



James C. Peterson

Working Together across Disciplines

A workshop met the first day of the most recent annual meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation. The topic was how to collaborate effectively in interdisciplinary studies. That is near and dear to the heart of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, in which we seek to bring together the best of the sciences and Christian faith. *PSCF* is well equipped for this work, bringing to the conversation authors and readers from across an unusual breadth of knowledge, who are committed to communicate.

The breadth is seen in dialogue across the full range of the scientific disciplines. The accessibility is pursued when we ask authors to remember that the typical *PSCF* reader is a trained and proven expert in their field; however, that field is probably not the field of the article author. The essay must make an expert contribution to the author's field, while also being accessible to thoughtful professionals outside it. That is why each article is peer reviewed by experts in all the disciplines it addresses. For example, a recent essay on genetics, addiction, and Christian faith was reviewed by a geneticist, a clinician, and a theologian. Each of those fields was part of the argument and so was evaluated by an expert in that field.

It is a challenge to write at the highest level for your own discipline and yet to conscientiously make your work readable for a thoughtful scholar not in your field. It helps when an author already has some experience meeting this difficult expectation from writing grant proposals to organizations in which referees will not be drawn from the author's field alone. Also, many of us these days are in "big science" that requires cooperation. Maybe we can extend some of the lessons we learn there, as well.

To encourage mutual challenge and insight, there are scholars who can speak as experts in more than one discipline that they are bringing into an essay's analysis. Their efforts can be quite fruitful, but it is, of course, much to ask of bright but finite people

who naturally struggle to master and keep up with all the developments in any *one* discipline. It would be markedly more manageable, and quite possibly more insightful, if the involved experts on a question could write from the beginning as a team within an article.

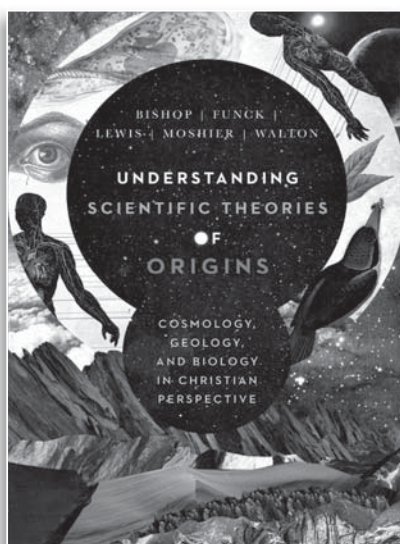
Granted, such would be quite contrary to our training. We learn more and more about less and less, in isolated departmental groupings, socialized to individual effort, degrees, and reward, and loaded with the time pressures of myriad responsibilities. For that matter, where does one find scholars who can contribute to an essay that would benefit from a line of thought or discernment in a field that one has not personally mastered?

Current copies of *PSCF* and free indexed archives, the annual meetings of ASA and CSCA, and the activities of local chapters are ready resources and are enjoyed all over North America. If we read each other, meet each other, talk with each other in the pages of *PSCF* and at ASA/CSCA annual and chapter meetings, we might expect, recognize, and develop synergisms by which we can insightfully think and write together. Such would redound to the benefit of all within the kingdom, and beyond. Cases in point include the combination of articles in this theme issue on astronomy, the previous theme issue on artificial intelligence, and future articles in response to the current calls for papers on transhumanism, and on raising food for thought. Collection issues can also do this well: for example, in free-standing articles such as the lead article for the upcoming December 2019 issue on the connection between benefiting from medical radiation and dating the age of the earth. Its authors include a chemist and a philosopher. We have great opportunities in place for working together at ASA: there is much we can learn from each other, and much we can share in interdisciplinary discovery. ☀

James C. Peterson, Editor-in-Chief



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