



Lesson 9

Creation vs. Evolution—Part 1

Apologetics Press Intermediate Christian Evidences Correspondence Course

CREATION VS. EVOLUTION—PART I

There are two different, mutually exclusive explanations for the origin of the Universe and life in that Universe—evolution and creation. Both concepts may be explored as scientific models since both may be used to explain and predict certain scientific facts. Obviously the one that does the better job of explaining/predicting is the better scientific model. In order to examine properly the two models, each must be compared to the available facts. In this lesson, we would like to examine in particular the evidence from the fossil record—first, as that record relates to the creation/evolution controversy generally, and second, as that record relates to the matter of human origins specifically.

As we consider the evidence, it is essential to know exactly what the evolution and creation models predict so that the predictions can be compared to the actual data. The evolution model predicts: (a) the “oldest” rocks would contain evidence of the most “primitive” forms of life capable of fossilization; (b) “younger” rocks would exhibit more “complex” forms of life; (c) a gradual change in organisms from “simple-to-complex” would be apparent; and (d) transitional forms would be present. Charles Darwin himself stated in *The Origin of Species* that “the number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, [must] be truly enormous.” However, he went on to admit: “Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be argued against this theory. The explanation lies, I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record” (1956, pp. 292-293).

This was indeed a problem for Darwin’s theory, and still remains a problem for the modern version of evolution. After all, isn’t it a bit ridiculous to expect people to accept a scientific theory as truth when its advocates have to explain why much of the critical evidence is missing? It would be somewhat like a prosecuting attorney trying a murder case, and saying in his opening speech: “We know that the defendant is guilty of murder, although we cannot find a motive, the weapon, the body, or any witnesses.”

It is true, of course, that the fossil record is imperfect. Darwin suggested a reason for that imperfection—insufficient searching. In 1859 (when Darwin wrote his book), most fossil collecting had been done in Europe and the United States. However, after more than 140 years of additional paleontological work, Darwin’s defense no longer can be upheld. In fact, one evolutionary geologist, T.N. George of Great Britain, stated over forty years ago: “There is no need to apologize any longer for the poverty of the fossil record. In some ways it has become almost unmanageably rich” (1960, 48[1]: 1-5).

The creation model, on the other hand, predicts: (a) the “oldest” rocks would not always contain evidence of the most “primitive” forms of life, and “younger” rocks would not always contain evidence of more “complex” forms

of life; (b) a “simple-to-complex” progression of life forms would not always appear; instead, there would be a sudden “explosion” of diverse and highly complex forms of life; and (c) there would be a regular and obvious absence of transitional fossils, since there were no transitional forms.

Evolutionists and creationists do agree on one thing: If there is ever to be any **physical evidence** for evolution, by necessity it will have to come from the fossil record, for it is only here that the actual historical evidence of evolution can be located. In the past, some mistakenly thought that it was within the record of the rocks—“nature’s museum”—that evolution finally would be documented. As more and more finds were discovered, however, it became clear that the evidence from the fossil record strongly **opposes** evolution and strongly **supports** creation.

First, consider the prediction of the evolution model that the fossil record should reveal a simple-to-complex progression of life forms. Until fairly recently, an examination of the Precambrian strata of the geologic time table (the lowest layer of that timetable) showed no undisputed evidence of multicellular fossil forms, while the Cambrian layer (the next higher layer) showed a sudden “explosion” of life forms. In years past, this was a serious and fundamental problem in evolutionary theory. Today, evolutionists suggest that they have found, in the Precambrian era, multicellular animals that did not have shells or skeletons. Labeled collectively as the Ediacaran fossil complex, these finds include animals resembling jellyfishes, possible relatives of corals, and segmented worms. But even with these new finds, the fundamental problem for evolutionists persists because in the Cambrian layer we find fossils of many different kinds of animals, while in the layers underneath these fossils we find only a few “jellyfish-like” organisms. Evolutionists propose that these organisms must represent the ancestors of **all** the fossils in the Cambrian strata, yet there are **absolutely no transitional forms** to suggest any such relationship. The problem of the “missing ancestors” in the Precambrian rocks is as acute as it ever was.

Second, if the fossil record is to offer support for evolution, it must demonstrate a clear-cut sequence of fully functional intermediate forms, by which we mean that certain conditions must be met before an organism (fossil or living) may be considered a true intermediate form. That means we should see transitional body parts such as half scales/half feathers, or animals that are something like half reptile/half mammal. Yet the fossil record does not satisfy the conditions for any such transitional forms. For instance, mammals take many forms, but all are equally mammalian; birds vary greatly, but all are avian. Harvard paleontologist Stephen J. Gould has stated that the absence of fossil intermediary stages has remained a “persistent and nagging problem for gradualistic accounts of evolution” (1980, p. 127). Indeed it has—and still does more than two decades after he made that admission!

The creation model predicts a sudden “explosion” of life—with fully formed plants and animals. The creation model predicts a mixture of life forms. The creation model predicts a systematic absence of transitional forms. The evidence from the fossil record clearly shows: (a) fully formed life appearing suddenly; (b) a mixture of life forms (for example, almost all, if not all, of the phyla in the Cambrian period); and (c) an obvious lack of transitional forms.

Evolutionists today certainly are in an embarrassing position. They can find neither the transitional forms their theory demands, nor the mechanism to explain how the evolutionary process supposedly occurred. The facts, however, fit the creation model perfectly.

Creationists and evolutionists both agree that fossils occur, and that they represent the environments in which they once lived. However, it is not the fossils themselves that creationists question, but rather the **interpretation** placed on those fossils by evolutionists. And nowhere is this more evident (or more critically important) than in the fossils that relate to human evolution—an area we would like to investigate further in this lesson.

THE FOSSIL RECORD AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

Let’s be blunt about one thing. Of all the branches to be found on that infamous “evolutionary tree of life,” the one leading to man should be the best documented. After all, as the most recent evolutionary arrival, pre-human fossils supposedly would have been exposed to natural decay processes for the shortest length of time, and thus should be better preserved and easier to find than any others. [Consider, for example, how many dinosaur fossils we possess, and those animals were supposed to have existed over a hundred million years before man!] In addition, since hominid fossils are of the greatest interest to man (because they are supposed to represent his past), it is safe to say that more people have been searching for them longer than for any other type of fossils. If there are any real transitional forms anywhere in the world, they should be documented most abundantly in the line leading from the first primate to modern man. Certainly, the fossils in this field have received more publicity than in any other. But exactly what does the human fossil record reveal? What is its central message?

Lyll Watson, writing in *Science Digest*, put it bluntly: “The fossils that decorate our family tree are so scarce that there are still more scientists than specimens. The remarkable fact is that all the physical evidence we have for human evolution can still be placed, with room to spare, inside a single coffin” (1982, p. 44). And relatively few “family tree” fossils have been found since that statement was made.

The public, of course, generally has no idea just how scarce, and how fragmentary (literally!), the “evidence” for human evolution actually is. Furthermore, it is practically impossible to determine which “family tree” one should accept.

Richard Leakey (of the famed fossil-hunting family in Africa) has proposed one. His late mother, Mary Leakey, proposed another. Donald Johanson, president of the Institute of Human Origins in Berkeley, California, has proposed yet another. And Meave Leakey (Richard's wife) has proposed still another. At an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, anthropologists from all over the world descended on New York City to view hominid fossils exhibited by the American Museum of Natural History. Reporting on this exhibit, Science News had this to say:

One sometimes wonders whether orangutans, chimps and gorillas ever sit around the tree, contemplating which is the closest relative of man. (And would they want to be?) Maybe they even chuckle at human scientists' machinations as they race to draw the definitive map of evolution on earth. If placed on top of one another, all these competing versions of our evolutionary highways would make the Los Angeles freeway system look like Country Road 41 in Elkhart, Indiana (see "Whose Ape Is It, Anyway?," 1984, p. 361).

How, in light of such admissions, can evolutionary scientists possibly defend the idea of ape/human evolution as a "scientifically proven fact"?

The primate family (hominidae) supposedly consists of two commonly accepted genera: *Australopithecus* and *Homo*. While it is impossible to present any scenario of human evolution upon which even the evolutionists themselves would agree, currently the alleged scenario (gleaned from the evolutionists' own writings) might appear like this:

Aegyptopithecus zeuxis (28 million years ago) ➔ *Dryopithecus africanus* (20 million) ➔ *Ramapithecus brevisrostris* (12-15 million) ➔ *Orrorin tugenensis* (6 million) ➔ *Ardipithecus ramidus* (5.8-4.4 million) ➔ *Kenyanthropus platyops* (3.8 million years) ➔ *Australopithecus anamensis* (3.5 million) ➔ *Australopithecus afarensis* (3.4 million) ➔ *Homo habilis* (1.5 million) ➔ *Homo erectus* (2-0.4 million) ➔ *Homo sapiens* (0.3 million-present).

Here, now, is what is wrong with all of this. *Aegyptopithecus zeuxis* has been called by Richard Leakey "the first ape to emerge from the Old World monkey stock" (1978, p. 52). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. *Dryopithecus africanus* is (according to Leakey) "the stock from which all modern apes evolved" (p. 56). But, as evolutionists David Pilbeam and Elwyn Simons have pointed out, *Dryopithecus* already was "too committed to apedom" to be the progenitor of man (1971, p. 23). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. What about *Ramapithecus*? Thanks to additional work by Pilbeam, we now know that *Ramapithecus* was not a hominid at all, but merely another ape (1982, 295:232). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. What, then, shall we say of these three "ancestors" that form the tap root of man's family tree? We simply will say the same thing evolutionists have said: all three were nothing but apes.

The 13 fossil fragments that form *Orrorin tugenensis* (broken femurs, bits of lower jaw, and several teeth) were found in the Tugen Hills of Kenya in the

fall of 2000 by Martin Pickford and Brigitte Senut of France, and have been controversial ever since. If *Orrorin* were considered to be a human ancestor, it would predate other candidates by around 2 million years. Pickford and Senut, however, in an even more drastic scenario, have suggested that **all the australopithecines**—even those considered to be our direct ancestors—should be relegated to a dead-end side branch in favor of *Orrorin*. Yet paleontologist David Begun of the University of Toronto has stated that scientists can't tell whether *Orrorin* was “on the line to humans, on the line to chimps, a common ancestor to both, or just an extinct side branch” (2001).

In 1994, Tim White and his coworkers described a new species known as *Australopithecus ramidus* (renamed a year later as *Ardipithecus ramidus*), which was dated at 4.4 million years. The August 1999 issue of *Time* contained a feature article, “Up From the Apes,” about the creature. When first found (and while still considered an australopithecine), morphologically this was the earliest, most ape-like australopithecine yet discovered, and thus seemed to be a good candidate for the most distant common ancestor of the hominids. Dr. White eventually admitted, however, that *A. ramidus* was not a missing link, but instead had numerous “chimp-like features.” A year later, Meave Leakey and colleagues described the 3.5-4.2 million-year-old *Australopithecus anamensis*, a taxon that bears striking similarities to *Ardipithecus* (an admitted chimp) and Pan (the actual genus of the chimpanzees). In 1997, researchers discovered another *Ardipithecus*—*A. ramidus kadabba*—which was dated at 5.8-5.2 million years old. [The original *Ardipithecus ramidus* then was renamed *A. ramidus ramidus*.] Once again, *Time* ran a cover story on this alleged “missing link” (in its July 23, 2001 issue). What was it that convinced evolutionists that *kadabba* walked upright and was on the road to becoming man? A single toe bone!

Then, in the March 22, 2001 issue of *Nature*, Meave Leakey and her co-authors announced the discovery of *Kenyanthropus platyops* (“flat-faced man of Kenya”). The authors described their finds as “a well-preserved temporal bone, two partial maxillae, isolated teeth, and most importantly a largely complete, **although distorted**, cranium” (410:433, emp. added). Leakey placed a tremendous amount of importance on the flatness of the facial features of this find, due to the widely acknowledged fact that more modern creatures supposedly possessed an admittedly flatter facial structure than their older, more ape-like alleged ancestors. This is no small problem, however, because creatures younger than *K. platyops*, and therefore closer to *Homo sapiens*, have much more pronounced, ape-like facial features. *K. platyops* was dated at 3.8 million years, and yet has a much flatter face than any other hominid that old. Thus, the evolutionary scenario seems to be moving in the wrong direction. Some have argued that *K. platyops* belongs more properly in the genus *Australopithecus*.

Australopithecus afarensis was discovered by Donald Johanson in 1974 at Hadar, Ethiopia. Dr. Johanson contends that this creature (known as “Lucy”) is the direct ancestor of man (see Johanson, 1981). Numerous evolutionists strongly disagree. Lord Solly Zuckerman, the famous British anatomist, published his views in his book, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*. He studied the australopithecines for more than 15 years and concluded that if man descended from an apelike ancestor, he did so without leaving a single trace in the fossil record (1970, p. 64). Some might say, “But Zuckerman’s work was done before Lucy was discovered.” True, but that misses the point. Zuckerman’s research—which established conclusively that the australopithecines were nothing but knuckle-walking apes—was performed on fossils **younger** (i.e., closer to man) than Lucy! If more recent finds are nothing but apes, how could an **older** specimen be “more human”? Charles Oxnard, while at the University of Chicago, reported his multivariate computer analysis, which documented that the australopithecines were nothing but knuckle-walking apes (1975, pp. 389-395). Then, in the April 1979 issue of *National Geographic*, Mary Leakey reported finding footprints—dated even older than Lucy at 3.6- 3.8 million years—that she admitted were “remarkably similar to those of modern man” (p. 446). If Lucy gave rise to humans, then how could humans have existed more than 500,000 years before her in order to make such footprints? [See Lubenow, 1992, pp. 45-58 for a detailed refutation of Lucy.]

What of *Homo habilis*? J.T. Robinson and David Pilbeam have long argued that *H. habilis* is the same as *A. africanus*. Louis Leakey (Richard’s father) even stated: “I submit that morphologically it is almost impossible to regard *Homo habilis* as representing a stage between *Australopithecus africanus* and *Homo erectus*” (1966, 209:1280-1281). Dr. Leakey later reported the contemporaneous existence of *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *H. erectus* fossils at Olduvai Gorge (see M.D. Leakey, 1971, 3:272). Even more startling was Mary Leakey’s discovery of the remains of a circular stone hut at the bottom of Bed I at Olduvai Gorge—**beneath** fossils of *H. habilis*! Evolutionists have long attributed the deliberate manufacture of shelter only to *Homo sapiens*, yet Dr. Leakey discovered the australopithecines and *H. habilis* together with manufactured housing. As Duane Gish asked: “If *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* existed contemporaneously, how could one have been ancestral to another? And how could any of these creatures be ancestral to Man, when Man’s artifacts are found at a lower stratigraphic level, directly underneath, and thus earlier in time to these supposed ancestors of Man?” (1995, p. 271). Good question!

And what about *Homo erectus*? Examine a copy of the November 1985 issue of *National Geographic* and see if you can detect any differences between the pictures of *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* (pp. 576-577). The fact is, there are no recognizable differences. As Ernst Mayr, the famed evolutionary taxonomist of Harvard remarked: “The *Homo erectus* stage is characterized by

a body skeleton which, so far as we know, does not differ from that of modern man in any essential point” (1965, p. 632). The fossil evidence for evolution (human or otherwise) simply is not there. Apes always have been apes, and humans always have been humans.

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Questions—Lesson 9

TRUE OR FALSE

DIRECTIONS: Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks before the following statements.

- _____ 1. If evolution were true, there would be a sudden “explosion” of diverse and highly complex forms in the fossil record.
- _____ 2. Scientists frequently find animals in the fossil record that are half reptile/half mammal.
- _____ 3. The fossil record provides good proof of evolution.
- _____ 4. A plethora of “missing links” has been found in the fossil record.
- _____ 5. *Australopithecus afarensis* (a.k.a. “Lucy”) is not a direct ancestor of man.
- _____ 6. Evolutionists are in agreement on which “family tree” to accept.
- _____ 7. The interpretation of the fossil record by creationists and evolutionists is very similar.
- _____ 8. There are no recognizable differences between the bones of *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer(s).

- 1. According to evolution, what should be found in the fossil record?
 - (a) Absence of transitional forms
 - (b) Explosion of many life forms
 - (c) Fully formed life appearing suddenly
 - (d) Transitional forms
- 2. Which of the following is actually found in the fossil record?
 - (a) Fully formed life appearing suddenly
 - (b) Transitional forms
 - (c) Older rocks with only “primitive” forms of life
 - (d) Only younger rocks exhibit “complex” forms of life

3. Evidence from the fossil record supports which of the following?
(a) An ancient Earth (b) Evolution
(c) Creation (d) Neither evolution nor creation
4. *Ramapithecus* turned out to be which of the following?
(a) Human (b) Fish
(c) Bird (d) Ape
5. The creation model predicts all of the following except:
(a) Both older and younger rocks containing “complex” forms of life
(b) Transitional forms
(c) Explosion of life forms (d) Absence of transitional forms

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. If there is ever to be any physical evidence for _____, it will have to come from the _____ record.
2. In the May 1982 issue of *Science Digest*, Lyall Watson wrote: “The physical evidence we have for _____ evolution can still be placed, with room to spare, inside a _____ _____.”
3. If the fossil record is to offer support for evolution, it must demonstrate a clear-cut sequence of fully functional _____ forms.
4. Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould has stated that the absence of any fossil intermediary stages has remained a “_____ and nagging _____ for gradualistic accounts of evolution.”
5. Apes always have been _____, and _____ always have been humans.

MATCHING

Match the ideas on the left with the terms on the right (place the correct letter in the space provided by each number).

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 1. | This man wrote <i>The Origin of Species</i> | A. | <i>Ardipithecus ramidus</i> |
| 2. | Sometimes called the “missing links” | B. | Leakey |
| 3. | The lowest layer of the geologic time table | C. | Charles Darwin |
| 4. | The fossil record fits this model perfectly | D. | Lucy |
| 5. | Was dated at 4.4 million years | E. | Transitional forms |
| 6. | Nickname given to <i>Australopithecus afarensis</i> | F. | <i>Aegyptopithecus zeuxis</i> |
| 7. | The famed fossil-hunting family in Africa | G. | Precambrian strata |
| 8. | What Richard Leakey called “the first ape to emerge from the Old World monkey stock” | H. | Creation model |

NOTES/COMMENTS

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