



Stephen Contakes

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Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, Slow to Anger

In this issue you will find ten book reviews, five letters, this editorial essay, and four articles. Among the latter, Harry Cook considers the creation care of sockeye salmon and the watersheds of the Columbia and Fraser rivers. Yong Fang Zhu and Kyra White review what is known about cannabis and its pharmacology, outline the regulatory and social dimensions of cannabis legalization and use in Canada and the United States, and offer a Christian ethical reflection on the use of cannabis for medicinal, recreational, and spiritual purposes. The remaining articles examine the implications of particular exegetical approaches for understanding the creation and flood accounts. John Carpenter argues that, taken at its most literal, the text of Genesis does not place the creation in day one and so is silent on the age of the cosmos. Finally, Bill Horst theologically critiques the old Earth concordist Hugh Ross's recent *Noah's Flood Revisited*, arguing that Ross's exegetical approach, if applied consistently, would allow for a more recent flood that did not affect all humans.

Not every submission to *PSCF* is as successful as those in this issue. On average, we receive two submissions per week, about six times more than we need in order to publish four articles per issue. Yet, the vast majority either end up rejected due to fatal flaws, or require one or more rounds of extensive revision before they pass review. For example, during the month of April, *PSCF* accepted one resubmitted paper and either rejected or requested pre-peer-review resubmissions for six others, giving an April 2026 acceptance rate of only 12.5%. Amidst a wealth of ideas, the editorial team members are worked to exhaustion, scrambling to fill issues.

A strength of *PSCF* is as a forum in which Christians in the sciences can "[interpret, integrate, and communicate] the discoveries of science with the insights of Scripture and Christian theology."¹ Such cross-disciplinary work is inherent in our role as the academic journal of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) and as the journal which serves the Canadian Christian and Scientific Affiliation (CSCA), the main big-tent organizations for Christians in science in Anglophone and Francophone North America. These organizations seek to "support [their] members' spiritual, intellectual, and professional formation [so they can] serve science, society, and the

church."² Consequently, one role of *PSCF* is to help develop ASA and CSCA members' cross-disciplinary scholarly competencies. We seek to do this for our readers by publishing articles that offer interesting, defensible, well-argued, and novel theses. However, we also work behind the scenes to develop the ideas and scholarly capacity of prospective authors. Practically, this looks like soliciting reviewer feedback and then offering advice along with our editorial decision. However, while every manuscript has its own unique strengths and weaknesses, there are common hazards that prospective *PSCF* authors should avoid as well as well-worn strategies they might use to improve their likelihood of producing a publishable article. The remainder of this editorial offers a selection of these to better clarify the scholarly expectations for publication in *PSCF*.

Scholarly Expectations for *PSCF* Submissions

Develop cross-disciplinary competency

From my perspective as *PSCF*'s editor-in-chief, the most pressing need is for the development of cross-disciplinary competency. We reject few manuscripts for poor fit. Usually, it comes down to deficiencies or overreach in scholarship on topics outside the author's primary expertise. Some authors simply do not realize they are sharing in the work of a longstanding community of scholars and end up rediscovering something that has either already been considered and rejected, or something that is widely accepted and known. It is bittersweet to see an author enthusiastically offer a skillful argument against conflict-thesis thinking or outline the significance of anthropic coincidences, only to learn that many others have gotten there first.

*Learn from recent *PSCF* content*

Another common problem is submissions that do not provide any evidence that their author has read articles published in *PSCF* recently. While this editorial will not help such, those of you who encourage prospective authors to consider publishing with us should also advise them to consult recently published issues to get a sense of the type of articles *PSCF* publishes, paying particular attention to their academic style, depth, and tone.

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Ideally, this should be done early in the article development process so the research and writing can be tailored accordingly.

Distinguish between journal-level work and popular apologetics

This is especially important for authors new to science-and-religion scholarship. There is a vast gulf between what is expected for journal-level work and what is helpful in congregation-level preaching or popular apologetics. Authors familiar only with the public lectures of Richard Dawkins or Ken Ham and other public figures might not know how to develop their ideas for a journal. To clarify, the problem is not that such authors respond to Dawkins or Ham; it can be good and proper to evaluate the views of public figures who speak on matters of science and religion. It is that Dawkins and Ham are both primarily doing popular apologetics, not offering journal-level arguments. So, even when responding to the views of public intellectuals, authors should also be aware of the strongest and most sophisticated arguments that either support or contradict the position of those intellectuals, and take those arguments as a model for their own scholarship. For example, if you are responding to Dawkins, don't read only works by Dawkins; consider Graham Oppy's "best argument against God" from naturalism³ and the evidential arguments from evil offered by thinkers such as Michael Tooley, William L. Rowe, and Paul Draper.⁴ This will automatically encourage you to "up your game" by writing with more nuance. It will also help you avoid making overly hasty or easy arguments that will not hold up to peer-review scrutiny.

Include recent discussions on the topic

One distinctive of *PSCF* is that it hosts conversations which are important for North American Christian communities about topics that many leading academic theologians working in science and religion consider settled. For example, some articles we publish address North American Christians' desire for a particular type of consonance between science and Genesis's primeval history that European and mainline science and religion scholars might consider peculiar and unnecessary. Consequently, the recent scholarly literature dealing directly with these topics may be sparse. However, there is usually some scholarly field or other that has been developing in a way that sheds new light on these topics. So, even for articles which continue longstanding conversations that have been active in the more distant past, it is rarely sufficient to write as if no relevant progress at all has been made in the last few years. For example, a paper that seeks to develop a view of Genesis consonant with archeology should not rely primarily on 19th- and

early 20th-century sources; it must reflect an up-to-date understanding of the archeology, history, and culture of the Ancient Near East. Similarly, papers thinking about evidence of providence in nature should be aware of developments in natural theology that are more recent than the creation wars of the 1990s and early 2000s.

Develop your ideas in community

The apostle James was certainly not thinking of academic writing when instructing believers to "be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19, NRSVUE). It is good advice for scholars nonetheless. Journal-level work in science and religion requires skills that can be difficult to acquire, even for talented and creative people. It is rare for a lone-wolf author to contribute a manuscript that addresses topics outside their own expertise without that manuscript being highly problematic. Some level of participation in a community that includes experts is *de facto* essential.

While not everyone has the opportunity to complete specialized programs at places such as Oxford or Graduate Theological Union-Berkeley, it is crucial to think about science and religion in some form of community. One way to do this is at face-to-face meetings of the ASA and similar organizations. These serve as forums where authors can discuss ideas and receive wise counsel and mentoring. However, the ASA meeting occurs only once a year and isn't richly populated by every conceivable type of expert. Consequently, authors conducting scholarship entirely outside their own disciplinary training are highly encouraged to join or convene either online or in-person study groups. These should include scholars who can fill gaps in each other's expertise and meet regularly to discuss each other's research.

However, authors needing guidance on a limited number of concepts might simply email one or two recognized experts, judiciously asking for information or feedback on specific focused questions that arise in their work. For example, to avoid embarrassing mistranslations and miscontextualizations when working with ancient texts, it can be particularly helpful to consult someone who has extensively studied the relevant languages and cultures in a recognized scholarly community.

Consult other literature

The literature on science and religion is another resource, though discernment is required to use it wisely, as only a portion is intended to support scholarly work. At a minimum, to prevent duplicated effort, authors entirely unfamiliar with academic science and religion dialogue should familiarize themselves with the gist of past conversations through books such as Alister McGrath's

*Science & Religion: A New Introduction*⁵ or James Stump's *Science and Christianity: An Introduction to the Issues*.⁶ All prospective authors should also be aware of prior publications on their topic in past issues of *PSCF* and journals such as *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*; *Philosophy, Theology, and the Sciences*; *Science and Christian Belief*; *Theology & Science*; *Zygon*; and *Christian Scholar's Review*. Depending on the topic, more-specialized journals and resources should also be consulted. For example, authors addressing medical practice might look at what has been published in *Christian Bioethics*, *The Linacre Quarterly*, and the *Christian Journal for Global Health*.

Scientists familiar with a journal culture should also be aware that much humanities scholarship is disseminated in book form through university presses and other academic publishers. Some of the more prominent Christian academic publishers are Zondervan Academic, IVP Academic, Baker Academic, Eerdmans Academic, Baylor University Press, and the Pickwick Publications imprint of Wipf and Stock. However, authors should not restrict themselves to publications by Christian presses. Routledge and the University Presses of Cambridge, Oxford, and Johns Hopkins, among others, publish important scholarship, particularly on theology and science and the history of science and religion.

Learn how to be selective

With so many potential resources, a major challenge is being appropriately selective, both in the sources cited and how the literature is used. Authors just starting work in a new field might begin by consulting dictionary- or encyclopedia-level resources or reviews; these are intended to orient beginners to the state of play of scholarship in a field. Experts have usually learned how to do this; so, again, there is no substitute for conversing with them directly.

Many fields in the humanities and social sciences produce specialized resources that serve to orient beginners to the state of scholarship in a subject. Some of the more important are reference dictionaries, encyclopedias, and bibliographies' articles. For example, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP) and *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (IEP) are important resources for non-philosopher authors seeking to contribute to topics in philosophy. The *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology* (SAET) serves a similar function for theology. For other topics, the curated bibliographic essays of the Oxford Bibliographies Online provide an overview of the literature in ways that are particularly helpful for beginners. Subject area guides maintained by university libraries can similarly be useful, but authors should be aware that some are of more-varied quality. Two important,

but slightly dated, additional resources for science and religion scholarship include the ISSR Library, a curated collection of the most-impactful works in academic science and religion,⁷ and *God, Humanity and the Cosmos*, edited by Christopher Southgate—which offers a thorough review of the most-important thinkers and ideas in science and religion.⁸ Both are current only through the early-mid 2000s, however.

In the sciences, review articles and graduate-level monographs serve to orient new researchers. However, even in their most education-oriented forms, these generally assume that readers possess the equivalent of a bachelor's degree and a year of graduate coursework in the relevant scientific discipline. Consequently, they are not always the best source for orienting humanities scholars. It may be better to *start first* with articles intended for educational purposes or semi-popular treatments such as those found in books written for the public.

Evaluate sources for your purpose

Whatever the topic, it is important to critically evaluate sources. For semi-popular works on science, it is crucial to evaluate whether their focus and level of detail are suitable for your intended purpose. For instance, most popular biochemistry books (and even textbooks) do not treat photosynthesis in enough detail to support a robustly detailed natural theology. To learn more about the varieties of photosystems in use in the living world, their evolutionary history, how they work, the constraints required for them to work, and their inefficiencies, it is necessary to consult more-authoritative sources such as Robert E. Blankenship's *Molecular Mechanisms of Photosynthesis*.⁹ Similarly, those who want to evaluate, extend, or critique the Genesis 1 cosmic temple hypothesis should primarily engage John Walton's academic defense of that hypothesis in *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*.¹⁰ However, when listing the cosmic temple hypothesis as an influential interpretive framework among evolutionary creationists, his *Lost World of Genesis One* is sufficient.¹¹

Authors should also be aware when a source is arguing for an iconoclastic or speculative viewpoint. To avoid presenting this source as settled scholarship, authors are encouraged to check what other scholars have said about the book, in both formal book reviews and elsewhere.

Suggestions for Accessing Articles

A problem that retired and nonacademic authors sometimes face is a lack of ready access to university library holdings. Many journals, including *PSCF*, practice some form of open access, but there are many important books

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and articles that can be acquired only by paying a hefty fee. If you cannot afford this (or even if you can), be aware that some subscription-based journals specifically grant authors the right to distribute pre-copyedited versions of their articles. It can be helpful to check if a needed resource has been posted to one of its authors' websites or a research-sharing website, such as academia.edu or PhilPapers.org. If not, you can request a copy directly from the author. Finally, some books can be borrowed through the Internet Archive, and public libraries might have the capacity to secure access to articles and books through interlibrary loan.

Suggestions to Integrate Ideas from Multiple Disciplines

A major challenge in interdisciplinary writing is the enormity of the task of integrating ideas from multiple disciplines into a seamless whole. A helpful trick for doing this, while keeping writing projects manageable, is to recognize that effective essays are like plot-driven movies. Most of the interchange takes place between a protagonist (author) and a small number of main cast voices (interlocutors), with occasional input from a constellation of supporting roles and bit parts (sources that address key details). In other words, to keep one's research manageable, it is crucial to identify good interlocutors and develop a clear thesis (plot) early in one's research. That way, all the other resources one encounters can be put in their proper place.

The use of a small number of interlocutors is a particularly effective and common tactic in science and Christian faith scholarship. For example, many writers who consider the relationship between the Bible and the Ancient Near East begin with the work of John Walton and Tremper Longman or Denis Lamoureaux. This approach has the advantage of facilitating deeper engagement with a few voices rather than more shallow engagement with many. This is important, since articles which try to do too much hazard accomplishing too little in any one area to convincingly establish a particular plank of their argument in reasonable depth. Articles that appear to be a genius work of grand synthesis to those unfamiliar with the difficulties of interdisciplinary scholarship, will, in the hands of expert reviewers, be seen as a Gish gallop through a panoply of poorly supported claims and assertions.

Engaging fewer interlocutors or even describing just one perspective on a question also help keep projects manageable by limiting the scope of expertise that authors must possess. For example, an article examining how

the practice of seismology may be understood through a particular theological approach to Divine action is likely quite manageable; a comprehensive theodicy of natural processes would be difficult to develop well in a single article, even for a world-class scholar at the top of their game.

Proceed with caution

That said, there are significant downsides to engaging only a few experts. If everyone relies on the same experts, discussions can prematurely crystallize around a particular thinker's views, leading to a monoculture of ideas poorly resistant to changes in scientific or theological understanding. Also, the fewer sources one relies on, the more important it is to do due diligence to make sure the views on offer are respectably defensible. Extra care should be taken to avoid pseudo-scholarly claims and to clearly acknowledge when ideas are controversial or under debate. Authors who treat pseudoscience advocates as authorities or rely on overinflated claims about AI, gene editing, or grey goo run the risk of rejection in *PSCF*. Our journal publishes articles on Christian faith and science—not Christian faith and science fiction treated as fact.

Papers are only as good as the quality of their interlocutors and the precision with which their views are engaged. It is not sufficient to argue against "liberals," "fundamentalists," "creationists," "atheists," or "compromised" people; instead, the views of particular theologians and schools of thought should be engaged straightforwardly and directly. Authors should also take care when responding to very old arguments or arguments expressed on websites, podcasts, and in books intended for the public, as these might not be the most rigorous and up to date. In such cases, authors will ultimately want to replace them with stronger arguments that are worthy of journal-level engagement.

Articles should avoid quick and easy arguments or dismissals. Articles should instead help readers appreciate why opposing scholars think the way they do. Further, this is true whether the argument on offer is one aligned with the ASA's statement of faith, or whether the thinkers whose views are critiqued hold views hostile to Christianity.

PSCF Submissions Review Process

James's injunction to be "slow to anger" is also good advice for authors, particularly as their manuscript goes through the review process. At *PSCF*, that process seeks both to determine articles' suitability for publication

and to help authors improve their work. All articles first undergo editorial review (desk review). This involves my reading the article with the aim of identifying whether it fits *PSCF*'s mission and also offers a well-researched, defensible, and clearly argued thesis that will stand a reasonable chance of obtaining a positive or constructively critical peer review. At this stage, poor fit or fatally compromised articles are rejected, promising articles are sent off for review, and the authors of articles needing improvement are given advice for making revisions for a future round of expert-level peer review.

Articles ready for review are sent to multiple experts across an appropriate range of disciplines, who evaluate the article's suitability for publication and suggest further improvements. Understandably, this sometimes reveals deficiencies in aspects of the scholarship outside the author's primary disciplinary expertise. In such cases, considering how the article might be strengthened can require much moral fortitude, especially when the requested revisions need substantial additional research. Nevertheless, this process is essential for publishing sound scholarship; thankfully, most prospective *PSCF* authors are up to the task. That said, *PSCF* is always glad to consider authors' responses to reviewers, especially when those responses clearly have considered reviewers' critiques carefully. In contrast, efforts to discount reviewer comments based solely on claims that an entire field or category of professionals is biased or narrow-minded are unlikely to be successful.

Avoid common pitfalls

Whether or not an author subsequently rectifies deficiencies in a manuscript depends on many factors. However, there are common pitfalls. Some of these can be inferred from what previous *PSCF* editors have written, most notably in James Peterson's lead essays in *PSCF* December 2021 and December 2013.¹² Others are expertly addressed in former *Zygon* editor Willem Drees' *Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates*.¹³

In the interest of space, I will add only one more suggestion: Assume the goodwill of reviewers. Thinking of reviewers as too closed-minded to be receptive to your ideas limits your ability to hear helpful criticisms and suggestions. Similarly, when reviewers suggest additional sources, that advice should be taken seriously. By this, I mean that you should read those sources deeply enough to gain an appreciation for what the author is trying to say and its relevance for your paper. Do not just add it as a citation. When authors mistake a reviewer's suggestion to consider an additional viewpoint for a cite-me request, the resulting revision illustrates how citation

without evidence of meaningful engagement fails to improve a paper. This can waste valuable time. More importantly, it is a wasted opportunity for an author to become better equipped to serve the church and world.

My Greatest Privilege as Editor-in-Chief

For as much as it has been my joy as editor to serve you through the articles written by our authors, my greatest privilege as editor-in-chief has come from observing the hard work our authors do for you in the Lord, and from seeing how they mature through the review and revision process into even more formidable scholars, who offer us rich wisdom and food for thought.

Notes

¹Taken from the ASA's mission at <https://network.asa3.org/page/ASAAbout>.

²Taken from the ASA's vision at <https://network.asa3.org/page/ASAAbout>.

³Graham Oppy, *The Best Argument Against God* (Palgrave Pivot, 2013).

⁴For an overview, see Michael Tooley, "The Problem of Evil," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2025 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/evil/>.

⁵Alister E. McGrath, *Science & Religion: A New Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

⁶J. B. Stump, *Science and Christianity: An Introduction to the Issues* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

⁷The ISSR Library Project, International Society for Science & Religion, <http://www.issrlibrary.org/>.

⁸Christopher Southgate, ed., *God, Humanity and the Cosmos: A Textbook in Science and Religion*, 3rd ed. (T&T Clark, 2011). The 1999 first edition is available at <https://counterbalance.org/reading/ghc-body.html>.

⁹Robert E. Blankenship, *Molecular Mechanisms of Photosynthesis*, 3rd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2021).

¹⁰John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Eisenbrauns, 2011). They should also consider his more recent book, John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *New Explorations in the Lost World of Genesis: Advances in the Origins Debate* (IVP Academic, 2025) and possibly the work of earlier scholars, such as Jon Levenson.

¹¹John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (IVP Academic, 2009).

¹²James C. Peterson, "Where at Least Some People Still Listen to Each Other," *PSCF* 73, no. 4 (2021): 193–94, <https://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2021/PSCF12-21Peterson.pdf>; and James C. Peterson, "All Together Now," *PSCF* 65, no. 4 (2013): 217–18, <https://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2013/PSCF12-13Peterson.pdf>.

¹³Willem B. Drees, *Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates* (Routledge, 2010). See especially his Ten Commandments for "religion and science," pp. 47–62.

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