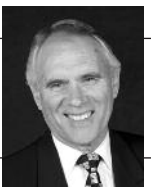

John T. Baldwin

THE LATEST ON DINOSAUR SOFT TISSUE

Radiometric dating of igneous rock strata below and above dinosaur fossils and the resultant inference of the alleged multimillion-year age of these dinosaurs present a scientific challenge to a literal reading of Genesis 1–2. Though attempts have been made to explain the radiometric readings in an alternative way,[i] many questions still remain. It is no small irony, then, that apparent lack of complete biological decay in dinosaur bones may be undermining the current understanding of radioactive decay. It seems that dinosaur fossils may play a central role in providing more evidence for the biblical claim that life on earth is of recent origin (Genesis 5, 11; Matthew 1).

An earlier "Faith and Science Update" entitled, "From Soft Tissue to Homing Pigeons," reviewed Mary Schweitzer's first report of finding soft tissue in a T-Rex dinosaur.[ii] Recently, she published several more lines of evidence demonstrating the preservation of soft tissue in a reportedly 80 million-year-old Campanian Hadrosaur.[iii] This is the second discovery of soft tissue in a fossil she has published, following up on her discovery of red blood cells in a T-Rex fossil.

Schweitzer's first discovery rocked the scientific community. It has been widely accepted that biological molecules cannot survive across geologic time because the background radiation would destroy them. Dr. Jeffery Bada, an organic geochemist, when expressing doubt at Schweitzer's first findings, puts it this way: "Bones absorb uranium and thorium like crazy. You've got an internal dose that will wipe out biomolecules."[iv] Based on this impossibility, Bada argued that the tissue found in the T-Rex bones must have been some kind of contamination.

Schweitzer's latest research data, however, regarding dinosaur soft tissue (which was independently tested by three laboratories) shows that the tissue found is not contamination. She also indicates that the three-dimensional shape of the proteins (such as collagen) in this tissue are still in-

tact and can be "recognized" by antibodies. She is able also to sequence these proteins by mass spectrometry and has identified eight collagen polypeptide sequences in the Hadrosaur fossil. About the amazing preservation of the bone matrix, Schweitzer writes, "The matrix was virtually indistinguishable from recent demineralized ostrich bone imaged under the same parameters."[v] It is truly remarkable that an 80 million-year-old Hadrosaur's bone matrix and the bone matrix of an ostrich look almost identical under the microscope.

The evidence may be suggesting that either the soft tissue somehow can survive 80 million years of background radiation (biologists doubt that soft issue can survive for 10,000 years), or the dinosaur fossil is not 80 million years old, but rather thousands of years old. While on the one hand the raw radiometric readings exist, on the other hand, the amazing preservation of soft tissue in the fossilized bones cannot be denied.

Scientists will no doubt go back to their laboratories to attempt to find a theory explaining how soft tissue may be preserved for 80 million years, across geological time. In light, however, of Bada's claim that the great amount of uranium and thorium that fossil bones naturally absorb will wipe out biomolecules over a period of millions of years, it seems more probable that the answer to this puzzle maybe found in revisiting the theory and assumptions of radiometric dating. In this instance, it is particularly necessary to distinguish between the radiometric readings and the interpretation of the readings.

What is clear is that the theory of macro-evolution needs millions of years in order to function. The implications of Schweitzer's research are significant. Because the validity of her initial claim of discovering soft tissue containing biomolecules in dinosaur bones has now been confirmed, her latest research strongly suggests that there may not be enough time for macro-evolution to be real. This conclusion is deeply encouraging to creationists who by faith accept that life on earth is recent. Again, the truth of the unfailing reliability of the Word of God is being supported by the records of nature, God's second book.

Correction: In the previous "Faith and Science Update" entitled "A Mountain of Evidence" (PD, 12:4, p. 50), the sentence beginning "Only the Cambrian granite of Steamboat Rock . . ." should read "Only the basalt material of Steamboat Rock. . . ."

REFERENCES

[i] D. B. DeYoung, *Thousands, Not Billions: Challenging an Icon of Evolution: Questioning the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, Ark.: Master Books, 2005).

[ii] *Perspective Digest* 11:3 (2006), pp. 58-60.

[iii] Mary H. Schweitzer, et al., "Biomolecular Characterization and Protein Sequences of the Campanian Hadrosaur B. Canadensis," *Science,* No. 324 (2009), pp. 626-639.

[iv] B. Yeoman, "Schweitzer's Dangerous Discovery," *Discover* (April 2006), pp. 37-41.

[v] Mary H. Schweitzer, et al., ibid.