



James C. Peterson

# Conflict and Collaboration

Collaboration can be enriched by conflict between the parties, if each is to bring a contribution to the table. Granted sometimes the conflict can be so complete that each has nothing to offer the other, but more often there is something in each differing perspective that can add to a better resolution going forward. That is not to say that the truth is always in the middle, nor that the compromise that is essential to a democratic process of living together is always the highest goal for academia. In academic study, we often have the luxury of seeking the most accurate description whether it supports practical cooperation or not. But even in academia, the hope is for eventually recognized agreement that knowledge has been advanced in a particular way. In pursuit of that goal, highlighting persistent conflict can still be a form of constructive collaboration, as it helps to map out approaches along with their strengths and weaknesses. We see such conflict, and collaboration, in this issue.

We begin with an invitation article by Russell Howell. One might find it confounding that God is left out of some current theologies, but not as surprising to study mathematics without reference to God. Yet to the contrary, Howell finds many points of interaction between mathematics and Christian faith, especially at the metalevel. In the following four articles that were spurred by Howell's essay, each author has their own perspective on recognizing and building upon a Christian connection with mathematics, both theoretically and practically. With this varied case for Christian perspectives shaping, in particular, the teaching of mathematics, how much more insight might there be here for teaching physics, chemistry, and biology? This is an opportunity to collaborate, not only in regard to mathematics, but also across the sciences.

Our next two essays show considerable conflict. They pick up where the discussion left off last December on human-triggered climate change. In this second round, they can clarify more exactly where they do agree, why their starting points and conclusions add up so differently, and how we might find more resources to hone our interpretation and response. Our book review section follows, along with a vigorous exchange of letters to the editor.

Conflict and collaboration. When authors send the journal their best effort, the first review is whether the essay will be considered by full peer review. This protects expert peer-reviewer time. If the essay has enough potential to warrant that next step, the best response the author can hope for is not rousing applause and cries of "Perfection!" Such just does not happen. Reviewers always have questions, corrections, challenges ... The best response to hope for from the journal is a request for a rewrite that takes into account the reviewers' responses. This does not mean that the author is expected to capitulate, but rather, that the author has now further input to strengthen the argument and the communication of it. When an article is eventually published, the collaboration continues as yet more fellow scholars consider and respond to the piece in conversation, citations, and, in the journal specifically, by dialogue in letters to the editor and in later articles that take the discussion into yet newer territory.

So, welcome to the process of both conflict and collaboration here at *PSCF*. May we appreciate each other in both, and be better for it. ♦

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