



James C. Peterson

Thirty Revealing Seconds

Recently, I was standing in the return line at a home improvement store. In just thirty seconds, I experienced an example of how badly we need both science and Christian faith.

Six feet in front of me were two twenty-somethings. The line was not moving; so, in a cheerful voice and smiling eyes over my mask, I said, *"Well, looks like we are going to be here for a long time. Would it be OK if I did a quick survey?"*

Puzzled and a bit suspicious, the gal shrugged and said, *"Sure."*

I then asked, *"Are you aware that people wear surgical masks like the one I am, to protect other people, not themselves? I know for myself that I don't like wearing a mask and it does not protect me. It is to protect you."*

She looked me straight in the eye and said, *"Masks don't make any difference. You are either going to get the virus or not."*

Admittedly surprised, I said, *"So it is all fate? Nothing you can do?"*

She nodded with resignation.

I looked at her friend and said as an honest question, *"You see it that way too?"*

He said, *"You don't want to know what I think."*

"You sound like you may be angry," I calmly stated.

"I am." Then, in a loud voice intended for everyone in line to hear, he said, *"I don't give a damn about anybody but me! If it doesn't help me, I'm not doing it, and you and nobody else is going to make me!"*

This was declared as a point of pride. No shame or embarrassment in it at all. At that second, an angelic cashier beckoned them to make their return.

So, in thirty seconds flat, I had a reminder that we have our work cut out for us at *PSCF*, and it matters. This is a journal about science and Christian faith. The first twenty-something had no place for

science. Masks make no difference. Whatever scientists and medical care providers say about how the virus spreads is wrong, a waste of time. It spreads by fate. Everything is already determined. Science has no power to understand or intervene. Whatever happens, just happens. Give up.

I am so surrounded by scientists, it feels as if everyone knows its power. Not so.

My second conversation partner was incensed at the suggestion that anyone mattered besides himself. Yet we were standing in line. I guess he feared cameras and the law. Why else not just rush the desk and take what he wanted from the till? He was over six feet, young, strong, and the cashier looked frail and half his size.

One can make an argument from evolution that inner drives toward altruism and cooperation are widespread because they have been advantageous for passing on our genes. Stuff three hundred chimpanzees in a plane and they will tear the plane and each other apart. Most human beings just think about it. But we humans can also think about why we are sometimes altruistic and cooperative, and decide to reject that tendency. Our culture is at a point now where it is no longer shameful to think and even declare in public that no one else matters but me. I couldn't help but wonder what his girlfriend standing there next to him thought about his self-revelation.

We need science, a tool capable of so much good (and harm), in a world that can be pretty tough without it. And we need another great awakening. We are on borrowed time. People are acting better than their beliefs, but less so with each passing year. Science and Christian faith can be allies, each acknowledging that there is one reality beyond our own making. Each giving insights into different aspects of that one creation. When they overlap, we are better for listening to both. What we learn together in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* is desperately needed. Read it. Think about it. Share it. Before it is too late.

James C. Peterson, Editor-in-Chief



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