



James C. Peterson

# Accurate

When we consider essays for *PSCF*, we look for a thesis related to our mission, clarity of expression, a contribution to the ongoing conversation, and accuracy in the involved disciplines. As to that last stated requirement, a published essay needs to be accurate in what can be checked, situated with full acknowledgment of relevant argument to date, and well argued beyond.

By accurate in what can be checked, I mean not only correct and full citations, but also a paper trail showing that the author has taken into account the byways already tried and found wanting. This saves the reader time. As is always said, why reinvent the wheel? And it creates a ready resource for the interlocutor who wants to check a source or delve more deeply into a referenced argument. One of the best ways to start research in a new area is to read a thorough and well-referenced article published on the topic. The endnotes document how the conversation has developed so far, both for and against the author's thesis. It is invaluable in development of such an article that colleagues with applicable expertise confirm for the author that this is done well. They will remember other relevant arguments and sources that the author missed and should include. They can also help the author to be sure that the arguments extending the conversation into new territory are coherent and compelling.

When the essay is then sent to the journal, it may be selected for peer review. That review further tests the essay on its own evident merits. This vetting process assures the reader that the argument has been questioned and found intriguing by experts in the relevant fields. The author then rewrites, in light of the reviews, to strengthen what the piece offers.

The resulting collection of articles, communications, and reviews in the journal has drawn then

from the expertise and cross checking of varied perspectives. The authors for just this issue—not even including the book reviewers, to make this list manageable—are writing across generations as graduate students, a pastor, post doc, program director, activists, and professors teaching, assistant, associate, and full. Geographically, the authors of this June issue wrote from Kansas City, Houston, Greater Toronto, Chicago, Vancouver, Grand Rapids, Edmonton, Miami, Ottawa, and San Diego. Disciplines directly present include theology, sociology, philosophy, physics, history, zoology, ecology, environmental studies, paleobiology, and computational cell biology. The ASA and CSCA that sponsor this journal gather together the best thinking of a striking breadth of people, place, and disciplinary perspective. When such work together, what a rich resource results. The parochialism that comes so naturally to our tribes of generation, location, or specialty is difficult to maintain when so many are listening and contributing to the conversation.

This process provides a significant advantage over daily news accounts or quick columns that are often written not only on a deadline of a few hours, but also without background or expertise to fully understand what is reported. Such accounts, dominating the web and the daily news feed, can be useful for raising questions or starting ideas, but too often they pool ignorance more than enlightenment. The contents of this journal can be counted on to be current and informed. Here is a place where there is a good chance that people can be oriented and launched on a topic from an extended and nuanced base. That enables us to build toward fresh new mistakes; there is no need to keep repeating ones already rightfully set aside. That such a head start toward insight can be found here is a gift to be appreciated and put to good further work.

James C. Peterson, *Editor*

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## In This Issue

Specifically in this issue, Eugene Curry considers the use and abuse of surveys concerning the convictions of leading scientists. He finds that some of the surveys offer too blunt an instrument to report accurately what scientists believe, and even the results in hand are often misinterpreted. He points out then what expert trends can tell or not tell us, even when a survey is well done.

The next article by Bruce Gordon challenges the common phrase “methodological naturalism” as inadequately reflecting the theological convictions that he enumerates. For Gordon, “uniformitarianism” better states and guides the approach that Christians should use in science and that non-Christians would benefit from using. All could do science with greater understanding and more success if they were to recognize that the material world cannot be adequately described by material causation alone.

From a different approach, Jitse van der Meer explains why he sees science as able to progress by

means of the cooperation of people who do not have the same basic beliefs. He argues that background beliefs are deeply influential, even essential to the practice of science, but can be checked and corrected by the sheer givenness of the created order.

Turning to the care of that created order, Karen Steensma, David Clements, John Wood, Randall Van Dragt, and Ben Lowe describe how Christian colleges have been trying to achieve and exemplify for their students the best care of the land entrusted to them.

In our continued series of communications on scientific vocations, Oscar González describes his passion and practice in bringing his environmental studies at the University of Florida and creation care to the evangelical churches of Peru.

The always appreciated reviews of the latest books are followed by Jordan Mallon’s thoughtful letter to the editor about Kathryn Applegate’s “A Defense of Methodological Naturalism” (March PSCF). That is followed by an equally thoughtful response from the author.

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## WORKSHOPS

*preceding the 2013 ASA Annual Meeting  
Belmont University, Nashville, TN*

**Friday, July 19, 2013, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM**

**WORKSHOP 1:** Introductory Hermeneutical Principles for Science and Religion —Denis Lamoureux, Leader



The father of modern young earth creationism states, “The Bible is a book of science! It does contain all the basic principles upon which true science is built.” However, the beloved preacher of the gospel Billy Graham asserts, “The Bible is not a book of science. I think we have misinterpreted the scriptures many times, and we’ve tried to make the scriptures say things that they weren’t meant to say.”

This workshop will explore whether the Bible contains modern science, and it will offer an introduction to hermeneutical principles.

**Friday, July 19, 2013, 1:00 PM–4:30 PM**

**WORKSHOP 2:** The Human Genome as an Ancient Text —Dennis Venema, Leader



The Human Genome Project, and comparative genomics in general, have provided a wealth of information about how our species came into being. Viewed in this way, our genome is an “ancient text” that reveals details of our past.

This workshop will examine our story as written in our genomes, from prior to our origins in Africa, to our spread across the globe, and ending with our emergence as the last surviving hominin species on the planet.

Register at [www.asa3.org](http://www.asa3.org)