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Spring 2001

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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individual authors or the editor. They do not
necessarily reflect the official views of the ISCAST
Board.*

Editorial

The most exciting event since the last Bulletin was COSAC2001 in Adelaide. Forty people registered and there was a good proportion of students. There was a great sense of unity of purpose and inquiry as we explored different issues together. Owen Gingerich's talks were stimulating and appreciated by those there. The excellent venue of "The Monastery" and its capable staff doubtless contributed to this. However the greatest credit must go to Mark Worthing and his doughty assistant Allie Ernst who made it all possible. The presentations of Professor Owen Gingerich and the workshop leaders also deserve a mention. As in all conferences there were lighter moments. At COSAC2001 these were supplied by a late night session of the video "Gattacca" and the adventures of Alan Gijbsbers, who the taxi mistakenly dropped off at the Convent opposite, and spent some time banging on its doors, seeking admittance. Several exciting openings for ISCAST were discussed at the Fellows' meeting afterwards. I hope to be able to report on these in due course. This issue of the *ISCAST Bulletin* contains abstracts of the different talks by Professor Gingerich. Those of the workshop sessions will appear in a later issue. These will give some idea on what was missed by those who did not attend. The talks were of high standard, consistent with the tradition of previous conferences, and setting a goal for the conveners of the next COSAC in two years time.

Have you checked out our new and refurbished web-site? It is worth a visit! www.iscast.org.au. Thanks to Yakhov Khalinsky who was commissioned by ISCAST national to brighten and update it, and has done a great job. Many thanks, too, to Ian Hore-Lacy who has kept the information up there on the web for a number of years.

Finally, it is with sadness that I note the passing of yet another leading Australian Christian in Science, Emeritus Professor Alan Wilson, formerly Professor of Geology at the University of Queensland. I had the privilege

of meeting Professor Wilson on a number of occasions and enjoying the hospitality he and his wife provided. Together we were able to discuss our shared concerns about what it meant to be a Christian geologist and to enjoy his mineral collection.

Professor Wilson made a significant contribution to the understanding of the

formation of gold in the regolith, in particular the origin of nuggets. He was also known for his expertise in the cultivation of those "living fossils", cycads. His friends, family, colleagues and fellow worshippers in the Church of Christ, with whom he had a long association, will miss him.

Jonathan Clarke

News

NSW

Seminar Week 2001 at UTC

This was my first exposure to the yearly Seminar Week workshop, organised by the United Theological College at its North Parramatta campus (Aug. 13-17). This year's theme was the interplay of religion and science. That the conveners took great care with content and scope was as much apparent in the highly creative responses elicited by the lecturers from their audience (long past question time) as in the talks themselves.

Perhaps no one could better embody the dialogue of science and religion than John Polkinghorne, Seminar Week's keynote lecturer. His morning colloquia (the only ones that I was really free to attend) provided a unifying thread for the week as a whole. John also gave an evening public lecture on *The Friendship of Science and Religion*.

Over four days, John recapitulated the main themes of his work: the search for truth in science and theology; natural theology revived; divine action; and eschatology. What we gained here, as listeners (not always so easily as readers), was an *immediacy* of access to an elegant and sensitive thinker. I'm glad to say that the College has taped his talks, with all the others.

For a physicist, some points stood out. One was the centrality, in John's thinking, of so-called *emergent behaviour*. Open dynamical processes evolve far more exotically and surprisingly than knowledge of their governing equations alone would suggest (think of phase transitions; chaos; symmetry breaking). To Polkinghorne, "open process" offers a connection between what we know about the richness of self-organisation in Nature, and what we may reasonably *believe*, if not understand, of God's action — providential and rational — within the span of this rich

openness (dare one say indeterminacy?). A forceful, if more secular, argument for the primacy of emergent collective behaviour is also found in Robert Laughlin's Nobel lecture: *Rev. Mod. Phys.* **71**, 863 (1999).

Finally to eschatology, where John was at his most compelling and daring. In two millennia, few years have passed without controversy over this "hot" topic (in more ways than one!). While some of us may struggle with John's (always measured) speculations, his intellectual commitment, and the passionate faith that he manifests in it, are clear.

I can illustrate this with a gospel passage on which John dwelt at length: Mark 12:18-27. Jesus refutes the Sadducees' anti-resurrection stance with breathtaking adroitness. The final verse 27, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living...", sums up Polkinghorne's own hope. It is a hope upon which he hangs his own Christian identity. All his careful, serene, and beautiful reasoning derives from that, not the reverse.

Questions linger. Does Jesus meet the Sadducees, and us, out of total faith in his Father, or does he speak out of total *knowledge* of Him? Or, indeed, are these two polarities reconciled within Jesus in a way that remains closed off to us — for now? (1 Cor. 13:12). What was true then is true now: how we interpret the encounter has to do with how we embrace the Resurrection. It can guide us in anticipating the eschatological dénouement, no less. To quote Peter Burrows: "God *never* gives up on His experiment".

Fred Green, Uni. of NSW

VIC

John Pilbrow on editorial board of SCB

Leading ISCASTian Emeritus Professor John Pilbrow is now on the Editorial Board of *Science and Christian Belief*. His name will be in from volume 14 (1). He will have, in his

words “something to live up to with all those Knights and FRS's”.

Exploring the Mystery of life

This question was discussed in a three way discussion sponsored by ISCAST (Victoria) on Saturday May 19th at St Judes Anglican Church, Carlton. Alan Gijbers reports on the meeting.

Life is a mystery. The Geoffrey Rush character in Shakespeare in Love and Charles Sherlock agree. By the end of the evening we all agreed, but the exploration was exciting and stimulating.

The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology decided to experiment in science-faith dialogue by bringing a scientist, a theologian and a philosopher together on the topic of the meaning of life. Would there be enough overlap between the disciplines for dialogue or are the domains so separate that they would not meet? Associate Professor Alastair Richardson, an ecologist from the University of Tasmania, gave a scientific perspective, describing the characteristics of living things, exploring how they might have become alive and asking why living things are so fascinating and so diverse. Physicists might wonder at elegant equations, but zoologists wonder at living things. “I can’t be completely objective, since I am a Christian, and I do look to see the Maker in the creation. But it does seem that in biology, as in physics, there is more to it than just an unconscious process.”

Dr Charles Sherlock, a theologian from Trinity College, argued that a Christian perspective rejects abstract ideas about life in favour of a relational emphasis on living. Humans are formed from the earth. They also share a ‘sixth day solidarity’ and the breath of God with the animals. God the author of life holds us accountable for our living; and death in terms of a break of relationships is the consequence of turning our back on God. Christians acknowledge the reality of death in the midst of living and look to Christ the one who destroyed death and who gives us life through his Spirit. The life of God’s Spirit draws us into the community of the Triune God who is transforming all things into the new heaven and earth.

Dr Bruce Langtry, a philosopher from the University of Melbourne, picked up that same theme of hope. Answering the question on

what is the value and meaning of life, he believed as a Christian that God’s purpose for our lives is for our good, not only for the after-life, but also for this life. “Think of the way the Psalms, for example, celebrate the manifold blessings of this life, the dignity of human beings and their place in the natural world, and commend wisdom, justice and love in earthly relationships.” This perspective helps us to understand some of our most basic questions: Who are we? Where are we? Who values me? What is wrong with us and how can it be remedied? The Christian hope of restored relationships expressed in the image of the city, the wedding reception and joy expressed in music, transforms our understanding of our current living.

Question time flew by. Each speaker dealt with the argument from design differently. Alastair felt that the theory of evolution provided an adequate alternative explanation for the formation of life. Charles stated that the argument from design did not prove the existence of God, but that if we accepted that God existed, the order in the universe made sense. Bruce Langtry pointed out that there is still an active controversy among philosophers and philosophically minded scientists about the merits of various design arguments for the existence of God, based on recent scientific discoveries.

The nature of humans was discussed at length. Charles suggested it was wrong to complain that this person is behaving like an animal, for that is what we are — animals! He challenged the ethical concept of the sacredness of life for only God is sacred, and anyway that is an abstract concept, away from the concept of living.

Dr Brian Edgar, ISCAST(Vic) chairman speculated that if we could build artificial intelligence made not from silicone but from DNA, would that be alive, and if so how, and will we be able to create life? The question of course can be pushed further. If we were able to make a silicon-based artificial intelligence robot, would that robot be regarded as alive?

Finally there was a question of the disabled life. What is its value? In our society where so much of what we value in a person’s life is based on their productivity, does Jean Vanier’s alternative view, that the disabled teach the abled about life, give us a glimpse into the deeper meaning of life?

We skated over many topics, which warrant

deeper investigation. The dialogue was just beginning when the evening ended! The

debate is continuing. Obviously the experiment is worth repeating.

Talks by Owen Gingerich

The following are short abstracts of talks by Professor Gingerich given during his recent visit to Australia. Some were presented at COSAC2001 and others during his visits to other centres.

Are we alone?

Is there not just life, but intelligent, sentient life, on other planets circling distant stars in our Milky Way galaxy? This intriguing idea fires the imagination and motivates many astronomers today. Some call upon "the Copernican principle" of mediocrity, saying that we should not be so centred on ourselves as to think that we alone rule the universe. Yet our calls for mediocrity resonate with a profound arrogance, for we somehow assume that we could comprehend and communicate with other life in the universe. In this talk Professor Owen Gingerich reviewed the requirements for habitable environments and the mechanism for life, and then took a rather skeptical look at the prospects for intelligent life (as opposed to life in general) beyond the earth. Nevertheless, although the traditional Christian ethos place humankind at the apex of God's creation, he argued that we cannot place limits on God's creativity.

Is the cosmos all there is?

In posing this query there is the question of whether there is a transcendence out of which the universe arose, a creator-designer which accounts for the observed fact that the universe is remarkably well tuned and congenial for the formation of intelligent, self-contemplative consciousness. There is also the question of immortality. Is it reasonable to hope for a continued existence beyond death, or is our existence just a macabre joke that a meaningless universe has inflicted on us? The lecture brings reflections on our place in the cosmos, vast, digressive, and inconclusive, though dedicated to a Christian trust in the future, and hopefully enlarging the vision of theological inquiry in the twenty-first century.

Galileo: hero or heretic?

In the early 1600s, Catholic theologians argued that Psalm 104 required a fixed earth and a geocentric cosmology. After his pioneering telescopic discoveries, Galileo Galilei suggested that "the Bible tells how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go," but when he defended the heliocentric system too vigorously, the aging astronomer was forced by the Inquisition to disclaim any such beliefs, and he was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. "The Galileo Affair" came into the news again with the Vatican's attempt to rehabilitate the famed 17th-century scientist. This talk examined the intellectual controversy over the Book of Nature versus the Book of Scripture, novel scientific interpretations versus a highly literal reading of the Bible. He explained how Galileo abandoned the traditional ways of establishing scientific truth, and by so doing effectively changed the rules of science forever after.

Dare a scientist believe in design?

The natural universe seems full of amazing features that lead us to exclaim "What wonderful design!" Yet many scientists argue vehemently against the notion of supernatural design and a Designer. Can entertaining the idea of superintelligent design cripple a scientist in his work? Professor Gingerich spirals in on the multi-faceted question, using both modern and historical examples to explain why he believes that a scientist can contribute effectively while holding a belief in a purposefully designed universe.

COSAC 2001 Workshops

Miracles

This workshop was designed to provoke discussion in an area where people use the same words to mean very different things. What do we mean by “miracle”? An important part of the definition would be that it had to have *meaning*. The problem for many scientists is that miracles would seem to interfere with the laws of nature which are “sacrosanct” for scientists.

Hume’s objections and the attitude to miracles of Eastern religions (there is no God so no miracles) and of Islam (the Qu’ran is the only miracle) were discussed.

Two kinds of miracles were identified — those which have an accompanying scientific explanation, like the crossing of the Red Sea, and those which are against all science, such as the resurrection of Christ. It should be noted that the first kind are still miracles on account of their timing — the Red Sea parted just as Moses and the children of Israel arrived there.

An example of a miracle which could be explained in several different ways is Joshua’s long day recorded in Joshua 10:12-14.

Workshop participants viewed the segment of the Russell Stannard video “The Question Is” that dealt with miracles. Several comments about miracles highlighted in it:

- Sarah (everyperson): “People don’t believe in miracles, not these days”
- William Provine: “We were taught as children that miracles exist...”
- Nancey Murphy: “The laws were created by God so He could violate them”.
- Arthur Peacocke: “God revealing himself in some special way, not necessarily breaking the laws of nature”. “God specially seen to be present”.
- Richard Dawkins: “The Biblical miracles didn’t happen”.
- Bishop Harris: “Biblical writers are not interested in whether the stories are true but in their spiritual meaning”.
- Bob Russell: “Everything in nature is due to God”.

While we would expect atheists such as

Provine or Dawkins to deny any intrusion of the supernatural, people like Peacocke and Bishop Harris also refrain from admitting a supernatural intervention. Many Christians find this disturbing. Or does our definition of “miracle” need changing?

Robert Stening

The Cross and the Cosmos: The God Who chooses to be powerless

The problem with the evolutionary development of the Cosmos, is that Almighty God appears not to be in control; neither does it accord with the of Creation accounts in Genesis.

There are two creation stories, which, if taken literally, are incompatible and therefore nonsensical. Taken as metaphor they are complementary, and full of truth about God and creation: they do not preclude evolution. (The reality of evolution may be glimpsed in the extraordinarily similar skeletal structure of land vertebrates; some times inappropriately so, as in the twin forearm bones of *Diplodocus* supporting its great weight).

Some scientists find God unnecessary: yet Science is a product of the Laws of Nature, and cannot explain their origin, nor their harmony and delicate balance. Science says nothing about the love and hate which rule our lives.

Science and Christianity both talk about relationships. Science talks about the relationships between things, but from it can be inferred something of the nature of God.

God is the One Who chooses To Be. God’s name revealed to Moses is “I Am”, or “I Will Be [loving]”. God is unique, and by the action of creation God puts God’s uniqueness at risk. This is God’s courageous, self-effacing love. Created beings have no choice in their being, but by allowing the universe to evolve, and life within it, God gives them a degree of freedom, at the expense of God’s power. This reflects God’s compassionate, self-giving love: God chooses to be powerless. Competition develops selfish identity. Without the gift of self, humans, the most selfish form of life, would not be able to choose to efface self. However

hard we try, we cannot efface self; in fact the attempt to do so is selfish. We are permanently cut off from our self-effacing creator. 'Self' is both a gift and a tyranny.

Despite the selfishness in the living world, there is a harmony, reflecting the harmony within the Godhead.

In Mark's portrait, Jesus is a man of power: yet he chooses to wield his power for good of others, particularly the poor and oppressed. This heralds the Kingdom of God, which is like no other, for kingship becomes servanthood.

Jesus deliberately chose to go to Jerusalem, the centre of earthly power. There he affirmed the right of all people To Be, by allowing his enemies to choose his death. It was his choice too, for at the table with Judas, and in the garden, he chose to neither fight nor fly. To do either would have betrayed his cause, and his friends. He trusted them to continue his cause, and God to vindicate him. With great courage he chose to be powerless.

In his courageous, trusting, self-effacing death Jesus identified with the courage trust and self-effacement of the Creator. If we choose to identify with Jesus' death, we also are enabled to efface self, and so to be at one with God.

Neil G. Cameron

The world of Gattacca: ethical issues of genetic engineering and screening

The film *Gattacca* is set in the not too distant future, with two basic premises. The first is ubiquitous genetic engineering (available to most, but not all) allowing the birth of genetically "superior" children (free of predispositions to various illnesses such as heart disease and "defects" such as baldness, and allowances for parental preferences such as skin and eye colour). The second is universal genetic screening available in moments, allowing the rapid identification of any individual (and their genetic "health"). Discrimination becomes a science. The film explores the impact of this on future lives, relationships, attitudes, and career paths through the eyes of a "God child", a "natural" who becomes a "borrowed ladder" by assuming the genetic identity of a "valid" to achieve his goal of entering space.

The film provides a springboard for discussing

a range of ethical issues posed by present and emerging biomedical technology. What criteria do we use to decide whether a particular genetic condition is a sickness, defect, or something that enriches humanity? Most would regard dwarfism as a defect, yet many dwarfs are incensed at the suggestion that they are inferior. What about baldness? If we have the ability to remove these from the gene pool, should we do so?

Even more important is what we do with such knowledge. Should a person with a predisposition to a particular condition be excluded from some careers? If there is a predisposition to violence (assuming that this is a genetic condition of course!), should such an individual be excluded from working with children? Should a predisposition to depression or heart disease prevent a career as an airline pilot?

A third issue is the use of statistics. The society of *Gattacca* equates the probability of a particular condition with its certainty. People who have a high probability for a particular "deleterious" condition are excluded from some opportunities, even if they do not actually have the condition. This is a "type two" statistical error, and says much about society's attitude to the use (and abuse) of statistics.

We do not yet live in the world of *Gattacca*, but many of the issues are already here. Germline therapy for some medical conditions already exists. Cases of discrimination against those with particular genetic predispositions have been reported, ironically in some cases against the recipients of germline therapy (who are classed as "genetically modified organisms" and denied some human rights).

Mark Worthing and Jonathan Clarke

40 years of young earth creationism

The discovery of deep time is the great contribution of geology to human culture. An awareness that the immense history of the planet can be read in the record of the rocks has had as great an impact on the scientific perception of who and where we are as has the discovery of deep space by astronomy. The tools to read the history of the earth were first developed by Robert Hooke and Bishop Steno in the 17th century, although Leonardo da Vinci anticipated some of them (along with much else) in the 15th century. By the second

half of the 18th century natural historians (many of them clergy) were suggesting the earth was tens of thousands to hundreds of millions of years old. For the Christians involved in this discover the history of the earth was a source of awe and an inspiration to worship. From the beginning of the 19th century anyone who argued otherwise was on the theological and scientific fringe. Even the much-maligned fundamentalist movement in the early 20th century accepted the antiquity of the earth. The actual age of the earth and of different geological epochs began to be measured from the 1920's onwards with the development of absolute dating techniques.

In 1961 a theologian and a hydraulic engineer collaboratively published a book that revolutionised popular thinking about the relationship between science and Genesis. This book, *The Genesis Flood*, by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, marked the beginning of modern young earth creationism. In their book Whitcomb and Morris argued that modern scientific ideas on the formation of species by organic evolution and the history of the earth and universe must be brought into alignment with what was later called scientific creationism. This included a literalistic interpretation of Genesis 1–11, a recent beginning to the earth and universe, no biological death before the fall, and an explanation of the geological record by Noah's flood.

In the first year of the twenty-first century we

can ask the following question: Where might young earth creationism go in the future? Historical analogues provide possible guides. The "Hutchinsonians" of the early 18th century were well-connected and opposed the apparent materialism of Newton and defended "Mosaic science". They were an influential movement for over 100 years. The anti-geologists of the 19th century, although working individually rather than collectively, persisted from the 1820's to the 1860's. The ideas of Price and Clark, in the early 20th century remain influential in some of the universities of the Adventist movement into the 21st century (although weakening markedly in recent years). If the past is a guide to the future, young earth creationism will eventually fade, but not quickly. The modern young earth creationist movements are well funded and institutionalised across major evangelical denominations and have significant support outside it. The fact that it is taught sympathetically in a plethora of parent controlled Christian schools and to a whole generation of home schooled children will also ensure its persistence for at least another 40 years. Young earth creationism has more in common with the Hutchinsonians and some Seventh Day Adventists in their institutionalised support than with the anti-geologists. Like them it is likely to persist for at least another 40 years.

Jonathan Clarke

Book Reviews

Genesis, Geology, & Catastrophism

Michael Johnson, 1988, Paternoster

This small book is subtitled "a critique of creationist science and Biblical literalism". The author, a geologist working in South Africa, is well placed to make such a critique.

The first two chapters introduce three main evangelical options in relating science and the Bible (literalist, concordist, and functionalist) and the problems of reading Genesis 1–11 in a scientific age. The next five chapters cover the rise of creation science and its critique of geology and evolutionary biology. Established geological concepts are well defended by the book and the inability of "flood geology" to explain the geological record is clearly pointed out. The chapter on organic evolution focuses

mainly on whether Scripture excludes it, concluding that it does not. I found the last two chapters the most useful. They illustrate how the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy and infallibility, developed in the 17th to 19th centuries, has painted evangelicals into an exegetical corner with respect to science and the Bible. Johnson clearly shows that infallibility and inerrancy are not the same as authority and inspiration. He illustrates how the former forces Bible readers to ask the wrong questions. Answers to such wrong questions about Biblical inerrancy all too often result in people doubting Biblical authority. This echoes the conclusions of Bernard Ramm and Paul Seely (reviewed elsewhere in this Bulletin). After discussing interpretative principles, Johnson ends with a chapter outlining a functionalist approach to Genesis 1–11. In it he shows how God's revelation in

Genesis about the world, humanity, and Himself is encapsulated in the world picture of the ancient near east. Johnson emphasises that nothing is lost theologically by this approach. Johnson's functionalism also avoids trying to force the Bible into a scientific matrix (concordism) or scientific data into a Biblical framework (literalism). The book also includes a useful summary of recent evangelical thought on Biblical authority as an appendix.

Genesis, geology, and catastrophism is well referenced and Johnson is clearly familiar with the relevant geological, young earth creationist, apologetic, and theological literature (mainly evangelical perspective and reformed) up to the mid-1980's. A helpful book for both the beginner and the informed reader, it deserves to be better known.

Jonathan Clarke

Inerrant Wisdom: science & inerrancy in Biblical perspective

Paul H Seely 1989. Evangelical Reform Inc., Portland, Oregon.

Paul Seely is a familiar name in the pages of journals such as *Science and Christian Belief*, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, and *Westminster Theological Journal*. In a series of papers spanning more than 30 years he has explored the scientific world picture of Biblical times, how this effects the language of the Bible, and how we are to understand the relationships between the Biblical world view and the world picture in which it is expressed.

Inerrant Wisdom is Paul Seely's privately published book that explores these issues in the light of the definition by Warfield and others in the late 19th century of Biblical Inerrancy. This is that not only is the Scripture God-breathed and useful for teaching, refuting error, guidance and instruction in error (2 Tim. 3:16), but is also without error. In the 20th century Biblical Inerrancy has come to be a major shibboleth among Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, and Reformed Christians. Movements such as Biblical Astronomy and Creation Science are motivated to a large degree by the belief that the doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy can be extrapolated to areas such as history, geography, and science. Earlier movements, such as the 18th century Hutchinsonians and the 19th century anti-geologists had similar motivations and approaches. As indicated by the extended title, the book explores the implications of this

doctrine in the encounter between revelation and science.

However, as Bernard Ramm wrote in 1969, "Nobody can play the game of infallibilities in the twentieth century and win". Whether with respect to Biblical Inerrancy or Papal Infallibility, humility and recognition of human fallibility and finitude are essential. This is especially true in terms of attempts to constrain science to Biblical models. What was true in the 1960's is even truer in this post-modern era where the infallibility of Scientism and the State have also crumbled. The Hutchinsonians of the 18th century were influential for over 100 years, but eventually faded. The anti-geologists of the 19th century collapsed in about 40 years. It is 40 years since the first significant penetration of young earth creationism into the evangelical world but it still has yet to make an effective impact on any science.

Seely explores these questions in terms of God's revelation of Himself. The book begins by laying the foundation for understanding revelation and science by explaining the scientific enterprise as an expression of the creation mandate to humanity in Genesis 1:26-28 to fill the earth and subdue it. Seely then develops two interleaved themes; an examination of the various proof texts advanced for Biblical inerrancy and an examination of the teaching of Jesus. Particular attention is paid to two areas; what Jesus said about geography, history, astronomy, and biology and where His use of the Old Testament is consistent with a rigid doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy.

Seely makes much of the kenotic nature of the Incarnation. In the same way God's revelation in Scripture is also kenotic, as God's word, the Biblical worldview if you will, is expressed in the framework provided by the world picture of the time. While this approach is familiar and acceptable to many evangelicals, the extension of this limitation to the words of Jesus about the material nature of the world is less so, and for some may be the most disturbing and challenging aspect of the book.

In his final chapter Seely writes:

"We must reject then inerrancy's 'high view' of Scripture for the same reason that we reject Docetism's 'high view' of Christ: It imposes an extra-Biblical philosophy on the nature of God which restricts Him to such a transcendent

Absoluteness that it denies the biblically revealed truth of His self-limitations for the sake of entering into effective dialogue and relationship with men”.

I found this a thought-provoking book that challenged many assumptions I had held about the Scripture and the nature of the Incarnation. However, it is a salutatory fact that humanity's

ability to forge idols is such that we can make an idol even of God's Word. Seely's book is a valuable resource against such misuse, especially in the area of science.

The book can be obtained from me at the cost of a donation (marked price is US\$11.95)

Jonathan Clarke

Science and Christian Belief

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

Cost: Aust\$46 for one year's subscription for 2002

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

Letters

Teaching about evolution and the nature of science

I read with some disquiet the review of 'Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science' under 'Education Issues' in ISCAST Bulletin 31. It gives unqualified support to the evolutionary stance of the book and approves of its assessment of creation science.

This and the preceding review typify so much of what comes from ISCAST — an acceptance of man's theories of our origins with the compromising of the Bible account where it doesn't agree. You are an avowedly Christian organisation and so you should at least pay respect to God's account of creation and you must agree that he made it as clear and unambiguous as words can make it. It should be our starting point, our foundation truth, on which scientific knowledge is built rather than the other way round. This does not involve blind faith, as the known facts of the earth's history can be well accommodated here (and in the subsequent Bible accounts). Problems only arise when great ages are assumed as a 'given'. Theistic evolution as suggested by the NAS,

and to which many in ISCAST adhere, is no solution. Apart from it being quite opposed to the Bible account, who wants a God who has to work through the haphazard, tortuous, cruel, and slow process of evolution! I don't. And what about his ability to create "a new heaven and a new earth" when Christ returns! That will be instantaneous and is eagerly awaited by all Christians. So why the difficulty in accepting the original creation?

May I suggest that in the interests of an unbiased position, which I hope you can take, you review a critique of this NAS book. It is "Refuting Evolution — A Response to the National Academy of Sciences' Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science" by Dr Jonathan Safarti and published by Master books. You may already know of this book.. It gives a clearly Christian response to the NAS position and could make some of you question what you have always taken for granted in respect to science and evolution. It is worth reading.

D. I. Nicholson

The deadline for submissions for the next issue of the Bulletin is November 30

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

Please submit to Jonathan Clarke 43 Michell St., Monash, ACT 2904.