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ISCAST is a think tank of Christian academics, scientists, professionals, and theologians, which explores the interface between science, technology, and the Christian faith.

## A word from the Executive Officer

Dear friends, known and not-yet-met,

Greetings from Oakleigh (Victoria) where ISCAST has its administrative HQ.

I'm writing to you following the recent ISCAST board meeting—a teleconference across Melbourne, Sydney, and the ACT. It was a convivial couple of hours, slightly interrupted by feedback and dropped Skype connections, but it resulted in useful discussion that is worth sharing.

### New fellows include Ken Freeman, the dark-matter man

ISCAST's newest fellow is Professor [Ken Freeman](#), the man who "[placed dark matter on the galactic map](#)," and an ANU astrophysicist. Welcome Ken! And also welcome to Dr Jenneth Sasse, Prof. Jeff Tallon, and Dr Michael Smith. It's great to have you all on board as fellows of ISCAST.

### COSAC 2017: Watch this space!

This month I will be in Queensland as a guest of the [World Science Festival Brisbane](#) as we consider whether the next ISCAST Conference on Science and Christianity (COSAC) might be held concurrently with the 2017 WSF. Our hope is to invite a number of renowned Christian scientists to COSAC, and to "offer" them to the WSF as well. More news will be forthcoming.

### The perceptions of "faith" survey

As you may know, ISCAST fellow, James Garth is working with the Rationalist Society of Australia on an analysis of the way people use the word *faith*. The initial report, which makes fascinating reading, is [here](#). Further qualitative analysis is underway as James prepares a paper for publication in *Science & Christian Belief* later this year.

### The EPO morphs into an EO

The Executive Project Officer (yours truly) has had his title shortened to Executive Officer—whether that signifies a promotion or demotion I am not sure—and from March I will work two days a week. Coincidentally it happens just as my doctorate in science and faith has been approved; a relief after the long slog.

### Marketing and communication

Recently we have been in conversation with a number of experts about ISCAST branding and communications. This is not a field that research scientists are traditionally interested in! However, for better or worse, as an organisation that seeks to engage in the public space, ISCAST needs to be on top of the marketing and communications game. The Internet age means ISCAST has to be media-savvy. Suffice to say we are working on it and that you will notice some changes this year.

Finally, can I encourage you to take the initiative? Please take the initiative in contacting me with your thoughts or suggestions about ISCAST-related matters, and to invite me to visit and speak wherever it might be useful. And please also take the initiative in generating conversation in the public space about science and Christian faith—I am available to help in whatever way I can.

May this Easter be one of remembering the cross of Christ, the centre-point of human history.

Kind regards,

Chris Mulherin

### In this issue:

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## News Items

News about the interface between science and Christianity, and of significance to the ISCAST community. Your submissions are most welcome.



### Cosmology and Creation: How do they relate to one another?

This lecture considers some themes within the Christian tradition dealing with the concept of "creation", noting especially Aristotle's notion of the eternity of the world, and the tensions this caused for Christian writers such as Thomas Aquinas.

[Read more...](#)



### Zika virus: An emerging health threat

For decades, the mosquito-transmitted Zika virus was mainly seen in equatorial

regions of Africa and Asia, where it caused a mild, flu-like illness and rash in some people. About 10 years ago, the picture began to expand with the appearance of Zika outbreaks in the Pacific islands.

[Read More...](#)



### "Improving" humans with customised genes sparks debate among scientists

Medicine or meddling? Researchers at a gene-editing summit grapple with the future of genetic enhancement.

Article by Dina Fine Maron

[Read More...](#)



### NASA's next great space telescope: The quest begins

Observatories such as the Hubble Space

Telescope have revolutionised humanity's view of the cosmos. And upcoming projects, such as the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) and the WFIRST-AFTA mission—which the agency aims to launch in 2018 and the mid-2020s, respectively—promise to make big discoveries of their own.

[Read More...](#)



### Why science needs metaphysics

Technology cannot keep pace with theoretical predictions about subatomic reality coming

from physics. The same applies to our ability to observe the far reaches of the universe. Theory outstrips data and can become more extravagant with the claims it makes about the character of a reality.

[Read More...](#)



### The future of war

US strategist P.W. Singer, in his first foray into the world of fiction, considers the future of war.

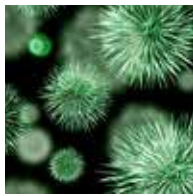
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### Parkinson's disease and faith

Parkinson's disease and faith. A talk given by Revd Prof Alasdair Coles.

[Read More...](#)



### We asked 12 scientists how their faith affects their work

Twelve scientists reflect on how faith influences

their work. This is what they told us.

[Read More...](#)



### Art bridges communication between science and religion

Art can open a communication portal

between science and religion, but it is much more than that, speakers said during "The Art of Science and Spirit," a 2 December holiday lecture and discussion at AAAS headquarters by the AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER).

[Read More...](#)



### Were you there?

Simon Smart interviews Tom McLeish on how science tips him towards faith, and living with open questions.

Professor Tom McLeish is a theoretical physicist at Durham University and the author of *Faith and Wisdom* in Science.

[Watch here...](#)



### Nature's witness: How science inspires faith

What does a religious voice have to offer conversations about the observation of

material reality?

[Read More...](#)



### Scientists debate boundaries, ethics of human gene editing

Rewriting your DNA is getting closer to reality:

A revolutionary technology is opening new frontiers for genetic engineering - a promise of cures for intractable diseases along with anxiety about designer babies.

[Read 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.

## News, Books and Resources

*Books and articles relevant to the interface between science and Christianity.*



### Do we have a “God Spot”? Is our faith determined by our brain architecture?

**Author**  
Andrew Wood

#### Abstract

This paper sets out to explore the question of whether religious faith is biologically determined and hence whether some can claim innate factors as a valid reason not to be responsive to evangelistic appeals.  
[Read More...](#)



### The big story: From stardust to new creation

The big story: from stardust to new creation

What if we told the story of the Bible from the perspective of what science has learned about God’s world?  
[Watch here...](#)

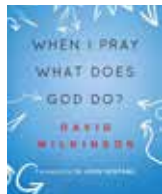


### “Miracles 101” or “Miracles and magic”

**Presenter**  
Helen Joynt

#### Abstract

The aim of this very introductory session is to investigate what is commonly meant by “miracle” and compare this with the biblical meaning and significance of “miracle”.  
[Read More...](#)



### When I Pray, What does God do?—book review

**Author**  
John Pilbrow

#### Excerpt

In this excellent and very readable monograph, Methodist theologian, Professor David Wilkinson, Principal of St John’s College, Durham, ponders the question as to how God answers our intercessory prayers.  
[Read More...](#)



### Technological inroads into the beginnings of human life: Social, ethical and religious repercussions

**Presenter**  
Gareth Jones

#### Abstract

One Christian organization, committed to demonstrating the manner in which the Christian faith should be addressing questions of relevance for contemporary society, has as one of its fundamental tenets that “human life is sacred from conception.” Consequences and repercussions of this position.  
[Read More...](#)



### Neuroimaging, the sense of self and the sense of God

**Author**  
Andrew Wood

#### 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.  
[Read More...](#)



### Strange bedfellows

An article originally published in *The Church Times*, 19th February 2016 / Gillian Straine

#### Excerpt

“Sundays are your busy day, eh vicar?” I cannot imagine that anyone in full time ministry would have not heard this one before. It may be funny (at least the first time) but it reflects a very common idea in our society today: religion happens on a Sunday, and the rest of life, including business, commerce and science, happens elsewhere and at another time.  
[Read More...](#)



### A global lab: Religion among scientists in international context

BioScience Research Collaborative.  
Religion and Public Life Program

#### Excerpt

More than 5.8 billion of the world’s 7 billion people claim some religious affiliation and most developed or developing economies are trying to grow their scientific infrastructure. Yet media pundits and scholars alike often see science as being in conflict with religion and the primary cause of secularisation.  
[Read More...](#)



### Christianity and Science: A vital 21st century conversation

**Presenter**  
Chris Mulherin

#### Abstract

In an increasingly global and secular scientific culture the cutting edge of Christian engagement is the science-faith conversation.  
[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](http://www.iscast.org/journalpage)*

# Event News

## Victoria events

Saturday 2 April, 2016

[Faith, wisdom and gravitational waves](#)—6.30 pm

Join us for an evening of robust discussion and talks by Prof. Tom McLeish and ISCAST Fellow Jenneth Sasse. Tom (via video link) and Jenneth will talk about topics that put fire in their bellies and get them excited.

[More details here.](#)

Saturday 9 July, 2016

[An evening with Gareth Jones](#)—6.30 pm

An informal evening to sit down and share with Emeritus Prof D Gareth Jones on Looking back and looking forward: science-faith dialogue from a personal perspective.

[More details here.](#)

## “Faith” survey report—February 2016

The quantitative analysis of ISCAST Fellow James Garth's *Perceptions of Faith* survey is complete. Findings show a statistical significance between the survey responses and affiliation. Other trends regarding the gender and age of responders have been identified.

The qualitative analysis is underway. This is working towards being complete by the end of March 2016.

Work is being performed by Dr Cat Kirby and Dr. Belinda Garth. James Garth has also communicated with Dr Keith Fox, editor of *Science and Christian Belief*. Dr Fox has confirmed interest in receiving a submission from us on this topic. James is targeting a submission for publication later this year.

[Read more here.](#)

## Student science and religion survey: Can you help?

Sharon Fraser, a researcher from Science Education at Utas, has asked for our help in a project close to the ISCAST heart. Sharon is surveying students in grade 6 and in years 10/11 about the relationship between science and religion.

Are you a teacher? Do you know schools or teachers that might be interested in helping?

Whole classes of students will be asked to complete a short survey, with three from each year level being invited to participate in an interview. Their teachers will also be invited to participate in an interview.

More details are available from Sharon at: [sharon.fraser@utas.edu.au](mailto:sharon.fraser@utas.edu.au)

## Other News

Look us up on:



Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ISCAST](http://www.facebook.com/ISCAST)



Twitter: [@ISCAST\\_Oz](https://twitter.com/ISCAST_Oz)



Tune in to our [Podcast](#)

Keep an eye on the website for events [www.iscast.org](http://www.iscast.org)

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I would like to know more about being associated with ISCAST

Annual Subscription by post: \$22 (Credit Cards add \$2 processing fee) Total Due: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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 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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