

**Please write—we love to hear from you!**

We welcome correspondence from our readers. Letters should be addressed to:  
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 Letters may be edited for length or clarity, and should include the writer's name, address,  
 and telephone number.

**Childhood Connections to the Campus**

Recently I received a copy of *inSpire* and have read it with great interest. We used to receive *inSpire* when my husband, Herbert Schroeder ('45B), was living, but when he died in 2003, *inSpire* no longer came. I find it awe-inspiring to read about the present-day seminarians and the other contributors to the magazine.

I have a dedicated interest in the Seminary, as I grew up on campus with my five brothers and sisters. My father, William Park Armstrong, was professor of New Testament from 1901 until his death in 1944, and before him my grandfather, George T. Purves. We lived in 74 Mercer Street (beside Alexander Hall) from 1921 until my father's death in 1944—then the Seminary made available for rent one half of 15 Alexander Street to my mother. She loved that little house and lived there until her death in 1964.

My brother Jim and I considered the Seminary our playground. We watched the students play baseball every afternoon in the area next to the "power house." We knew all the students by name and added new ones each fall as they entered. It was a wonderful place for us as children to have as our backyard! My two older sisters also married Seminary graduates.

My memories of seminary life go back a long way. At one time I corresponded with Mr. William Harris (former librarian for archives and special collections), who liked to collect memories of the Seminary and faculty for his history.

Please continue to send me the magazine. I think *inSpire* is a fine instrument for the Seminary. Thank you for your work on it.

*Jane A. Schroeder*

*Eugene, Oregon*

**Seeing the Light in Shades of Gray**

I'm grateful to Erin Dunigan for her "A Conversion Story" [winter/spring 2006, p. 49] regarding the crisis faced by the Palestinians. It arrived in the mail just in time for my church's monthly session meeting, and I read it word-for-word to the group. I know it did some good.

For those not yet informed, there is a PCUSA Israel-Palestine Mission Network. We communicate online via Yahoo Groups. Here's the link:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IsraelPalestinNetwork/>

The Western New York Presbytery sent an overture to the Birmingham General Assembly regarding "A Week of Prayer and Witness with Christians in The Middle East." This overture urges congregations to select a week between Easter and Pentecost in 2007 to be deliberately in solidarity with our sisters and brothers there.

Even Bethlehem is encircled by the Israeli-built separation wall now. Freedom of movement for the Palestinians is severely restricted. The economic boycott by the United States, the European Union, and Israel is strangling the Palestinian National Authority and the population. Because it is easier for Palestinian Christians to come and go under the Israeli occupation, many have simply departed the region, however they are able. The latest statistic I've seen says that the combined population of Christians (of all "stripes") in the Holy Land is now down to 1.5 percent.

The time for half measures is long past. Let us stand up and be heard, for the sake of these faithful ones who live in the very cradle of Christianity.

*Jack Moriarty ('92M)*

*Ellicottville, New York*

I'm only halfway through the [winter/spring] issue of *inSpire* and I am inspired!

If you could pass my appreciation to Erin Dunigan for her witness [End Things, "A Conversion Story"], I'd be most grateful.

I, too, like to see shades of gray, and came out where she did a few years ago when a colleague of mine told me about her experience as a PCUSA young adult volunteer in Palestine. And of course, Gloria Yi's ('02B) impassioned witness about her time there swayed my thinking. It's an important message we MUST keep sharing.

You're continuing to make a real difference for us all.

*Carrie Mitchell ('02B)*

*Pittsford, New York*

**Science, Theology, and the Theory of Evolution**
*Editors' Note:*

On September 1, the Office of Communications/Publications sent out its first newsletter to those alums for whom the Seminary has email addresses. We received this letter in response to a story in the newsletter about a June Continuing Education event. The event, titled "Bible, Theology, and Intelligent Design," discussed the history of the conflict between the scientific theory of evolution and the theory of intelligent design and was led by PTS professors Wentzel van Huyssteen and Chip Dobbs-Allsopp. The author has a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Pennsylvania.

Peter Slevin's *Washington Post* article "Kansas Education Board First to Back Intelligent Design" [November 9, 2005] compels us to take a hard look at what constitutes science and what does not. The business of science is solely concerned with establishing relationships among observable phenomena. For this, science creates models with which to conceptualize its hypotheses. Science also makes simplifying assumptions that attempt to isolate specific aspects of observable phenomena by using notions such as "frictionless surfaces." Science is at its best when it is quantitative, but is still useful, albeit less precise, when only qualitative.

It is improper to present any theory as "fact" although we repeatedly stake our lives on its theoretical predictions as when we fly from DCA to DIA. The reason we do so is that most theoretical predictions have been verified experimentally (again, the emphasis is on observation). Every theory, including evolution, has its range of application and is subject to the limits of its assumptions. In addition, most, including the theory of evolution, will "evolve" as new information is encountered.

All of this is central to the business of science. What is not of the business of science is speculation concerning relationships that do not encompass observables, including first causes. At the onset of the Renaissance, the boundary between science and theology was completely blurred and both were included in what was then known as "natural philosophy."

Newton, after solving the equations of motion for orbiting bodies, noted perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. Since he had solved only the second and not the third order differential equations, he did not realize that any deviation from a perfect ellipse created its own restoring force. As a result, when asked how the deviations in orbit (a slight oscillation around the perfect ellipse) were corrected, he attributed this unashamedly to "divine providence."

When scientists (or school boards) move beyond observables and the relationships among them, they cease to be doing (or teaching) science. This is at the heart of the problem in Kansas and everywhere that there is a fundamental lack of understanding concerning what constitutes science. If we want to quibble about the details of any theory, including evolution, that is fair game. If we want to introduce unobservable first causes into a discussion of science, we are way out of line.

*John R. Powers ('63B)*

*Alexandria, Virginia*

We are pleased that Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and the American Academy of Religion requested to link on their web sites to stories in the winter/spring issue: "Shelter from the Storm," about PTS students' volunteer efforts for hurricane relief, and "Understanding Faith," about PTS faculty in AAR/SBL.