

Fitting



James C. Peterson

How fitting that the lead article in this December issue uses the science of astronomy and other sources to date the birth of Jesus. *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* exists to contribute to the scholarly discussion of how the world's largest, and still growing, global movement (the Christian faith) interacts with the sciences. Science and Christianity have centuries of dialog behind them, and there is always more to consider. For most readers of this journal, both are among the best sources of insight that we have. Studying where they challenge or instruct each other is fruitful and important. Articles and reviews are selected for this journal that contribute to that task. Specifically as a peer-reviewed journal, we are looking for contributions that offer insights that are new, arguably true, well communicated, and of interest to our audience. I will devote future editorials to each of these essential characteristics. Here I will address the focus of *PSCF*.

In a search-engine world, we do not lack input. The problem is not volume; it is having time to sort through the information to find what is potentially worthy of attention, and to verify its accuracy. *PSCF* editors, coordinators, board members, peer reviewers, and authors invest countless hours in evaluating what is offered to the journal and scanning further for what else should also be considered. The result is that if one keeps up with *PSCF*, one should hear about the new ideas, developments, and resources at this intersection. The journal format is not published as instantly as a blog, but it is verified to be more considered and trustworthy. It cannot be as extended in argument as a book, but it is much more timely, each article is more focused, and more authors and approaches are presented.

Essays are chosen that establish something helpful for the journal's readers. That can be a grand synthesis, but more often it is something modest.

An article that thoroughly works through a small but important point can make a real contribution. In this issue, James Nollert takes pages to establish when Jesus was born, since dates have been proposed from 4 BC to AD 6. Nollert is pursuing a turning point of history, not just for our calendar, and offering another affirmation of the historical concern and accuracy of Matthew and Luke. It is instructive that their accounts and those of the early church writers that followed, fit quite well with the referenced astronomical events of their day.

We also see the Christian faith and science connected in Thomas Davis's article. His expert excavation in Crete gives clues to the cultural orientation of various cities that are prominent in the book of Acts. The archaeological findings provide evidence of perceptive accuracy in Luke's description, and offer an enriched context for understanding the theological development of the Apostle Paul. Davis sees Paul deeply affected by living out his life in the particular places of a particular time.

Offering a personal communication on serving as a scientist in a particular time and place, James Nichols reflects on his sense of calling as a Christian and as a scientist. He teaches biology and chairs that department at a Christian university. We will hear in future issues from Christians who are scientists working in places such as international development, government standards, administration, corporate research, and research-intensive universities.

The contributors and readers of this journal are not only serving in different contexts, but also in a striking breadth of disciplines. This is a resource that offers unusual opportunity for cross-disciplinary insight and correction. As a professor of chemical physics at Carnegie Mellon University, Gary Patterson describes some missteps from theologians building on a mistaken notion of entropy. In contrast,

Editorial

Fitting

he thinks that properly understood thermodynamics can offer substantial theological insight. Few journals are able to draw this way from so many of the impinging disciplines for the most complex problems such as origins or the nature of humanity. While this diversity is a distinctive strength, it does mean that forty pages on a detail of an eighteenth-century scientist are not likely to carry interest beyond the five other historians thinking about that particular scholar's life. Yet even a study that is minutely focused can become a fruitful contribution to the journal's audience if it illustrates or implements an insight or approach of broader import.

In all these explorations, *PSCF* does not promise infallibility. What the peer-review process does warrant is trust that proffered views have been tested and found compelling by experts in the involved fields. That is light years ahead of the blogosphere. If it appears in *PSCF*, there are scholars who take it seriously. However, that does not mean that *PSCF* claims to state official positions of the American Scientific Affiliation or the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation. Those who write for the journal and those who read it, do not have to sign a statement of faith or even be members of the founding association. The journal is read far beyond the association membership. For example, in the last months, permission has been granted to reprint articles in Chinese, German, Japanese, and Spanish. Further, back issues of the journal are readily available and widely read over the worldwide web.

The reach is global, but no one journal can address everyone about everything. Our pages are dedicated to serving people interested in how the life-giving Christian tradition interacts with the best of science. For example, Keith Miller's piece in this issue articulates how scientific consensus works, for those who as fellow Christians and citizens need to interpret findings concerning climate change.

Each article is blind peer reviewed for accuracy and plausibility. By plausibility, I mean that the perspective is a genuine possibility, not necessarily the only possibility. The word "Perspectives" is intentionally plural in the journal title. At the leading edge of inquiry, multiple perspectives are almost always in play. An essay that divides peer-review evaluation because of a controversial but thoughtful,

well-presented argument, might well appear in the journal. Publication here means that the approach is worthy of attention, not that it is settled. There is always room to learn more. The articles and book reviews published in *PSCF* are to spur and enable that pursuit. Enjoy. ★

A Psychology Challenge

Science is constantly moving. **Heather Looy**, professor of psychology at The King's University College, has written an intriguing description of the latest developments in psychology with insights and challenges that they may raise for Christian faith. The essay can be read at www.asa3.org or www.CSCA.ca.

This article is intended as an invitation. Readers are encouraged to take up one of the insights or challenges, or maybe a related one that was not mentioned, and draft an article that contributes to the conversation. These can be sent to Looy at Heather.Looy@KingsU.ca. She will send the best essays on to peer review, and then from those we will select some for publication in a psychology theme issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. For full consideration for inclusion in the theme issue, manuscripts should be received electronically before February 28, 2013.

For those readers who prefer to take a literary approach in sharing their ideas, please submit essays (up to 3,000 words), poetry, fiction, or humor inspired by Looy's invitational essay to emily@asa3.org for possible publication in *God and Nature* magazine.