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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 President's 2015 Report

This is an edited version of the report presented by A/Prof. Alan Gijsbers at the 2015 ISCAST Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 17 November.

For Alan the highlights of 2015 included:

- 1. The 2015 Conference on Science and Christianity (COSAC) in Geelong.** I am pleased with the growing fellowship with colleagues from New Zealand. We need to explore more opportunities to extend our contact with them.
- 2. Identifying the domains to explore over the next ten years.** This was an initiative of the ISCAST Vic team and involved a workshop in which ISCASTian thinkers reflected on the issues we would be exploring in ten years' time. Mark Worthing is currently writing a report of this and is developing recommendations. He is adamant that this will not be the last word on the subject, but rather another step in exploring the territory as things unfold.

Mark is developing the idea of "Six domains, six strategies, and six core values" (see page 4) to guide us in our conversations in the future. We want to test these ideas with you in the new year and trigger off yet more thoughts to give us direction for future COSACs, our online journal, CPOSAT (Christian Perspectives in Science and Technology), and so on.

- 3. The visit by Prof. Tom McLeish, FRS.** Tom's enthusiasm and insights, especially around the creation stories in the Bible, excited many of us. His visits to South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand

were also a spur to consider how to promote more fellowship with scientists throughout Australasia (and elsewhere), many of whom are dealing with similar issues in their own ways. Chris and Richard are now exploring the idea of establishing an "International Fellow" category of membership.

- 4. James Garth's "Faith Survey" survey has broken new ground.** I know what I mean by 'faith' and you know what you mean, but is your understanding different to mine? James and his team are working on a report of the survey of over 1000 people for early in the new year.

At the initiative of Prof. Michael Clark, ISCAST has created a Research Fund to see that this work is formally published.

- 5. The funding target for the ISCAST Executive Project Officer for 2015 was met successfully.** It has been exciting to see people responding to Chris Mulherin's work. The Board is now actively considering whether we are able to double his time to two days per week at a cost of \$60K to cover his salary and expenses (including travelling).

Alan closed his report with a statement of gratitude to his brother, Richard, and the team at Stockdale ACS. They manage membership and finances, keep the website and Facebook page up to date, organise events and so on. Richard in particular has also been doing much of the thinking and leading in both long-term planning as well as day-to-day decision-making. Much of the latter will be progressively handed over to Chris Mulherin as his work and role expands.

A word from the EPO

Dear ISCAST members and friends,

Christmas and holiday greetings from the Executive Project Officer! I hope the next couple of months bring peace and joy to you and those around you.

Recently I have shared with young people three global challenges that will dominate the century: 1. radical Islam, which pits jihadist Islam against all other religions; 2. climate change, which raises questions of certainty and the expectations of science; and 3. radical secularism, which rules out religious truth claims in favour of a 'science only' view. Central to all three issues is an epistemological battle: How do we know? What do we know? Who is right? What is truth?

ISCAST is a *Christian* think tank; we believe that the truth lies in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. ISCAST is also committed to the discovery of truth through science—human and fallible as it is—in all its manifestations. So ISCAST directly or indirectly is also at the centre of the important 21st century conversations about faith, science, and truth. I will expand on all this another time perhaps ...

My sincere thanks to those people who have made it possible for me to spend time helping ISCAST and its members to engage in the profound conversation about science and Christian faith.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year. May God bless you all.

Chris Mulherin

In this issue:

- News Items
- Books and Resources
- Science & Religion Dialogue in Australia

News Items

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



Space mining opens door to Mars missions

Australia's mining boom might be over, but some of our brightest engineers say we shouldn't be

looking at the ground in search of another economic windfall—we should be looking to the stars.

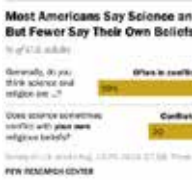
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Mobile technology: A complication in the human condition

On the surface, this is another book about how smartphones disrupt conversation. It draws from social science studies and a raft of interviews to confirm what we already knew through experience.

[Read More...](#)



Do science and religion conflict? It's all in how you 'see' it

Most Americans see a conflict between the findings of science and the teachings of religion. But 'see' is the operative word in a new Pew Research Center report. Examining perceptions leads to some unexpected findings.

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Churchgoers least likely to see science and religion in conflict

The more you go to church, the less likely you are to see science and religion as incompatible, according to the latest Pew Research Center survey.

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Using science to interpret Scripture: Celebrating God's accommodation

"If God created using the Big Bang and evolution, why didn't God just say so in Genesis?" When I hear this question, I usually answer by talking about the pre-scientific picture of the world in the ancient Near East when Genesis was written.

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Talking science and God with the Pope's new chief astronomer

On 18 September, Pope Francis appointed Jesuit

brother Guy Consolmagno as the new director of the Vatican Observatory, which employs a dozen astronomers to study asteroids, meteorites, extrasolar planets, stellar evolution, and cosmology.

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Monkey on our back: Unravelling the 'Evolution Myth'

Evolutionary psychology doesn't come close to an exhaustive explanation of who and what we are as humans. That mystery demands a richer, saner conversation than evolutionary psychology permits.

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Is Lawrence Krauss a physicist, or just a bad philosopher?

I watched a debate this week between journalist Robert Wright and physicist Lawrence Krauss on "the origins of the universe, quantum weirdness and the limits

of scientific knowledge," as an announcement from Union Theological Seminary, which hosted the event, put it.

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Towards an integration of science and Christianity

Eric Priest has been a professor of Theoretical Solar Physics in the Mathematics Department at the University of St Andrews since 1983. As an applied mathematician, his research interests involve constructing mathematical models for the subtle and complex ways in which magnetic fields interact with plasmas in the atmosphere of the Sun and in more exotic cosmic objects.

[Read More...](#)



Biochemistry: Randomness and God

How can a random process generate meaningful mechanisms? This is the question

that Keith Fox, Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Southampton and Associate Director of the Faraday Institute, asked in his seminar at the Faraday Institute last week..

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Ecomodernist Manifesto: review

A review of 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto' Ian Hore-Lacy, April 2015

The Ecomodernist Manifesto was written by 18 ecologists and presents a Third Way of addressing the environmental challenges of the present and future.

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Books and Resources

Books and articles on the subjects of science and Christianity.



Belinda Garth reviews Graeme Clarke's book for *Eternity News*

Author

Belinda Garth

Excerpt

In this inspiring biography, Mark Worthing takes us on a journey through the life and achievements of committed Christian and scientific pioneer, Professor Graeme Clark.

[Read More...](#)

and much more accessible to the ordinary lay person in the street. In doing so McLeish suggests that we replace the 'hard' concept of science with the 'softer' older concept of natural philosophy—a love of the wisdom of nature. And he communicates that love through the enthusiasm with which he presents so many different aspects of physics and beyond...

[Listen Here...](#)

Gaia Vince, a journalist and broadcaster based in London, was named the winner of the 2015 Winton Prize for Science Books at a ceremony in London.

[Read More...](#)



Animal suffering and the problem of evil—book review

Author

Murray Hogg

About

Nicola Hoggard-Creegan's *Animal suffering and the problem of evil* is an intriguing book which challenges the anthropocentrism of much contemporary Christian theology. Taking animal suffering as her primary theme, Hoggard-Creegan inquires after the theological and ethical consequences which arise in light of what we know about animals.

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Faith, hope, and love in science: An interview with Tom McLeish

Author

Chris Mulherin

Excerpt

Tom McLeish is professor of physics at Durham University in the UK, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a passionate defender of the God-given harmony between science and Christian faith.

[Read More...](#)



Inventing the universe: Why we can't stop talking about science, faith, and God by Alister McGrath, book review

Author

Adrian Read

Excerpt

Since the first half of the 19th century, when new scientific disciplines and revolutionary scientific concepts began to take shape, scientists have been eager to share their discoveries with the general public. Concepts such as evolution and the vastness of geological time challenged not only the scientific consensus but literal interpretations of the Bible, so it is not surprising that they provoked vigorous debate—and continue to do so.

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The presupposition of science-based atheism

Author

Jonathan M. Hanes

Abstract excerpt

Best-selling author Jerry Coyne's latest book, *Faith versus fact: Why science and religion are incompatible*, prompted another round of discussion about the relationship between science and religion (theism, in particular). Are science and religion compatible? Does science preclude the existence of God? Atheists like Coyne hold to a central presupposition about science that merits further scrutiny.

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Moving the goal-posts: A new direction in science-faith dialogue

A review of Tom McLeish's book Faith and Wisdom in Science by Alan Gijsbers, December 2014

Author

Alan Gijsbers

About

The book is ambitious on a number of fronts. First it seeks to make science much less nerdy



Top science book prize won by a woman for the first time

About

Adventures in the Anthropocene, a study of human plundering of Earth's resources, makes Gaia Vince the first female outright winner of the Royal Society Winton Prize in the award's 28-year history.

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

Science & Religion Dialogue in Australia:

Six themes, strategies, and core values for the next 10 years.

The following themes/domains, strategies and core values emerged from Mark Worthing's reflections on the "State of Play" workshop held at Ridley College on 15 August 2015. We recognise that the domains will change over time and ISCAST will need to respond when they do.

These ideas are presented for comment and refinement by ISCAST members and friends. In so doing, we will develop a clearer picture of the challenges that lie ahead and how ISCAST might respond.

Please send comments, feedback, and issues of concern to admin@iscast.org

Six themes/domains - What we will be exploring over the next 10 years:

1. Stewardship of creation
2. Uses and abuses of technology
3. Neuroscience and Christian theology
4. Evolutionary biology and theology
5. Secularism, New Atheism and other worldviews
6. Scientific literacy in the public forum and in the church

Six key strategies - How will we be exploring these domains:

1. Dialogue
2. Publications and conferences

3. Growing the science-religion dialogue
4. Education
5. Recognising and affirming the diversity of approaches to the issues
6. Act intentionally, not opportunistically

Six core values - The framework we will work within:

Christian commitment. We affirm the Gospel of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Bible and outlined in the Nicene Creed as central to our faith.

Scientific commitment. We are committed to rigorous scientific and technological research; particularly the insight this gives to our understanding of our creator and the benefits it brings to our planet and humanity.

Moral accountability. We are committed to understanding and working within the limits of our knowledge and seek to minimise the adverse impacts of the application of our science and technology.

Biblical interpretation. We seek to interpret the Bible within the mainstream evangelical tradition while respecting the stance of others.

Theological and academic safe space. We encourage people to explore new areas of discovery without fear of unfair or inappropriate criticism or theological ostracism.

Mode of debate. We seek to speak the truth in love and firm humility while being open to new ways of thinking and without rejecting the insights of the past.

Other News

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website for events
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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 community 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 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 \$22 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST office.

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