Clear

When dat Aprille witt his shoures soote, 
the droghte of Marche hath perced to 
the roote, and bathed evevy veyne in 
swich licour of whiche vertu engendred is the flour.

The previous sentence is English, granted it is 
the Middle English that begins Canterbury Tales. It is 
beautifully put for the thirteenth-century Londoner. 
Chaucer has much that is entertaining and insightful 
to say, but he is almost indecipherable to contempo-
rary English readers. Our English is present in that 
quotation, but “the droghte of Marche hath perced 
to the roote,” would be much more likely to be recog-
nized today as “the drought of March has pierced 
to the roots.”

An essay submitted to PSCF may be on task, new, 
and true (as described in the last few editorials), but 
there is no point in its publication if it is not also 
clear. It is not enough that an article may eventually 
be decipherable. Our readers are erudite, but they 
have to choose how to apportion their time, and they 
cannot be expert in the jargon of every specialty. 
Articles in PSCF can be demanding, but they need 
to be readable across a wide range of scientific and 
theological disciplines.

The point of each article is not just to present 
material. It is to evoke understanding. That requires 
authors to go out of their way to write in a way that 
eliminates as many byways and dead ends as pos-
sible. When the precise terminology of a discipline 
is useful, it is welcome, but it should be defined, 
not assumed. If an insider consensus is relevant, 
the not-yet-initiated reader will gain from that being 
noted. When knowledge of a field’s context helps 
to reveal the importance or force of an argument, 
it warrants explanation. The author needs to think 
ahead and provide what the esteemed reader of 
PSCF might find helpful to recognize the article’s 
contribution.

That clarity of thought should also be evident 
in the clarity of presentation. The outline should 
be evident in the headings. Short sentences. Short 
paragraphs. There is room for nuance, but it should 
be presented directly. The content may be challeng-
ing, but the communication should not be more 
complex than it has to be.

Being clear does require more work for the 
author. Clarity of expression takes greater skill and 
mastery of one’s topic than presenting a lump of 
great worth that is not yet mined and refined. But 
the work presented in this journal is too valuable 
to be left inchoate. The author’s task is not only to 
present new, relevant, and insightful ideas. It is to 
present them in a way that the reader can readily 
understand the contribution. The essays that we 
publish are ones that are accurate, fitting, new, 
and clear.

James C. Peterson, Editor

In This Issue
One year ago, Heather Looy agreed to post on the 
ASA and CSCA web sites, an analysis of some of 
the current interactions between psychology and the 
Christian tradition. That triggered many thoughtful 
theses in response. Four of the best follow here. As 
co-editor for the articles in this psychology-themed 
issue, Looy ably organized the rigorous peer review 
to recognize and develop them.

The first is by Duane Kauffmann and counter-
balances part of Looy’s initial essay. He argues that 
the striving of psychological science for an empirical
Editorial

approach should remain central to sorting through the tangle of human self-perception. Next, Russell Kosits calls for scholarship in psychology that is distinctively Christian in its perspective, and yet so compelling in its insight that it engages and challenges those outside the Christian tradition. Noreen Herzfeld warns that the expanding power of machine memory will never replace truly human memory, and Gareth Jones describes and tests proposals to use technology to shape our brains to higher moral achievement.

In Communications, Denis Lamoureux shares a story of healing through medications that repair brain chemistry. Kevin Reimer then writes of his experience and research with the differently abled core members and their assistants at L’Arche.

Our book review section goes beyond psychology, ranging across the latest conversation between science and the Christian tradition. Then, in a letter, Kenell Touryan draws from his extensive experience of dialogue with scientists who are atheists, to extend the analysis of a June issue article on science and atheism. A letter follows from Charles Austerberry that challenges the June essay that advocated uniformitarianism. The author, Bruce Gordon, replies.

James C. Peterson, Editor