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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-24Peterson>

Final Words

That might sound too absolute, to title this editorial “Final Words.” At this point, I have carefully studied and given feedback on over a 1,000 essays offered to the journal, and 700 book reviews. Days have been filled, as well, with listening across the wide discussion in academia and the church, envisioning future themes for the journal, encouraging promising submissions, giving copyright and translation permissions, adding keyword and DOI identification tools to support our readers’ research, creating job descriptions for journal posts, recruiting to them... Continuing that service is our esteemed colleague Stephen Contakes, but I hope to continue to be part of the friendships and conversations of *PSCF* for years to come. These are my parting words then as specifically the Editor-in-Chief of *PSCF*.

PSCF has often found theology and science to be allies. That will no doubt continue under the able leadership of our new editors. Such is a needed counter to one of the most influential perspectives on our campuses today, that of writers such as Michel Foucault, that language and concepts are in essence just power games, one speaker defeating another. For that view, there is no actual truth, just “my truth” to further my ends. In contrast, theology and science are allies in their conviction that some answers are better than others. There is a reality to discover which is not of my making or desire. Realizing that, is not to place in triumph one person over another, rather to mutually seek what is actually the case. It is a wonderful thing to be delivered from an incomplete or false perception. We are inherently finite and limited in our approaches, but there are ways to test and improve with each other our recognition of what is. This is essential to excellence in science and theology.

A second dominant perspective today is a variation on the romanticism (that personal feeling is the *sine qua non*) that was influential before, in the early 1800s. For the current gnostic version, the only truth that is truly known, hence that exists, is one’s own experience and desire. My self-perception is most real to me and so trumps any other reality claim. If I identify as a member of the first nations, I am a member of the first nations regardless of my parentage, history, or the discernment of the tribal council. Science, as the careful systematic

observation of what materially is, is an ally of Christian faith when it calls for recognition of what is, not just what I might want or think things to be. Saying or wanting, is not enough to make it so.

While theology and science are allies concerning these perspectives, they each bring also unique contributions. Science serves theology, when it reminds theology that certain material connections are quite clear. There is always room for science to improve its understanding, but there are assertions, such as that the earth tracks around the sun, that are so evident, and reinforced by comprehensive coherence, that it is hard to imagine that we will ever need to revisit their trustworthiness.

Theology serves science well when it reminds science that science is very good at what it does, but only at what it does. There is no scientific basis for claiming that science is the sole way to apprehend reality. Such is the ideology of scientism, not science. Science seeks to recognize causal connections between material entities. It does not have the tools or expertise to do else, even to pronounce that it is a good thing to study science! Much that is real, is not accessible to scientific verification.

When they work well together, the best of theology and science welcomes apparent contradictions and anomalies. One’s pulse should quicken when they do not seem to fit together: in anticipation, not in dread. Such challenges are opportunities to learn, to understand a little bit better what actually is. One approach may need to adjust, or more likely, both. Theology and science, at their best, are allies in the quest to pursue the truth, including that the more we learn, the more aware we become of how much more there is to learn. We do learn, including that we have so much more to learn. Hence 76 years of *PSCF*.

Thank you to all who have made that happen at *PSCF*. What a privilege and opportunity to bring together such experience and insight, in both theology and science, to understand better. To that purpose, and progress in it, science and theology are much needed allies.

Carry on!

James C. Peterson, *Editor-in-Chief*