



James C. Peterson

# What Is Not Said

**R**ecognizing what is not said is often as important as hearing what is said. In our lead article of this issue, Harry Lee Poe argues that the first chapter of Genesis describes five days of creation, with each day as a particular starting point. The specific grammar used does not imply that the days are in immediate succession. Each described day is a day, not the very next day. According to Poe, many attempts at harmonizing scripture with science are actually trying to match science with something scripture has never said.

There is a key principle here for Christian faith (and the sciences). If one is taking scripture seriously, it is as important to hear what it is not saying as to hear what it is saying. Otherwise, one is attributing revelation and authority to one's own additions to the text. That is eisegesis, rather than exegesis: reading into scripture rather than reading out from scripture. The final chapter of the New Testament is explicit in warning against such (Rev. 22:18–19).

Our second article carries on this theme of carefully reporting as accurately as possible what is said without claiming what is not said. David Wilcox describes how genetics reveals much about human origins, but there is much that genetics cannot say. Scientific study includes theorizing interest, context, and potential explanations for observed data. But it is not within the ability of science to settle theological implications. Science is very good at what it does, but only at what it does. It is as important to realize the limits of how far it can go as to recognize how far it has come. Science describes as best it can patterns of material causation. It cannot address whether that material causation is all that exists. When science is claimed as the sole arbiter of what is real, that is an expression of a philosophy or worldview of scientism, no longer science itself.

In the third article in this issue, the theologian Patrick Franklin proposes a way of approaching Christianly some of what science thinks it has observed. He sees an evident evolutionary process as part of what God as the Trinity is doing through the Son and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit toward a new creation.

Then, in the first communication, we find a piece written exactly fifty years ago. Elving Anderson again guides us in thinking about fruitful dialogue between established commitments and the fair assessment of what appears to be new and reliable data.

In the second communication, Stephen Contakes reflects on the dialogue at a recent conference on the sciences and Christian faith. He suggests various methods of better sorting out what we can claim in such discussions.

Finally, our review section alerts us to ten new books that think through the extent and implications of what we do and do not know in our ongoing investigations.

It has been said that people who are absolutely sure, probably do not understand the breadth and depth of whatever it is that they are addressing. The person who is not absolutely sure, probably understands more. Or at least so it seems. It is an essential part and characteristic of truly growing in understanding, to recognize how finite we and our understandings are. We can learn, but that very progress triggers a greater realization of the extent of our limitations. Whether listening to Christian scriptures or to scientific observations and theory, recognizing what is not said is part of understanding what is said. Being aware of what we do not know is an important part of knowing what we do.



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