

# Perspective Digest

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## Epistles

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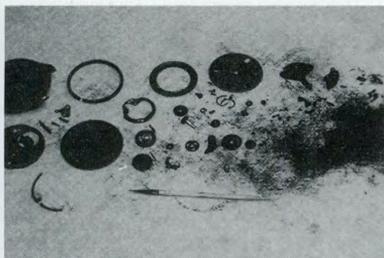
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*"To be known and read" by all. . .*

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### Paley vs. Dawkins: The Decision

In a previous letter (*PD 3/2001*) I described an experiment meant to test the claim of William Paley that a mechanism such as a watch suggests an intelligent designer, and Richard Dawkins' contrary claim that no intelligent designer was needed to produce ever more elaborate and functional constructions through evolution.

Readers may recall that I placed a disassembled spring-wound watch in a baby-food jar, and oscillated it for 410 days. On July 1, 2001, at 12:18 p.m., I concluded the experiment after well over a billion oscillations.

When I opened the jar, I found the interior partially obscured by a black powdery substance, which also covered all the parts of the watch. I poured the contents onto a paper towel, separated each with a tooth-

pick and tweezers, and photographed them.

I observed a small screw and equally small gear caught between the second and third innermost coils of the mainspring. A split ring lodged inside the case. These constituted the only indications of any degree of assembly. I could not identify the hairspring, although a small magnet separated bits up to one millimeter long from the black powder. These may have been parts of the hairspring. More than 20 small unidentifiable fragments of various nonmagnetic materials were present.

In this very simple experiment I arranged conditions to be most favorable to Dawkins' thesis. The necessary materials were present, precisely shaped and successfully tested by years of operation. I introduced no extraneous elements and supplied mechanical energy. However, over a billion oscillations failed to assemble even two parts into their original relationships.

The only parts joined in any way were a small gear and screw found jammed into the mainspring. These would have prevented the mainspring from ever being fully wound,

and could only have degraded its function by preventing it from being fully wound. The energy introduced over the experiment served only to scratch, deform, erode, break, and pulverize various parts. Most of the original parts are now degraded beyond usefulness. Instead of evolving into a functional timepiece, the parts of the disassembled watch have devolved into distorted, eroded, broken junk.

My conclusion: The experiment demonstrates the inexorable operation of the second law of thermodynamics. The results are in harmony with Paley's claim; Dawkins' assertion remains unsubstantiated.

Val Periman

Via E-mail: [byperimn@ipa.net](mailto:byperimn@ipa.net)

### A Man-Making Contest

Out of the dim and misty past a voice you may remember from your visits "down under" speaks ongoing congratulations on *Perspective Digest*. I enjoy each issue, but the latest (Vol. 6, No. 3) has stirred me into sending you this E-mail. The various approaches to the Creation topic are helpful in a world where the majority are "willingly ignorant" of the truth on this topic. Here is a relevant snippet from the August edition of the Australian *Readers Digest* in what

they regard as their humor section, but they make a very potent point.

It goes something like this. A modern scientist approached God, saying, "We have decided that we don't need you anymore. Nowadays we can clone people, transplant hearts and do all kinds of things that were once regarded as miraculous."

God replied, "Alright. We will see whether you still need me. We will have a man-making contest."

"OK," agreed the scientist.

"Now," said God, "we will do this just the same way I did back in the old days with Adam."

"Fine," replied the scientist as he bent down to scoop up a handful of dirt.

"Whoa!" said God, shaking his head in disapproval. "Not so fast. You get your own dirt."

Ron Taylor

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Excellent issue on Intelligent Design. Wish all our science teachers could get a copy. Do you have an extra for our science people here at Southern? If so, send about 20 to the university in my name and I'll see that they get distributed. Blessings to you and Newman.

Jack Blanco

Via Email: [blanco@southern.edu](mailto:blanco@southern.edu)

• Done. And soon you'll have to extend your blessings by one. Newman has a little brother. Watch for his birth announcement.—Eds.

### The God Factor

In *PD* 6:3 you say to Jerry Buttram (whose *PD* 6:2 arrived in the mail with only the covers), "I'm sending you five copies. Anyone else want to try for 10?"

Sure! I enjoyed that excellent issue immensely and have shared it with my friends. I'd like to try you also for 10 of No. 3 to circulate amongst Adventist university students, which, in this country, mainly means those attending state universities, as we don't have an Adventist university here.

I am doing my best to encourage these university students to read Dr. John Ashton's (he is an Adventist scientist here in Australia) two books—*In Six Days, Why 50 Scientists Believe in Creation*; and *The God Factor, Why 50 Scientists and Academics Believe in God*. The latter contains one of the most amazing conversion stories I've ever read, among others in the book. The books contain material eminently suitable for *PD*. In fact, John Ashton is sought for interviews in all branches of the

media here—newspaper, radio, TV.

Glad to notice what ATS is doing in the U.S.A. to support translation of the Bible into modern Russian. I'm also doing my little bit for the project, and am grateful for being able to do so under the umbrella of ATS (Australia).

I've always enjoyed your editorship (including *Liberty* magazine), and continue to do so. With greetings and gratitude.

Pr. Austin Fletcher

Cooranbong, New South Wales,  
Australia

• Austin, you'll get at least 11! And with contents intact. Why 11? Because I like to give *PD* readers more than they expect. And send along that special chapter.—R.R.H.

### When All God's "Chillen" Get Ordained

Since I've been under the impression that the Adventist Theological Society was opposed to the ministry and ordination of women, I was pleasantly surprised to read "When All God's 'Chillen' Get Shoes," by Pamela Baker Powell. What an intriguing story! Not only was the pastor of this highly motivated church a woman, but three of her elders were women!

This story certainly verifies what I

*Continued on page 62*

E P I S T L E S

*Continued from page 6*

have long felt—that it was a mistake to put this issue up to a vote by the world church, since it is not a matter of right or wrong—only of policy that should be decided on local levels, depending on the needs of the district and the qualifications of the individuals.

In a recent interview, Anne Graham-Lott, daughter of Billy Graham, was asked how she could take on her father's mantle of evangelistic crusading when Southern Baptists are still in opposition to the ordination of women. Her reply: "I take my orders from Jesus Christ himself, who told Mary Magdalene to go out and tell others what she had seen and heard."

I pray that our world church will one day come to realize that leadership ability is not confined by gender, and that the ordination of women should not be considered right or wrong.

Carol Mayes  
Chatsworth, California

• The Adventist Theological Society has not taken a position on women's ordination, though most of the ATS presidents have favored it.

Though I do also, I am not able to conclude, as you do, that "the story certainly verifies . . . that it was a mistake to put this issue up to a vote by

the world church." The gender of Pamela Baker Powell is incidental to the story. And many Adventists in the world church *do* see the issue as a matter of right or wrong; and local-level policy, however well intended, could bring division and even schism. I speak as one who, in 35 years in the General Conference, visited every world division.

On such an issue as this, I would recommend a prayerful reading and rereading of Romans 14 and 15, which I understand to place a burden on one who is "strong" to "bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves" (NIV). And to this add Christ's prayer that all his children be "one," even as the Godhead is one.

Thanks for sharing Anne Graham-Lott's delightful response! I do note, however, that Jesus didn't tell Mary Magdalene that she must be ordained before she could tell others what she had seen and heard. . . .

I cannot escape my maleness in responding as I have; I will, however, eschew the term "Elder," used as an ecclesiastical designation, though again, sorrowfully, I'll have to admit its legitimacy as a term describing longevity.—R.R.H.