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ISCAST is a think tank of Christian academics, scientists, professionals and theologians who explore the interface and interactions between science & technology with the Christian faith.

ISCAST and Test of FAITH

By James Garth

Those in attendance at the 2009 ISCAST AGM had the pleasure of exploring the new "Test of FAITH" material and viewing the first part of the three-part DVD documentary, entitled "Beyond Belief?" The Test of FAITH project was launched recently by the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, a UK-based interdisciplinary research enterprise which engages in the public understanding of science and religion under the leadership of Dr Denis Alexander.

The Test of FAITH documentary offers an accessible introduction to the often complex dialogue between Christianity and the sciences, demonstrating that belief in God and genuine Christian faith are wholly compatible with honest, credible and rigorous scientific inquiry. The documentary forms part of a comprehensive course which has been designed to be accessible to small groups and individuals both inside and outside the church community. As such, the degree of congruence with this project and ISCAST's mission and values is evident.

After discussion at the AGM it was agreed that there are a number of ways that ISCAST can help to promote the Test of FAITH tools within Australia, ranging from the simple to the more comprehensive. We will continue to be active in distributing flyers and promotional DVDs to key contacts in the Australian Christian community to help publicize this material. In addition, we encourage individuals to run this course within their own churches or wider friendship circles.

Longer term, we would like to develop a network of people who are passionate about communicating this material and would be willing to either run courses or act as a point of contact to help individuals who would like to participate in a course to connect with other like minded people. If you are interested in helping to build this network, please contact James Garth at james.garth@gmail.com. In particular, we are looking for State contacts who would be willing to help publicize Test of FAITH within their home state.

The Test of FAITH course material, DVD and book are now available for purchase in Australia from Koorong (www.koorong.org).

About the New ISCAST Logo

Visitors to the website will have noticed the new ISCAST logo which has been prominently displayed in recent months. The logo was developed as part of the website development project, and features a simple, clean, modern design which has been optimised for printing and online viewing. Three key criteria were considered when developing the logo. We hope you like it!

- **Christian commitment** - the presence of the Southern Cross represents our Christian commitment, which is central to our organisation and mission.
- **Scientific commitment** - the stars of the cross have an astronomical flavour which proclaims our love of science and the light that it sheds in humanity's pursuit of knowledge and truth.
- **Australasian focus** - the constellation carries with it an Antipodean flavour that is easily identifiable and culturally significant for those of us living in a part of the world that was once termed *La Australia del Espiritu Santo*.

In this Issue:

- News Items
- Journal Abstracts
- Event News

News Items

Items of interest to the interaction between science and Christianity and of significance to the ISCAST family. Your submissions of these are welcome.



Evolution & Human Nature at Yale

Three experts explored the question "Does evolution explain human nature?" at a panel discussion in late September sponsored by Yale University, Discover magazine, and the John Templeton Foundation. The discussion was based on the Foundation's recent Big Questions essay series, which can be found online and is available in booklet form by request. [More](#)



Dr Conor Cunningham on Darwin

British philosopher and theologian Dr Conor Cunningham was featured on the Compass program on 22nd November on the ABC. Dr Conor Cunningham argued that it's possible to be a Christian and accept the theory of evolution, noting that when Darwin's theory was first published in Britain it was welcomed by both the Anglican and Catholic Churches. [More](#)

News Items



Science, faith used to be allies

"Tellingly, President Obama's pick to head the National Institutes of Health - Francis Collins - touts this symbiotic relationship today", writes Mark I. Pinsky of USA Today. "The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome," Collins says, "God can be found in the cathedral or in the laboratory. By investigating God's majestic and awesome creation, science can actually be a means of worship." [More](#)



Test of FAITH now available at Koorong

The Test of FAITH DVD, Book, Study Guide and Leaders Guide are now available for purchase from Koorong. Visit www.koorong.com and search for "test of faith" in the search bar. [More](#)



God, Science and the New Atheism

Prof. Keith Ward will be discussing "God, Science and the New Atheism" at the next upcoming James Gregory Public Lecture on 29th October. Keith is a well-known speaker with a strong interest in comparative theology and the interface between science and faith. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and former regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. [More](#)



Mind & Matter

"With the rise of modern science, the pursuit of wisdom gave way to the acquisition of useful truths" writes historian of science Ronald Numbers in the latest edition of Templeton's "In Character" magazine. [More](#)

Character" magazine. [More](#)



HARPS Discovers 32 New Exoplanets

The Associated Press recently reported that astronomers at the European Southern Observatory have "found 32 new planets outside our solar system, adding evidence to the theory that the universe has many places where life could develop." [More](#)



Bioethics and Future Hope

Prof. John Wyatt's three lectures from the recent New College 2009 Lecture series are now available for download.

The three lectures cover Bioethics and Creation, Bioethics and Redemption and Bioethics and Future Hope. [More](#)



Cardinal Pell at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas

Cardinal George Pell's recent address on the 4th October at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas held in Sydney engaged significantly with the question of science's relationship to God, containing references to Hawking, Einstein, Swinburne, Flew, and many more distinguished thinkers. [More](#)



Ayala and Craig on ID

A debate on the topic "Is Intelligent Design viable?" will take place between Dr. Francisco J. Ayala and Dr. William Lane Craig on Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 7 p.m. EST at Indiana University Auditorium, Indiana. The debate is sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ at Indiana University and will be moderated by Dr. Bradley Monton, author of the new book "Seeking God in Science: An Atheist Defends Intelligent Design". [More](#)



Darwin was right - to a point

Barney Zwartz, religion editor of The Age, talks with Simon Conway Morris and engages with his thoughts on Darwinism in a follow up to his recent visit to Australia. [More](#)



Test of FAITH resources for high school students now available

Resources for students based on the Test of FAITH documentary are now available from the Stapleford Centre. The materials have been developed for UK students between 14 and 18 years old, and include background information, glossary, bibliography and curriculum links. [More](#)

COSAC 2009 Photos



Professor Simon Conway Morris



Participants deep in discussion



Emeritus Professor John Pilbrow



Conference lecture in session

No access to the internet and want more information? Contact the ISCAST office (see back page) and we will forward it to you. Postage and handling fees apply.

Christian Perspectives on Science and Christianity: Journal Abstracts

The ISCAST Online Journal – Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology is a forum for those exploring the interaction between science, technology and the Christian faith. Submissions are invited and they may be academic articles, less formal discussions aimed at non-academic readers, opinion pieces, or book reviews. Articles and discussions will be refereed. The intended readers are Christians interested in science and technology, and scientists and technologists interested in the Christian faith. Specialist knowledge is not assumed. Below are selected abstracts from the journal. (see www.iscast.org/journalpage)



Understanding and Teaching Intelligent Design

Brian Edgar, October 2009

Author

Brian Edgar is Professor of Theological Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, and a Fellow of ISCAST.

Abstract

The theory of Intelligent Design is a topic the general public has willingly debated because of strongly held opinions concerning both its validity and its suitability as a subject for students at school. Unfortunately there is a fairly high degree of confusion about a range of matters associated with ID. This paper discusses what intelligent design actually is and what it achieves as well as its difficulties and inadequacies. It also discusses the relationship of science to other disciplines and what it means for Australian public education to be 'secular' and the implications of teaching ID in public schools.



Assumptions of Science and the Christian Tradition

Mark Worthing, October 2009.

Author

Rev. Dr Mark Worthing, BA in religion (Michigan), MDiv (SBTHS), STM (TLS), PhD (Regensburg), Dr Theol (Munich) is a Lecturer and Dean of Studies at Tabor College, Adelaide, Australia. He has studied extensively in both Europe and America. Living with his wife Kathy and their four children in Hahndorf, his hobbies include farming, chess and running. Mark is an ordained Lutheran pastor and an author of several books and articles about Christian theology. His book *God, Creation and Contemporary Physics* (Fortress Press 1996) won the 1997 Temple Book prize for new works in the field of science and religion.

Abstract

Often, science has been supposed to make no presuppositions, to deal only with facts (in contrast to religion), and that its progress is morally good. These statements are critically examined. In fact, science makes basic assumptions that cannot be absolutely proved, and has arisen beside and often out of religious world views. Nothing in science can be finally verified.

This paper was presented at the Conference

on Science and Christianity (COSAC) 2003 held at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia from 18 to 20 July 2003. It was first published in COSAC2003 Collected Papers: God, Science and Divine Action: God's Interaction with His Creation.



History's science lesson for Fielding

Chris Mulherin, August 2009.

Author

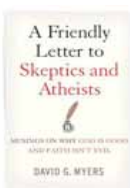
Chris Mulherin is an engineer and Anglican minister who teaches philosophy of science at the University of Melbourne. He is a member of ISCAST.

Abstract

This article first appeared in The Canberra Times, 12/8/09.

Senator Steven Fielding is not the fool he is made out to be. But he seems to have shot himself in the foot during his stoush with the Labor Party over climate change.

The Government will put its emissions trading scheme legislation to the Senate tomorrow and Fielding should be the key player. But the recalcitrant senator continues to question whether rising global temperatures are caused by human activity. Without the evidence, he says, the enormous cost of emissions trading to the country is unjustified.



Review of David Myers' book 'A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists'

Reviewed by

James Garth, October 2009.

Abstract

Professor David G. Myers is a distinguished social psychologist and psychological science writer whose extensive works include the most widely used psychology textbook on North American college campuses today. *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists* is his contribution to the current dialogue between modern science and religion, and constitutes a short compendium (132 pages, plus references and appendices) of twenty or so loosely connected essays which engage with numerous topical issues with sensitivity and panache.



Divine action and the problem of miracles

Mark Worthing, July 2009.

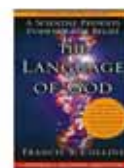
Author

Rev. Dr Mark Worthing, BA in religion (Michigan), MDiv (SBTHS), STM (TLS), PhD (Regensburg), Dr Theol (Munich) is a Lecturer and Dean of Studies at Tabor College, Adelaide, Australia. He has studied extensively in both Europe and America. Living with his wife Kathy and their four children in Hahndorf, his hobbies include farming, chess and running. Mark is an ordained Lutheran pastor and an author of several books and articles about Christian theology. His book *God, Creation and Contemporary Physics* (Fortress Press 1996) won the 1997 Temple Book prize for new works in the field of science and religion.

Abstract

Miracles may be meaningless within science, but that does not make them meaningless. A miracle is a manifestation of divine power, though it need not always transcend physical laws. However, physical laws may not be so immutable in a statistical quantum universe. Often a miracle is of a very personal kind. Does God intervene? He surely can, but how often does He?

This paper was presented at the Conference on Science and Christianity (COSAC) 2003 held at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia from 18 to 20 July 2003. It was first published in COSAC2003 Collected Papers: God, Science and Divine Action: God's Interaction with His Creation.



Review of Francis Collins' book 'The Language of God'

Reviewed by

Ian Hore-Lacy, March 2009.

Abstract

This is an excellent book on science-faith issues for the layman, written by the head of the Human Genome Project. Subtitle is 'A scientist presents evidence for belief', and this is the angle of approach, starting with the author's own journey from atheism in his mid 20s, influenced by his growing perception of a Moral Law and by C S Lewis. His transition from maths and physical chemistry to medicine and genetics was a corollary of this.

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

Soundings on Calvin and the Natural Order

Date: Saturday 12 December 2009

Time: 2:30-5:30 pm

Venue: Collins Street Baptist Church, 174 Collins Street, Melbourne, Melways reference Map 1B-P7

Registration: \$15 - Members, \$20 - Non-members

See enclosed flier for more details or visit www.iscast.org.

COSAC 2009

By all measures, COSAC 2009 (Conference On Science And Christianity) was a resounding success.

As a conference it exposed us to the thinking of Professor Simon Conway Morris who took us beyond the stale arguments of how the earth was created and how long it took and into some of the deeper challenges that creation presented to us. Stimulating was hardly the word for it.

Other thinkers presented their thoughts as well and it was great to have a large contingent from New Zealand exposing us to the challenges of their thinking.

On another level, the light-hearted Inaugural Science-Faith Trivia contest was a lot of fun and

taught (some of) us a lot of new things (such as what were the Trivium - unfortunately I have forgotten that already).

Then there was the fellowship and sharing. Meeting old friends and colleagues and making new ones is always an important feature of our biennial gatherings. It was sheer delight to be able to mix with some of the pre-eminent scholars in Australia and New Zealand as well as with Simon in the science/faith area. A real privilege and thank you all for sharing so freely.

Finally there was the challenge presented at all the COSACs. "Where do we go from here?". John Pilbrow outlined the challenges he saw us facing. We are faced with two sorts of fundamentalism - scientific and theological and then there is the curious muddle that has been allowed to develop in between. If anyone is in a position to work alongside the church and society to do something about that it is us.

Alan Gijbers (our new president) presented the challenges facing ISCAST in doing something about this. Alan wants a secretary for the Board, he wants funds for an ISCAST CEO and he wants our prayers.

The COSAC take-home message therefore: we have a cause, we have the gifts, so let's organise ourselves to serve our creator and put these into practice as we have been called to do.

- Richard Gijbers

Digest Subscription and Renewals for 2010

Please fill out the form if you would like to subscribe to the Digest for the first time or continue your subscription in 2010, and return it to us by mail or by fax with any payment that might be required. Renewals apply to subscribers who are not members of ISCAST Victoria and who have elected to receive the Digest by post, or those wishing to change their subscription from email to post. You can also register online at www.iscast.org/Digest_Registration.

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This is an official organ of ISCAST (The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology, a not for profit organisation registered in New South Wales, Australia).

It is published quarterly in both hard copy and digital formats. It includes news items of relevance to both the ISCAST family and to the engagement of science and Christianity in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

It also includes abstracts of articles submitted to "Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology", ISCAST's online journal and the latest information of events hosted by ISCAST Chapters around Australia and New Zealand.

Items published on the ISCAST website and in this Digest explore the interaction between science and the Christian faith and will be published to foster the discussions and debate. ISCAST cannot endorse any or all of the opinions expressed here.

Details of events published will be correct as at the date of publication but you are encouraged to check the website or with the relevant contact before the event.

Hard copy versions of the Digest are available at the cost of \$10 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST Victoria office.

Contact ISCAST Vic:

C/- Stockdale ACS,
300 Huntingdale Rd,
Huntingdale VIC 3166

Phone: (03) 9535 7045
Fax: (03) 8610 1936

Email: admin@iscast.org

www.iscast.org