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Summer 2005

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

A Non-profit company ISCAST Ltd ABN 11 003
429 338 website: www.iscast.org.au

Chairman:

Prof JW White CMG FAA FRS, Research School
of Chemistry ANU Email: jww@rsc.anu.edu.au

Secretary:

Dr Robert Stening, 5 Savoy Ave, Killara NSW
2071
Ph h (02) 9498 2710 b (02) 9385 4584
Email: r.stening@unsw.edu.au

NSW Contact:

Dr Lewis Jones 202/35-47 Wilson Lane,
Darlington, NSW 2008 Ph(02) 9519-0189 Email:
lewis.jones@reap.asn.au

Queensland contact:

Dr Ross McKenzie, Dept Physics, University of
Queensland
Email: mckenzie@physics.uq.edu.au

Victoria/SA/TAS contact:

Richard and Glenys Gijbers, 58 Koonawarra
Street, Clayton VIC 3168, Tel.: (03) 9562 6122
Email: vic@iscast.org.au

Bulletin Editor:

Dr Jonathan Clarke, 43 Michell St Monash, ACT
2904 Ph (02) 6292 0969 (h) Email:
act@iscast.org.au

For circulation concerns, contact the state
representatives. To submit articles contact the
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Board.*

Editorial

Science, Tsunamis and Theodicy

Like all ISCASTians I have watched the coverage of the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 with shock and horror at the human suffering that ensued. In newspapers, on web sites, radio and television, from pulpits, at the office and in the home, people have discussed the event. For a few short weeks the world has remembered there are bigger dangers and more important issues than the 'war against terrorism' or even the economy.

For me the disaster has a personal dimension. One of the places badly hit by the tsunami, although certainly not the worst affected, was Phuket. The images of giant waves crashing across waterfronts and the resulting devastation showed locations familiar to me since childhood. People I know had their homes flooded and my foster sister was at Phuket airport when the tsunami struck, witnessing the effects first-hand.

How are we as Christians, especially Christians knowledgeable in science and the way the world works and with our faith in a loving and just God, to make sense of such events?

One traditional response has been to say that such events are the result of human sin. Because of human rejection of God the world is bent and broken; thus, disasters such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis are the result of sin. However, this explanation does not work well if we accept the evidence of the historical sciences that such events and the processes that cause them have been a part of the history of the planet since its beginning. Nor does this fully address the suffering of the apparently innocent in these events, the children dead, injured, orphaned and homeless.

Another response has been to see such disasters as acts of God's judgement. This too raises issues when many of those to suffer are

not only apparently innocent, but fellow Christians. There is also the question of whether, without prophetic inspiration, we have the authority to say that a particular event is an act of judgement. Indeed Jesus, in Luke 13:4, appears to suggest there are acts of apparently random catastrophe in the world, events which point towards the need for repentance but which cannot be seen as divine judgement.

A more complete understanding of the problem of natural suffering is, I suggest, to be approached by recognising that creation is ongoing. We are not living in a finished world, but rather one still being made. The goal of creation was not a perfect world at some time in the past, but the new heavens and new earth of the eschaton. God's people are called to share in that work, filling the earth and bringing it under control, but we are not yet there. Superimposed on this is the effect of human sinfulness – in the case of the Indian Ocean tsunami – greed, which led to overdevelopment of vulnerable coastal regions for tourists, apathy and the failure to install a warning system, communal violence which has increased the suffering of many and hampered relief efforts, and the channelling of too many resources into military activities, rather than emergency services.

As the book of Job shows, God does not justify Himself. Theodicies are thus at best only partial and provisional and at worst hubris. However, no attempt to develop a spiritual understanding of such an event will function, even provisionally, unless it recognises the centrality of the incarnation in creation history. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we meet God the Son who has entered into His creation and suffers with it and for it. In Jesus we see that God is not distant from his world, but fully takes part in its suffering as well as its joys. Through Jesus and the work of the cross God will make all things new. No

understanding of the doctrine of creation can be functional unless it includes the cross and looks toward the goal of creation in the new heavens and new earth.

As Christians, we are part of creation and suffer with it. We are promised trouble and suffering in the world, and so must not be surprised when we experience or witness it. In the face of disasters, whether natural or the result of human action, whether we are caught up in it or not, we are to do good to all people, especially but not exclusively, to those who share our faith. Even when we might see an event as justified judgement (which is, in my view, clearly not the case in this instance), we should not expect to be immune to its effects or any less compassionate. The Old Testament prophets both pronounced judgement on Israel, and suffered it along with their fellows. In suffering with those who suffer and helping them in that suffering, we witness to Jesus and the God who is not remote from His creation, but became part of it and suffered for it.

As God is not remote from the suffering of creation, we also are not aloof. There are many areas in which Christians in science can make a unique contribution in subduing creation. Some may have opportunities to develop and work in emergency relief teams. Others may be able to help develop the detection systems necessary to provide early warning next time or study the effects of the tsunami to understand these events, their effect and history better. Yet others may be involved in reconstruction, trauma counselling or environmental rehabilitation. This is over and above our general Christian responsibility to do good to all people, so amply demonstrated in recent weeks.

Jonathan Clarke

News

NATIONAL

Visit of Professor George Ellis

ISCAST will hold its two-yearly Conference on Science and Christianity from 15th-17th July 2005 at Burgmann College in the Australian National University. The key speaker will be Professor George Ellis, a

cosmologist and a specialist in Einstein's theories of relativity, who is the 2004 Templeton Prize Winner.

Professor Ellis was born in 1939 in Johannesburg, South Africa and obtained his Ph.D. in 1964 from the University of Cambridge in Applied Mathematics and

Theoretical Physics. In 1973 he wrote a key work: "The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time" with Stephen Hawking and this has become a standard reference. Though his parents were atheists Ellis grew up immersed in the youth activities of the Anglican Church, but his experiences, on return to South Africa, of the injustice of the political system, helped draw Ellis to The Society of Friends. In the 1970's Ellis became deeply involved in social work but continued his physics with the same fervour, writing internationally recognised works on cosmology.

It was in these years that Ellis also distinguished himself by moving to bring the forces of science and religion together to the general benefit of both fields. In 1994 he served as the J K Russell Fellow of Science and Religion at The Centre for Theology and Natural Sciences at Berkeley California and in 1996 he co-wrote with Nancey Murphy "On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Cosmology, Theology and Ethics". His efforts to balance the rationality of evidence-based science with faith and hope has made Ellis a key figure in the discussion at the boundaries of science and theology.

The importance of the theories of relativity to our concept of the universe and our place in it cannot be underestimated. The philosophical "onflow" from relativity and quantum uncertainty has penetrated language and perceptions extensively. The conference will provide plenty of time for discussion of these matters and their consequences for Christian apologetics. If you would like to find out more about George Ellis, his website is <http://www.mth.uct.ac.za/-ellis/index.html>. As the conference programme develops, and arrangements for Professor Ellis' visit to some cities in Australia are made, further information will be available on the ISCAST website.

ACT

The fifth Australian Conference on Science and Christianity (COSAC) will be held in Canberra from the 15th-17th July. For further details see advertisements in this issue of the Bulletin and updates on the ISCAST web page.

NSW

The NSW chapter had a fairly even-keeled run in 2004 after the excitement of organising COSAC 2003. It was also a more eclectic year relative to our 18 month look through 'Science,

Life, and Christian Belief' by Jeeves and Berry in the run up to COSAC 2003. NSW was glad to co-host two of its meetings in 2004 with the Centre for Apologetics Scholarship and Education (CASE), which has emerged in place of the Institute for Values Research as an arm of New College at UNSW. Check out their website at www.case.edu.au. Our four speakers in 2004 were the Rev Dr John Dickson, Rev Dr Bill Dumbrell, Rev Michael Hill, and Dr Gareth Jones.

John Dickson is an Anglican minister and an Honorary Associate of the Department of Ancient History at Macquarie University. He delivered a paper entitled 'The Thought World of Genesis', which outlined prevailing cosmologies at the time of Moses in order to help us think more clearly and sympathetically about what is written in the early chapters of Genesis.

Bill Dumbrell is mostly retired, but can't escape lecturing here and there at Bible colleges around Sydney and beyond. The author of several fascinating books of eschatological focus, he took us through an exegesis of Genesis 2-4 aimed at making sense of the New Testament teaching on the end times, which in many aspects is a recapitulation of the beginnings found in Genesis.

Michael Hill, the Vice-Principal of Moore Theological College, recently published an introductory ethics book, 'The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics', and spoke to us on the issues of building a biblical ethic. His approach is to allow the tenets of Biblical Theology to provide a framework for collecting and interpreting the relevant biblical material on ethical questions.

Dr Gareth Jones is Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology at Otago University in Dunedin, New Zealand, and spoke to a joint CASE/ISCAST meeting on the topic 'Is genetics changing what it means to be human?'. He focused on shifting the debate from the extreme and unrealistic futuristic fears to a person-centred approach to genetic decision-making based on God's sovereignty over even the genetic code, and on God's internal character as relational.

SA

Mark Worthing, ISCAST fellow and board

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member, has been invited to participate this coming September in the first round of consultations on the problem of evil and modern science sponsored jointly by the Vatican Observatory (the science wing of the Vatican) and CTNS. The consultation, like the previous series on divine action, will be held at the papal summer palace in Castel Gandolfo, outside of Rome. It is planned that, as with the previous series, a volume of essays will arise out of each of the consultations. With numbers of invited participants limited to about a dozen this gives a very good percentage of representation from ISCASTians!

VIC

What can we say as we look back on 2004? It has been an exciting year of change and development in ISCAST(Vic). and perhaps a look further back is worthwhile.

The executive took one of Allan Day's vision documents from about 5 years ago which had helped to guide the Victorian chapter, and evaluated how far we had come. We have successfully set up a local administration which provides some services to ISCAST nationally as well as in Victoria. With Brian Edgar's overseas posting coming up in 2005, I was appointed as the new incumbent of the Victorian Chair. As well, following Helen Joynt's retirement, Stockdale ACS, a service company run by Richard and Glenys Gijsbers, has been appointed to take on this administrative role. In addition to 'Thinklings', 'Fire in the Belly' sessions and the Annual Lecture, another major achievement was the Anglesea Geology weekend. This was a wonderful time of fellowship, real learning at a high level and aesthetic enjoyment. This is an exercise worth repeating, but with one major snag. The spectre of indemnity insurance looms again, and I have been assigned to address this area with the ISCAST National Board.

On the other hand, we have not been able to set up an institute of the likes of say the Anti-Cancer Council, or set ourselves up with links with a major theological college. We have also so far failed to capture the imagination of the next generation of students. A recent look at the Adelaide EU website shows that views such as those of Johnson, Behe, Demski and Hugh Ross plus those from the Matthias media have prominence and the more orthodox views (to us!) of (say) Jeeves and Berry, Poole and Blocher, have been ignored. A similar phenomenon is occurring among influential

people in the US, Canada and the UK.

However ISCASTians still believe that we can function in the market-place of ideas and action, that Christians can make a contribution within the secular world, that our science is not very dissimilar to the science of atheists and that common grace allows us to work together without needing to form a ghetto (or a monastery). We can avoid spending a lot of energy debating with our conservative fellow-believers while ignoring the secular world and the need to represent the Gospel there.

What can ISCASTians do? Despite being amateurs and few in number, the work we are producing is of high quality and can stand alongside international standard work. Let's develop a stronger belief in each other and encourage each other to continue to work to our strengths. Brian Edgar's paper on principles of biotheology is a good example of what we can do.

In this coming year in Victoria we will focus on our strengths by:

- Supporting COSAC 2005 15th to 17th July in Canberra
- Inviting George Ellis to continue on to Melbourne to present a lecture here soon after COSAC 2005
- Pursuing the following topics:
 - Science and Suffering
 - Motivation, Will and Desire
 - God and the Weather
- Having a similar event to the Anglesea weekend focussing perhaps on Astronomy.
- Seeking to share more with ISCAST in other states eg Tasmania, and South Australia and explore how to draw on their expertise, insights and wisdom in return.
- Looking at Allan Day's course notes to see if we can publish them online.
- Supporting Brian Edgar in further developing and disseminating his paper on Biotheology.
- Supporting the further development of the ISCAST website.

We believe that as we develop, publish and disseminate good quality material, especially online, we will be seen as a source of sensible, even wise comment for the church and the world to draw on.

Your prayers for the executive will be appreciated.

Dr Alan Gijsbers

COSAC 2005

The 5th Conference on Science and Christianity will be held at Burgmann College at the Australian National University in Canberra on the weekend of the 15th-17 of July. The provisional program will include:

George Ellis

"The Present State of the Science and Religion Debate"

"Cosmology-Theology-Ethics Part I",

"Cosmology-Theology-Ethics Part II"

"The Nature of Emergent Complexity"

ISCAST Fellows

"The Impact of Relativity on Christian Thought" Prof Robert Stening and Prof John Pilbrow

"Is Contemporary Science Irrelevant to the Gospel?" TBA

"Phenomenal Cosmic Power, Itty-Bitty Living Space – reflections on the incarnation in an Einsteinian universe" RevDrAndrew Sloane

For further details look for updates on the ISCAST web page

Articles

Understanding science as a social pursuit

It is very difficult adequately to encompass all the intellectual pursuits that come under the rubric of science into a single definition. Abraham Kaplan points out that defining science is a bit like trying to define the game of baseball as a bat hitting a ball. The game is much more complicated than such a reductionist definition. In this context, definitions are unhelpful, restrictive and misleading. He prefers a broader description.¹

In this article, I would like to explore the social aspect of science. This acknowledges the intellectual context in which science takes place. It does not take place in a vacuum, but within a community and a tradition. Polanyi puts it this way:

"Tacit assent and intellectual passion, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage,

¹ Kaplan A. *The conduct of inquiry: methodology of behavioural science.* . Chandler, Scranton Pa 1964:27. . "...there are other and often better ways of making meaning clear than by giving definitions. But I also forego a definition because I believe there is no one thing to be defined."

*affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework."*²

Science is a community activity. There are gatekeepers to that tradition who ensure that the tradition is not corrupted by ideas not in keeping with the tradition.

The first group of gatekeepers are the teachers at the university. They determine whether a student passes or fails the subject. Once the subject is grasped, the graduate will need to satisfy his employers that he will contribute well to the development of the tradition. Graduates will then need to persuade funding bodies that they can be entrusted with funds to conduct their research. Funding bodies have to study proposals to judge that they are scientifically sound. Only those that are in keeping with the current perceptions of the tradition will be funded. Once the research is completed, the graduate will have to persuade the gatekeepers conducting peer reviews of journal articles that the submitted article makes

² Quote at the top of the Polanyi Society website, <http://www.mwsc.edu/orgs/polanyi/index.html>.

a worthwhile contribution to the tradition. If the article is too different from the tradition, the gatekeepers will reject it.

All this implies that science is inherently conservative and that there are many checks on non-conformity. Stories are told of pioneers of new ways of thinking being ridiculed and rejected. Semmelweis was ridiculed for suggesting that there was a link between sepsis in newly delivered mothers and the doctors who came straight from the mortuary and examined these mothers without washing their hands.

Sometimes rejection is politically motivated. Arthur Koestler makes the strong case that the Lamarkian Paul Kammerer was set up, rather than fraudulent, in the famous case of the nuptial pads of the *Alytes* toad.³ The story of Georg Cantor is another example of a scientist being too out of step with his community, and maybe Galileo could be seen in a similar light, that is, not so much as a science-religion fight but as an establishment-innovator fight

However it would be wrong to regard the traditions of science as totally conservative, for innovation and discovery are the hallmarks of the scientific approach. Science flourished when people stopped believing there was nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9) and started to discover new facts and theories. Indeed the major prizes are given to people who have made outstanding contributions to new developments.

But even here there are cautions, for honorary doctorates are often given to slick politicians. Indeed we can identify professors who have got there by sheer merit and others who have got there because of their political skill. There is the dark side as well as the honourable side to academic pursuit.

However all the above paints too negative a picture. Science flourishes in a community of likeminded people with a common goal who provide mutual encouragement. There is something exciting about sparking ideas off each other, enthusing and provoking each other to greater heights and in collaborating towards a common goal. All of these are the positive social elements to the scientific pursuit. The sciences flourished in the lecture halls and the

³ Koestler A. *The case of the midwife toad*. . Pan, London. 1971.

cafes of Gottingen of the nineteen twenties⁴.

But even this does not go deep enough, for, as Charles Taylor points out, contra modernism with its understanding of man as the self-referential individual, we understand ourselves in a social context and define our big questions and our direction in life in dialogue with others⁵. MacIntyre makes a similar point in relation to ethics⁶. If dialogue is fundamental to what we do we cannot pursue our science by ourselves.

Kaplan makes a similar point in relation to science. Science is based on experience, but it is experience corroborated by others. In other words the locus of our interaction is the shared world, and the results of our experiments are submitted to others to see if they experience the observations the same way. This prevents the descent into subjectivity.⁷ We cannot abandon the social element of our scientific activity. We need the corrective of the community of researchers. As Kaplan suggests, "Adherence to the Law is the surest and perhaps the only safeguard against being misled by false prophets".⁸

This however raises a number of questions worth exploring further. By what criteria do we decide that the innovator has adhered to the law? By what rules will the debate be conducted? How do paradigm shifts occur?

We may go into these questions later but the salient point here is that science is a social, not an isolated pursuit and descriptions and definitions of science need to acknowledge that observation.

Alan Gijsbers

⁴ Jungk R. . *Brighter than a thousand suns* Pelican 1964. Ch 2. *The beautiful years*. 21-36

⁵ Taylor C. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Harvard University Press. 1991:32ff. "The essence of human life is its fundamentally *dialogical* character."

⁶ MacIntyre A. *Dependent Rational Animals*. Duckworth London. 1999.

⁷ Kaplan Op cit p 35.

⁸ Kaplan A. Op cit p5.

ISCAST Website Report

The ISCAST website (www.iscast.org.au) continues to receive increased patronage. Since its inception, 1,000 unique visits per month was something of a target we were never sure we would attain.

In April 2004 the site was updated and placed onto a new server and I lost track of the statistics. I finally got around to visiting them recently and can report the following:

- Four of the last nine months had more than 1,000 unique visits. In December we had 1,393 visits with an average number of visits per visitor of 2.37. This means that the site received 3,807 visits that month and a staggering 7,259 pages were downloaded.
- The most popular point of entry into the site is the “Papers” page. People are now entering the site there directly to check out the papers that are published and download these.
- Australia is the country from which most of our visitors (about half) come. The next most common countries (in order) are: The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, USA Educational, Germany, Croatia, the US government and Poland. The first of these downloaded 103 pages and Poland 11.
- Other countries from which the site was visited include: Denmark, Singapore, the US military, Estonia and Malaysia.
- The five most popular papers viewed in December were:
 - The COSAC 2003 collected papers (69 times)
 - Allan Day’s paper on “What It Means to Be Human” (65)
 - Dr JA Thompson’s paper on “Genesis 1 to 3: Science? History? Theology?” (53)
 - Prof LE Lyons’ Review of the Thoughts of Max Wildiers (38), and
 - Dr B Edgar’s 2004 ISCAST Annual Lecture (37)
- Other papers that have been posted for quite a while are still being viewed. These include: Jennifer Laing on Christian Views of Extra Terrestrial Intelligence, Brian Edgar on the Embryonic Stem Cell debate, notes on Abuse and Forgiveness

and so on.

- Other popular pages include the announcement of COSAC 2005, the “Thinklings” pages (yes, some people are still contributing to our chats even though many of us had given up on it), the Online Bulletins, and the events calendar.

The reach of the site is also staggering. People from 39 countries visited the site last month and breaking the 1,000 unique visits per month barrier regularly is a reason to celebrate. We have done no special promotion of the site, merely placed the papers, notices of our activities in Sydney and Melbourne, and our other material online. Naturally enough, many of our visitors arrive at the site via Google but many are also now getting there directly because they know where to go.

The continuing popularity of John Thompson’s paper amazes me. Someone must be passing the word that this is a paper to read and it has been on our “bestseller list” since we started monitoring the statistics!

I would dearly love someone of stature in the field of science and faith to take on an editorial role for these papers. I believe the website with a proper “Online Journal” will be far more effective (and cheaper) than a hardcopy journal that is sent to a limited number of people. I can also promise our cooperation in adapting the site to your requirements (funds and ISCAST editorial policy permitting).

We are also exploring a number of improvements to the site. These include a search engine for the papers to make discovery (and rediscovery) of papers much easier, publishing Fellows’ CVs online, revamping the home page and updating the events calendar to make it more easy to cater for conferences including providing for online payments.

What did I hear you say? What can you do? I’m glad you asked! How about visiting the site and checking out the papers already published. You can also submit a paper of your own that relates to an area of science and faith. Donations too for the site’s further development will be put to good use I can assure you.

The website is proving to be a significant asset for ISCAST and your support will make it even more so.

Richard Gijsbers

January 2005

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 (\$56 for both printed and online access)

For subscription contact Richard Gijsbers, Administrative Secretary ISCAST (Victoria)

Reviews

Mark Worthing, *The Matrix Revealed*

Adelaide: Pantaenus, 2004 (ISBN 0-9752401-1-0)

Mark Worthing has written an interesting and informative book about that recent cultural and phenomenon, the *Matrix* series. He seeks to provide 'the basic background for an informed Christian interpretation of the Matrix trilogy' (6). Such an analysis clearly informs the book from start to finish, shaping not only the discussion of issues but also the very issues Worthing chooses to address (as will be seen in the brief overview of the book below).

The book begins with the question 'What is the Matrix?', answering it helpfully on a number of levels. In so doing, Worthing gives an overview of the storyline of *The Matrix*, *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolutions*. Most useful, however, is his brief introduction to the philosophical and religious ideas that permeate the films. Having noted the postmodern religious (and, I might add, philosophical) pluralism of the films, Worthing turns in the next chapter to the Messianic imagery of the Matrix. Much of this is both interesting and insightful, and well illustrates the depth of the first of the movies, as well as Worthing's own explicitly Christian analysis.

Worthing moves on to discuss the *Animatrix*, which provides much of the history and mythology behind the Matrix movies, in so doing shedding light on *The Matrix* and its sequels. He then turns to an analysis of *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolutions*, interspersed with chapters on religion within the Matrix and the Matrix and philosophy. The book closes with discussions of the eschatology of the Matrix series and the task of theology after *The Matrix*. Again, this is generally interesting and insightful, although

I'm not convinced that Worthing is right in all his claims. So, in the main, this is an interesting and useful book, especially for those who, like me, find *The Matrix* both fascinating and a valuable contact point with contemporary culture.

There are, however, a number of points where I would take issue with Worthing. At times the parallels he draws between the movies and Christian story are overdrawn. One instance relates to Neo's 'baptism' into the real world. He rightly notes the movie's use of (re) birth and baptismal imagery; but the notion that there is Trinitarian significance in the three lights on the Nebuchadnezzar (page 32) is precarious at best. At other times it seems to me that there are more obvious parallels and allusions than the ones he notes. For instance, in the *Animatrix* stories 'The Second Renaissance', parts I and II, the references to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt seem clearer than those to the Flood narratives. Indeed, it seems to me that much of the imagery in those stories is an amalgam of disparate OT narratives and Jewish history and experience. For instance, while there is a clear reference to Babel, there also seems to be an allusion to Israel's slave labour in Exodus, and B166ER seems more like Moses than Cain. So too, Exodus and Exile are combined with *diaspora* and the pogroms of Eastern Europe and the 'holocaust' in the images of humans persecuting the machines. This, as I understand it, is one way the Jewish tradition uses the stories of the OT and its past—so it's not surprising that the Wachowskis should do so.

There is also, in my view, a significant gap in the book. One of the most significant features of *The Matrix* is the idea of 'the world that has been pulled over our eyes to blind us to the truth'. This, it seems to me, is a wonderful metaphor for contemporary culture and its

values, and the ways in which we are so immersed in them that we fail to see the water in which we swim. Equally, the red pill speaks of the possibility of a truth beyond the system that reveals reality and enables us to live it—an excellent metaphor for the gospel. Worthing makes no mention of this, or the deep irony of the subtle and unsubtle 'product placements' in the movie, given that such rampant capitalism is deeply engrained in our cultural matrix. *The Matrix*, in some respects at least, is itself an agent of the matrix; as a product of Hollywood capitalism it is part of the world that has been pulled over our eyes and, in its tacit endorsement of these values, it serves to foster that blindness. Some engagement with such theological readings of the film would enrich the book and its usefulness as Christian reflection on the *Matrix*.

However, where I most take issue with Worthing is in his evaluation of *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolutions*. While he recognises that *Revolutions* is the weakest of the films (pages 13, 112–113), he nonetheless sees it as philosophically sophisticated, and *Reloaded* even more so. On this matter I think he's simply wrong—as most critics agree. The dialogue in both of these films is frequently stilted and pretentious. Cinematically, it is simply poor dialogue; philosophically, it is a confused, and in my view, incoherent pastiche of ideas which fails to achieve the philosophical synthesis (however postmodern) of the *Matrix*. *The Matrix* may be philosophically pluralistic; *Reloaded* and *Revolutions* are confused, even incoherent and at times undermine central tenets of the original. In my view, *Reloaded* and *Revolutions* just can't sustain the philosophical freight that either the film-makers or some viewers have tried to load into them. This is illustrated in an example from *Reloaded* which Worthing cites as an instance of its philosophical acuity (pages 66–67); here, it seems to me, Morpheus uses a standard trick of bad philosophy—the veiling of sloppy claims in obscure, mysterious sounding language. In this respect Worthing is far too generous to these disappointing movies.

There are also a number of typos and spelling errors, as well as a few sentences and even paragraphs that seem to be repeated in separate chapters, which is unfortunate.

Nonetheless, on the whole this is an interesting and valuable book. Even when you disagree with Worthing's evaluation or conclusions, as I do on a number of points, his book will

stimulate your thinking on the movies and their use in understanding and communicating with our culture. And that is a very good thing.

Andrew Sloane

Two books by Graeme Finlay

Evolving Creation (Telos Books, 2004, ISBN 0-476-00650-3).

God's Books — Genetics And Genesis (Telos Books, 2004, ISBN 0-476-00651-1)

Graeme Finlay is a biologist at the University of Auckland. His book, *Evolving Creation*, expounds the viewpoint that science and Christian theology offer compatible views of the world, complementary rather than conflicting. Of course, there are many scientists who apply their view of science to attack religion, and many Christians who demonise science; but Finlay contends that we need not follow these paths.

A few quotations illustrate Finlay's approach "Natural science explores mechanism; Christian theology reflects on meaning." "The subject matter of science is inescapably impersonal. The subject matter on which Christian theology reflects is personal." "Creation refers to God's relation with the physical universe; evolution refers to development within that universe." Theology and science mutually interact; e.g. the rationality of God leads to the intelligibility of the world (a conclusion that some other religions would not reach). Reciprocally, observations of the physical world (e.g. concerning its age) have implications for theological interpretation.

Natural theology is discussed in its modern version — the critical "fine tuning" of physical constants, without which chemical properties required for life to be possible would never have arisen. A final chapter considers suffering, from the Christian standpoint of the suffering Jesus

In *God's Books — Genetics and Genesis*, Finlay goes into more details, both concerning genetics, especially DNA, and concerning the creation account in Genesis. This reviewer, not being a molecular biologist, cannot comment on the details of the DNA chapter. However, the important point is made that the sequence of genes in the DNA, which carries inherited information from parents to children, carries within it evidence of development in time.

Thus creation was not a "one-off" process done at the beginning and never changed. In accord with this, the opening of Genesis may be rendered as "When God began to create..." It is remarked that "the Hebrew poetry indicates that all life is dependent on God's continual creating activity," an aspect presented in detail.

The accounts in Genesis of creation and the Garden of Eden have been interpreted very variously — as literal days or as geological ages, as literal history or as allegory (or Jerome's "in the style of a popular poet"), as sacred story or one creation myth among many. Here Finlay makes the point that creation myths were common ground to many ancient peoples, however Israel put a very distinctive interpretation on the old stories, one that must have been unwelcome to e.g. the Canaanites. Israel's God was presented as not just one of many actors on the stage, but as the creator of all. Human beings were not just an afterthought of creation, but creatures of inherent value, "created in God's image".

"The first 11 chapters of Genesis are a polemical repudiation of many ideas current in the Near East of the first and second millennia BC." "Is evolution compatible with the nature of God?" Finlay stresses the balance between random chance (which generates variety) and consistent lawfulness. A number of parallels are drawn between those aspects of evolutionary history, and the story of God's community as told in the bible. In both stories, disasters occur, new initiatives arise out of disaster, "small numbers may have great effects", "random happenstance achieves God's purposes", and suffering is ever with us. But some great things come out of it". The suffering in this creation is a necessary prelude to the glory of ...the New Creation."

Both the books give notes and references for further study. The style is very clear to follow. These books provide much food for thought for Christians who respect both the Bible and what we have learned about the physical and biological world, and who do not divide their thinking into watertight compartments.

Bruce Craven

Regarding the book review above, readers can get copies by writing to: Stockdale ACS, 58 Koonawarra St, Clayton North, VIC 3168 or emailing vic@iscast.org.au

Each book costs \$10 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling.

For the Beauty of the Earth — a Christian vision for creation care

Steven Bouma-Prediger, Baker Academic 2001; 234 pp approx \$25.

This is one of the better books on the subject, though like many others it suffers from its academic perspective, devoid of any grappling with practical aspects of how to care for creation while using it as God evidently intended. Its context is not the world of agriculture, mining and forestry, but a US college where the case for a theological approach to anything outside the church has still to be made.

So two chapters are devoted to an outline of ecology and environmental issues before plunging into the familiar ground of the ecological complaint against Christianity by Lynn White et al. The author concludes that the church has in fact failed to a large degree in being captive to modernity and Western culture, accepting anthropocentrism, deifying technology, forgetting creation and succumbing to hubris.

A chapter on the connection between scripture and the created world is very well done, with the author's hermeneutic put forward as "a faithful attempt to hear again the message of Scripture while being attentive to a groaning earth" (p90). This leads to a theology and ethic of care for the Earth which is valuable as far as it goes, looking at the various approaches. But it quickly dismisses any thought of the natural world as a natural resource "to be managed as prudently as possible by humans for human good" by packaging that thought with others and consigning them to the grossly inadequate and too anthropocentric basket (p128). He concludes that "the challenge ahead is to persuade Christians that care for the Earth is an integral feature of authentic Christian discipleship" (p135). That may well be so in places, but for me today's challenge is to understand how to utilise resources faithfully and apply them to the real needs of real people while certainly caring for the creation of which they are a part.

The chapter unpacking what character we should display in earth care is predictably inadequate, though with many positive insights. The ecological virtues he puts forward are: respect and receptivity, self-restraint and frugality, humility and honesty, wisdom and hope, patience and serenity, justice and courage, and benevolence and love.

In relation to the last, "these (Genesis & Psalms) texts reveal the theological motif of earthkeeping. God is the rightful and proper owner of the Earth, but God gives us the calling to be earthkeepers. We are given the joy and the responsibility to lovingly keep the garden that is the Earth — in all its intricate fullness and dynamic relatedness. From this theological motif comes the ethical principle of beneficence. Doing good for the sake of the other is the essence of serving and keeping the Earth" (pp154-55). One wonders what the implications of substituting 'farm' for 'garden' might be! This precious attitude which ignores the 'dynamic relatedness' of the world's six billion people with the abundant provision in God's creation is staggering. But there is much of value in the chapter.

This leads to consideration of ten common arguments for responsible stewardship of creation, usefully expounded. Number 9, God's

concerns are our concerns, touches upon the question of whether pure green priorities can be construed as anti-people. "Christian earthkeepers are not misanthropes." (p177) But the author slides off the point by saying that "This objection wrongly assumes that the gospel is somehow unconnected to the earth....as if our Redeemer is not our Creator". Back to the ivory tower!

The last brief chapter touches upon technological and related solutions as the author sees it, which "do foster hope that we can adequately address at least some of our ecological problems" (p182). It is upbeat on the basis of Isaiah 54, but at the same time concludes a very inadequate approach to the subject.

Ian Hore-Lacy

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