

Article

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

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2003, 2010

CAROL A. HILL, "Making Sense of the Numbers of Genesis," *PSCF* 55, no. 4 (2003): 239–51; and DENNIS R. VENEMA, "Genesis and the Genome: Genomics Evidence for Human-Ape Common Ancestry and Ancestral Hominid Population Sizes," *PSCF* 62, no. 3 (2010): 166–78.

Carol Hill's article documents the extensive use of symbolic numbers ascribed to people in the ancient near east as though they were their chronological age, when in fact they were intended to be symbolic of their character and/or accomplishments. The documentation shows that this information was in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* for 1903! What a pity this has been kept a secret for over a century! Think of all the churchgoers who have puzzled over the ages ascribed to Adam or Noah, and how helped they would have been by this simple explanation.

I have also found especially helpful, Dennis Venema's "Genesis and the Genome." I am not a biologist, but I found his clear explanations of the findings of contemporary genetics in relation to human evolution, both enlightening and compelling.

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2005, 1991, 2022

PERRY PHILLIPS, "The Thrice-Supported Big Bang," *PSCF* 57, no. 2 (2005): 82–96; FRED G. VAN DYKE, "Ecology and the Christian Mind," *PSCF* 43, no. 3 (1991): 174–84; and ALAN DICKIN, "The Design of Noah's Ark," *PSCF* 74, no. 2 (2022): 92–105.

The current scientific model of the beginning of the universe is clearly described in an article by Perry Phillips in the 2005 *PSCF* article "The Thrice-Supported Big Bang." Perry describes the history of the universe from 1×10^{-43} second onward, highlighting the three key elements supporting the hot Big Bang. The descriptions in this article are understandable to individuals with a good understanding of high school science. Knowing that the universe has a beginning in time neatly agrees with a God external to the universe. Perry concludes by debunking "alternative theories" of young earth creationists.

I have been able to use this article when sharing with my young earth friends including some pastors in my Southern Baptist Church.

Another article I have referred to colleagues is Fred Van Dyke's article documenting the important shift in attitudes in ecology. Secular scientists no longer regard Christians as the cause of the ecological crisis but realize the important contributions of ecology science in Christian Colleges. A secular ecologist who believes in an accidental and random creation of life on Earth does not have a philosophical teleology to argue that humans should sacrifice for the environment. A proper understanding of the biblical concept of stewardship gives a logical philosophical reason as to why we should care for creation.

I recently shared a *PSCF* article by Alan Dickin on the design of Noah's ark with a friend who is on the board of trustees of the Ark Experience in Kentucky. There was no conversion, but hopefully better understanding of the diversity of perspectives within the Christian community. *PSCF* allows us to share insights on what it means to take biblical revelation and science seriously.

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2007, 2008

RANDY ISAAC, "Assessing the RATE Project," *PSCF* 59, no. 2 (2007): 143–46; THE RATE GROUP (LARRY VARDIMAN et al.), "RATE Responds to the Isaac Essay Review," *PSCF* 60, no. 1 (2008): 35–36; RANDY ISAAC, "Isaac Replies," *PSCF* 60, no. 1 (2008): 36–38; KIRK BERTSCHE, "Intrinsic Radiocarbon?," *PSCF* 60, no. 1 (2008): 38–39; and ROBERT ROGLAND, "Residual Radiocarbon in an Old-Earth Scenario," *PSCF* 59, no. 3 (2007): 226–28.

I grew up in a religious context, including school, church, and home, where young-earth creationism was standard fare. When I went off to study science at university, it was implicitly, and in some cases explicitly, indicated to me that my mission was to expose the scientific establishment for its anti-God and anti-Bible views, and to identify its scientific errors. After all, when done correctly, science would no doubt confirm the truth of the Bible, meaning the universe, earth, life, and humanity were created around 4000 BC.

I encountered significant challenges while an undergraduate student research assistant of cosmologist Werner Israel, finding the evidence for an ancient cosmos overwhelming enough for me to switch into the safer, less faith-impacting (or so I thought), field of theoretical condensed matter physics for my doctorate. I marked that transition with a silly little claim that “cosmology can rightly deal only with the present and future.”

Over the next ten years, while completing my graduate studies, a postdoctoral position, and the early years of a faculty position, I read relevant theological and philosophical literature, including from within my Reformed tradition, and also engaged informally with some in the young-earth creationist community who were attempting to resolve cosmological questions. As a result, I became less convinced that the Bible clearly taught on the age of earth and cosmos, more convinced of the integrity of the fields of cosmology, astrophysics, and geology, and increasingly concerned about the claims of “scientific creationists.”

The RATE project (“Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth”) of the Institute for Creation Research and the Creation Research Society caught my interest, and I was even involved in a bit of the early peer-review process. It was not hard for me to tell that much of what was being claimed was not particularly scientific, and based on the kind of science-related interpretation of scripture of my youth. But I didn’t study the entire project in detail. I was therefore grateful for a helpful and thorough essay review by Randy Isaac in the June 2007 issue of *PSCF*, as well as his reply to the RATE Group’s response in the March 2008 issue, coupled with a reply by Kirk Bertsche in that same issue to a related article.

While I had been a member since 1996, this all helped me understand and appreciate more than before the nature, ethos, and value of ASA, with expert scientists who are committed Christians helping one another through respectful dialogue. These exchanges, along with many other important articles in *PSCF*, have been invaluable as resources to provide to students as well, to connect them with our network as they develop as scientists and as Christians.

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2008

TIMOTHY LARSEN, “War Is Over, If You Want It’: Beyond the Conflict between Faith and Science,” *PSCF* 60, no. 3 (2008): 147–55.

Over the years there have been many thoughtful, engaging, and insightful articles published in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. It is difficult to choose what has been the most impactful piece for me, but one that ranks up at the top of my list is Timothy Larsen’s “War Is Over, If You Want It’: Beyond the Conflict between Faith and Science.”

Not only has Larsen’s article helped me to articulate more clearly how the metaphor of warfare or conflict between the sciences and faith is a myth, but I have also found it helpful with students. Assigning it as reading for a class and then sitting down with students to discuss Larsen’s arguments and evidence has been very fruitful. Getting students to compare this article with the typical things they have heard in churches, schools, the media, and so forth, has proven to be very clarifying for them.

I would recommend Larsen’s article as a go-to piece to put in anyone’s hands who seems to think that Christianity has been at perennial war with the sciences. The article clarifies well how there may be some people who pursue conflicts between the sciences and faith—perhaps for atheistic or religious reasons—but there is no necessary conflict between scientific inquiry and good theology. This is an article I return to time and again.

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2011

KEITH MILLER, “And God Saw That It Was Good’: Death and Pain in the Created Order,” *PSCF* 63, no. 2 (2011): 85–94.

Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith has been absolutely instrumental in my own development as a Christian paleontologist. I grew up in a community in which it was simply assumed that Christian faith was incompatible with the notions of an ancient universe and an evolutionary history for life on Earth.