



Randy Isaac

PSCF: A Retro- and Prospective

This is the sixtieth year of publication of the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, now known as *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. Perusing the archives of the first decade of publication, one is struck by the diversity and breadth of topics as well as their familiarity.

The very first issue began, appropriately enough, with a discussion of the Christian view of the development of science. Subsequent issues delved into the presuppositions of the theory of evolution and into biblical interpretation. Radioactive dating of the earth was debated in 1952 as well as in 2008. Periodic articles traced the age of the universe from approximately 3 billion years in the early 50s to the 13.7 billion years that is accepted today. The second volume included articles on psychology, ensuring a focus on social sciences as well as natural sciences.

These sixty years have demonstrated the value of a peer-reviewed journal with emphasis on scholarship and balanced assessment of a wide range of topics relating to science and Christian faith. Simply being peer reviewed is not sufficient to guarantee quality. Of critical importance are the editors and the editorial board, the peer reviewers, and the book reviewers. The method of selecting anonymous reviewers who are knowledgeable and critical of the field in question is crucial to gaining credibility. The ASA has been blessed with a sequence of very talented scholars who have served as editors. There have been nine editors: Marion D. Barnes, D. N. Eggenberger, David O. Moberg, Russell L. Mixter, Richard H. Bube, Wilbur L. Bullock, J. W. Haas, Jr., Roman J. Miller, and most recently, Arie Leegwater. Their leadership and skill at handling the process for selecting papers and reviewers have been a vital part of achieving our reputation. The primary mission, as expressed by our founders, is "... the task of reviewing, preparing, and disseminating information ..." related to science and Christian faith.

This journal has frequently been the first to publish new ideas that have grown to be important in the field. Deluge geology was first discussed in an article by Larry Kulp in the March 1950 issue. More than a decade later, the topic became widely known throughout the Christian community. Some of the earliest articles that were forerunners of Intelligent Design were published by Bradley, Thaxton, and others. Few in our society would fail to recognize this term today. Theistic evolution was defended by Richard Bube in the 70s as a viable option for Christians. Today the concept is gaining attention as understanding of the latest genetic data becomes widespread. All of these views, and many more, continue to be held within the ASA community, offering a unique environment for the exchange of ideas. Despite our differences in perspectives, we remain united in our statement of faith, and we worship together as the body of Christ.

Turning from the past to the future, what are the key topics that we might expect the ASA to address, with seminal articles in this journal? I would like to suggest a few broad questions on which we could reasonably expect a great deal of work in the coming decades.

How are scientific practice and Christian faith related? This is the enduring underlying question that continually demands our attention. Loud voices on all sides proclaim that a complementary relationship is an illusion or requires a radical change in either mainstream science or in our understanding of the Bible. Those who find inherent compatibility differ widely with one another in articulating that relationship. Through it all, we have a significant responsibility of apologetics in the face of pressure from secularists who claim a scientific basis for atheism. New scientific fields such as multiverses and string theory and new data from genetics and anthropology continue to challenge our understanding.

Guest Editorial

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Where do we come from? The topic of origins will never die out. It is of vital importance and will continue to attract our attention. The dominant focus will shift, however, from the origin of the universe and the origin of species to the origin of life and the origin of consciousness. No viable scientific theories have yet emerged in these fields but any that do are bound to generate vigorous debate on the philosophical and theological implications. We especially need to understand the impact of worldview assumptions and their effect on the formulation and acceptance of scientific theories concerning these issues.

Why do we behave the way we do? In the past, Herbert Spencer and others, such as W. G. Sumner, eagerly applied evolutionary thought to social behavior, but these attempts led to dubious, often racist and elitist, conclusions. More recently, socio-biology has had its own checkered history. In the last 10–15 years, there has been a resurgence of another wave of research in seeking to understand our behavior based on an evolutionary perspective. It is too soon to tell whether the current wave will have more staying power than previous attempts. Armed with a new suite of tools to study genetics and brain function, researchers will have significant new data to interpret. The complex relationship of the influence of genetics, epigenetics, and spiritual factors in our behavior will come under great scrutiny. This work should be a strong focus for the ASA.

How should we then live? While science is properly descriptive and not prescriptive, these two modes are not entirely independent and there are implications of science on our moral and ethical behavior. We must continually address the ethics of how to carry out our scientific research and how to make decisions in an increasingly complex technological world. The ability to manipulate the fundamental code of life gives us a tremendous responsibility to use that power wisely. Increased knowledge leads to greater responsibility and accountability. Those of us living in both the scientific and the Christian communities have a deep responsibility to help shape the thinking of our society in the formulation of its ethic.

What can we do to help others? Today's students are energized by opportunities to help others in need. ASA members are galvanized by the ability to make contributions in areas such as alternative energy

sources, creation care, and appropriate technologies for a sustainable future. In our era of global awareness, we recognize our opportunity and responsibility to work toward sustainability not just in our own lives but throughout the developing world. ASA can contribute effectively as a focus of communication of opportunities and experiences. We share a common motivation to serve our Lord and Savior by demonstrating his love to those in need.

There are many other areas that will be addressed in years to come, some new and some old. What will remain unchanged is our commitment to serve God by offering to Christians active in science and technology a network of communication and exchange of ideas at a high academic level. We will continue to demonstrate the unity of the body of Christ despite a great diversity of ideas and opinions. The quality of the scholarship in the pages of this journal is vital in helping us to achieve that goal. ☉

Randy Isaac, *ASA Executive Director*



In This Issue

In contrast to the wide geographical distribution of the authors in the June issue, this issue stays closer to home. Articles by Timothy Larsen (Wheaton) on the so-called war between faith and science, Janel Curry (Calvin) on a social framework for understanding the diversity of Christian responses to climate change, Joel Duff (Akron) on Darwin's and flood geology's abominable mystery, and an interview of Ian Hutchinson (MIT) by Evan Peck (Gordon) and Karl Giberson (Eastern Nazarene) fill our pages. I would like to see interviews of leading scientists become a regular feature. Please contact me if you are considering initiating an interview.

Thirty-one book reviews authored by twenty-four different reviewers and four letters written in response to articles published in previous issues of *PSCF* also invite your perusal. Thank you to Randy Isaac for writing the guest editorial, a retrospective and prospective view of *PSCF*. ☉

Written in Korean *kimchi*-deprived Grand Rapids,
Arie Leegwater, *Editor*