

# Article

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

Why do I like this paper? This novel interdisciplinary conjunction of various lines of research provides us with important additional evidence of the historicity of Jesus's crucifixion. The specificity of the date highlights the reality of the crucifixion, reminding me (and I hope all Christians), that our faith is based not only on abstract ideas, but on actual historical events. It is also a reminder that while the perils of taking scripture too literally are well known, sometimes we perhaps don't take it literally enough!

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## 1990

**GEORGE L. MURPHY, "Chiasmic Cosmology as the Context for Bioethics," *PSCF* 42, no. 2 (1990): 94-99.**

One of the things that I appreciate most about the journal is its breadth of coverage. It provides insight into disciplines outside of my specialization that nonetheless have important bearing on broader theological and philosophical questions. As a paleontologist and evolutionary creationist, my studies raise important questions about the place of suffering and death in the created order, the nature of humanity as God's image bearers, and how we view the lives and bodies of human persons.

I will highlight three individuals whose writings in the journal have been important in my own thinking. Early in my involvement with the ASA, I found the perspectives of George Murphy to be very helpful in providing a theological context for understanding the evolutionary process. His focus on a Christ-centered cosmology provided a very helpful way to understand the ubiquitous presence of death throughout creation. The Creator is the Crucified, and all of creation reflects the pattern of life out of death. This emphasis on the cross also resonates with Murphy's understanding of *creatio ex nihilo*. God brings about new things where there seems to be no possibility — out of nothing.

I have always been very impressed with the honesty and faithfulness with which Gareth Jones has dealt with the very difficult and intensely emotional questions that surround the beginning and end of life. These ethical and theological questions are rooted in

how we understand our humanity and the image of God. Evolution forces us to think more deeply about how humans image God, and the biology of human development and the impairments at the end of life, challenge us to think how to honor that image in individual persons from conception to death.

More recently, the work of Malcolm Jeeves in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology has been very helpful to me in working through the relationship between our "souliness" and our physical bodies. Central to this is the debate between a dualistic or monistic understanding of persons. I have found his "non-reductionist physicalism" provides a way to acknowledge the growing understanding of the role of brain activity in what we perceive as aspects of our souls, while avoiding a reductionist view that our spiritual experience is "nothing but" the firing of neurons.

The writings of these three individuals, with very different disciplinary expertise, have all contributed to my growth as a scientist and as a Christian.

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## 1994, 1995

**JAMES PATTON CLARK, "Fact, Faith, and Philosophy: One Step Toward Understanding the Conflict between Science and Christianity," *PSCF* 46, no. 4 (1994): 242-52; and NATE OLSON, "On Clark," *PSCF* 47, no. 2 (1995): 148.**

I began teaching psychological science courses in 1990 at a secular university in Ohio, and then headed over to Malone University as an Assistant Professor in 1994. There, Provost Ronald G. Johnson (who is a physicist by training) was keen to foster my integration of faith with scholarship. So, he introduced me to the American Scientific Affiliation's (ASA) *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith (PSCF)*.

As a research methodologist, my focus has been on helping students and other researchers develop and refine techniques to test predictions. Early in my days as a professor, I commenced by asking them two questions: (1) "What's the research question?" and (2) "What is your hypothesis?"

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