Welcome to another ISCAST Digest full of food for thought. We hope you enjoy this sampling of the conversation between science and the Christian faith.

Chris Mulherin, our Executive Director has been busy. Amongst his numerous writing and speaking engagements, he featured recently on ABC Radio National’s *God Forbid* program wrestling with issues of truth and faith ([see here](#)).

Chris also interviewed bionic ear inventor (and a Distinguished Fellow of ISCAST), Prof. Graeme Clark, about his lifetime of integrating his faith and his science. Video snippets and the full transcript of the 50-minute interview will be available on the website soon. Ken Freeman, another ISCAST Distinguished Fellow, also featured on ABC RN after his appearance at the World Science Festival Brisbane where he promoted the ISCAST message. The conversation is here on the ABC’s *The Spirit of Things*. Jon Clarke, ISCAST Fellow and Board Member, likewise featured various times at the WSF and [here doing an ABC interview](#).

Speaking of ISCAST Fellows, the Board has recently approved the names of Emeritus Prof. Ian Harper (noted economist and Reserve Bank board member) and [Prof. Peter Harrison](#) (Australian Laureate Fellow at UQ and author of *The Territories of Science and Religion*) as new Fellows.

However, while good things are happening, 2017 looks fiscally fraught! To employ the Executive Director three days a week costs $90,000 (including his travel and other expenses, and administrative support). As you might have read in Alan Gijbers’ president’s letter ([download here](#)), our budget for the director was based on an agreement with a benefactor to fund one day of Chris’s time. Sadly he died before signing the agreement.

The ISCAST Board is convinced of the importance of our mission and of Chris’s work in leading us. So, it is crucial to keep funding his position. To date we have raised $19,520 due to consistent, faithful giving by regular supporters as well as some substantial donations. Our thanks go to those people and to God for providing in this way.

This year, we are starting an Executive Director support team and ask you to consider committing to donate $1,000 or more during the year, either in a single payment or in increments.

Would you please consider supporting Chris for 2017 by either:

- making a one-off donation (perhaps of $500 or some other amount that you can afford) or
- joining the Executive Director support team and commit to donating $1,000 or more (and letting us know so that we can budget for this amount for the remainder of 2017).

Below is a formal response form. Please fill this out and send it to the ISCAST office, or use the PayPal link to pay online with a credit card, or simply send us an email with your commitment and we will invoice you. Thank you for sharing in this important work.

Richard Gijbers, ISCAST Secretary

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News Items

Geologist Jon Clarke Braves Life on Mars

Prior to his three appearances at the 2017 World Science Festival in Brisbane, ISCAST Fellow Jon Clarke was interviewed by Emma Griffiths about his Mars experience on ABC Drive. ISCAST even gets a mention! (From 14 min on.) The podcast of this interview is now available.

Read more...

A Holiday With a Difference: Lecturing on a Cruise Ship

Tim and Lyn Beattie (ISCASTians in Melbourne) recently took a holiday with a difference. A cruise, in fact, where they offered some mental stimulation to the fellow cruisers. We asked them to tell us briefly about the experience and how the talks were received.

Read more...

Creation Careless

Thanks to Ian Hore-Lacy for alerting us to this interesting commentary at First Things on ‘Christian creation-care wars’ in the US; for those interested in the politics and theological leanings behind care for the planet.

Read more...

Interview with Astrophysicist Dr Jennifer Wiseman

Today is International Women’s Day and, while women are not overly represented in ISCAST (a challenge to remedy!), here’s a sneak peak at a woman who we hope will be joining us in Australia for a conference next year. Jennifer Wiseman is senior scientist on the Hubble space telescope and (NASA permitting) will join us in March 2018 for our next COSAC-Conference on Science and Christianity.

Read more...

Exoplanets and Theology

Does the discovery of exoplanets threaten established religions here on Earth?

A comment by ISCAST Fellow James Garth.

Read more...

Exoplanet Discoveries and Alien Life: A Comment by ISCAST Fellow Jon Clarke

Until 1992 planets beyond our solar system, or exoplanets, were the stuff of speculation and fiction. That year the exoplanets were discovered in perhaps the last place that might be expected: orbiting pulsars. Since then thousands of planets have been discovered. As of February 24th, 2017, 3583 planets belonging to 2688 planetary systems were known.

Read more...

Ard Louis and Morgan Freeman Talk About Science and God on National Geographic

Who has best portrayed God in cinema? My vote is for Morgan Freeman’s version in the theologically profound Jim Carrey comedy Bruce Almighty (2003). Freeman gave the role gravitas, tackling a number of vexing theological questions in a humorous and endearing way. Thirteen years after his initial portrayal of God, Morgan Freeman is hosting National Geographic Channel’s The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, which recently kicked off its second six-episode season.

Read more...

There May Be an Antidote to Politically Motivated Reasoning

There may be an antidote to politically motivated reasoning. And it’s wonderfully simple. Yes, politics can make us stupid. But there’s an important exception to that rule.

Read more...

God, Bubbles and the Origin of Life

There is something about the sight of a bubble hanging effortlessly in the air that excites a childlike wonder in us, whatever our age. Perhaps it’s their delicate beauty, almost transparent, glimmering with a rainbow of colours? Perhaps it’s the temptation to pop them? For me, the most amazing thing about bubbles is that they make themselves.

Read more...

Science Falling Victim to “Crisis of Narcissism”

Cut-throat atmosphere in world-class labs and conferences closer to House of Cards than Big Bang Theory, says Swiss academic.

Read more...
Books and Resources

**Book Review:** The Evolution of the West: How Christianity Has Shaped Our Values

A review of Nick Spencer’s book

Excerpt

The Evolution of the West: How Christianity Has Shaped Our Values is a collection of essays written by Spencer based on material published and/or delivered over the past ten years, and including some essays written especially for this volume. The theme, as the title and subtitle indicate, is the role Christianity has played in shaping the values of the modern West, including the dignity of the individual, nationhood, law, democracy, humanism, atheism, science, secularism, ethics, rights, welfare, and capitalism. Broadly speaking, each essay focuses on one of these topics but there is understandably some overlap.

Read more...

**How Living in an Age of Science and Technology Affects our Understanding of Christianity**

Excerpt

a. Science and technology have given us a way of thinking that is different from that of other ages and we have become dependent on this. We are less likely to understand the thinking of the past and why people acted as they did then (see h. below).

b. There is an expectation that science will answer all questions (eventually). Those that it can’t/won’t answer aren’t real questions anyway.

Read more...

**Let There Be Science: Why God Loves Science, and Science Needs God**

Author

Tom Mcleish

About

Throughout history, scientists have made discoveries and tested hypotheses that have revolutionised the way that we see the world. Our industry has been shaped by the discovery of electricity and the invention of machines; our understanding of the world has deepened as we have had gravity and the magnetic forces that govern the earth explained to us. Century after century, big questions about our earth, nature around us, and the way our bodies work have been posed and gradually, or sometimes dramatically, answered.

Read more...

**Two New Books by Mark Worthing**

ISCAST Fellow Mark Worthing has recently had two new books released. Although they are not about science and faith, they do engage with the wider dialogue between Christian faith and culture and may be of interest to fellow ISCASTians.

The first is a history of fantasy literature titled Narnia, Middle-Earth and The Kingdom of God: A History of Fantasy Literature and the Christian Tradition.

The second is a modern retelling of George MacDonald’s novel Phantastes, the books which had such a profound impact on C.S. Lewis and others. It is simply titled Phantastes: George MacDonald’s Classic Fantasy Novel, as retold by Mark Worthing.

Read more...

**The Dictionary of Christianity and Science**

A promising new Christianity and science dictionary is now available

Read more...

**Why Are We Here?**

About

A four-part documentary in which Oxford physicist Ard Louis and film-maker David Malone meet scientists, philosophers, and writers to discuss questions about meaning and the nature of the universe.

The website whyarewehere.tv, where the documentaries can be viewed, also has extended interviews, along with transcripts, for all the 18 interviewees.

Read more...

**How Can Christians in Science Respond to Claims that Faith Is Irrational?**

(STEAM Grant Series March Question)

Excerpt

Is faith in God fundamentally irrational? Many people think it is. A popular internet meme has compared belief in God to belief in the Flying Spaghetti Monster, a being invented to poke fun at the Intelligent Design movement. But why should we think that belief in God is analogous to belief in the airborne, noodly deity of Pastafarianism? As someone with a PhD in theoretical chemistry who worked in academia for over a decade, I’ve heard my scientific colleagues offer three main justifications for this comparison.

Read more...

Do you have an article to submit to Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology? Contact the editorial team via www.iscast.org/journalpage
Event News

Victoria

2017-05-18 Vic: ISS Seminar
Topic: A God’s Eye View of the World in the Divine Speeches to Job
Date: Thursday 18 May, 2017
Time: 7.30 - 9.30pm
Venue: St Peter’s Hall, Eastern Hill, Melbourne
Cost: $15 (concession: $12)
Speakers: Rev. Dr Graeme Garrett
Read more

2017-06-29 Vic: Euthanasia Conversation
Topic: End of life choices, voluntary euthanasia & assisted suicide in Victoria: a conversation between world-renowned bioethicists
Date: Thursday 29 June
Time: 5.45 - 7.45pm
Venue: Collins St Baptist Church, Melbourne
Cost: $15 (concession: $12)
Speakers: Prof. Peter Singer and Prof. Margaret Somerville
Read more

NSW

2017-05-23 NSW: ISCAST-CASE (Sydney) Lecture
Date: Tuesday 23rd May at 7.30 pm
Speaker: Associate Professor Alan Gijsbers, MBBS, FRACP, FACHAM, DTM&H, PGDip Epi
Lecture Title: “Is the brain just a computer made of flesh? What does neuroscience say about who I am?”
Venue: Main Common Room, New College, UNSW, The New College entrance is at 330 Anzac Pde, Kensington.
Read more

COSAC 2018: The Heavens Declare

Save the Date!

We are planning to hold the next Conference on Science and Christianity (COSAC) to coincide with the World Science Festival in Brisbane in March 2018. We expect the main speaker to be Jennifer Wiseman, senior scientist on NASA’s Hubble space telescope.

Many details still need to be confirmed but add Friday 23 March to Sunday 25 March 2018 into your diaries and watch this space.

Click here for more information.

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