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Great are the works of the LORD: they are studied by all who delight in them Ps 111:2 (NASB)

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

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Board.*

Editorial

COSAC 2003

The fourth Australian Conference on Science and Christianity was held at Avondale College at Cooranbong, NSW, on the weekend of July 18th-20th. Cooranbong is a small country town about an hour or so north of Sydney on the road to Newcastle. For non-Sydneyites, it can be considered a suburb of the city, although locals appear to resent that perception. About 60 people attended the conference, coming from Queensland, NSW, the ACT, Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand. They represented a wide range of backgrounds, including Adventist, Anglican, Baptist, Brethren, Catholic, Presbyterian, Reformed, Uniting and many others.

The theme of the conference was Divine action, with five major papers presented by Alan Gijsbers, Neil Chambers, Andrew Sloane, Mark Worthing and your editor. There were three workshops spread over three sessions that discussed Mind (Alan Gijsbers), Miracles (Mark Worthing), and Evolution (Andrew Sloane and your editor). Introductory talks for each workshop were presented by Jaan Boersma, Andrew Brown, Mick Pope. In addition Patsy Robertson and Richard Gijsbers presented reports on communications and the web site. Summaries of the various talks form the bulk of this issue of the ISCAST Bulletin.

I have been to all COSACs to date and, while all have been both valuable and memorable, this one had by far the most pleasant atmosphere. Especially note worthy was the willingness of people to discuss different approaches to issues in a spirit of Christian fellowship, without arguments. While all the presentations were stimulating I found Mark Worthing's paper on miracles especially encouraging.

The credit for a very successful conference belongs to the conference organisers – Peter Barry, Lewis Jones and Lyndon Rogers. Special thanks go to Lyndon for coordinating the wonderful facilities and hospitality at

Avondale College. The role of Helen Joynt, ISCAST Victoria's administrative Secretary, in the sale and publicity of material should also be recognised, as should be the efforts of Bettina and Peter Eyland who stood in at the last moment to look after the bookshop.

The location and theme of the next COSAC are to be confirmed, but those who missed out this time should already mark July 2005 in their diaries so that they will be able to attend the decadal conference of ISCAST.

COSAC 2003 Keynote Papers

The assumptions of theology

Neil Chambers, Bundoora Presbyterian Church

While there may be shared intellectual values amongst those engaged in theology, values common to any intellectual endeavour such as commitments to comprehensiveness, consistency, non-contradiction, and a rigour in reasoning, you will not necessarily find in those who operate under the umbrella of 'theology' today shared starting points, shared preoccupations or shared outcomes. This is not just because theologians are like musicians and writers in that each one has his or her own distinctive emphases, style and preoccupations. It is because theology, particularly as practised in the West, shares in the same crisis of authority and knowing as the rest of the culture. That being the case to know the assumptions of any theology one must first ask 'Whose theology?'. This will not prevent me from differentiating below the starting point of Christian theology from other starting points and attempting some brief justification of that, but you should know that not all who practise 'theology' would share or even reckon as legitimate such an approach. Having expressed my starting point I will list the givens of such a Christian theology and summarise the character of the theology that arises from dealing with those givens, but first, to prevent more confusion than is necessary, I will clarify what I am talking about when I am using the word 'theology'.

At its simplest theology is thinking about and talking about God. 'Theology' as it is practiced in theological colleges and universities (generally not in Australia) is engaging in that reflection and discourse with the same disciplined and rigorous thought and training which is given to other fields of study at tertiary level. It is, however, distinguished only by degree from the activity of a Bible Study group talking about why God tells us to pray when He knows all things, or someone reading J. I. Packer, or Rowan Williams, on their

holidays from the Lab. At a tertiary level, while it can be used of a course of study that embraces languages, biblical studies, history, it is used primarily of disciplined thinking about God. As such it is to be distinguished from religious studies, which gives itself to description of the religious practices of humanity and reflection on their origin and role, and can be expressed in a number of overlapping sub-disciplines — Biblical, Historical, Philosophical, Moral, Dogmatic and Systematic Theology.

With such an understanding of theology it is clear that theology can be engaged in by anyone with a concept of God and some claimed source of knowledge of God which can be the subject of rational reflection. Thus there can be and are Jewish, Islamic and Hindu theologies, each with a distinctive starting point in their own claimed revelations. Some, observing this, will attempt a generic theology, trying to isolate what is common to all. Others, partly in response to the observation of conflicting theologies not just between faiths but within faiths, will want to focus on starting with the knowing subject (i.e. the human engaged in seeking to know God) of theological discussion, claiming that theology is human exploration of the question of God and what is being examined are human claims about knowledge of God, and what is of interest is how those claims operate in human society (e.g. in endorsing inequalities in relationship) or how particular human contexts shape claims about God. Still others, observing the role faith commitments have in particular communities, want to start with particular collectives and what they have always believed about God, with the goal of elaborating and clarifying for that community its understanding of God.

Yet none of these are an adequate starting point for a Christian theology for they are not true to the reality of the God Christians know. Christian theology is thinking about and speaking about God in response to His revelation, His address to us in the gospel of

Jesus Christ, Son of God. The gospel is its starting point, and it takes its purpose and character both from the fact and content of that gospel address. This understanding of the starting point is consistent with the gospel's self understanding—it comes to us on its own terms as a message from God. Thus Christian theology has, in common with Christian profession, just one assumption, the truthfulness of the gospel as word from God.

Divine action and organic evolution

Jonathan Clarke, ANU

Theories of organic evolution provide a conceptual framework for the formation of biological diversity by so-called natural processes. Current theories of organic evolution also rely on both random events, such as mutation, and historical contingency, including impact induced mass extinction, in shaping the history of life on earth. Furthermore, many evolutionary processes are chaotic in nature, in conjunction with randomness and contingency, pointing to an apparent absence of goal and purpose to organic evolution and, by implication, the biological world. In the Bible this diversity is created and sustained by God. In addition, the whole of creation is working towards a goal. Many Christians, past and present, see theories of organic evolution as a denial of God as creator and sustainer of the biological world. In this paper I will examine some of the many examples in the Bible where so-called natural processes, including those of a random, chaotic, and contingent nature, are shown to be under God's authority and form part of God's creative and sustaining work in creation. These include the cycle of day and night, the life cycle of plants, animals and people, weather, and human history, and God's provision of food for animals and people. The implications of God's action in these spheres for our understanding of the theological context of organic evolution are profound. The Biblical language of how God, maker of heaven and earth, in Whom we live and move, and have our being, creates and sustains the world is compatible with God creating living things through organic evolution

The Dialogue Between Neuroscience and Theology

Alan Gijsbers, St. Vincent's Hospital

This paper explores several issues in the dialogue between neuroscience and theology and identifies seven key questions:

- 1) How can a neurobiological organism express rationality, accountability, consciousness, etc.?
- 2) What is human and what is the "soul"?
- 3) Does neuroscience force us to abandon concepts such as the "spiritual world"?
- 4) Is the "scientific method" the only way to knowledge? What is an appropriate approach to neuroscience?
- 5) How can the person—the results of neurobiological evolution and development—live beyond physical death?
- 6) How can we develop an effective ethic to deal with people in the human genome project, abortion, euthanasia and stem cell research?
- 7) If intelligence is a purely physical and biological system then cyber and animal intelligence could well be similar to human intelligence. Is this so?

The present state of the dialogue suggests the following tentative conclusions:

- Neuroscience has not obviated the need to consider higher-level phenomena, even if we don't fully understand the relations between the layers.
- Reinterpreting the soul as the self can be a very fruitful exercise.
- Biblical anthropology has a lot to say about the value of people in today's world, but this fits better with considering the Biblical metaphors of the image of God, the person-in-relationships and an anthropology based on our Christology. Any of the various types of dualism are unnecessary to insist on the value of human beings.
- Christological Anthropology is Non-docetic; Relational; Spiritual.
- Godliness (=spirituality) will be seen to be a far more physical activity in the light of the holistic understanding of persons—irrespective of the position taken on the dualism/monism question.

- There are a number of ways of understanding the time between death and the resurrection of the body, but these are speculative and beyond Biblical data. Resurrection of the body still calls on an understanding of the mystery of *Σωμα πνευματικόν*, and that again is extrapolation beyond Biblical data.
- Humans are biopsychosocial beings firmly grounded in the physical, dependent on the environment, but reaching up into the world of God, who, in Christ, gave us life, love, purpose and meaning, and calls on us to live in a community of love with other humans.

Theological boundaries on organic evolution

Andrew Sloane, Morling College

Some say that the very *idea* of theistic evolution crosses crucial theological boundaries. ‘Creation science’ clearly argues for the illegitimacy of theistic evolution. Creation scientists argue that science must operate within the pale of a literally interpreted, infallible text. Given that the Bible is inerrant, any account of origins that differs from their account of it is illegitimate, for it subordinates infallible (or inerrant) Scripture to fallible, even sinful, human reason. Those who disagree with such a position, such as those who believe in theistic evolution, may still be Christian, but need to look at what the boundaries are and how they function, and then seek to present a ‘story’ of origins that fits within the boundaries of faithful Christian belief. There are, in my view, key controls on the *content* of accounts of theistic evolution. First, is belief in God as sovereign creator of all things. Here, it seems to me, there is a range of views acceptable. Second is a commitment to the authority of Scripture understood in its historical, cultural and theological context. As I will argue below, I see no conflict between this commitment and acceptance of theistic evolution. Third is belief in the dignity and sinfulness of humanity. Again, there are a number of accounts of evolutionary origins of humans that are consistent with these core affirmations. Fourth, we need to affirm both the value and the limitations of scientific investigation. Science is not inherently value-neutral, and so we, as Christians, need to assess evolutionary science *as science* in part in relation to its ‘fit’ with core Christian beliefs. Nonetheless, it seems to me that it is a

very powerful tool for understanding our environment, and also helps us to understand our own formative history. There are also, I believe, controls on the *manner of our discussion*, a matter frequently forgotten by all parties in the debate. The first, and most important of these is godliness in debate: that is to say, we need to demonstrate Christian virtues such as charity in our discussions with those with whom we differ. Second is a commitment to identifying and affirming the core, that is, central Christian truths, such as those I identified above. Third, and related to it, is allowing for liberty around the edges, which is to say, we need to identify non-central issues and to give each other liberty in relation to them.

Assumptions of science and the Christian tradition

Mark Worthing, Tabor College

Most popular understandings of science fall into the category of folk science. These assumptions include:

- Science is presuppositionless.
- Science deals with facts, whereas religion deals with feelings/faith/fiction.
- Scientific research and knowledge is morally good and is connected to progress, which is also morally good.
- Historically, science arose independently of and in opposition to religion and thrives best when left alone.
- Science can prove or verify its theories.
- Only the material realm is real.

The formal assumptions of science are in stark contrast to these: Science is based on a number of foundational presuppositions that cannot be absolutely proven.

- Scientific research and knowledge is morally neutral. Knowledge and technical ability is in itself neither good nor bad, but its application may well be.
- Science arose alongside of and in many cases out of religious worldviews. Christianity played a particularly important role in the rise of modern science.
- Verification is an illusion. Nothing can be absolutely and finally verified.

Neither theology nor science is free of assumptions. And this is not a bad thing. We must all start somewhere and, at least provisionally, believe something. The battle

for the scientific world to recognise that it was not without its foundational presuppositions was not an easy one. And in some circles one would think that the battle had never been fought and the ramparts of scientific neutrality and impartiality never challenged. Our best scientific thinkers, however, know better. Science has pushed the boundaries of the knowable further than many imagined, while at the same time uncovering just how much remains beyond our ability to explain or understand. Throughout this process views of truth, knowledge, progress, and the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical have also undergone and continue to undergo significant change. These also, inevitably, impact theology. If we want to talk about truth and knowledge and the relationship between creation and Creator in the modern world, then we must familiarise ourselves with these concepts as they are currently understood. As people of faith we reject the naivety of folk science and puzzle over the seldom questioned assumptions of previous generations of scientists. We are eager to enter into dialogue with scientific worldviews and want to engage with the best of scientific thinking. We must ask ourselves, however, if we are willing to put the theological enterprise and its hallowed assumptions under the same scrutiny. Are we willing to identify and challenge the rampant assumptions of folk theology and religion?

Miracles

Mark Worthing, Tabor College

“Does science leave room for miracles?” There are only really two ways in which to honestly answer that question: “No”, and “It depends upon how one understands science and, more importantly, ‘miracle’”. Our Christian faith is based upon the assumption that two foundational miraculous events

actually occurred in human history: the incarnation and the resurrection. Also, most Christian views of God as transcendent creator imply that God must at least in theory be able to intervene within God’s creation even if this means a violation or suspension of the ordinary laws of nature. For theology, it is important to distinguish between God’s ability to intervene in the affairs of the world through a miraculous interruption of natural law and his propensity to actually carry out such acts of special providence. From the perspective of the natural sciences it is difficult to engage in dialogue with theology if theology is constantly changing the rules by invoking miraculous intervention. It is like playing tag with someone who retains the right to change the ‘safety’ zones at their convenience. Thus, partly for apologetic reasons, miracles have become something of a theological problem that contemporary theologians are “loath to invoke”. There are also theological grounds for this reluctance. A God who is constantly tinkering with his creation through special, miraculous intervention begins to look uncomfortably like a God-of-the-gaps. Yet when all is said and done, the ability of God to intervene in the universe remains a fundamental confession of the Christian doctrine of God. A God who cannot in principle intervene ‘miraculously’ in the universe can hardly be credibly maintained to be its ‘wholly other’ Creator. The transcendence of God, however, is perhaps ultimately more of a stumbling block than the possibility of miracles. A God who transcends the physical universe also transcends the ability of modern science to prove or disprove his existence. In an age when scientific research stands on the very threshold of understanding the mysteries of the universe, a God who is beyond its grasp remains a hard pill to swallow.

COSAC 2003 Workshop Papers

Flat earth thinking processes and higher beings in a multiverse

Jaan F J Boersma

For most people "understanding" comes through learning by rote of infinite arrays of analogous stories. It is a wonderful pedagogical technique that has been used for

millennia, is used in scripture, and by us all. What are the impediments to comprehension of rational Christian belief by being too literal and arguing by analogy? For the more cerebrally oriented some abstraction is possible and inductive thinking may produce higher or more general truths.

However, even language itself of necessity reflects culture, the limitations of being human, and in fact the physical nature of the

universe we know, with the undesirable consequence of constraining God to our image—anthropomorphic picture language.

The question arises of how God and his/her domain may be more meaningfully modelled while maintaining characteristics such as a rational and self consistent nature. What inferences can be made by extrapolating knowledge from 2 D and 3 D universes to a higher N D space in order to seek a tighter understanding of God in a Multiverse?

Can a Darwinian be a Christian?

Andrew Brown, Queensland Baptist College of Ministries

Michael Ruse's recent book by this title acknowledges the importance of this topic for Darwinians as well as Christians. I propose to compare four recent positions on this question that have emerged in discussion with Ruse and with one another. Among Darwinians, Ruse answers his own question affirmatively, while Richard Dawkins is an obvious opponent of such compatibility. Among Christians, Alvin Plantinga has questioned whether a Christian is obliged to accept Darwinism, while Ernan McMullin denies any basic inconsistency between them and regards evolutionary belief as scientifically indispensable.

I continue by clarifying the four positions in terms of their stand regarding the relationship between science and religion, utilising Ian Barbour's four-part description of this relationship. The degree of perceived overlap between the two domains has much to do with the way the title question is answered by each spokesperson. I claim that Darwinism and Christianity do tend to compete for the same philosophical or metaphysical 'turf' in the real world of popular thinking, while recognizing that many Christians embrace Darwinism as a mechanism of biological development while rejecting it as a world-view. Metaphysical or theological overlap would partly explain the competitive nature of the discussion about Christianity and evolution.

I proceed to outline some of the potential agreements and disagreements between the worldviews generated by Christian beliefs about creation and (potentially) by Darwinism. Some of these are raised by Ruse, while others are not. Questions include divine action, naturalism, teleology, the place of process, the status of humanity, the place of evil, the role of Scripture and the significance of history. In some of these areas there is a general harmony

between Darwinism and Christianity. In others, internal differences within Christianity affect the response to Darwinian perspectives, and in others it is argued that Darwinism as most often construed fits awkwardly into a Christian world-view, a fact evidenced in trends in Western thought leading up to and since the advent of Darwin's theory. Darwinism could perhaps be construed as 'Christianity's rebel son', depending on a Christian world-view for its birth, then turning to challenge it.

Meteorology, omniscience and omnipotence: Reflections on divine action in the weather

Mick Pope, Bureau of Meteorology Melbourne

Whilst much discussion of special divine action (SDA) centres upon subjects such as the origin of the universe, the emergence of consciousness, etc, weather and climate are also important issues.

Weather and climate are essential factors in the evolution of life. Two events in particular are of interest. The first are the so-called snowball Earth events between 580 and 750 mya, resulting from decreased atmospheric CO₂ and solar radiation. Evidence suggests that photosynthesis was effectively eliminated during such events. This "bottleneck" and the warming due to volcano CO₂ emission lead to the "Cambrian explosion". The second set of events was the rapid cooling and drying (and subsequent warming) during the past 250,000 years due to the collapse of the "Global conveyor", as shown by Greenland ice cores. Aridification led to the woodlands in which many hominid fossils are found, and successive events may have been the "pump" for increased brain size and human migration "out of Africa". Instead of concentrating on quantum SDA in the human brain, might not consciousness be inevitable given the right climatic forcing?

God's sovereignty over the weather is important to biblical theology. Against the background of both Egyptian and Canaan myths, there were competing claims to climate control from Hapi, the god of the Nile and the storm god Baal. The parting of the Red Sea and the drought during Elijah's time must be seen in light of this competition. We could take these as either statements of the non-existence of other gods (general divine action), or of God's omniscience (a process God), or omnipotence (SDA).

Weather is also important for theodicy. Covenant curses include threats to agricultural “friendly” weather. Thunderstorms help fix nitrogen for use by plants, but also kill about 50 people annually in the USA. Did God have a choice in creating weather that gives life as well as kills? Probably not. Can we pray to God to alter the weather? Events such as snow in the Sahara are unlikely in an entirely mechanistic system. However, unless we make God passive, then no weather miracle is anything more than “perfect forecasting”, which due to sensitivity to initial conditions requires infinite precision.

Finally, since the weather system is chaotic, some have seen it as open to non-interventionist SDA. However, since chaotic systems are *deterministic*, they are ontologically closed. Chaos is a statement of our epistemic ignorance. Therefore, our current understanding does not permit non-interventionist SDA. This does not seem satisfactory if we adopt the biblical view of creation as the theatre of God’s action.

Hence, we see that the weather is important in the study of science and biblical Christianity. Whilst highlighting this importance, at this time there do not appear to be any ready answers, but there can be worthwhile discussion.

Other COSAC 2003 Papers

ISCAST Communications Working Group – report to COSAC 2003

Patsy Robertson

The Communications Working Group was convened early in 2003 by Patsy Robertson at the request of the Victorian Branch of ISCAST. The Members were: Richard Gijsbers, Helen Joynt, Brian Edgar, Jia-Yee Lee, Ian Hore-Lacy, Jonathan Clarke, John Pilbrow, and Mark Worthing

The primary aim of the group is to further develop a unified ISCAST Communication Strategy. Communications modalities within ISCAST include *The Bulletin*, edited by Jonathan Clarke; conferences and resulting papers; email; the website; and general mail. Much of the current activity of the Working Group has centred on the ISCAST website.

The website was first developed by Ian Hore-Lacy and has been upgraded over the last two years by Richard Gijsbers and his son-in-law. Since August 2001, unique site visitors have increased from about 100 to over 900 a month. Number of pages downloaded has increased from under 1000 per month to close to 7000 per month by June 2003. Major users come from Australia, the UK, USA and NZ but there are users from a number of other countries including Germany, Namibia, Singapore and Canada. The ‘papers’ are the most frequently visited pages with John Thompson’s article on Genesis 1–3 still number one.

Current projects areas include online papers, online bulletin, ‘thinklings’, internal business online. One of the Victorian Fellows has agreed to be editor of the online papers. We are looking for an online Bulletin editor and will need to work with him/her to coordinate the paper Bulletin and online bulletin. ‘Thinklings’ is well visited and Richard is looking at ways to improve access. He has had preliminary discussions with someone who might become ‘thinklings’ moderator. Other possible ideas for the site include subscriptions/donations online, online courses, articles in other languages, and FAQs.

Any suggestions or ideas can be sent to patsyroberson@ozemail.com.au or Richard Gijsbers: ringle@optushome.com.au

www.iscast.org.au: An Update

Richard Gijsbers

The use of the ISCAST website site has increased from about 140 visits per month to about 1000 over the last two years. Note the number of pages that are downloaded (nearly 7000 over June this year). This reflects the number of papers that are regularly being downloaded.

The site has 19 formal papers posted on it, six shorter articles, eight reviews and a number of other contributions. It was also a useful resource for COSAC 2003.

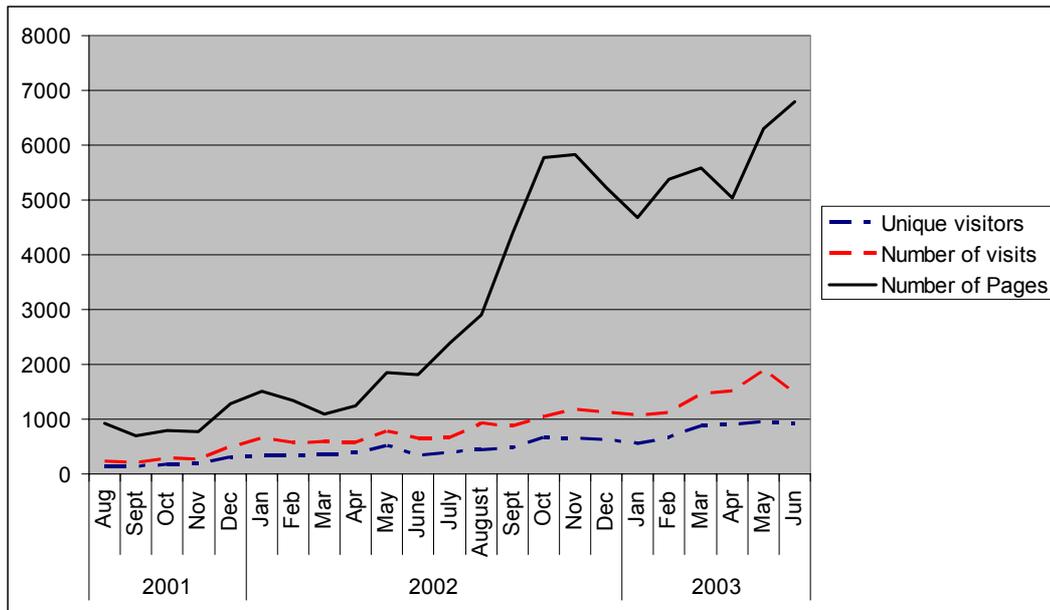


Fig 1: Use of the ISCAST Website

The visitors to the site mainly come from Australia, the United Kingdom, USA and New Zealand. Other countries include Canada, Singapore, Netherlands, Croatia, Namibia, Germany, Japan, South Africa, Argentina, Czech Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Hungary, Belgium, and the US Military.

Where to now?

There are four areas where I think ISCAST can develop the site:

1. Formal Papers

My dream would be to make this site the publishing medium of choice for papers on science and Christian faith. John Pilbrow has agreed to be the editor of this section. He has reviewed the existing papers and is preparing recommendations for the future.

In the meantime I am exploring setting up a properly structured search engine for the site.

2. An Online Bulletin

This would be a magazine-style communication of more general interest for visitors. It will have short articles, invited editorials, "Letters to the Editor" and the like.

I have asked our Sydney colleagues to see if they can't come up with an editor for

this (I will arrange for any technical adaptations to the site if required).

3. Online Discussions

Our "Thinklings" pages require a different approach. The original idea was to integrate online debate, some structured discussion and perhaps the publication of a formal paper. This was a bit ambitious.

We hope to have a moderator for these pages soon and I look forward to Thinklings taking off, catering for different levels of discussion.

4. Internal Use

There is potential for using the site to circulate minutes, drafts of position papers and so on. Please contact me if you have any proposals.

The site has been set up so that anyone with access to the Internet can contribute. It would be ideal to have at least one person in each State or centre of activity advertising local events on the site on a regular basis.

A Communications Committee has been set up to coordinate our different means of communication. Patsy Robertson is the convenor of this august body which also includes Brian Edgar, Helen Joynt, Richard Gijbers, Mark Worthing, Jonathan Clarke and Ian Hore-Lacy. Please let us know if you have any ideas or offers of help in the area of

communications.

The site is there as a repository for papers of varying degrees of complexity and formality. It

is a site set up for your use so please feel free to use it.

Science and Christian Belief

The Journal of Christians in Science (UK). It comes out twice a year and contains many thoughtful articles.

Cost: Aust\$50 for one year's subscription

For subscription contact Helen Joynt, Administrative Secretary ISCAST (Victoria)

Reviews

The Trinity in creation

Colin E. Gunton: The Triune Creator. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998.

Much ink has been used in exploring the Christian doctrine of creation. Much of this has been written from a perspective of Christian monism. That is, while acknowledging the triune nature of God, discussing the work of God as creator and sustainer from a monistic perspective, under the assumption that the work of the three persons in the Godhead are either interchangeable or indistinguishable. The late Colin Gunton in this important book argues that the doctrine of creation can only be fully understood in Trinitarian terms, to do otherwise is to court deism on one hand or pantheism on the other.

Gunton tackles the problem in two ways. Firstly he takes an historical overview of theological reflection on the Trinity in creation. He then develops a Trinitarian doctrine of creation. The first part takes up the seven chapters and the second the remaining three.

The historical survey begins with both the Biblical foundations of the doctrine of the trinity and creation, and with ancient Greek ideas of the world. The importance of Greek ideas, especially those of Plato and Aristotle, should not be understood, because for 15 centuries most Christian reflection on creation was mediated through the intellectual tools of classical thought. Science has subsequently replaced classical thought in this regard, and Gunton devotes several pages to Galileo and to the role of pantheism and panentheism in

ecological reflection and the rise of deism, both of which he traces to an inadequate Trinitarian theology. He also devotes several pages more to the *de facto* deification of organic evolution by people such as Peter Atkins *et al.* But a more systematic coverage, especially on the development of geology and contemporary cosmology, would have been helpful.

One interesting aspect of Gunton's historical analysis is how the emphasis on a Trinitarian concept of creation has ebbed and flowed over time. He argues that from the time of Irenaeus (2nd century) until the 13th century the Trinitarian focus was lost, apart from a few thinkers like Basil of Caesarea (4th century) and Philoponus (6th century). While both Athanasius (3rd century) and Augustine (3rd-4th century) rightly taught the separation of God from creation (to avoid the risk of pantheism), the under emphasis of God's triune engagement with creation through the Incarnation paved the way for deism. Luther and Calvin re-emphasised the importance of Trinitarian theology, but it is Gunton's contention that this was once again lost in the later reformation period, again resulting in a tendency to either deism or pantheism. In the 20th century Gunton sees signs of resurgence in Trinitarian thinking about creation, beginning with Karl Barth.

In the last three chapters of this book Gunton develops his Trinitarian doctrine of creation. It is, perhaps, somewhat briefer than it could be. Gunton develops this theology on a Barthian foundation, paying particular attention to the question of providence. In the eighth chapter Gunton does pay some attention to the relationship of providence to Darwinian evolution. He draws the analogy between the Galileo controversy, which laid bare problems of the mediaeval church's theology of nature,

so Darwin showed theological deficiencies in an overly mechanistic understanding of divine action. The apex of Gunton's thesis is that, in developing a fully Trinitarian doctrine of creation we need to integrate both creation and redemption – the “two hands of God”. It is only in the person of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, God incarnate, that we can come to a right understanding of creation that avoids the traps of emphasizing God's transcendence (and sliding into deism) or His immanence (and sliding towards pantheism).

This is a most useful book to be read and re-read. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the doctrine of creation, whether from a systematic or a historical perspective.

Jonathan Clarke

Berry on Nature

God's Book of Works—the Nature and Theology of Nature, by R.J. (Sam) Berry, T&T Clark, 2003, 286 pp, £20 in UK. ISBN 0 567 08915 0 (paperback).

This is the latest book from Sam Berry, and arises from a series of distinguished lectures in 1997-98. He writes as a "natural scientist" rather than geneticist in any narrow sense and addresses a wide range of issues on the relationship between God and his creation. He finishes up identifying a convergence over the last two or three decades between public concerns expressed politically and Christian notions of stewardship of the world, which seems to be leading to "a truly natural theology" simply because we are having to come to terms with reality. "The nature and properties of creation are such that certain features are appearing that determine (or prescribe) a proper treatment for it." This points us "to the credibility of . God, and the coherence between his special and general revelations"—the title of the book being the latter, and complementary to God's Book of Words.

It is an immensely stimulating and edifying book though at the same time it has some of the same shortcomings as much Christian environmental discourse in relation to today's agenda of sustainable development.

It works through a lot of historical material to contemporary Green Religion and Green Science before expounding a raft of practical issues. Running out of World is both a pivotal

chapter and a recurrent theme thereafter, identifying constraints but without optimism that they can continue to be overcome as in the past. It credibly covers all the issues concerned with a Christian approach to the environment at the level of principle and stewardship of the world in a broad sense, without getting into many of the hard issues of policy and management.

However, a central part of the book is where the author sets out Ten Premises for Sustainable Living, helpfully drawing together the key ethical and practical elements of several major international pronouncements up to 1992. He says that the Ten Premises "represent a convergence of ideas describing the whole nature, properties and management of the Earth" and hopes that they might provide the same kind of "focus for sustainable development .. as does Darwinian theory for biology". While steering away from rights language, the Ten Premises, like their precursors, are almost totally environmental and barely include resource issues. They do not reflect the more recent emphasis in sustainable development to alleviation of poverty as articulated at the 2002 World Conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. More attention to how resources and energy are accessed, their equitable development and distribution, and how widespread poverty can be overcome sustainably would have been welcome in a "book of works".

There are some well-presented thoughts on issues from the historicity of Adam to the neo-Platonic notion of the 'balance' of nature (though not explicitly its outworking in modern environmental ideology), contrasted with his acknowledgement that stewardship of creation "involves improving on it, not merely maintaining it".

In exploring religious faith in the light of biological science, Berry is writing for a general audience, but a final chapter is focused on the cross. His treatment of "nothing buttery" is lucid in establishing that scientific understanding falls well short of addressing the human condition and main issues of life.

A valuable reference and also a worthy gift for open-minded science aficionados. There is a huge list of references and also indexes.

Ian Hore-Lacy

Books on Science and Religion from the Australian Theological Fellowship

God, Life, Intelligence, & the Universe. Edited by Terrance J Kelly and Hillary D. Regan. ATF Science and Theology Series: One, 2001. \$35.00

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Cosmology and Biological Evolution. Edited by Hillary D. Regan and Mark Worthing. ATF Science and Theology Series: Two, 2001. \$25.00

Habitats of Grace: biology, Christianity, and the global environmental crisis. Carolyn M. King, ATF Science and Theology Series: Three, 2001. \$25.00

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Letters

A UK case study in gospel compromise—and science myths out.

This all started off as something which in most churches would be a relatively minor aberration in some materials, but as the church sought to fob off criticism, it emerged as a deeper malaise. A worthy emphasis on "gospel ministry" allowed free reign to notions compromising the basis of that.

All Souls Church at Langham Place in London was brought to prominence under John Stott as a lighthouse of evangelical vigour and biblical preaching. In the late 1990s it acquired an Associate Minister—Paul Blackham, who proceeded to champion the cause of Young Earth Creationism (YEC). In March 2000 he was involved with a meeting addressed by Ken Ham of "Answers in Genesis" at an All Souls venue, introduced the speaker and later waxed eloquent about the subject matter on AiG web site.

Then in March-April 2003 the first volumes of a bible series called *Book by Book* published by Paternoster appeared, with Paul Blackham's name prominent and All Souls' Rector, Richard Bewes promoting the series. The Genesis volume, consisting of videotape plus study booklet, had a page asserting a literal 6-day creation, supported very weakly. The videotape set up science as being in conflict with scripture. The Genesis 1 medium was confused with the message.

Various UK clergy and others associated with Christians In Science have been dismayed by this as they have discovered it in bookshops, not simply because it is so off-beat, but also because All Souls appears to have "come out" on the matter. Paul Blackham is also noted for an eisegetical approach to the OT which has Jesus popping up in some surprising places BC, and exegesis is redefined accordingly. YEC in this context seems to me to be part of a package of ideas comprising a closed system impervious to reason or challenge. The incident—or expression of chronic malaise—has profound epistemological and hermeneutical implications which undermine the gospel witness hitherto associated with All Souls. (Note that I do not know of any other senior All Souls staff who hold these views, though in a recent published book—*The Top 100 Questions*—the Rector takes a similar line on Genesis and suggests that science is simply a progression from one lot of uncertain ideas to another.).

John Bausor, a senior CIS member in the congregation wrote to the Rector: "I am rather concerned that there seems to be a tendency in some evangelical circles nowadays (both Oxford and Cambridge have been mentioned) to adopt a very limited approach to biblical interpretation, in effect excluding knowledge from extra-biblical sources such as science, coupled with a commitment to a uniformly literalist hermeneutic. I do hope that this does not become established at All Souls".

My own correspondence with Paul Blackham was less oblique and made the point that I considered his notes hermeneutically indefensible and clearly also scientifically unsupportable, and more or less negating St Paul's point in Romans 1 re learning about God from his creation. His response did not engage any of the substantive points I raised. My reply suggested that in essence the issue is how we understand God's creation, particularly: The hermeneutic of Genesis 1:1-26 in its cultural context, our scientific understanding of God's creation, including a 4.5 billion year old Earth and biological evolution, and how the two are coherently linked without intellectual schizophrenia.

By this stage the matter had been aired on the Calvin College web site, with comment about squandering the biblical and evangelical legacy of John Stott. In drawing Paul Blackham's attention to it I asked: "How can you assert such a facile reading with such profound implications in the context of two millennia and more of understanding which does not set up a false dichotomy? It disparages the entire scientific consensus and method by the same implication, though you obviously do not reject the benefits of that science, in medicine or technology". This was not answered.

Recently, in connection with ensuring that this note for ISCAST did not misrepresent anything, I wrote to the Rector, concluding: "The issue is not merely revising a page or two

of *Book by Book* and the video, it is whether All Souls continues to promote way-out teaching or to stick with the evangelical mainstream. The implications of this for the faith of members of the congregation who are on an active learning curve in life are profound. With YEC, unless they settle for intellectual schizophrenia, they must choose between faith and truth at some point". This undermines the preaching of the gospel of One who is the way, the truth and the life. A Christian's sources of knowledge about God's world and purposes is not a marginal issue.

Appeals for a meeting to discuss the matter have been ignored, so I am not optimistic that there will be an early resolution, beyond minor rewording of offending passages (risking merely a cosmetic fudge). It is a salutary warning that evangelical tradition based on biblical scholarship and established with great difficulty can easily be eroded by narrow fundamentalism. While English evangelicals have their attention on the behaviour of episcopal candidates, this YEC cancer beneath the surface both compromises the gospel message and threatens their hard-won status in the councils of the C of E. Lack of early treatment may create the need for radical surgery in places like All Souls, and not only in UK.

Ian Hore-Lacy, London

The deadline for submissions for the next issue of the Bulletin is September 30th

Word limit for articles is 1,000 words, for letters, reflections and book reviews 600 words. Exceptions may be made in exceptional cases.

Please send material to Jonathan Clarke at the address on the front. Electronic submissions preferred.