



James C. Peterson

All Together Now

It is a delight to see insightful essays in my inbox, whether long anticipated or out of the blue. Over the last seven issues of this journal, I have been describing in editorials what is present in those essays that have potential for publication. Even the best are rarely submitted as ready in every aspect, but the standards listed below can serve as a helpful checklist to take into account when preparing a piece to offer. The editorial team looks for these characteristics, investing its time to guard and serve the reader's time.

On Mission

The Christian tradition is the world's largest global movement. More than two billion people call themselves Christians. Combining sheer numbers with two thousand years of reflection and analysis in the tradition, there are rich resources to refine and launch thoughtful exploration. The sciences are ever extending their insight and reach as well. These two interact at a myriad of interesting and important points. Explaining and furthering that dialogue is the core mission of *PSCF*. The journal cannot publish everything for everyone, but it does seek to report and move forward the most constructive work in this interdisciplinary field. The selected articles serve people interested in how the life-giving Christian tradition interacts with the best of science.

Informed

Someone should be able to see in the essay and endnotes what is available on the topic for and against the author's thesis, including from the previous discussion in this journal. The relevant dialogue on the topic, past and current, will be in full view. This brings up to speed the reader who may be an expert in a different field, and it keeps the article appropriately focused and modest.

Few journals are able to draw, as *PSCF* does, from so many disciplines for the most complex problems such as origins or the nature of being human. There is unusual opportunity here for cross-disciplinary insight and correction, though that is not a claim to offer the final word. While each essay will show mastery of the involved disciplines—no easy task in an interdisciplinary journal—there will always be more to discover and discern. It is not unusual for substantially contrary articles to appear in the same issue of the journal or in subsequent issues as the discussion develops. The first word in the journal's title, "Perspectives," is intentionally plural. At the leading edge of inquiry, multiple views are almost always in play. Publication means that the approach merits attention, not that it is the end of the discussion. Those who are already absolutely sure probably do not fully understand what they are discussing. Those who are not as sure are probably more aware of what is being considered. Or, at least, so it seems to me.

New

There is always more to learn. There can be recurring questions and themes, but each new article brings forward some aspect worthy of consideration that was not part of the literature before. The author has taken into account and explained the byways on the subject, and now establishes a new contribution. The contribution could be in the conclusion, or in an argument, or in a way of explaining the issue, but there will always be something new.

New approaches or insights may be disruptive. They may be perceived as undermining other careful work. Yet they may present an opportunity to understand better—which is, after all, the point. The role of this journal is not to repeat what is already commonplace or to articulate a party line.

Editorial

Challenges brought by the essays may call for a change in perspective or at least an improvement. Such might not always be comfortable, but it should be appreciated and compelling. Those who publish this journal hold to the historic and life-giving Christian faith because it continues to make the most sense. Challenges and implications are welcome and can be fruitful.

The long-fulfilled expectation is that the readers of this journal will delight not only in supportive evidence for what has convinced them before, but also that they will find here some ideas, or ways of description, that lead to fresh perspectives. If they find a new proposal here persuasive, they will have learned something. If they do not find a colleague's proposal here persuasive, they will hopefully write and submit a better reading for the journal's blind peer-review process and potential publication. We would all be better for it.

Valuable Contribution

Sometimes an article will offer a grand synthesis, but more often it will offer something more modest in scope. An article that thoroughly works through a focused but important point can make a real contribution to the scholars drawn to this journal from a wide range of fields. While this diverse audience 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 scientist's work. Yet, even a study that is minutely focused can make a fruitful contribution to the journal's full audience if the author notes how it illustrates or illuminates an insight of broader import.

Indeed, if it appears here, the proffered view has been tested and found compelling by experts in the involved fields. The journal is not published as instantly as a blog; rather, it is carefully verified to be more considered and worthy of trust. It cannot be as extended in argument as a monograph, but it is more timely, with many authors and approaches presented. In a search-engine world, we do not lack for input. The problem is not in having enough volume. The need is to sort through copious information to find what is potentially worthy of attention and to verify its accuracy. The editors, coordinators, peer reviewers, and board members of *PSCF* invest countless hours in evaluating what is offered to the

journal, and in scanning for what else should be considered to launch the further investigations of our readers.

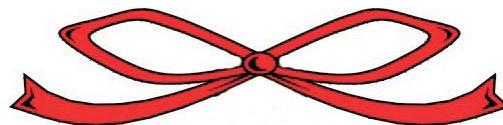
Clear

There is no point in publishing an article that meets every standard above but then presents in a way that is difficult to decode. While our readers are erudite, they cannot know the insider's jargon in every specialty. Time is always short for people in demand, and that is the life of our readers. Authors should be sure that their case includes the tools and explanations that might help readers to follow the argument. The content in this field will usually be challenging, but the communication of it should not be any more difficult than it has to be. The work in this journal is too important to be left inchoate.

In Summary

The contents of this journal can be counted on to be on task, informed, new, valuable, and clear. Contributions with these facets are most welcome. *PSCF* offers a forum where there is a good chance that readers can be oriented and launched beyond old mistakes into promising new territory. That such a head start can be found here is a gift to be appreciated and put to good further work.

James C. Peterson, *Editor*



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Gift ASA memberships and *PSCF* subscriptions are a great way to introduce someone to ASA and our journal. Giving a gift is easy: Go to our online store on our website, <http://network.asa3.org/store>, and click on our gift section.

Select the gift you wish to give. Once you purchase the gift, you will receive a downloadable page with a code that you can give to the recipient to activate the gift membership or subscription.



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