Reflections on the ASA Winter Symposium

Dana Oleskiewicz

Praises have been expressed several times over as we continue to reflect on the tremendous success of the Winter Symposium. Record attendance was reached at 1,238 people as we gathered virtually on January 30, 2021, to hear ASA Fellow Francis Collins present “Scientific and Spiritual Lessons in the Time of COVID.” Forty-one countries were represented in the international audience.

The intent during early planning for the symposium centered on the ASA chapters. The goal was to provide chapters with a livestreamed national speaker, followed by an agenda of local presenters in regional assemblies throughout North America and other countries. When it became evident that in-person meetings would still not be possible in early 2021, planning quickly pivoted to accommodate a fully virtual experience.

The featured presentation by Francis Collins began with an affirmation on the harmony between science and faith, including God’s plan for creation through the lens of an evolutionary view of the great diversity we see in nature. Made in God’s spiritual image, we are granted free will; thus in our sinfulness, we are estranged from the Creator. Jesus Christ, as our Savior, offers the solution as we are reconciled by grace. An introduction to BioLogos was presented as a ministry to engage in gracious dialogue at the intersection of science and the Christian faith.

A year in review on the COVID-19 pandemic was then offered, including early news headlines from January 2020, infection and death rates over time, and an overview on health disparities and racial inequities in medical care. Details on therapeutic treatments and vaccine development were presented that highlighted the methods, how they work, and efficacies. A June 2020 report in Science indicates that only 50% of US citizens plan to get the vaccine, so a focus on community outreach was discussed, including how to engage in ways to increase public trust and vaccination rates.

Francis then addressed the role of Christians in society during this time of COVID-19, with a list of practical actions for civic duty in caring for our neighbors. The formal presentation concluded with Psalm 46:1–3: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear—though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

A stimulating audience Q&A followed to further the conversation as Francis provided additional comments. He concluded in his customary style of

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Dear Friends,

Projections of the ASA at 80, or even 100!

That’s right—we are entering our 80th anniversary year. Can we imagine what the ASA will be like at our centennial, just two short decades from now? It will take much discernment, courage, and change to get us there!

The end of the pandemic is in sight. Hope is rising. Looking back, it has been a transformational year for the ASA. We have opened council leadership to new voices. There are more advisory committees and expanded council roles on them. Last March, when COVID hit, we realized that the ASA had “a once in a lifetime” opportunity for innovation. The pandemic meant that, like all nonprofits, we were going to need to reinvent ourselves. And we did. One year later, with the loss of in-person meetings, we have reached more people, engaged more chapters, and raised more money than any time in our history. So, with thanksgiving to God we say, “It has been a truly remarkable year.”

All of this has meant a demanding schedule of multiple zoom meetings for the executive council, staff, and leadership team. We launched a new strategic planning process. This sets the stage for the executive leadership search next summer and is already increasing our mission effectiveness today.

The core of our mission is to “encourage the Christian church and the scientific community to discuss discoveries at their mutual touch points and provide a community of fellowship for Christians involved in science and related fields.” Eighty years on, we are doing that with a much more complex and diverse membership than ever. The ASA has always aspired to be a “big tent.” The spirit of the ASA is to encourage thoughtful discussion, maintaining a humble and loving attitude toward individuals who have a different opinion.

However, as sinful humans, we are not always successful in achieving these aspirations. So, it has been with regret that I have heard from several ASA members that they, or persons they know, have not experienced the grace of this ASA spirit. In most cases, we have resolved concerns informally. However, this past summer, an ad hoc committee met with Joshua Swamidass over unresolved concerns from 2018. He pointed out that the ASA has no formal mechanism for appealing executive decisions. This committee and the executive council regret that he was unfairly excluded from decisions impacting the conduct of his workshop and later a plenary address. I have written an apology to Josh and extended my personal remorse as well as regrets of the leadership. The text of this public apology is posted on the ASA website at www.asa3.org. The leadership of the ASA is committed to addressing all member concerns for more equitable planning and providing excellent services. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to me at John@asa3.org.

The ASA, like all science organizations, is crossing a diversity divide. We are increasingly diverse across vocational and disciplinary choice, geography, age, and denominational background as well as in gender, disability, ethnicity, and racial identity. We remain committed to our mission and to respecting all persons both in the ASA and in the broader community. We anticipate providing a space for gracious interaction and look forward to celebrating our centenary in just a few short years.

Finally, as we are quickly ending another fiscal year on March 31, we are deeply grateful to our members. You are the life blood of the ASA and it is a privilege and pleasure to partner with you in our mutual service in the faith and science community. Join us in praying that 2021 will be another fruitful year!

Cheers,
John
strumming a tune on his guitar that he wrote to complement the poem “Christ Still Rises,” by David Bjorlin.

The second, hour block of the symposium was set aside for breakout sessions facilitated by chapter/region. Twenty-nine of the thirty-six ASA/CSCA current chapters participated (300 people). There were also international groups invited as guests to join us: CiS, United Kingdom; ICAST, Australia; and Global Scholars. Most chapters prepared to host a conversation related to the keynote address by Francis, while others viewed the time as an opportunity to introduce officers to their members and discuss upcoming events.

Transition from the general session, however, to the breakout rooms did not go as technically planned. The beauty of the snafu was that chapter members found themselves in virtual space with people not just from their own region, but also from all over the world. The breakout facilitators, consummate professionals that they are, just rolled with it, welcoming everyone to take part in the discussion. Lemonade was made from lemons, as each breakout space enjoyed such a unique fellowship moment.

The final block of the symposium was the fellowship hour. Attendees were randomly shuffled into another breakout room. This engagement functioned as a meet-and-greet to simulate hallway conversation during a typical ASA annual meeting. Yet again, the resulting social time was a welcomed addition to the program.

About a third of the attendees at the Winter Symposium were current ASA members. Attendance was free, with the hope that there would be an increase in new members following the event to offset the technology costs in offering the agenda virtually. And there was!

Sixty-six new members and several donations were received shortly thereafter, further indication of the great success of the event.

The ASA gives an enthusiastic “thank you” to the planning committee members; Mike Beidler, Louise Huang, Lynn Billman, Nyasha Gondora, and Arnold Sikkema, as well as the many chapter leaders and breakout facilitators who made the day possible!

A survey was sent to attendees with an impressive 26% return rate. Here are some sample responses.

- Francis Collins’s presentation was excellent—clear, concise, and well organized. Enjoyed it immensely!
- Helped convince me that getting the vaccine is worthwhile and safe.
- This was very helpful in providing hope and information to share with neighbors who are not scientists.
- I loved that this was open to nonmembers and nonscientists.
- Great event. We should do this type of event every year, even after we can start meeting in person.
- I was delighted to meet and converse with other Aussies (it was a select group at 5am!) and particularly to chat with Chris Mulherin of ISCAST … It was great to be part of an international community.
- A good social event. Learned about others in society.
- It was so good to listen then discuss in groups. I felt hopeful at the end!
- Amazing! I joined ASA right after the Symposium and I’m excited to be apart of ASA now!
North Star Kick-off Meeting

Kristine Johnson

The North Star Chapter of the American Scientific Affiliation, which encompasses Minnesota, eastern South Dakota, and western Wisconsin, held our inaugural meeting via Zoom on Tuesday evening, February 2, 2021. We were blessed with more than forty attendees who came to learn about our new chapter and hear Dale Gentry, an avian ecologist, Associate Professor of Biology and Biochemistry at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul, and founder of Disciple Science, speak on “Science vs. Faith and the Christian Divorce from Creation.”

We began the evening with prayer, introductions of the chapter officers: President, Kristine Johnson (aerospace engineer); Vice President, Joanna Klein (biology professor); Treasurer, Wade Neiwert (chemistry professor); and Webmaster Dale Gentry (biology professor)—and a synopsis of our chapter and the American Scientific Affiliation.

Dale’s presentation touched on how the tensions between science and faith have influenced our perceptions of natural theology and our willingness to look for God in creation. He shared with us how many students resonate with connecting to God when experiencing the outdoors and how there is a common, but false, perception that Christians should seek the spiritual to the exclusion of the physical world. After his presentation, there was a time of Q&A with an excellent discussion.

Those attending were invited to join ASA and our next event scheduled for May 8 when we plan to meet in person to go bird watching, putting into practice what we learned about seeking God through creation.

Randy Isaac

Since 1949, the ASA has been publishing their quarterly flagship Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, now known as Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith (PSCF). It has become a renowned source of information about the interface between science and Christianity. The articles are peer reviewed and reflect a high standard of academic scholarship. All issues are available at the PSCF website.

While the articles are prime sources for scholars and anyone interested in an in-depth articulation of key issues, they are also excellent focal points for discussion. Many articles leave the reader with a desire to ask the author questions or to share questions and comments with others. In the past, this has been possible with Letters to the Editor, blog posts, and discussion at chapter meetings and the ASA annual meetings.

The pandemic this past year has opened up a new opportunity for discussion through Zoom. Accordingly, in January 2021, the ASA began a monthly virtual discussion, moderated by ASA Executive Director Emeritus Randy Isaac, expressly designed to allow members to engage more deeply with each other and with authors. Called “Diving Deeper Discussions,” the Zoom meetings are held on the second Saturday of every month at 2 pm Eastern time. Recordings of each session are available at the Diving Deeper Discussions page. The link to join the meeting is a hyperlink in the title on that page and will also be sent to ASA members as a reminder before each meeting.

Please join us as you are able!
Conference on Faith and Science (COFAS)

Ben Sanders

The inaugural Conference on Faith and Science (COFAS) was hosted at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe in March 2019. As a follow up, COFAS 2021 was online on February 12–13. There were 1,200 attendees from six continents watching on three streaming platforms: ASU Live 2, Facebook Live, and Whova. Elaine Howard Ecklund of Rice University spoke in the opening session on Friday evening on the topic of her book, *Why Science and Faith Need Each Other: Eight Shared Values That Move Us beyond Fear* (Brazos Press, 2020). On Saturday, the theme was derived from Gregg Davidson’s book *Friend of Science, Friend of Faith: Listening to God in His Works and Word* (Kregel Academic, 2019).

Seventy speakers presented on their experience of being friends of both science and faith in the following seven fields: Physical Sciences; Biological and Biomedical Sciences; Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences; Mathematics and Computer Science; Environmental Sciences and Sustainability; Historical, Philosophical and Theological Studies of Science; and Astronomy and Space Exploration. Several ASA members participated, including Gregg Davidson, Ted Davis, Deborah Haarsma, Doug Lauffenburger, Bethany Sollereder, James Ungureanu, and Jennifer Wiseman. See the full list at www.cofasasu.org/speakers.

Sponsors of COFAS included the ASA and affiliated networks such as the Canadian Scientific & Christian Affiliation, Christians in Science, and ISCAST: Christians in Science and Technology. See the full list of sponsors and exhibitors at www.cofasasu.org/exhibitors. COFAS was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation to the Arizona Center for Christian Studies.

COFAS 2022 is being planned as a hybrid online and in-person conference at ASU, Tempe, next February. For more information, contact veritas@asu.edu or visit www.cofasasu.org.

Waterloo and Hamilton CSCA/ASA Chapters Host a Book Launch

Bob Geddes


One of the themes that Janet shared was on the topic of cause and effect: its biblical and theological concepts, how science views causation, and how the human mind judges it. How this affects our pandemic experience was also discussed. Two phrases of interest and intrigue that Janet shared were “randomness is not the same as purposelessness” and “our certain God works in an uncertain world.”

Congratulations, Janet!
ASA New Members
October–December 2020
Please join us in welcoming these new members!

Ana Abrantes – Barrington, RI
Luca Albrecht – Lake Geneva, WI
Gastón Alfaro – Auburn, AL
Madeline Allen – Signal Mountain, TN
Edward Arias – Ann Arbor, MI
Deepak Bardhan – Beverly, MA
Vinay Barnabas – Mumbai, India
Sarah Beebout – Laurel, MD
Megan Behrmann – Waco, TX
Lorelei Blackburn – East Lansing, MI
Dean Blevins – Kansas City, MO
Jeffrey Boian – Claremont, CA
Sabrina Bush – Vadnais Heights, MN
Nathaniel Chichak – Edmonton, AB
Sarah Codd – Downingtown, PA
Max Deffenbaugh – Katy, TX
Lisette dePillis – Claremont, CA
Jarel Fernandez – Riverside, CA
Steve Finke – Cypress, TX
Samuel Flint – Lincoln, NE
Daniela Fuller – Virginia Beach, VA
Richard Gabrielson – Vestal, NY
Courage Houston – Templeton, PA
Kirsti La Shell – Weymouth, MA
Christopher Larsen – Little Rock, AR
Zhulu Lin – Fargo, ND
Danny Luecke – Fargo, ND
Daniel Lusk – Seal Beach, CA
Bryan Mark – Columbus, OH
Jodie McVane Reisner – Bryan, TX
Kaitlyn O’Brien – Rehoboth, MA
Cintia Orsi – Ithaca, NY
Elijah Overbey – Seattle, WA
James Park – Kingston, ON
Catherine Parler – Folly Beach, SC
Jordan Phillips – Sykesville, MD
Frank Robinson – Palmdale, CA
Susan Rupp – Gravette, AR
Nathaniel Saxe – York, PA
Dave Sibley – St. Michael, MN
Evangeline Soerens – Dillsburg, PA
A. Leonard Tuggy – Naperville, IL
Glen Van Brummelen – Langley, BC
Gary Van Drie – Sewickley, PA
Joseph Vybihal – Pointe-Claire, QC
Tamar Wheeler – West Lebanon, NH
Yicheng Zhang – Langley, BC

News from CSCA
Bob Geddes, CSCA Secretary

The ASA Winter Symposium had a considerable Canadian participation. In fact, the number of Canadians who took in Francis Collins’s talk exceeded the total CSCA membership by more than 50%! Several of the Canadian Chapters organized either shared or individual discussion groups for the second hour. Some were blessed with American or out-of-chapter counterparts, as part of what proved to be a useful random element for the participant. What follows are summaries of the various activities. Thanks are extended to Local Chapter Leaders for their submissions.

The British Columbia meeting had thirty-one participants. The panel of Trinity Western University biology professors Dennis Venema and Laura Onyango plus Regent College theology and ethics professor David Robinson engaged our audience very well. They each spoke for three to five minutes from their expertise and perspective, and then we had a lively Q&A with about one-half of those present asking questions and sharing reflections. A wide range of topics were covered. Many participants were known to one another from other Vancouver events, but new connections were made as well.

In January 2021, the leadership of the Montreal chapter changed from Chris Barrigar to Joseph Vybihal. Hence, the Collins follow up was an opportunity to introduce the new leadership and plans. The meeting was divided into three parts: an introduction to the CSCA, its affiliation with the ASA, and the purpose of the CSCA/ASA. We then did a roundtable introduction of everyone, followed by discussing issues from the talk. Discussion centered on how the information we heard could be used to strengthen our churches’ engagement within the community, and the desire to be examples to others as to the importance and reality of COVID-19 and its impact on people. The last fifteen minutes was used to introduce the new chapter leadership with a goal of forming a committee to help lead the chapter. This turned out to be a great success, as the committee is now composed of seven members. New contacts were created.

The Hamilton chapter enjoyed an informal and informative time of fellowship following the excellent presentation by Francis Collins. The group included six regular members of the Hamilton Science-Faith forum (it was nice to reconnect) as well as a western Canadian and an eastern American. Topics ranged from scientific details about immunity to common Christian attitudes toward the pandemic. We even touched on creation care. The small group size was conducive to meaningful dialogue.

The Calgary and Winnipeg chapters co-hosted a meeting across the prairie provinces. We had attendees from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. It was an edifying time of sharing and encouragement, and was strengthened by the insights of the Winnipeg chapter leader, Rebecca Dielschneider, who had authored a paper, now published in the March 2021 pandemic-themed issue of Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, on vaccine denial.

For the Waterloo-Toronto breakout room, we had twelve attendees, eleven of whom were from various cities in Ontario (Waterloo, London, Toronto) and one individual from Virginia, USA. We discussed a variety of topics including racial inequality in the healthcare system and how that has resulted in vaccine hesitancy in various minority groups. We spoke about vaccines in general and a major focus of our discussion was the Christian response to the pandemic, for example, what it looks like to be part of the solution.
William Clark Duke Jr.  
(1943–2020), Theologian

William C Duke Jr. passed away on October 27, 2020. Will was born on January 7, 1943, in Odessa, Texas. His father, Bill Duke Sr., was away serving in WWII when Will was born, and it would be three years before Bill would be reunited with his wife, Lora May Duke, and his firstborn son, Will or “Dub” for short. The first thing Will said to his Daddy was, “You gotta nickel?” They later moved to Midland where he attended high school. He played the coronet in the marching band and was an ROTC graduate. He was also a member of the Boy Scouts of America.

Will studied biology and continued ROTC at West Texas State College followed by a 30-year career in the US Army. In 1975, Will graduated from Denver Seminary with a Masters in Theology. In 1976, he graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity and earned his PhD in Theology from Southwestern in 1982. He began his life-long career (and passion) of teaching others about God’s Word and love.

While at Southwestern Baptist he joined the ASA. His PhD dissertation was “The American Scientific Affiliation and the Creation Research Society: The Creation-Evolution Issue.” He concluded that “Scripture does not require a recent creationist approach; science does not require a macroevolutionary approach; and a resolution of the issue is to be sought most likely in the direction of some progressive creationistic synthesis. Continued open dialogue by all parties will be required, but the two most influential organizations seem to be moving further apart.” Will became an ASA Fellow and remained a faithful member and supporter for nearly 45 years until his death.

In the 1980s, he was privileged to lead several archeological digs to Israel with his students at Criswell Bible College in Dallas. He later moved to Phoenix, AZ, where he became the Academic Dean for Southwestern Conservative Bible College, teaching both science and theology classes. In 1990 he moved to California where he continued his military career and would eventually retire from the Army Reserves as a Colonel and be awarded the Legion of Merit.

Edward Remick Huff
(1930–2021), Agricultural Engineer

Ed Huff, 90, died Tuesday evening January 12, 2021. He was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on August 21, 1930, the youngest of three children of Edward Alonzo and Louise Mary (Remick) Huff. He grew up through first grade in Pawtucket, then moved with his parents to the Huff place in Lyman, Maine. He walked a mile to school through 8th grade. He and his parents moved to Kennebunk, Maine when he attended Kennebunk High School, graduating in 1948. He graduated from the University of Maine in 1952 with a BS in Mechanical Engineering.

After serving in the Army in New Jersey and Germany, he married Ellen Lewis of Jamaica Plain, MA. He worked as an engineer for General Electric Company for 6½ years, then taught at Wentworth Institute in Boston for 1½ years. In 1962, he moved to Maine with his wife and young daughter, where he got an MS in Agricultural Engineering at the University of Maine in 1966. He taught in that department, later called Bio-Resource Engineering, until his retirement in 1997, with two years taken off to obtain his PhD from the University of Nebraska in 1979 and to work at Valmont Industries in Valley, Nebraska.

Ed joined the American Scientific Affiliation in 1985 and attended the annual meetings frequently. He actively taught and supported the harmony of science and Christian faith in classes at his church, the United Baptist Church of Old Town, and contributed significantly to ASA projects on knowing creation. He was also a member of the Pentiel Bible Conference of Lake Luzerne, NY, The American Society of Agricultural Engineers, and was a registered Professional Engineer. He was known for his energy, curiosity, humor, and dedication to God, science, and his family.

*Dignity Memorial Obituary

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ASA Annual Fund Update

Vicki Best

$220,000  Goal
$214,065  Gifts & Pledges
$5,935  Left to Fundraise by 3/31/2021

Thank you very much for your generous donations to the ASA Annual Fund appeal. In a challenging year, we are so grateful for your faithful prayer and financial support. Our fiscal year ends on March 31, 2021, and we are seeking just under $6,000 to meet our funding goal. Would you kindly consider a first-time or additional gift to help us meet our goal?

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!