



How Do You Measure Up?

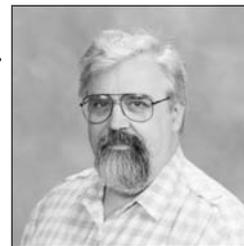
What kind of a person are you? Does superior, adequate, or below average describe your work and productivity? Does your body measure up to societal expectations? Or do you shop for portly or extra large jeans? Do friends characterize you as an obnoxious gabber, a wallflower, or a true comrade? Assessment and evaluation describe a process that consumes much of our attention and effort. How we measure up affects longevity on the job, the approval of our peers, and our sense of self-worth.

Foundation to the validity of the measurement process is the selection of the specific evaluation standard. Frequent standards of measurement include a comparison with the work of others, the general assessment of colleagues, or the extent of consistency to an "industry standard." In the world of academic scientific research, publication in a peer-reviewed research journal indicates that the investigator's work has met or exceeded the industry standard and that the laboratory work is elevated from hobby status to real science.

Why do we measure and evaluate each other or our work? We believe that this process both certifies excellence and motivates an individual toward enhanced performance. In an academic setting, receiving a grade of A versus a D for course work dramatically testifies to the performance and output of an individual student. The desire of a student to earn a high grade motivates study and mastery of course material.

What happens when we fail to meet the measured standard? What if we are not all above average or even average? What does it mean when we fall short of the mark? Does a grade of D or F on our work reflect a flaw in our character or our value? Frankly, I think the answer is yes. When we honestly assess ourselves, we find that all of us have areas where we perform admirably and other areas where we fail miserably! When resilient humans are given the choice, successes and high achievements are maximized in importance, while inadequacies are minimized. Peer pressure, spousal approval, or job

The View from Shepherd's Knoll ...



requirements force individuals to re-prioritize the importance of their tasks and frequently bring to attention those un-achieved areas of life and conduct.

Authors who submit manuscripts for publication to this journal begin this process because they expect that their work will be printed. However, the reality outstrips the expectation; most submitted manuscripts are not published. Some are immediately excluded by the editor because the manuscript focus does not deal with science and Christian faith; others are excluded because the quality of scholarship is inadequate. Most submitted manuscripts enter the peer review process to be read and critiqued by peer reviewers, primarily ASA members. After receiving and considering these reviews, the editor makes a judgment about the acceptability of the specific manuscript for publication. Anonymous reviewer critiques along with the editor's judgment are then shared with the author. More letters of rejection are written than letters of acceptance. Although this evaluative process involves a lot of effort and sometimes pain, we believe it positively contributes to the quality of our journal.

Measurement has eternal consequences. The teaching and example of Jesus Christ are the divine standards for Christians living on this earth. Furthermore, one day we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to hear the verdict of our future existence (2 Cor. 5:10). Will I meet the expectations of my Lord on that day? Fortunately for me, the outcome of Judgment Day is not dependent on whether my good deeds exceed my neighbor's good deeds or are perceived to be "above average" for most mortals. Some persons mistakenly believe that if they are more moral or kind than the average person then God will take notice and reward them with heaven. The Scriptures tell us that it simply does not work that way. All of our good deeds are as "filthy rags" and are unable to compensate for our failures and sins (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:10). However, God has provided a way for all of us to meet the divine standard, to fulfill the divine expectation, and to receive the approval of the divine Judge on that final day. The remedy for our sub par performance or failure is to repent from sin, receive God's gift of salvation, be renewed by divine grace, and walk in the power of the resurrection as a devotee to and a follower of the way of Jesus (Eph. 2:8-10). This "Jesus way" shapes us to humbly serve God through compassion and demonstrative love especially among the "least of these" or society's outcasts (Matt. 25:40). Jesus' words: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these ... you did for me" becomes a standard of how Christ's grace and compassion is working in our being.

Let's go and be it,
Roman J. Miller, *Editor*



In This Issue

In response to reader suggestions, a question/commentary format introduces articles published in this issue.

Four Articles ...

How can scientists make the claim that a particular rock strata is two million years old or that a skeletal artifact is 60,000 years old? In response to an invitation by the editor, Davis Young, who taught geology at Calvin College for over 25 years, writes a three-part series that explains many of the technical aspects of dating methods for the interested layperson. The first article explains the difference between relative and absolute dating methods and then describes several non-radiometric dating methods.

Why, in many of our acquaintance circles, do biologists greatly outnumber anthropologists? Do college science students, who are Christians, shy away from anthropology as a career because of perceived tensions between the science of anthropology and their Christian faith? Dean Arnold, long-time professor of anthropology at Wheaton College, describes and responds to four issues: human origins, cultural relativism, immersion and critique of culture, and the role of family in anthropological research. He emphasizes the need for Christian anthropologists to influence the academy and thereby make significant contributions for Christ and the church.

Does chance preclude purpose? Or, is purposeful chance an oxymoron? This is a central question in Thomas Woolley's article. After reviewing the conflict between chance and purpose, Woolley describes an understanding of contingency by an almost forgotten Anglican theologian, Leonard Hodgson, who was active in the middle of the twentieth century. After synthesizing Hodgson's ideas, Woolley, a professor of statistics at Samford University, concludes that chance is a part of God's creation and functions as a divine purposeful tool.

Should human embryonic stem cell research be encouraged because of the benefit it could bring or should it be banned because a human embryo is destroyed in the process? James Peterson, a professor of theology and ethics at McMasters University, describes a process in which a genetically altered nucleus is transferred (ANT) within an oocyte to form a resultant embryo that cannot develop or function past a certain point of development. Would such a change in the ontological status of an embryo subsequently affect the morality of stem cell research? Peterson reasons through this tangle and concludes that an ANT embryo used for research may be morally acceptable by some Christians.

Three Communications ...

What has been the outcome of the ASA 1986 publication, *Teaching Science in a Climate of Controversy*, that was mailed to about 40,000 high school science teachers? Jerry Bergman, adjunct professor at the Medical University of Ohio, takes a backward look at some of the responses received following this mass mailing. Many prominent scientists quickly criticized the booklet; public press reviews were generally negative. However, of the teachers who received the booklet and responded to a survey, 80% rated the booklet favorably. Bergman concludes by describing some lessons that can be learned from this experience.

What does it mean for humans to be created in the image of God? Harold Faw, professor of psychology at Trinity Western University, traces some of the ideas advanced by others to describe this reality. Faw proposes the idea that cognitive psychology in conversation with theologians may provide a harmonious concert that gives understanding to this aspect of God's creation.

What does Jesus have to say about embryonic stem cell research? A student-faculty team from Seattle Pacific University, Bryant Webber a biology major and Cynthia Fitch a professor of biology, answer that question using a unique approach. They analyze the words and concepts in Jesus' parables and apply those findings to the issue of stem cell research in the twenty-first century.

Other Sections ...

A sonnet written by editorial board member Walter Hearn takes the view and voice of God in reflecting on the creative efforts of humans.

Due to editorial policy, essay book reviews are a rarity in the pages of our journal. Yet occasionally when a very significant book is published that has broad appeal, we highlight that event for our readers. In response to an editorial invitation, J. W. Haas, Jr. writes a compelling description of *The Language of God* and extols the author, Francis Collins, as a spokesman for today. If you have not read this book, read this essay first and then read the book to be inspired and challenged.

In the Book Review section, nineteen published books are classified, briefly reviewed and critiqued.

Three letters to the editor on various topics as well as a correction conclude this issue. *

Upcoming ASA Conferences

August 2–5, 2007: University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh, Scotland

August 1–4, 2008: George Fox University
Newberg, Oregon