



James C. Peterson

A Sense of Place

Just before this editorial went to press, ASA/CSCA was gathered in Tulsa for our annual meeting. It was clear from the twenty-four-hour flames at the towered center of campus and at the front fountain of our main meeting hall, that we were both in oil country and at a place that seeks to honor the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Place deeply shapes us. Our opening article on how we should treat human embryos is by D. Gareth Jones of the University of Otago, the oldest university in New Zealand. He brings a perspective informed by the Commonwealth, particularly down under, but has done his homework to address the specific experiences, literature, and legislation in the United States. Dialogue gains from insights far and near, but always eventually is played out for each of us in a specific context.

The next piece addresses fracking wherever it occurs, but particularly from the experience of the shale fields in Pennsylvania. The production of oil and gas there has been revived by this new technology, but local well water, in some cases, has been contaminated. Bruce Beaver, at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University, sees fracking as worth the risk when it is rightly controlled. It is then less damaging than the alternatives of burning coal or making power too costly. For a time, he argues, it is our best available energy source to support people and the environment.

Our third article comes from Wilton Bunch in the deep south of Alabama, where he teaches at Samford University. That is a place of ecumenical intersection, particularly between the locally prominent Baptist, Reformed, and Wesleyan traditions. It lends itself to hearing from and challenging responses to the often-voiced question of how to think about and pastorally respond to a world that is God's, and yet

has piercing suffering. The author has had reasons to feel that challenge acutely, and draws from part of how we do science, to address it.

Michael Tenneson, David Bundrick, and Matthew Stanford then advocate a typology for how science and Christian faith relate to each other. They test it in places that they know well, such as with Assembly of God pastors and students.

Jean Claude Parlebas reports from France, a place proudly all its own. At our 2014 annual meeting, we gathered delegates primarily from the jointly sponsoring American Scientific Affiliation, Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation, and the UK's Christians in Science. Parlebas reminds us that the interaction between science and Christian faith is fruitful in the French-speaking world as well. He focuses, in particular, on the past and present impact of Blaise Pascal. Pascal was a man of his place and time, from whom can still learn in our place and time.

Our book reviewers write in this issue from Massachusetts, British Columbia, and Alberta, and there is a letter to the editor from the northern plains of Alberta as well. This editorial is being written amidst the Blue Ridge Mountains that overlook Roanoke, Virginia. What a privilege to listen to and learn from the people and situations of so many places. We can then contribute back to that wide dialogue, yet part of our contribution and so much of our application will be local with all the unique concerns and nuance that such entails. Our Lord came for us in all places, but to be truly human, started in a particular place, as we always do as well. ♦

James C. Peterson, *editor*