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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.

What Constitutes a Good Life?

The following is the report by The Melbourne Anglican (August issue) on the sermon delivered by Tim Costello at the science week service at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne (used with permission).

Humanity cannot continue to abuse creation and it must start to imagine a different future, the Revd Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision Australia, said in his sermon at the opening service of science week in St Paul's Cathedral on 15 August. Mr Costello considered the question 'What constitutes a good life?', the theme of the service.

Reflecting on diverse perspectives, he cited the Hopi Indians of North America who traditionally rose before dawn and went through their prayers in order to bring about the rising of the sun. Although their views did not accord with science, they nevertheless had a sense of the good life being linked with Creation through the sun's rising.

He continued: "In the beginning in Genesis 1 God creates, doing so in a way that aims at freedom and relationship. God created a human in his own image; He walked and talked with him." But humans were not the only ones to reflect God, because "God says that all of creation carries the image of the maker."

Reminding the congregation of the intrinsic connection between heaven and the created earth, he pointed out that "the heavens are the starting point. The logic of the heavens being created before the earth lay in the fact that we humans can't be human without heaven." "In other words," he added, "the creation story serves as a reality check on human self importance. While Science has taught us so much, Genesis reminds us that we are created, we have limits, and that we must live within those limits, with humility."

He pointed out that World Vision workers around the world regularly report that the earth's climate is changing in all kinds of ways. He stressed that "humans have not taken seriously this creation story that it is about relationship. We have taken 'dominion' to mean greed rather than sustainability." He added a warning note in saying that "in terms of stewardship, we can't go on abusing creation."

Moving to the end of the Bible, he said the Book of Revelation laid out a picture of heaven and earth combined: "a picture of God's Shalom that joins heaven and earth." While humans have a curiosity that seeks to transcend, there are limits. "Reason of itself cannot save us. Reason will prostitute itself to dominant ideologies."

He concluded with an impassioned plea: "We have to start imagining a different future. As partners of God, made in his image, the ushering in of a new earth is what God intends for us. The biblical story is about the renewal of humans, the world, the whole of creation."

He also lamented the "unfortunate dichotomy that divides faith and science", suggesting that it was not for thinking Christians. "Faith and science are inextricably related", he insisted, adding that "Science has everything to do with renewal; God is in the business of renewal. Faith and science should walk together."

In his introduction to the service, the Dean of St Paul's, Dr Mark Burton, reflected that for some, the completion of the Cathedral in 1891 represented a significant achievement of the good life. At the same time, he wondered if "our good life was at the expense of the original inhabitants."

The science week service is an annual event jointly sponsored by the cathedral and ISCAST. Plan to come next year.

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.



Scientists respond to Stephen Hawking

Eminent scientists, theologians and philosophers have mounted a strong response to Stephen Hawking, challenging his recent assertion that science renders God unnecessary in the creation of the universe.

Hawking, who had previously argued that belief in a Creator was not incompatible with modern physics, has now adopted the position that there is no need to invoke God to set the universe going. He argues in his new book "The Grand Design" that:

"Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going."

His controversial position has attracted strong criticism from learned cosmologists, mathematicians, religious leaders and philosophers of science. [More](#)

News Items



Faraday media news feed

The Faraday Institute sends out a daily news feed to anyone interested which picks up current stories on science and religion out in the media, giving an idea of what the story is about and providing the relevant web-address. [More](#)



ESA Mars Express takes hi-res images of ancient Mars crater

New images of the "Footprint Crater", or Orcus Patera, taken by the Mars Express probe have intrigued and puzzled Mars-watchers as they hope to discover the origin of this mysterious 385km long depression. [More](#)



"How Many are Your Works?" On Christians and Biodiversity

Ahead of the upcoming 'Groaning Creation - Biodiversity & the Bible' conference (November 20), Mick Pope of 'ETHOS Environment' (and an ISCAST Fellow) reflects on our role in God's wondrous creation. [More](#)



Presentation - Atheism & belief: the difference Jesus makes

The lecture on Atheism & belief: the difference Jesus makes given by Dr Greg Clarke on 13 March, 2010 at BMW Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne, is now available as a video and mp3. [More](#)



New "Celebrating God's Creation": An All-Age Service Resource

Test of FAITH, in partnership with the Bible Society (UK) has developed a free all-age church service resource which includes ideas for songs, hymns, prayers and liturgy, children's/all-age activities and sermon notes. [More](#)



Dr John Forge on the Morality of Weapons Research

Those who appreciated James Garth's recent presentation on "New

Developments in Military Technology" may also be interested in this alternate perspective presented by Dr John Forge in his talk on "The Morality of Weapons Research" delivered to the Sydney Philosophy Forum on 25 June 2010. [More](#)



Winners for 2010 Eureka Prizes announced

The innovation and dedication of Australia's top scientists have been recognised with the announcement of the winners of the 2010 Eureka Prizes. [More](#)



US judge reverses Obama stem cell ruling

A US federal judge has temporarily blocked the Obama administration from funding human embryonic stem cell research, ruling that the work violates a law passed by the US Congress to bar federal funding of the destruction of human embryos. [More](#)



State Library of Victoria

Did you know that if you are a resident of Victoria you are entitled to free access to the State Library of Victoria external database? This database contains extensive access to a wide variety of resources. [More](#)



Dr Ruth Bancewicz Blog

Biologist and Project Leader for the Test of FAITH materials, Dr Ruth Bancewicz, now has a personal blog. [More](#)



Books of Distinction Campaign

A reminder that ISCAST members can obtain quality Science and Religion books at a 20% discount off the cover price as part of the "Books of Distinction" campaign. [More](#)



Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins

In this new book from the Faraday Institute, Denis Alexander and Ronald Numbers (eds) bring together fourteen experts to examine the varied ways science

has been used and abused for non-scientific purposes from the seventeenth century to the present day. [More](#)



Divine activity through evolution long accepted

In The Melbourne Anglican, Dr David Young explores the history of the growth of modern science in the 18th and 19th centuries and explores the Revd Frederick Temple's thoughts on divine activity. [More](#)



New articles of interest from Big Questions Online

Big Questions Online, the Templeton Foundation's newest publishing venture, recently launched with a full slate of columns, blogs, and other features. [More](#)



An Eye in the Biggest of Skies

On July 5, the European Space Agency finally released the long-awaited data from the Planck satellite, which has been studying the fading afterglow of the Big Bang that gave birth to the universe 13.7 billion years ago. [More](#)



The Limits of the Coded World

What if science could predict your every move? A famous study foresaw certain actions of monkeys by reading their neurons. [More](#)



Videos from the World Science Festival in NY now available

A selection of videos from the recent World Science Festival, held in New York from June 2 to 6, are now available online. [More](#)



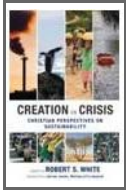
Jennifer Wiseman appointed head of AAAS DoSER

Prominent astrophysicist and Christian Dr Jennifer Wiseman has been appointed head of the AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion, an organisation which promotes communication between scientific and religious communities. [More](#)

No access to the internet and want more information? Contact the ISCAST office (see back page) and we will forward the full item 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)



[Review of Robert White's \(ed.\) book 'Creation in crisis: Christian perspectives on sustainability'](#)

SPCK 2009, 320pp including index

ISBN 13: 9780281061907

ISBN 10: 0281061904

Reviewed by

Ian Hore-Lacy, July 2010.

Review extract

This book provides some well-informed and thoughtful perspectives on how sustainably humanity is living on the Earth that is our finite home. Its 18 authors cover climate, natural disasters, water, food, agriculture and poverty, as well as economics, governance, and population control, before finishing with five chapters on ethical and biblical perspectives. Forestry and minerals are effectively omitted, while energy is confined to a few thoughtful pages by Sir John Houghton. These could have been greatly amplified.



[Calvin and the Natural Order: Positives and problems for](#)

[science-faith dialogue](#)

Brian Edgar, July 2010.

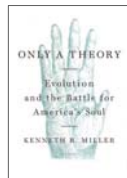
Author

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

Abstract

The year 1543 saw the publication of Copernicus' On the Revolutions of Celestial Bodies, Vesalius' On the Structure of the Human Body and Calvin's The Necessity of Reforming the Church – three publications which provided a philosophical foundation for a reformation of both church and scientific method. This paper discusses the way Calvin's theology contributed to a positive and theologically enhancing view of science while, at the same time exhibiting a greater ambivalence about science than the general approach which subsequently developed as a result of his overall thought. While his thought involves a strong defence of the legitimacy of the scientific investigation of the natural world various dualisms (including the dualisms of common and special grace and the

anthropological dualism of body and soul) illustrate a lack of that dynamic which is necessary for a dialogical, integrative or strongly interactive mode of relationship between the two. The solution to this involves developing a bridge between common and special grace, through an approach which stresses a greater integration of the salvific work of God in all divine activity, both in the work of the Holy Spirit in the natural world, as well as in the specific revelation of God through the incarnate Christ.



[Review of Ken Miller's book 'Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul'](#)

Viking Penguin, 2008. 244 pp.

ISBN: 9780670018833 067001883X

Reviewed by

Alan Gijbers, June 2010.

Review extract

This is a valuable book, and my criticisms are not meant to denigrate its strengths. As a biologist Ken Miller very effectively shows the bankruptcy of the science of Intelligent Design (ID). He very effectively shows that the bacterial flagellum is not irreducibly complex, nor is the clotting cascade, nor the immune system. These arguments convinced the Kansas courts not to grant ID the status of a science. In reality it is a religious position, and as such, ineligible in the secular classrooms of the United States.



[God, persons and machines: theological reflections](#)

Brian Edgar, May 2010.

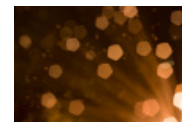
Author

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

Abstract

The desire to transcend the limitations of human nature along with the development of new biological technologies, nanotechnology and an increasing understanding of genetics is transforming the human person and leading towards the development of cyborgs. The process of merging the mechanical with the

biological has begun, the re-creation of the self is underway and the future holds even more changes in store. A symbiotic relationship between humanity and machinery already exists. There is now a debate between trans-humanists who are looking towards a shift in human nature, perhaps moving towards a post-human condition and bio-conservatives who see trans-human initiatives as nothing other than de-humanising. In developing a theologically appropriate attitude towards these changes there are three important issues relating to the nature and action of God and the nature of humanity which have to be resolved. The first issue concerns the value of the various orders and structures of the natural world, the species and kingdoms and other previously impenetrable barriers which exist within in the natural world between various forms of life. To what extent are these appropriately blurred or overcome? The second concerns the nature of God's action in the world, the role that humanity plays in representing God and the appropriateness of understanding humanity as co-creators or, preferably, as pro-creators with God. The third concerns the meaning and status of human nature and the limits to our future human-controlled evolutionary development.



[God's Deputy: Divine Law and the Laws of Nature](#)

Dr Larissa Aldridge's talk given on 5 July 2010, on the topic "God's Deputy: Divine Law and the Laws of Nature", at the School of Physics at UNSW.

Now available to download as an mp3 from the 'Presentations' area on the website.



[Syriac Christianity and the transmission of Greek science to the Arabs](#)

Peter Eyland, a former Lecturer in the School of Physics at UNSW, has an MA in Ancient History from Macquarie University. His talk given on 24 May 2010 at the School of Physics Library, UNSW, was subtitled: The nature and spread of Syriac Christianity, the coming of Islam, the development of science under Islam, croisants and the Renaissance.

Now available to download as an mp3 from the 'Presentations' area on the website.

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

ISCAST Vic Annual Lecture

Date: Friday 29 October 2010

Venue: Queen's College, Melbourne, Vic

The 2010 ISCAST Victoria Annual Lecture is being held in conjunction with the ISCAST Intensive and will reflect the Intensive's theme "Who Says? The Use and Misuse of the Bible in an Age of Science and Technology".

Speaker: Professor D. Gareth Jones of Otago University, New Zealand.

Prof. Jones, as Director of the Bioethics Centre and Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology at the University of Otago, has an international reputation in his field and is eminently qualified from study and direct experience to speak on this subject.

INTENSIVE (Mini Conference):

Who Says? The Use and Misuse of the Bible in an Age of Science and Technology

Date: 30-31 October 2010

Venue: Queen's College, Melbourne, Vic

This will follow our annual lecture on Friday 29 October.

The Intensive will explore the way in which Christians apply scripture to the challenges thrown up by Science and technology.

Keynote Speaker: Prof D Gareth Jones, Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology and Director of the Bioethics Centre at the University of Otago.

Parallel Sessions: A number of parallel sessions will also be offered on a wide range of topics by Australian scholars and members of ISCAST.

A copy of the draft program is available online.

Online bookings for the Annual Lecture and Intensive: <http://tinyurl.com/2vmncdb>

ISCAST (NSW) - CASE Lecture

Date: Monday 18 October 2010, 7.30 pm

Venue: Main Meeting Room, New College, The University of NSW

Speaker: Assoc. Professor David Cohen: "The Deep Time Issue - A Christian Geologist's Perspective" He is Head of School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences UNSW.

A light supper will follow the presentation.

Groaning Creation: Biodiversity & the Bible

Date: 20 November, 9:30am - 5:00pm

Venue: St Mark's Anglican Church, 622 Melbourne Rd, Spotswood, Vic

Cost: \$40 (\$25 concession)

Speakers include:

- Mick Pope, meteorologist
- Jessica Morthope, environmentalist
- Amar Breckenridge, economist
- Jonathon Cornford, aid & development

Registration on-line at www.ethos.org.au
Enquiries to Mick Pope on 0412 002 977 or polymath@optusnet.com.au

CBE Melbourne 2010 Annual Dinner

With address by Dr Mary Evans

Date: 2 October, 6:30pm for 7:00pm dinner

Venue: Ormond Anglican Church, 436 North Rd, Ormond, Vic

Tickets: \$45 (\$35 for full-time students).

Register by 27th September at www.cbe.org.au or phone 0402 155 935.

For more details on events visit
www.iscast.org

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Contact the ISCAST office for payment details.



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:

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

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

Email: admin@iscast.org

www.iscast.org