

In 1994, an essay by James Patton Clark in *PSCF* catalyzed a two-decade transformation in my manner of teaching science. A reply by Nate Olson in 1995 fostered my understanding about some of the big mistakes that scientists make (whether of faith, agnostic, or atheist) when approaching a research question. As Clark asks when considering the strife between science and Christian faith, “Hasn’t science explained the things that used to be explained by invoking God?” (attributing this question to secular scientists). He explores part of the “speaking past each other” that scientists of faith, and those without, do. They fail to apprehend the presuppositions of “the other.” At my first reading of Clark’s paper, I thought, “There you go. We are talking past each other.”

My students were learning and demonstrating acumen for research; we began with a research question. They generated hypotheses, tested them, and analyzed the data ... just as the best textbooks suggest. Nevertheless, many of them did not care about their research findings, and it became commonplace for students to negate their own results in their final reports. “Well, my study was well-constructed, but my findings were not statistically significant. However, I think this is just an accident, because I really do believe my prediction that [BLANK] is true.”

Year after year, I have had this experience and some feelings of failure as a science professor. How could students master the careful, stringent techniques of behavioral research without trusting them? They learned about Kuhn’s protestation against all science as “normal science” and epiphany that some advances come about through paradigm shifts. I taught them about good research and the nature of change in science from slow advances to paradigm shifts. They were versed in the terms and how to apply them. So, why didn’t they have faith in their own findings?

At some point, I went back to Clark’s and Olson’s essays and began to think that my folly was in *starting at the beginning* of the research study with my students, rather than *starting before the beginning*. According to Clark, naturalism rules science and includes the assumption that all things commit to the natural laws of the natural world. Adding Olson’s view, not only do we need to understand each other’s

pre-suppositions (à la Clark), but we must comprehend that *everyone has a creation story*, i.e., a set of ideas about what exists and how it came into being. After years piloting various pedagogies, around 2014 I had a moment of clarity about this as it pertains to teaching: *start before the beginning and learn what your students believe about the world*. What do they think is real? Why do they think it is real? Explore this with them, and it will help them (and you) to capture the essence of their orientation to life ... and to research. Once this happens, help students find the best research orientation for their own investigations (whether traditional/conventional, action research, phenomenological, or other).

This opens the door for trusting research. Having a foundational understanding of varied epistemologies may open Christian minds to more fully comprehend an atheist’s perspective, and this may improve communication between those of faith and those without. As a bonus, it seems to open students’ minds to the possibility that there are other ways of knowing, and this can add willingness in those who do not have faith to hear that God may actually exist outside of natural laws, and may have created them.

I am thankful to Ron Johnson for introducing me to the ASA. Moreover, I am grateful for the quality of *PSCF* and the opportunity to learn from other scholars of faith.

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## 1996

MEREDITH G. KLINE, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *PSCF* 48, no. 1 (1996): 2-15.

It was the spring of 1996. I was transitioning from full-time research to undergraduate teaching. I was visiting the campus of the institution where I would be their first biology professor, starting up a new program. During my visit, I had some down time, so I went to their small library to see what they had. I noticed the spring issue of *PSCF*, so I picked it up, leafed through it, and found Meredith Kline’s article outlining his Framework interpretation of Genesis 1. At the time I had been struggling to reconcile my literal interpretation of Genesis 1 with the science that seemed to point to an old earth. What was so

# Article

## *Twenty-Five ASA Fellows and Editors Tell of PSCF Articles That Changed Their Lives*

impactful about this article was that it shattered my impression that a nonliteral interpretation simply dismisses what the Bible says in these early chapters of Genesis. Instead, I found a far deeper and richer explanation of the text than I had ever seen.

I ended up getting the position and one of the courses I developed dealt with evolution. This Kline article was one of the readings for the class. Over 25 years later, I am still teaching a course on origins and the Kline article is still on the reading list, along with several other *PSCF* articles. I have found *PSCF* to be a tremendous resource for Christians navigating their way through difficult topics in a way that attempts to do justice both to scripture and science, God's two ways of revealing himself in the world.

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## 1997

**KEITH B. and RUTH DOUGLAS MILLER, "Taking the Road Less Traveled: Reflections on Entering Careers in Science," *PSCF* 49, no. 4 (1997): 212-14.**

I learned about the American Scientific Affiliation in 1997, three years after graduating as a biologist from a state university in Peru. At that time, I worked as a science professor in a high school in Lima and volunteered at a nature conservation association. There were few opportunities for biologists, so I wasn't sure if I should either pursue graduate studies that would enhance my research abilities, or dedicate my life to children's education. After becoming an ASA member, I loved reading about evolution, astronomy, human origins, and other topics Christian scientists wrote about in the *PSCF* journal. One of the first articles I read was a short reflection in the young scientists' corner, "Taking the Road Less Traveled: Reflections on Entering Careers in Science," by Keith and Ruth Miller. Their road less traveled was pursuing careers in science as a Christian calling.

As a Christian, I always have had a passion for God and nature. But at that time, I struggled to see the connection between my faith and the academic world. The only connection available between my evangelical faith and science in the church was the teaching of the young earth creationists (YEC). As the Millers described in their article, I saw in my

local church how science was considered an apologetic tool to contradict evolution and not for proper stewardship of creation. I had much comfort in doing this stewardship of creation because that was a better connection between science and faith than YEC, and I had failed miserably trying to be a YEC apologist. It was good that ASA changed my mind!

As the Millers, I was part of the equivalent of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the university where I earned my undergraduate degree in Peru. I also had a role model, a Christian professor who taught botany. I was able to do research with him. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). That unity of mind means for me knowing that God is the creator and that he is not just in our religious life but in all aspects of our lives. I lived this experience at Bible study groups at the university and the first time I attended an ASA meeting in 1999. The Millers also mentioned that graduate school studies are more focused and serious. The eager pursuit of truth in a holistic sense that they described, motivated me to start graduate studies in 1998. Even though I was very busy as a graduate student, I found Christian community that honors the life of the mind. As the authors narrated, I also learned about the diversity of the body of Christ, considering different theological positions.

Almost at the end of their article, the Millers place three challenges for the evangelical church in the United States: (1) Let the youth be professionals and serve God with their talents, (2) Value divergent viewpoints that are tangential to the core Christian beliefs, and (3) Encourage reflection about faith and the current world situation. These challenges could be applied well to the church in Latin American countries and elsewhere. I welcome these challenges and hope our churches now accept them, too.

The final words of encouragement in the Millers' article were vital to make my decision to pursue graduate studies and get more into research. "In studying the processes of the natural world, you are watching the hand of God at work. By striving to understand the workings of creation, you are equipping yourself to fulfill the stewardship mandate given to us by God."

After 26 years, I am honored to be part of ASA, a scientific and Christian community that honors Jesus