

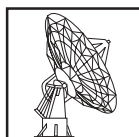
Although a strong supporter of the AV, the author acknowledges that its translation of Job is not as good as some other more modern versions (for example, the RSV, the NIV and even the Jerusalem Bible). When appropriate he refers to these and many other translations, as well as the Hebrew text, to draw out the meaning. He identifies a number of places where the original text is unclear, and usually suggests ways in which these passages might be interpreted while recognising the ambiguity in these cases. In a very few places—for example, Job 34:29,30—he does not even attempt exposition because of uncertainty about the text. Many readers will welcome this level of honesty.

There seem to be almost as many views about Elihu as there are expositors of the book. Brother

Baird quotes extracts from most Christadelphian writers on the subject to demonstrate the wide diversity of views, but he himself regards Elihu in broadly positive terms.

He acknowledges that Elihu is brash at times, but regards his views as sound and vital to Job's education. Some readers might be unreceptive to a view about Elihu that differs from their own, but the author's reasoning on this matter is very cogent.

The Education of Job seems likely to become one of our standard works on the book of Job. It is a handsomely produced book that promises much and delivers on the promise. It is recommended for students and readers alike, and would be a valuable addition to the library of any Christadelphian.



Science

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The feathered dinosaur hoax¹

Malcolm Edwards

IN THE OCTOBER 2000 edition of the *National Geographic* magazine there appeared a somewhat low-key "Report to Members" in the form of an apology for an article in the November 1999 issue entitled "Feathers for T. Rex", announcing the discovery by a Chinese farmer, two years earlier, of a fossil which was said to be the 'missing link' between the so-called toothed bird *Archaeopteryx* and reptiles. It was given the similar name of *Archaeoraptor* and declared to be a feathered dinosaur. It turned out to be an embarrassing hoax for all those involved in the story.

The apology covered five full pages, and the selected writer, Lewis Simons, does not pull his punches. This is how he summarises the whole debacle: "It's a tale of misguided secrecy and misplaced confidence, of rampant egos clashing, self-aggrandizement, wishful thinking, naive assumption, human error, stubbornness, manipulation, backbiting, lying, corruption and, most of all, abysmal communication. It is a story in which none of the characters looks good". The November 1999 article was written by Assistant Art Editor Christopher Sloan, and in honour of his

involvement the fossil was given the full name of *Archaeoraptor liaoningensis* Sloan.

The artful perpetrator

The Chinese farmer who found the fossil was not the innocent perpetrator of the hoax, as is suggested. He was a part-time fossil collector who had previously sold his finds to dealers. He had used different fossil parts and had joined them together with home-made glue. The result was a birdlike body connected to the tail of a small dinosaur, to which he added legs from other collected scraps.

The unnamed dealer to whom the farmer sold his fossil defended him by saying that he genuinely believed he had found a 'missing link' and was putting together what time itself had separated. Whatever the farmer thought, it does not excuse the gullibility of the 'experts'.

1. See also reference to the same story in "[Science Update: Another fake fossil exposed](#)", *The Testimony*, Jun. 2002, p. 227.

The writing of the article

In February 1999 the dealer sold the phony fossil for US\$80,000 to Stephen Czerkas and his wife, who are directors of a dinosaur museum in Blanding, Utah. Comprehensively taken in, they constructed a model of the creature and added plumage, and then consulted Canadian scientist Philip J. Currie at the Royal Tyrell Museum of Palaeontology, Alberta, who in turn contacted Christopher Sloan.

Sloan was not even qualified to write the article, but the Chief Editor of *National Geographic*, William Allen, gave him the go-ahead. This is what Simons wrote about that:

“The Archaeoraptor story was originally to appear in the magazine as a small, subsidiary part of a broader piece on feathered dinosaurs. Sloan, who’d handled the artwork for numerous articles but had never written a story, had convinced Allen to let him write this one. Publication was set for November, six months ahead.

“The association of Sloan and Currie would prove to be star-crossed. As a first-time writer, Sloan committed the journalist’s cardinal sin—he assumed that since Currie’s reputation was so outstanding, there was no need to stay on top of him or question him. Currie became a collaborator rather than a source. Worse, Currie was so distracted by other commitments around the world that he gave the Archaeoraptor project short shrift”.

Sloan’s article trumpeted the discovery, supported by ample paintings and photographs, one of the Czerkas model being prominently featured. Conspicuous headings stated that this was “The best evidence since *Archaeopteryx* that birds did, in fact, evolve from certain types of carnivorous dinosaurs”, and that “We can now say that birds are theropods, just as confidently as we say that humans are mammals”. One painting showed a downy baby *Archaeoraptor* emerging from its newly broken egg.

There was never any *Archaeoraptor*, and the only egg there ever was, in this saga, was now firmly on the faces of the National Geographic Committee, particularly of Assistant Art Editor Christopher Sloan.

The painful truth

At the University of Texas in Austin the fossil was scanned by a High-Resolution X-Ray CT Facility in which it was revealed that it appeared

to have unmatched pieces. Professor Timothy Rowe, who did the scan, said that the tail had no natural connection to the body and that there was a chance it was a fraud. By the time Currie had joined them, however, they had consulted together and concluded that the body and tail *did* belong together. The scan alone had cost the Magazine Committee US\$10,000. As Currie left, the National Geographic TV crew entered the building to commence shooting.

In Denver, some three months after this, at a meeting of scientists who do not share the birds-from-dinosaurs theory, serious doubts were expressed about the scanning conclusions, and later a Chinese scientist named Xu Ling, who had also looked carefully at the fossil, declared: “I am 100% sure we have to admit that *Archaeoraptor* is a faked specimen”. Later, Currie was to admit that getting involved in the *Archaeoraptor* saga was the greatest mistake in his life. Chief Editor Allen was to add that while “extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof”, they had relied on “very ordinary proof”.

But was there any proof at all? Christopher Sloan feared that the article would damage his credibility. There is absolutely no doubt about that. He commented afterwards, “I thought I was bringing in more than was expected, and it turns out I was dragging in a monster”.

Was any lesson learnt?

Predictably, the *National Geographic* magazine had finally overstepped the mark in its unrelenting support of the evolutionist cause. The *Archaeoraptor* hoax will take much more living down than either the Piltdown Man or Nebraska Man hoaxes. There are even those who suspect that *Archaeopteryx* itself was a clever hoax that has been covered up. This most recent one might well have been as well, were it not for one or two honest scientists who became involved. This article has omitted much of the details in Lewis Simons’ article, which, in turn, by his own admission, does not tell the whole sordid story.

But have the National Geographic Committee members finally learnt their lesson? One suspects not. There must be many amongst them who are aware of the evolutionary prejudice in most of their articles about the origin of life on earth, but since the only alternative is Divine Creation they are likely to persist in looking for answers in the earth itself, and not from the God of heaven.