Scientists and Theologians Working Together at ASA 2021

Stephen Moshier and Michael Everest

Perhaps no other annual meeting involved the duration of planning and attention to detail as ASA 2021. We have emails dated back to 2018 when the idea for “Scientists and Theologians Working Together” originated as a meeting theme. There were so many stops and starts along the way, not to mention scheduling and venue issues … and that COVID thing.

But, from the start, we were committed to a partnership with the Creation Project at the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; it just didn’t happen until July 2021.

Our call for abstracts was met with enthusiasm for the 2020 meeting. We received more proposals than we had slots. The team of reviewers included Robert Bishop, Steve Contakes, Michael Everest, Dominic Halsmer, Randy Isaac, Bill Jordan, Maurice Lee, Ray Lewis, Keith Miller, Steve Moshier, Annabelle Pratt, Faith Stults, Daisy Savarirajan, Janet Warren, and Julie Woodman. When the 2020 meeting was canceled, almost all of the accepted abstracts were recommitted by their authors for the 2021 meeting. Becky English masterfully kept up with correspondence and program scheduling. Lyn Berg worked her editorial magic. Vicki Best kept us all in line!

Even without the virtual venue, we intended to do a few things differently, such as having speakers and respondents for the plenary sessions. We hope that future meetings can continue with this approach, at least for some plenary speakers. Special thanks to Geoffrey Fulkerson and Ian Prince at the Creation Project for inviting the plenary speakers and respondents and managing the manuscripts and session schedules. Also, thanks to Ted Davis for organizing and participating in the session discussing genealogical Adam and Eve with Joshua Swamidass, Hans Madueme, and Jack Collins.

We are grateful to all who participated at so many different levels to make this a meeting to remember. Of course, Mark McEwan worked like the Wizard of Oz (or the Sorcerer’s Apprentice?) behind the curtain, with assistance from Becky English, Dana Oleskiewicz, and team intern Natalie Swetland. It was so good to meet new people and see old friends, even if only on our computer screens.
Dear Friends,

*Change* is in the air at the ASA. Covid-19, the ultimate in individual and organizational stress tests, is upon us with a fourth wave. But while public health measures dominate the headlines, the healthy ASA team in the office, our standing committees, the Executive Council, chapter leaders, and many volunteers are making changes and making a difference.

This fall, after a nearly two-year hiatus, the Executive Council plans to meet at the Topsfield, Massachusetts, office. Together we will be finalizing a new strategic plan and then launching the next generation executive leadership search.

Throughout our history, ASA members have supported students by donating scholarship funds, encouraging informal mentorship, and fostering leadership development. I know the impact of gift memberships because many years ago Jim Kennedy, the biology department chair at North Park (then College), gave me a student membership. The distance from this first student contact with the ASA to the mature leadership represented in the Fellows Class of 2021 is shorter than it appears.

Now, after 80 fruitful years, we are renewing, pruning, and adding additional features to our suite of member services. Key this year is expanding the profile of the student/early career track with two new awards: one for outstanding “Early Career Scientist,” and the other for “Campus Ministry.” These awards were for exceptional individual achievement selected with our ministry partners at the InterVarsity Graduate and Faculty Ministries. The ASA career center now offers another new service that members can access through the ASA website.

This summer we welcomed over 300 online participants to the Gift of Scientia—ASA 2021 virtual annual meeting. Translating a first-person professional conference into a viable online experience kept the ASA team intensely focused. In partnership with scholars from the Carl H. F. Henry Center, we brought a wider range of voices into our virtual ASA conversation than in many years. Interestingly, most of our plenary speakers have additional social science or STEM degrees.

Navigating in-depth cross-disciplinary dialogue is a challenge. And continuing these boundary conversations for increasingly diverse audiences is vital. Look for us next year as we anticipate navigating a new challenge with the VIP (Virtual and In-Person) meeting model, staging both virtual and in-person elements simultaneously out of our meeting location at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego.

Today, the ASA together with the CSCA offer more member touch points than ever before. The Diving Deeper and Brown Bagger guided conversations are some of my favorite interactions. Across all our platforms—in committees; local chapter and affiliate meetings; and in our publications, devotionals, and the medley of praise video—the unique mission and ministry of our ASA members is ever present. I want to thank each of you who have taken time to give leadership to this unique and vital community of the ASA.

Thanks!

John
Uplifted in Worship at ASA 2021
Dana Oleskiewicz

A call to worship by John Wood on the morning of August 1 drew us to the Lord as we gathered virtually at the annual meeting of the ASA. A song of praise, “Speak O Lord” (Keith and Kristyn Getty), along with an Old Testament reading of Psalm 19 by Ken Martin prepared our hearts to hear the Sunday worship message.

Rev. Bob Geddes, a 20-year member who actively participates as an ASA/CSCA leader, was introduced by Vicki Best. His education and experience both as a geologist and as a pastor offered a blessed perspective for his sermon on spiritual gifts. Bob opened with a prayer and reading of 1 Corinthians 12:1–7. He then weaved spiritual teachings within the telling of three holy moments that he experienced while engaging with fellow attendees at his first-ever ASA annual meeting in 2003 near Denver, Colorado. Bob encouraged each of us to remember who we are and whose we are, in all that we do professionally and personally, as we belong to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Leadership Transformations, Inc. (LTI), under the leadership of Founder and President Steven Macchia, was chosen this year for a love offering. Vibrant spirituality and attentive discernment in Christian leaders and teams is cultivated through the work of LTI. A praise video featuring ASA/CSCA members was shared, offering uplifting words of appreciation to the Lord.

The 2021 ASA worship service concluded with a call to prayer, benediction, and closing announcements. This annual gathering is always a highlight of ASA conferences and remained so this year, even as we worshipped together over great distances. To God be the glory!

State of the ASA Recap
Vicki Best

Our second ever virtual State of the ASA was well attended and a real success. At this retooled business meeting, the leadership reflected on celebrating 80 years of excellence as we look forward to our centenary in twenty short years. In his President’s report, Terry Gray talked about the ASA as a big tent organization united by belief in orthodox Christianity and a commitment to mainstream science. John Wood, as Interim Executive Director, focused on the three words characterizing the ASA today: (1) change, (2) clarity, and (3) courage. While our mission is clear and unchanging, our vision is changing, and leading change takes courage. Director of Operations and Development Vicki Best shared how God, in his providence, transformed and abundantly provided for us in ways we could have never imagined over the last year.

We were delighted to induct our Class of 2021 Fellows, recognize our 50-year members, and then remember our members who passed into glory the past year. Michael Hahn, Gordon College student chapter leader gave a testimonial on the value of the ASA in his life as an undergraduate student. Finally, InterVarsity ESN Liaison Hannah Eagleson celebrated five years of the student/early career track and launched the early career scientist and campus ministry awards. Heidi Fuqua Haviland received the early career scientist award and Wendy Quay received the campus ministry award. Our intention is to make this an annual tradition.

The PowerPoint slides of this event can be found at: https://cdn.ymaws.com/network.asa3.org/resource/resmgr/annmtg2021/state-of-asa.pdf.
News from CSCA

Bob Geddes, CSCA Secretary

A good number of Canadians and CSCA members participated in the recent and unique ASA annual meeting. We congratulate the joint ASA-CSCA employee Mark McEwan for effectively handling the technical complexities involved with this meeting, and thank the ASA team and leadership for a well-run and inspiring experience.

At the end of each annual meeting, we always look ahead to future meetings, and the CSCA is focused on hosting the 2023 annual meeting in Canada. It will coincide with the CSCA’s 50th anniversary, and the CSCA is pleased that the annual meeting of the ASA will provide an opportunity for celebration. While the venue options are being narrowed down (it’s a big, attractive country!), it is still not too late to let the CSCA know of any favored locations.

The unknown direction of the pandemic and the challenges of variants continue to make it difficult to plan for the future. As this is written, however, a number of the local chapters have been planning meetings established over the next short while, and are considering forthcoming talks and activities. In British Columbia, two events are scheduled. One, with a tentative date of September 30, features Tom McLeish (University of York, UK) who will speak on his second book *The Poetry and Music of Science*. An online event is being planned for October, jointly hosted by Trinity Western University and Regent College. Dennis Venema will speak for a launch of his new book with Michael Peterson, *Biology, Religion, and Philosophy: An Introduction*, https://www.amazon.ca/Biology-Religion-Philosophy-Michael-Peterson/dp/1107667844.

We look forward to sharing news of all the activities as the autumn season unfolds.

Some of the members who met during the Affiliate Networking session on Friday, July 30, 2021.
ASA Affiliate Groups Gather for Fellowship

Dana Oleskiewicz

The ASA has a long history of members from similar disciplines gathering in fellowship, such as at the annual meetings, during seminars, and online. Recently, we have begun conversation as a team with the affiliate leaders about how to strengthen those networks.

The ASA chapters are organized around a geographic region or educational institution. The prospect of structuring effective ASA leadership based on profession has us excited about another avenue of outreach. We continue to encourage ASA members to look for these opportunities of service toward our respective disciplines.

This year at the annual meeting we were strategic in offering virtual space for the affiliations to meet and greet. On Friday (July 30), the Christian Engineers in Science and Technology (CEST), the Affiliation of Christian Geologists (ACG), and the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation (CSCA) each held a networking session. A fourth zoom room hosted first-time attendees and chapter leaders to introduce local chapters and what they do within the ASA.

The following day (July 31) also had space in the agenda for the Christian Women in Science, as well as the Emerging Scholars Network and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship to gather and get to know one another. Long-time ASA members of 40 or more years were welcomed in a special session hosted by John Wood and Vicki Best.

Discussions centered on current efforts and ideas for expansion, both in the number of members involved and activities offered to increase participation. Venues for engagement were explored such as social media, newsletters, and reaching out to students through education. Various topics of interest were identified, dependent on the discipline of the group.

Additional guidance protocols providing support toward establishing a strong working relationship between the home office and the affiliations are being developed by the ASA team. Your ideas are always welcomed! Contact Dana at dana@asa3.org or 330-466-5631.

Some of the first-time attendees who met during the Affiliate Networking session on Friday, July 30, 2021.

Some of the geologists who met during the Affiliate Networking session on Friday, July 30, 2021.
Albert J. Smith (1932–2021) Biologist

Albert J. Smith, age 88, a resident of Windsor Park in Carol Stream, formerly of Winfield, Illinois, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, February 10, 2021. He was born February 14, 1932, in Gasport, New York, to Albert and Marion Smith.

After losing his father at a very early age, Albert, who preferred to be called Al, was a hard-working, diligent young man who worked for local farm families and excelled in his studies. In high school, while living with a local family, Al began attending church and accepted Jesus as his Savior. His pastor encouraged him to pursue a career in ministry and suggested he attend Wheaton College. At Wheaton, he took a biology class to meet a general requirement and it became his chief area of study as he and his wife, Audrey, planned to pursue full-time ministry combining education and missions.

After receiving his BS in biology with highest honors in 1953, he attended Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and went on to teach at Elgin Academy in Elgin, IL, as well as pastoring a church and working for the post office. During the early years of his career, he earned his MS in ecology from Northern Illinois University and set up the biology department at the newly formed Judson College, also in Elgin, IL, where he taught from 1964–1967.

In 1967, he returned to Wheaton College as a biology professor and was thrilled to be working with some of the same professors who had encouraged him as a student. He was awarded a National Science Foundation Science Faculty Fellowship which enabled him to complete his PhD from the University of Chicago. During his 32 years on the faculty at Wheaton, Al taught genetics, bioethics, environmental ethics, and creation/evolution and supervised teacher education. For many summers, he taught and directed Wheaton's Science Station in the Black Hills of South Dakota. He also taught at Wheaton's Honey Rock campus in Wisconsin. His many accomplishments were recognized when he was awarded the Senior Teacher of the Year in 1979 and the Faculty Emeritus award in 1999.

Looking back on his career, Al reflected, “There were numerous ways in which God had guided us. Often, we did not know it as such but in each of these experiences—Wheaton College, NBTS, Judson College, Valley View Baptist Church, Elgin Academy—God was preparing me to minister to many of the future leaders in evangelical Christianity by being able to show how learning methods such as science and theology could be integrated. This was a far greater ministry than the pastorate would have been. I am overwhelmed to find out one by one what some of our graduates are doing. For me, this is especially true of the teachers we have trained as we hear from near and far of their work in the Kingdom.”

After retirement, Al stayed active in ministry to seniors in his local Evangel Baptist Church congregation and enjoyed his lifelong hobbies of gardening and traveling with his beloved wife, Audrey. He and Audrey first met in the fourth grade as classmates but attended different high schools. In 1950, after a “chance encounter,” Al invited Audrey to a high school graduation party and they soon became sweethearts for life, marrying in 1953. Clearly committed to his wife and children, Al took great pleasure in watching their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren grow up and express themselves as individuals. He was able to participate and even officiate in many of their marriages and newcomers to the family were always greeted with the warmest of hugs from “Dad,” “Father Dear,” and “Grandpops.”

His entire family is forever grateful for the loyalty and deep faith that he exemplified throughout his life as he humbly followed God’s lead. In his own words, “Looking back over the years, I am seeing more and more of how God has directed even though I haven’t understood how he was doing it at the time. My earnest conviction is that he is in charge and that anything accomplished will be up to him.”

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Audrey, and 22 descendants in three generations.

Frank Mathews (1924–2021) Physicist

Frank Mathews passed away on January 23, 2021. He was born on April 22, 1924, Derbyshire, England. The family emigrated to Canada in 1930 during the depression to seek religious freedom and economic stability. Frank attended a one-room school, graduating early, and immediately enrolled at the University of BC to study math and physics. During those years, he worked at a can factory, raced velodrome bicycles, and ran track and field.

After graduating with a MS in physics, he enrolled in the Navy as an officer in the Canadian services and served on the Camperdown, a destroyer of the 19th Destroyer Flotilla, British Pacific Fleet. He was the chief radar officer on his ship, and one of the first radar experts in the Navy. Prince Philip was the chief radar officer of the fleet, and he and Frank shared daily phone calls to calibrate their clocks and their radar positions.

He subsequently attended Purdue University to study physics, where he was on a team of researchers that built the first synchrotron, precursor to the cyclotron. It was there he met his future wife Anne through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, was married, and Lisa and David were born. Late in life, one of his favorite memories was a visit to the CERN Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, where one of his guides was his grand-nephew, grandson of his brother Stephen. He never lost his love of nuclear physics!

Frank took a teaching position at the Colorado School of Mines (CMS) before he finished his doctorate. Summers were spent working on research projects for the National Bureau of Standards, DECO Electronics, the US Navy, US AID, and the American Scientific Affiliation. His travels took him to far-flung destinations experiencing local living conditions, and challenging projects—some classified, some pertaining to alternative energy generation. Some of his research projects involved sea ice floes, low frequency radio wave transmission for submarine communications, and deep space radio astronomy.

In 1964, he joined a PhD program in geophysics in the oceanography department at Oregon State University. His focus of research was the Sicilian volcano, Mt. Etna. His advisor was a renowned Icelandic volcanologist, and he spent months on the slopes of Mt. Etna collecting data before writing his dissertation. Collecting data meant lying next to the hot lava flows wearing an asbestos and foil bodysuit, measuring electromagnetic currents using probes inserted into the flowing lava to determine pyroclastic potentiality. He loved that the Italian Nonnas (grandmothers) would send baskets of food up the mountain for lunch and dinner via cable car.
Back in Colorado after graduating from OSU, Frank was involved in setting up the Colorado Solar Energy Research Institute, and taught the first course in Solar Energy at CSM. He served on numerous Mines faculty committees, was President of MVCC in 1971 and 1972, and of the English-Speaking Union Denver Chapter in 1997 and 1998. He was a member of the Plymouth Brethren Bible Chapels in Denver, Lakewood, and Littleton and continued his involvement with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

During his time at CSM, Frank joined the American Scientific Affiliation. His good friend Ken Touryan provided this report.

Frank, John Vayhinger, and Gordon Brown of CU led the local Rocky Mtn ASA, starting in mid-1980s. They organized ASA activities, including biannual meetings and inviting local and out-of-state speakers. Frank was the driving force behind all these activities, including the planning of the 2003 ASA Annual Meeting held at the Colorado Christian University. Frank worked behind the scenes and never took credit for his efforts. He leaned toward ID regarding origins, but always said “God did it but how.” He recruited me in 1996 to be active in local ASA affairs.

After he retired from CSM in 1986, he and Anne relocated to Kingston, Jamaica, for two years, where he was involved with US AID in setting up a solar crop drying facility presumably to dry coconut, coffee, and bananas.

Frank was a man of many talents, who loved to read and learn new subjects. Most of all, he lived with a deep appreciation of the beauty of the natural world and a love of Jesus Christ before all else.

Gordon J. Van Wylen
(1920–2020) Engineering/Thermodynamics

Gordon J. Van Wylen of Holland, MI, died on Thursday, November 5, 2020, having reached the century mark on February 6, 2020, when he turned 100 years-old. As a devoted and doting husband, a dedicated, loving, and playful father, a person of deep and abiding faith, a respected and appreciated Hope College president, and an impactful community contributor, his earthly life will be sorely missed.

Gordon’s Christian faith was his defining dimension. It shaped his family, work, and community life. He drew upon it as his personal foundation and motivation, and in turn this was a catalyst and inspiration for many others. In all things, he saw his ultimate purpose to be an avenue for God’s love and to realize, both individually and in community, the grace known through Jesus Christ.

Born in Grant Township, Van Wylen grew up in Grand Rapids and graduated from Ottawa Hills High School. He attended Calvin University on the 3-2 engineering program with the University of Michigan, graduating in 1942 with joint degrees from both institutions.

After graduation, Gordon enlisted in the US Navy, receiving a commission as Ensign in 1943. He joined the Submarine Service and was assigned to the USS Hardhead, upon which he served for two years, completing six war patrols in the Pacific during WWII. In honor of his military service, he received on-court recognition through the University of Michigan’s Toyota Hero of the Game program during the university’s basketball game versus UCLA in December 2018. In 1988, Gordon learned that a Japanese naval officer from a Japanese light cruiser that the Hardhead had sunk on its first patrol, had written a book in Japanese that told the story of how some 190 survivors rowed 300 miles in lifeboats, under very difficult circumstances, to safely reach the Philippines. Believing that this story would be of interest to American readers, Gordon, in conjunction with Japanese colleagues, translated and rewrote the story by merging it with the Hardhead’s experience. This book, with two Japanese coauthors, was published in 1994 under the title, Encounter at Sea.

After the war, Gordon completed a master’s degree in engineering at the University of Michigan in 1947 and his doctorate at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1951. Subsequently, he joined the faculty in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Michigan. After moving through the academic ranks to be a Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Department Chair, he served as Dean of the College of Engineering from 1965–1972. In 1959, he published a textbook, Thermodynamics, which was widely used in the United States and translated into a number of foreign languages, remaining in print, eventually by coauthors, for 60+ years.

In 1972, Gordon was appointed the ninth president of Hope College; he served in this role until 1987. During his tenure, there was an increase in enrollment, growth of the endowment, several campus buildings were built/renovated, 12th Street was closed with the resulting expansion of the Pine Grove, and an emphasis on academic excellence in the context of the Christian faith built Hope’s national reputation. In recognition of the many contributions to Hope College by Gordon and his wife Margaret, the library that was completed shortly after his retirement was named the Gordon and Margaret Van Wylen Library.

Gordon’s commitment to excellence certainly did not end with his retirement from Hope College. Upon retirement at the age of 67, few would have guessed that he was just beginning the longest “job” of his career, as for the next 30 years he worked with Holland city officials and community leaders to revitalize downtown Holland and the surrounding central city. Snowmelt, a hallmark of downtown Holland, was installed through the ingenuity and determination of Gordon and others who built an impressive public/private partnership for this and many other projects that are foundational to Holland’s currently thriving downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Homecor was started by Gordon, providing urban renewal and affordable housing to the central city. Along with wife Margaret, Gordon was the grand marshal for Holland’s Tulip Time Volksparade in May 2005. To recognize Gordon’s contributions to the community, the Gordon Van Wylen Green at Chamber Pointe was established in 2019.

Over the years, Gordon served as a member, and sometimes as chairperson, of the Boards of a number of organizations including InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Holland Community Foundation, Words of Hope, Bethany Christian Services, Homecor, Pine Rest Christian Hospital, and Van Andel Education Institute.

Gordon joined the American Scientific Affiliation in January of 1960 while he was on the faculty at the University of Michigan. In December of 1964 he gave a talk on “Thermodynamics and Theology” at the Western Michigan section of the ASA. He was remembered by many Christian engineers for this quote in several editions of his textbook on thermodynamics:

A final point to be made is that the second law of thermodynamics and the principle of increase in entropy have great philosophical implications. The question that arises is how did the universe get into the state of reduced entropy in the first place, since all natural processes known to us tend to increase entropy? … The author has found that the second law tends to increase his conviction that there is a Creator who has the answer for the future destiny of man and the universe.

In 1978, Hope College hosted the ASA Annual Meeting and Gordon was pleased to be able to personally welcome the attendees as both Hope College president and ASA member.

Always active in church life, Gordon was instrumental in establishing the Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s and in the rejuvenation of Pillar Church as a joint Reformed Church of America/Christian Reformed Church congregation just a few years ago.

In 1951, Gordon married Margaret DeWitt, and the two remained life and faith partners for 66 years until Margaret’s death in 2018.
Celebrating Five Years of the Student/Early Career Track

Hannah Eagleson

This year we celebrated an important milestone: the fifth year of the Student/Early Career Track at the ASA Annual Meeting! At the 5-year mark, there is much to celebrate. Student and early career turnout has grown substantially, and more early career participants are staying engaged with ASA as they move into the next part of their careers. We thank God for a growing community of early career Christians in science.

Programming in 2021 explored various aspects of the conference theme. In discussing the gift of Scientia, we enjoyed a great panel exploring scientific collaboration in developing and delivering a COVID-19 vaccine, and how that discovery is a gift of many scientists working together to make a difference in the world God gave us.

We addressed the theme of the Body of Christ through a panel exploring how churches can support early career scientists and how scientists can in turn support churches. We were delighted to host a roomful of participants from Baylor’s Truett Seminary at this panel, and even more thrilled to hear that the seminarians present had an engaging conversation afterward about how to support scientists in their future congregations.

We explored the conference theme of the common good in our Sunday student/early career extended event. Mathematician Francis Su and health innovator Alynne MacLean gave a remarkable joint interview on working for the common good in different field areas. We broke into small groups to connect with each other, and then reconvened for a fun reception featuring Mars expert Roger Wiens.

We are starting exciting conversations about next year’s student/early career events, and we welcome all students and early career members to be in touch with ideas.