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From Soft Tissue to Homing Pigeons (Faith & Science Update)

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John T. Baldwin

Increasing Controversy Over Dinosaur Soft Tissue

Since our first report of the fresh-looking soft tissue inside a *T. rex* femur discovered by Mary Higby Schweitzer, the shocked paleontological community has erupted in controversy over the find. Schweitzer states that, “I had one reviewer tell me that he didn’t care what the data said, he knew that what I was finding wasn’t possible. I wrote back and said, ‘Well, what data would convince you?’ And he said, ‘None.’”¹ To admit a recent burial would seriously question evolutionary theory.

Schweitzer is finding remarkable data and sharing new information. First, her Hell Creek dinosaur samples exude the odor of death. She says that the samples smell “just like one of the cadavers we had in the lab who had been treated with chemotherapy before he died.”² This conclusion was confirmed by her mentor, Jack Horner, renowned dinosaur

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scientist of Montana State University, who responded to her description by saying, “Oh, yeah, all Hell Creek bones smell.”³ This means to

Schweitzer that traces of organic matter may be present in the bones.

Second, the sex of a dinosaur as inferred from its bone has been discovered for the first time. When Schweitzer removed the first Hell Creek *T. rex* fragment from the cardboard box shipped to her by Horner, she took one look and exclaimed to her research assistant, Jennifer Wittmeyer, “Oh my . . . it’s a girl. And it’s pregnant.”⁴ Barry Yeoman explains that what Schweitzer saw was “medullary bone, a type of tissue that grows inside the long bones of female birds. Medullary bone is produced during ovulation as a way of storing the calcium needed for egg production, then it disappears.”⁵ After carefully examining the sample under the dissecting scope, Schweitzer said, “There was nothing else it could be.”⁶

Schweitzer's claim of finding such specific organic information and particularly of discovering transparent blood vessels and other stretchy organic material is hotly contested by some scientists. Jeffrey Bada, an organic geochemist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, cannot imagine how soft tissue can survive for 65 millions years. He claims that environmental radiation would degrade organic tissue over this vast amount of time. For example, he says, "bones absorb uranium and thorium like crazy. You've got an internal dose that will wipe out biomolecules."⁷ Therefore, Bada concludes that Schweitzer's cellular material must represent contamination from external sources.⁸

The above two observations by Bada are significant. A prominent Adventist palaeontologist tells me that Bada is scientifically correct in his first claim that the environmental radiation of uranium and thorium into dinosaur bones over a period of 65 million years would wipe out biomolecules in the bones. Assuming Bada's claim on this point to be true, this means that Schweitzer's soft-tissue samples represent either contamination, or they represent strong evidence that the dinosaur from which the samples came was buried recently and not 65 million years ago. Given the fact that Schweitzer's continuing tests demonstrate the authen-

ticity of her claim that the samples indeed represent uncontaminated soft tissue, this means that the claim to contamination can be ruled out, and that, therefore, the soft tissue points to a recent burial of the dinosaur. No wonder evolutionary scientists are vigorously disputing Schweitzer's soft tissue find.

Famous Atheist Turns Toward God

Something encouraging occurred in 2004 in the discipline of philosophy (reflections about the true nature of things) that is worthy of attention. The world-renowned philosopher, and ardent atheist, Antony Flew, unexpectedly turned from his atheistic posture to a position that affirms some form of divine designing cause.

Although a regular student attendee of Christian apologist C. S. Lewis' Socratic Club of Christian writers, Flew ultimately rejected Lewis's argument from morality as given in *Mere Christianity*. While a professor, Flew spent the next 50 years of his life carefully rebutting many of the philosophical arguments for the existence of God.

In a December 2004 interview with friend and philosophical adversary, Gary Habermas, Flew indicated that he has accepted some form of God, but perhaps not exactly like "the God of the Christian." While this may not sound like the heart-changing words we'd prefer to hear, they are significant coming from a

man who has dedicated more than 50 years of his life to arguing—and strongly at that—against any God at all!

That Flew’s change of mind (if not yet heart) resulted from some of the recent evidence that has emerged from the realm of science is particularly encouraging and noteworthy for us as Adventists. It demonstrates that even a world-class thinker and scholar, like Flew, is able to see the evidences of “intelligent design” woven into the world of nature. This also illustrates the beauty and truth of the biblical statement: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13, NKJV).

Homing Christians: Work of the Holy Spirit

As a boy in Singapore, I raised homing pigeons. Worshipers there would buy pigeons at the pet store and then release them as thank offerings to the gods. I sold one of my birds to the same pet shop three times because of this religious practice. On the third time my pigeon returned to the home loft, a message

written in Sanskrit to the gods was attached to its foot.

Jim Tucker mentions that research has shown that homing pigeons navigate by sensitivity to the Earth’s magnetic field, by observing the Sun, and by recognizing familiar landmarks as they near home.⁹ By acting on their drive to return home, and by following the critical signage available to them, homing pigeons return long distances to their nesting sites. By the grace of God, let us be homing Christians—individuals who actually trust and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the counsels of God’s Word, and His messenger in order to return to our everlasting home loft with the Creator.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Barry Yeoman, “Schweitzer’s Dangerous Discovery,” *Discover* (April 2006), p. 37.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Windows on God’s World* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1982), p. 3.

