



Edward B. Davis

# The ASA in 2109: How We Got There

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One of the benefits of being a historian is that you get to encounter the past in the present, through the perceptions and experiences of our predecessors. I have yet to figure out how to encounter the future, yet historians are often asked to prognosticate: considering the history of this or that, what do you think will happen in the next quarter century? Usually I decline the opportunity to consult my crystal ball, but let us pretend for the moment that I have used it to peer into the future of the ASA, looking forward to a century from now, when no one reading this editorial will be able to tell me how badly I was misled by that transparent little sphere.

The premise behind this thought experiment is, of course, that the ASA will still exist in 2109, when there will be 168 candles on its birthday cake. Plenty of organizations and institutions have been around far longer, but more than a few have not made it even to our present age, a modest sixty-eight. If we are still here in 2109, what will have made it possible? What might some future historian say then about how we got there?

First, he or she might say, we were clear about who we are and why we exist. The ASA is currently defined as “a fellowship of men and women of science and disciplines that can relate to science who share a common fidelity to the Word of God and a commitment to integrity in the practice of science.” This has the advantage of being specific, without being too specific—Christians from a variety of backgrounds, who hold a variety of theological perspectives, are invited to become members, as long as they affirm the importance of the Bible as an authentic divine revelation and do not misrepresent scientific knowledge.

Our purpose is even clearer: “to investigate any area relating Christian faith and science” and “to make known the results of such investigations for comment and criticism by the Christian community and by the scientific community.” Again, we find just the right amount of specificity, with enough breadth to ensure that many interesting topics will get plenty of attention, while leaving some controversial topics on the outside, for example, those related to more purely political or theological disputes—though both politics and theology can certainly influence one’s views about science and Christianity.

The other part of our purpose reflects the two worlds in which our members live and work: first, in the body of Christ, of which we are only a very small part, with millions more no less valuable than ourselves; second, in the professional communities to which we belong and to whom we can be salt and light. In short, the ASA exists to advance the activity of science—including the social sciences and technology, along with the natural sciences—as a proper Christian vocation. If we are still here in 2109, it will be because we remained faithful to this vision.

Our future historian might identify a second, equally important, factor; he or she might find that our members were strongly committed to the future of the ASA, indeed, to its very existence as an organization dedicated to advancing the kingdom of God through our scientific vocations. This is where I come in, as your current president, and this is also where you come in, as the members who entrusted me with that job. My proposal to ensure that the ASA will be here for future generations of Christians in science is simple. I call it, “1 and 1 and 1.”

# Guest Editorial

## *The ASA in 2109: How We Got There*

Here is what each of us can do, and if we do, then I have no doubt that our future historian will have something good to say about us. Let each member commit to doing three things for the ASA:

1. Persuade 1 person to become a permanent member of the ASA in the next five years;
2. Attend 1 annual meeting in the next five years, and keep this pattern as long as you can;
3. Give 1 percent of your estate, at the time of your death, to the ASA endowment fund.

Speaking now in the present rather than in the future, our greatest single need is to grow the ASA by another few hundred members—a goal that lies in our collective hands to achieve in the next decade, long before the next century. This can and should follow naturally from our calling to mentor younger colleagues in their development as scientists and in

their walk in Christ. If one-third of our members follow through with this part of my proposal, then very soon the ASA will be able to do new things that will benefit both the body of Christ and the scientific community. If one-fifth of our members follow through with the second part, we will all make wonderful new friends, and our annual meetings will be even better than they already are. If even one-tenth of our members follow through with the third part, the ASA will be less dependent on annual giving; if one-fourth follow through with the third part, we could start to plan major new initiatives in a couple of decades, or even sooner, if more members participate. Let us go forth with courage and faith, trusting in him who holds the future in his hands! ☞

**Edward (Ted) B. Davis**, *ASA President*  
tdavis@messiah.edu



## In This Issue

This September issue of *PSCF* may lack the symmetry of the previous issue, but not its timeliness. This issue is cast in the shadow of contemporary challenges. It begins with a guest editorial “The ASA in 2109: How We Got There” written by the newly-minted president of ASA, Edward (Ted) Davis, and carries a challenge to ASA members to endeavor to make the ASA better equipped to realize its mission, and stretch its collective vision and prospective reach to the year 2109.

Besides this “state of the ASA” piece, we have a diversity of articles ranging from modern cosmology, the evolution of human cognitive capacities, part II of a series on Arthur Compton, to a detailed book review with a response by the book’s author. Robert Mann (University of Waterloo) explores (once again) an ancient conundrum—the puzzle of existence—by framing the puzzle in a way that is cognizant of recent findings in cosmology and which poses a serious challenge to contemporary

theological reflection. Ralph Stearley (Calvin College) assesses the evidence for the development of humanoid “soulful behaviors,” and in so doing challenges previous scientific and theological interpretations. Ted Davis (Messiah College) continues his historical reading of the influential scientific and religious life of Arthur Compton.

This issue ends with a new category: a book review by Scott Rae (Biola University) of a recently published book by Joel B. Green (Fuller Seminary) entitled *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Baker Academic, 2008) and Green’s response. These scholars clearly differ in their interpretation of Scripture and how best to allow the natural sciences to influence their reading. The challenge of faithfully reading and interpreting Scripture is one we all share.

A final word about book reviews: As book review editors, we have attempted to provide a diversity of challenging book reviews. While still utilizing the “master-list” of ASA reviewers which has been generated, we have tried to broaden the base by inviting other reviewers to speak to the relevance and quality of recently published books.

*Tolle lege*: take up this issue and read. ☞

**Arie Leegwater**, *Editor*  
leeg@calvin.edu