

THE ANCESTRY OF MAN

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The origin of man is not solved by history. Though examples of misrepresentation and fraud can be found, Christians should not be discouraged in their search for understanding of early man because of mistaken interpretations. Many instances are known of fossil forms which are like modern man, and which must be older than "primitive" man because of the rock strata in which they have been found. Too often evolutionists have assumed that which they attempt to prove. Scientists offer no basic discoveries for a compromise theory which some offer to harmonize science with Genesis.

Since there is wide disagreement as to the origin of the human race, whether man came up from the brute or directly from the plan and handiwork of God, some may think that his origin does not matter. Why tire the mind with a problem which is hard to solve?

One cannot deny, however, that the origin of a substance gives a clue as to its nature. Being shown a substance from a mine, we at once think it is a mineral, while something from a garden is classified as a vegetable. We could be mistaken but such is our first judgment and we usually have no reason to change. The same principle holds good in our estimate of the nature of man.

If man came from the animals, he still is a being who simply reacts to his environment and lacks an awareness of responsibility; while if made in the likeness of God, man has vast spiritual potentiality and is not content until he does that which he ought to do, even though at times he gives way to his fallen nature.

The origin of man is not solved by history, for the oldest written records do not narrate man's earliest experiences. They do, however, make it clear that man's residence on earth has not been a gradual, uninterrupted growth in civilization. Our admiration is excited by the sculpture, the poetry, and the architecture of ancient Greece; and we marvel also at the huge blocks of which the Egyptians built the pyramids, fitting them together with tight joints. If man's ability were simply a growth from primitive beginnings, it would seem strange that such a height was reached in ancient times with so little being added since that time.

Man Lived before Records

While no one knows the age of the human race, we know that man lived before the time of written records, and as a record of this era we turn to the skeletons, tools, and weapons of early man.

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Some Christians are inclined to turn away from human paleontology, contending that it is misrepresentation and fraud. Indeed, one skull, found near Piltdown in England, has been proved to be just that. In 1911-12 some fragments of a human skull found in a gravel bed and fitted together were pronounced to represent a man of the Pleistocene or glacial age. The bones were placed in the British Museum, plaster casts of the specimen were made, and it became one of the most famous "missing links" between man and ape.

But there was a mystery, in that the mandible (the jaw) seemed to be more apelike than the rest of the bones. Yet the majority of scientists maintained that the specimen was genuine and the casts remained in the museums and the pictures still were used in the textbooks.

In 1953 the bones were examined more thoroughly and it was proved that the mandible was that of a recent ape, stained brown with iron salts to make it look old, and the molar teeth had been filed down to make them appear human. The two molar teeth could not have been worn by use because they were filed in slightly different planes. It was a plain case of conscious fraud on the part of the one who placed the bones among the gravels, but we cannot be sure who that was.

Certainly it should not have taken scientists forty-one years to discover such a forgery. While not involved in the deceit, they had not made their tests carefully. An X-ray of the roots of the lower teeth had shown them to be short like human teeth; but a later picture, after fraud was discovered, showed them to be long and crooked like those of an ape. A test for fluorine had indicated that the cranium and the mandible had equal amounts of fluorine, thus making them contemporaneous; but a later test revealed that the jaw had almost no fluorine, or that which would be present in a fresh bone.¹

Piltdown Defended, Then Abandoned

It seems that the makers of these tests were influenced by the intellectual fashions. When it was fashionable to defend Piltdown man, tests came out in his favor; but when fashion turned against him the tests did the same. This agreeing with majority opinion, or interpreting according

to preconceived theory, will account for most or probably all the misinterpretation of human skeletons or artifacts.

Mistakes such as these have caused some Christians to turn away from all research of the relics of ancient man, considering it trivial or spurious. But if we scrutinize rather than minimize, emphasizing what has been found rather than the current interpretation, we find much which harmonizes with historic Christianity.

No doubt you have seen pictures of cavemen. When they are mentioned, peculiar features flash upon the walls of your memory: thick neck; un-combed hair; low, receding forehead; massive brow ridges; receding chin. These cave dwellers are pictured as short, stocky men who could not stand erect because the neck was bent forward and the knees could not be straightened. They seem to have had massive brute strength but puny minds.

The imagination is caught by this being [Neanderthal man] close enough to *Homo sapiens* to be called a man, but distant enough, in shape as well as in time, to appear in a way an "alien" in the sense in which the word is used by science fiction writers. Hence, many misconceptions are to be found in popular books, even textbooks, the most common being the one about the "brutish Neanderthals." Reconstructions show him as only a little better off than the big apes, and his tools (Mousterian) are described as "crude" by people who would not, to save their lives, be able to make them. The truth is, indeed, quite different.²

Of course Neanderthal man could not be a forgery because almost a hundred skeletons have been found in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Along with the bodies were placed their tools and weapons, for it was thought they would need them in the future life.³

Reconstructions Are Imagined

In making pictures of cavemen it is evident that the outlines are based partly upon the skeletons and partly upon the estimate of the artist. We have no data on how long early man wore his hair, how thick his lips were, or whether he usually closed his mouth. Such features, along with the clothes, make a person appear either stupid or intelligent.

Of course the clothes have gone into the limbo of decay, along with the wooden tools and weapons. While early man made many excellent drawings of animals, he has left practically none of himself. Thus the skeletons are the only reliable guides for the portrait makers, leaving the major features to be added from theory and imagination.

The first skulls of Neanderthal man to be dis-

covered were broken and ill-preserved at the base, where the skull rests upon the spinal column. Since the finders could not be sure about the neck, and since according to the theory of evolution this type should be a connecting link between man and ape, they guessed that it was like an ape's neck. But a very complete skeleton was found at Monte Circeo in Italy which showed that Neanderthal man **stood erect**. The head was not carried in front of the neck but rested upon it. It has been proved likewise that not all cavemen stood with their knees partly bent.

At present it is agreed that Neanderthal was a true man. That he was a little lacking in height but was well muscled is proved by the attachments of muscles on bones. The brain was as large as that of modern man—some anthropologists claim that it averaged a little larger. He built houses, used fire, and buried the dead surrounded by tools and weapons, indicating that he believed in life after death.

Another cave type, Cro-Magnon man, averaged six feet tall, was well proportioned and of modern type. These men were the artists who have won the admiration of the world by painting pictures of animals on walls and ceilings of caves.

We turn now to a different type of skeleton of which the first was found in South Africa in 1925 by Raymond Dart and was named by him *Australopithecus*, which means ape of the south. It soon became evident, however, that this name was not well chosen, for the newly discovered creature did not have the characteristics of an ape. The skulls and the fragments of skeletons present a problem, for the stature is small, the mandible is large and deep, and the chin is not prominent.

They are rather poor specimens of the human race but not specimens of apes at all. "They are not exactly like ours in every detail, but they are not at all like an ape's: they are *not halfway between*" (Italics in original).⁴ The teeth are typically human and it is evident from the hip bones and the base of the skull that *Australopithecus* walked erect.

Judgments as to the nature of *Australopithecus* should be considered tentative until more complete skeletons are found. It may be that problems will be solved, just as they were made clear in the case of Neanderthal man. If we allow modern genetics to guide us we may decide that this peculiar type from South Africa was not our ancestor at all, but a mutant type headed for extinction; for genetics has shown that the vast majority of mutations are harmful and that most mutants lose their lives because of their peculiarity.⁵

No Evidence of Animal Origin

There would indeed be evidence that man developed from animals if the most deeply buried remains were most like those of animals. But this is not what is found. Along with the peculiar types are found specimens of modern type, *buried just as deeply*. That this was true in South Africa is indicated by the following statement: "It seems likely, judging from the world as a whole, that more advanced men—what for the moment we will have to call 'true men'—were also in existence at the same time, overlapping the man-apes in the later part of the early Pleistocene."⁶

It is just as true that Wadjak man, a type resembling Australian man, was found in Java on the same level as *Pithecanthropus erectus*. But Wadjak man has received very little publicity because it was not what Dubois was looking for and did not fit into the theory of evolution. The discoverer, Eugene Dubois, locked up the two Wadjak skulls, took them home, and wrote nothing about them until after 20 years. Instead of conjecturing that modern man developed from *Pithecanthropus*, it is more scientific to think that Wadjak man was the ancestor and that the other was a mutant type headed toward extinction. This estimate agrees with modern genetics.

Likewise, modern-type skeletons were found among those of Peking man. The most sensational discovery of this kind was made at the Fontchevade cave in France, where a trained worker, Mlle. Germaine Henri-Martin, found skulls of modern type lower than the tools and weapons of Neanderthal man. There was no possibility that their position had been interchanged, for a floor of secondary limestone had formed between them.⁷ It was another example of a man like us who lived earlier than **peculiar** men.

Modern Man before "Primitive" Man

Much is being added to our knowledge of early man by a well-trained industrious worker, Louis S. B. Leakey, ably assisted by his wife, Mary. Born in Africa of missionary parents and educated in England, Dr. Leakey early made discoveries which indicated that some men of modern type lived earlier than certain "primitive" specimens. In 1932 the Leakeys discovered several skulls at Kanam and Kanjera in Kenya which were evidently of modern or *Homo sapiens* type, in the midst of Chellean and Acheulean cultures, which had been ascribed to less developed types of man.⁸

Leakey learned also to make stone tools and found that they and their makers are not to be despised. He took a stone knife which had lain in a cave since prehistoric times and with it skinned and cut up a Thompson's gazelle (which

is the size of a goat) in twenty minutes. Evidently the maker of this knife had skill.

In 1959 Dr. Leakey and his wife discovered what they called the world's earliest man and named it *Zinjanthropus boisei*.⁹ This discovery took place in Olduvai Gorge, 300 feet deep, in Tanganyika, East Africa. A reconstruction by Neave Parker, pictured in the *Illustrated London News*, shows a face which is human in every respect except that the forehead is very low. But since this skull was chiseled out of the rock in 400 pieces it is hard to be certain about the shape. The teeth, however, were well preserved and in their natural positions; they were without the long, interlocking canines which are characteristic of apes.

In reporting such discoveries, the age in years is usually mentioned very prominently. Based upon the remains of accompanying animals, Leakey estimated the age of *Zinjanthropus* as 600,000 years. But testing the bones by the potassium-argon method, the University of California scientists came up with the amazing age of 1,700,000 years.

Potassium 40 breaks down into calcium 40 and argon 40 at a rate which usually is steady; but in reality the usefulness of this test is based upon the assumption that environments have been uniform in the past, and that all contaminations have been removed. We know that any skeleton buried 300 feet deep in solid rock is old, but when one sets the age in years, someone else has a different estimate.

Since this notable discovery, specimens of another type, *Homo habilis*, have been found in the same gorge. This type is even more fully of modern type; and it was surrounded by many stone tools. The skull is larger than that of *Zinjanthropus*, the forehead is high, and the clavicle and the hand are those of modern man.

"Old" Man Resembles Modern Man

While dating in years is uncertain, as noted above, the skeleton of *Homo habilis* evidently is old as compared with others, and may be the oldest one ever found. While most skeletons were found near the surface, this one was 300 feet deep and in solid rock. The oldest man's resemblance to modern man is evidence for creation rather than gradual development.

As in other parts of the world, remains of giant animals are found in Olduvai Gorge: a sheep six feet tall, a pig as big as a rhinoceros, and a baboon bigger than a gorilla. These recall to one's mind the extinct giant bison and giant beaver of North America, which are hard to account for by evolutionary reasoning.

In evaluating the work of Louis Leakey we may say that to the extent that he has trusted *his*

own discoveries he has added much truth about man; but to the extent that he has agreed with fashionable theories he has become lost in the crowd.

Thus it is not the biblical account alone, but also the actual remains of man which indicate that the human race started as well-formed men. Of course such an origin had to be brought about by a personal Creator rather than by the laws of nature.

The above discoveries, with their interpretations by evolutionists, show that the workers had assumed already that which they were attempting to prove—namely, that man developed gradually from simple kinds of animals, by the process of natural selection. Considering this assumption as proved, then the skeletons which were most like the animals and least like modern man would be the oldest. But, as was pointed out above, this theory runs into difficulty because skeletons of modern type are found in positions just as low as the peculiar types.

The Bible agrees with these discoveries by recording that the trades developed early. In the fourth chapter of Genesis the following trades are mentioned: herdsman, farmer, builder of houses, tentmaker, musician, and blacksmith. It is the interpretation of the discoveries of science, rather than the actual discoveries, which disagrees with the Genesis account.

Compromise Theory Unsupported by Findings

There is a compromise theory to the effect that God allowed plants and animals to develop gradually by natural laws, and when animals had reached a high degree of development he took one of them and breathed into it a human soul. According to this theory it was *living dust* which received the divine breath.

While this is an evident attempt to harmonize science with Genesis, science offers no discovery to serve as a basis. Furthermore it is not so stated in the Hebrew text of Genesis. The statement is that “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul [*nephesh chayyah* in Hebrew]” (Genesis 2:7). Let us quote from a Hebrew scholar at this point:

In Genesis 1:20 God said “Let the waters swarm with living (*nephesh chayyah*) swarms.” The American Standard Version substitutes “That hath life” for “living.” In 1:21 God created “great whales and every living creature

(every *nephesh chayyah*, every soul of life) that moveth.” In verses 24, 28 and 30 the words “living creatures” [and] “life” are all *nephesh chayyah*. That is to say, before the creation of man there were many things that had life, *nephesh chayyah*. It was *life* that came to the clay in Genesis 2:7 when God created man. It was not that a brute became man at that point.⁹

Those who agree with an evolutionary development of man overlook other passages in Genesis, namely, the creation of woman, the fall of man, and man’s creation in the image of God. It would be difficult indeed for the struggle for existence and natural selection to develop a creature like God, whose essence is love. Rather, such processes are fitted to develop weeds, bandits, and dictators.

Those who object to animal ancestry for man do not claim that animals are unclean or vicious, but that they are irresponsible. The laws of every government, however, as well as the laws of God, assume that man is responsible for his deeds. How impossible it would be to have a democracy with animals as citizens! If we value our freedom we must recognize our responsibility as men.

There is a chasm between man and beast which never has been bridged, this difference being observed in use of fire, use of speech, making tools, conscience, sense of responsibility, and belief in life after death. Anyone who seeks to erase these distinctions does not serve the best interests of the human race.

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