poland, and the United States. Normally, only the remains of the hard part of animals are preserved as fossils, leaving a biased record. However, in the Burgess Shale localities the soft bodied fauna and the soft parts of the shelly fossils are preserved as well. This allows a much better understanding of the biology of the organisms. Of course, the fossils are highly flattened, and reconstructing the Burgess Shale fauna has been likened to working with fossilised road kills.

Simon Conway Morris is a major researcher into the Burgess Shale fauna. His 1998 book "*The Crucible of Creation*" (Oxford University Press) is a well-written guide to this fauna and its significance. To a large extent the book appears as a response to Stephen Jay Gould's, "*Wonderful Life*," (Norton, New York, 1989). This equally rewarding book had three main themes, the extraordinary diversity of the Burgess Shale fauna; much of which Gould believed couldn't be correlated with modern phyla, and the lessons this holds for our understanding of evolution. Gould argued that the Burgess Shale fauna demonstrates that diversity has decreased with time, not increased with time. The significance of contingency was an important theme of "*Wonderful Life*." If we re-ran the tape of life, so the argument goes, we would end up with a fauna totally different to what we now have. Together, these factors point to the inadequacy of neo-darwinian processes to explain the

Cambrian "explosion". In "Crucible of Creation," Morris cogently argues against these three themes. First, more recent work on the Burgess Shale fauna shows that almost all the fossils can be related to existing phyla, mainly arthropods, and the degree of disparity in the Burgess Shale fauna is less than that in modern faunas. Morris also says that while there is much we do not yet understand about the Cambrian "explosion", there is nothing yet that point to the necessity of abandoning neo-darwinian models. Indeed, the neo-darwinian processes operating on the expression of Hox genes, according to Morris, may well account for much of the explosive appearance of the Cambrian biota. Finally, while fully recognising contingency, Morris claims that convergence means that replaying the tape of life on earth would result in broadly similar biotas reappearing, even if they differ in detail. Criticism of Gould's understanding of evolution is a constant theme in the book. Eventually I found it somewhat carping and rather annoying.

This criticism aside, "*Crucible of Creation*" is a most valuable book for many reasons. It is an insightful read, full of technical detail but never dry, it provides state of the art insights into contemporary research on the Burgess Shale, its review of patterns of evolution, and the placing of all these issues in the larger context. It is refreshing, especially in contrast to the writings of extreme reductionists such as Richard Dawkins, to read a book on organic evolution that points out the limits of such reductionism. As an example:

"Perhaps a suitable analogy to explain the short-falls of Dawkins's account of evolution is to think of an oil painting. In this analogy Dawkins has explained the nature and range of pigments; how the extraordinary azure colour was obtained, what effect cobalt has, and so on. But the description is quite unable to account for the picture itself" (p9).

It is also encouraging to read acknowledgment of human uniqueness and accountability: "We might be a product of the biosphere, but it is one with which we are charged to exercise stewardship. We might do better to acknowledge our intelligence as a gift and it may be a mistake to imagine that we shall not be called to account" (p14).

This uniqueness also extends to the history of capacity for moral evil which "can make no sense unless evil doings are recognised for what they are, and that they are bearable only if somehow they may be redeemed." (p205)

Brown WS, Murphy N, Malony HN *Whatever happened to the soul? Scientific and theological portraits of human nature.* Fortress Press Minneapolis. 1998. 252pp.

This book has caused a considerable degree of consternation. Does the abandonment of dualism mean a ditching of Christian doctrine? Should we as Christians on theological grounds reject neuroscience's monism as another example of Godless science or does it force us to relook at our cherished beliefs? Malcolm Jeeves feared a religious reaction, hence his campaign to insist on the resurrection of the body and of a Biblical doctrine of monism rather than dualism. This book is a good exposition of such a position, but it prompted the following exchange:

Dear friends

At the recent ATF conference I was often urged by a fellow Iscastian to read the book "Whatever Happened to the Soul?" I have just looked this up on Amazon.com and the first reviewer leads off by saying, "I think this book is a terrible attack on Christianity." The sorts of views espoused in this area by most Science-theologians may be viewed as heresy by the average church goer. Having read quite a bit of "Whatever Happened to the Soul?" my reservations on the topic have not diminished. There is an enormous gap between the thinking of scientifically trained people and the ordinary person in the pew. Unless one is extraordinarily sensitive, ISCAST may get a lot of unwanted backlash.
Robert Stening, Secretary ISCAST.

Dear Robert

Thank you for your recent concern about the book "Whatever Happened to the Soul?" and especially the adverse review from one Dutch reader who espoused dualism because otherwise we would be abandoning the dual nature of Christ. In doing so he commits the Arian heresy of saying that the personhood of Christ resided in the body and the soul was the divine part of Christ. (Apollinarianism taught that there were two souls in Christ < the animal soul (the psyche) and the rational soul (the nous).

Alongside this adverse critique there are a number of positive reviews from other readers, a very positive review by the editors of amazon.com and the CTNS awarded this book a prize.

Of course the science faith issue is controversial - that's why we need good speakers to teach truth well. The science-faith debate is riddled with false antitheses claiming positions are unorthodox when actually they are not. That is the very reason for continuing the debate, not for abandoning it. It is good to tackle cherished beliefs and re-evaluate them, provided we do so charitably and constructively.

By role modelling reasoned debate with love, ISCAST can be a leader in our society. There's a challenge!!!
Alan Gijsbers.

Dear Robert,

I have not looked at the Amazon review but I have read "Whatever... etc" from start to finish and found no heresy. When I read it I did not even think that anyone would or could! I can only assume that the reviewer believes that a strictly (probably Cartesian) dualist account of the person is the only orthodox position one can possibly adopt and that any sort of monistic position (even a non-reductionist position) is an attack on Christianity because it seems to some (who do not understand it) that this position eliminates any possibility of there being 'a soul' which relates to God and which lives on after physical death. It is hard for some people to understand that there are other ways of understanding the person which preserve the spiritual nature of the person and life after death, without being purely dualist in form. So, on the one hand I think this position is laughable.

On the other hand I can understand that some may have difficulty because I am now in the midst of an interesting dialogue. I recently submitted an article to an Australian journal which says "contributors enjoy reasonable liberty in the exposition of the Christian faith." The thrust of my article was that, traditionally, biblical anthropology has been controlled by the intermediate state (that is, that after we die our non-physical souls live on in some state or other until the time of the final resurrection), which requires an anthropology in which the human person consists of two separable parts. However, there are many reformed and evangelical Christians who are finding anthropological monism more helpful in dealing with ethical matters as diverse and important as cloning, genetic engineering, mind-brain relationships, euthanasia, embryo experimentation and psychology. And there are others who have biblical problems with the notion of the intermediate state. My article argued that the intermediate state should not be seen as the only historic position of the church and suggests that anthropological monism is to be preferred over dualism. I also argue that the adoption of the idea of the intermediate state was an unnecessary theological move precipitated by what people thought were certain philosophical necessities, but which really aren't.

My article was rejected solely on the grounds that this runs counter to the Westminster Confession (which refers to this intermediate state) and therefore cannot be considered for the journal even though it allows reasonable liberty in the reverent exposition of the Christian faith! So, Robert, you are right that some find this view controversial, although I am rather astounded myself as I do not see it attacking the fundamentals of the faith!

Incidentally Science and Christian Belief Vol 11-2 published an article by Joel Green (one of the writers of "Whatever... etc") on the topic "Scripture and the Human Person" which raised the question of those who are not dualist in the context of widespread dualist belief. He argues that such people can be "assured that this position actually places them more centrally within the biblical material than has usually been granted over the past two millennia." I am sure that this is the case.

There are certain similarities with the evolution-creation debate. Those who object to all monist positions are far less fundamentalist and more scholarly but still likely to be affected by the belief that one cannot really hold to a particular position (in this case a non-reductive monism) and be a fully orthodox, theologically sound Christian and that therefore the position ought to be rejected prior to examination. I think that this is very unfortunate.

Brian Edgar Chair ISCAST (Vic).

Letters

Time and Eternity in Science and Scripture.

This note says that the starting point in dialogue should be some understanding of the divine intent for all creation over all time. This cannot be deduced finally from science, but must be found by revelation in Scripture.

Creation gives God pleasure (Genesis 1: 31; Revelation 4: 11), but there is more. Creation shows the limitless love and power of God (Proverbs 3: 19; John 3: 16), but there is still more. Scripture reveals that divine pleasure, love and power are not only for time, but for eternity (Isaiah 57: 15). Though this life is more important to us now, eternity is far more significant by reason of duration.

To put it briefly, God's plan is to bring a perfect entity into being. Divine Persons are uncreated. The material creation, angels and humans are not perfect (Job 15: 15; Romans 3: 23; I Corinthians 6: 3). This new entity will display the glories and beauties of Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally. The Bible uses the word "church" to describe it. Christians should know all this (Ephesians 1: 18-23; 3: 9-11).

The church consists of all those who give our Lord Jesus Christ their love, loyalty and allegiance (Ephesians 1: 3-7; II Corinthians 5: 17; I John 4:7-10). These find in Him a Saviour from the penalty and power of sin, and ultimately from its presence (Romans 8: 14-17; II Peter 3: 13). It is with this ultimate provision that this note is concerned.

Perfection of the body results from resurrection: "We shall be like Him" (I Corinthians 15 53-54; I John 3: 2). Perfection of the soul results from the insights obtained at the judgment seat of Christ (Matthew 12: 36; II Corinthians 5: 10). Perfection of spirit is His gift to us (Hebrews 12:23). Members of Christ's Church in eternity possess to the full the divine quality of freedom, and will at every moment choose successfully to use this freedom to serve Him in complete union with Him (Hebrews 2: 5).

The material universe is incredibly vast. It is to be expected that our Lord has a purpose for all of it. Given that the Church contains something of the order of one hundred million of us, we should be able to administer it for Christ until entropy has its way and the black holes dominate. Then, who knows what the next great adventure will be? In the mean time, remember that dialogue which does not take eternal matters into consideration is in part a detachment from reality.

Ian McDowell.

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your usual thought provoking comments. We need to keep that eternal perspective in mind, but also to rethink what it will mean to live there somehow embodied in some environment. The apocalyptic vision is intriguingly challenging. How will we enjoy God's complete healing, no sorrow, no death, the presence of the One who was slain for us? In what way will we enjoy the new heaven and the new earth in our resurrected bodies? The issues of embodiment and ecology will not cease..

Ed.

Towards a Theory of Miraculous Beginnings

I have been concerned and disappointed by the polarisation among Christians about the Bible and science. There are Christians, who defend a literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis against evolutionism. On the other hand, Christians defend an evolutionary understanding of "creation" against Biblical literalism. There are serious

strengths and weaknesses in both positions, and I have been trying to develop a mediating position.

My proposals are tentative because my main work has been in philosophy, ethics, and culture, but I have completed the preliminary work for an MA in the history and philosophy of science. I believe that although the Bible provides evidence that miracles have occurred, the Bible itself is not a miraculous book. It is not literally "the word of God". Therefore, the early chapters of Genesis need not be interpreted literally because they do not provide God's eye-witness records of events which occurred before humans began to make their own records. On the other hand, because I believe that the Bible provides evidence that miracles have occurred within human history, I believe that some theory of miraculous beginnings is necessary to account for the possibility of miracles within human history. Because I believe in a theory of miraculous beginnings, there is no need for me to believe in an evolutionary theory of beginnings.

However, it is one thing to profess belief in the necessity of a theory of miraculous beginnings, it is another thing to actually propose and develop a credible theory of miraculous beginnings. Any acceptable theory of miraculous beginnings must suppose that the things which God caused to exist were things which did not have an appearance of age. With regard to living things, a theory of miraculous beginnings must suppose that God caused the existence of the various kinds of living things by causing the existence of their seeds or eggs or embryos. A seed or egg or embryo has no appearance of age. There is no obvious way to tell from the present appearance of the seed or egg or embryo how long it has existed. Therefore, supposing that God caused the sudden existence of a seed or an egg or an embryo does not involve supposing that God caused something to appear to have an age when it did not really have an age.

Since a kind of living things is only viable when there is a certain population of this kind of living things, a theory of miraculous beginnings must also suppose that, with regard to each kind of living things, God caused the simultaneous existence of a population of seeds or eggs or embryos. A population of living things has no appearance of age. Unless the fossil record has been studied, there is no obvious way of telling whether a population of a certain species is a "living fossil" which has existed for hundreds of millions of years or a population which has only existed for tens of thousands of years.

These suppositions concerning the beginnings of the various kinds of living things and the beginning of the universe seem to me to provide the basis for a credible theory of miraculous beginnings. I hope that there are specialists in natural history and cosmology among the readers of the Bulletin who are willing to critically examine this theory.

(Mr) Vivian Bounds

Dear Vivian

I'm sorry space prevented me from publishing your submission in full. I have two major difficulties with your position. First, it does not adequately grapple with the scientific data which accounts for the age of the universe and the development of life. A philosophy cannot just be built on thought experiments, it needs to take into account credible scientific theory based on geological and paleontological data. Sometimes the data drives

us to polarisations, but truth is truth. The second difficulty is the unnecessary polarity of miracle and mechanism. The two are not mutually exclusive alternatives. We reject semi-deism which only sees God working in the world by intermittent miraculous interventions. We are theists who believe God works both through natural and supernatural means.

What do other readers think?

Ed.

On science and creation.

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that humans no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him.

The scientist walked up to God and said, 'God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost.'

God listened patiently to the man. After the scientist had finished, God said, 'OK, let's have a man-making contest.'

The scientist agreed.

But God added, 'Do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam.' The scientist said, 'Sure, no problem' and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt.

God looked at him and said, 'No, no, no. You go get your own dirt!'

Thanks to Melissa Khalinsky