

The Early-Date Genesis Man

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The question of man's origin, which is closely related to the age of man on this planet, is not only pertinent but of fundamental importance to the kind of impact Christianity is making upon a non-Christian world. For instance, some years ago many Christian young people in the area of Latin America where I was living were confused on this subject, having been told by their pastors that belief in any kind of evolution was incompatible with Scripture and therefore incompatible with being a Christian. One survey showed that as many as three-fourths of the young people were lost to the evangelical community after they had come under the concentrated influence of the secular university's teaching of a materialistic interpretation [of] man and his origin.

In response, a group of Christian university students encouraged me to offer an open course related to the origin of man from a theistic viewpoint — in a local Marxist-oriented university. Interestingly enough, this series of some twenty lectures was well received by both students and faculty. The lectures took both the Bible and science seriously. As a result of the interest generated in this topic, the university published the entire lecture series, which actually presented a non-evolutionary alternative view of man's origin.

It seems that the best approach to this subject is to assume a humble and respectful attitude toward the findings of science and the facts of Scripture. In other words, our attitude is to be that of 1 Peter 3:15 — "Be always ready with your defense whenever you are called to account for the hope that is in you, but make that defense with modesty and respect" (NEB). And we should be really sure of the facts of both science and Scripture, realizing that God is the author of the

natural laws discovered by science just as he is of his revelation in the biblical record. Therefore there can be no real discrepancy between the two. I have found over the years that scientists are, for the most part, addressing themselves to a different set of questions than theologians. Scientific researchers are more interested in discovering *how* it all came about rather than in the deeper and more fundamental question of *why* man — to which the Bible clearly speaks.

Scientists are not automatically biased against facts that do not necessarily support their theories. While doing graduate work in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania a few years ago, I could not help being impressed by the intellectual honesty of my professors and their genuine humility about what science could not tell us about man's origin as well as what it *could* tell us. When the facts did not support the assumed theory, they often readily admitted it. The strongest arguments I ever heard against evolution occurred while I was doing graduate work at Penn, because my professor, though an evolutionist, honestly presented both sides of the question.

With this background, let's now look at some of the facts of science as they relate to the question of the age of man upon earth. As a student of prehistory who lived in the Andean area of South America for many years, I have had opportunity to do archaeological fieldwork on a number of early-man sites, which date man earlier than 10,000 years ago (Kornfield, 1972); to my knowledge there are approximately 300 lithic workshops-campsites in the Andes that antedate Abraham by several thousand years. Consistent series of carbon-14 datings of organic materials found in association with artifacts and/or morphologically modern skeletal remains indicate that man is old even in the New World. The famous Folsom projectile point from Colorado, clearly dated in the 9,000-10,000-year range, was so skillfully made that present-day scientists have spent years — and with little real success — attempting to replicate this magnificently engineered spearpoint (Crabtree, 1966). It appears that the Folsom point represents the mind of a human being every bit as ingenious and as capable as we are today. A good number of prehistoric early-man sites have been discovered in the New World that are in the 10,000-12,000-year range (Jennings and Norbeck, 1964; Willey, 1966; Lynch, 1967; Rowe, 1967; Ravines, 1970). More recently a Harvard scientist's carefully controlled excavations near Ayacucho in the Peruvian highlands give strong evidence that man was probably living in the Andean area of South America 20,000 years ago (MacNeish, 1971). All skeletal remains found in conjunction with early-man sites in the New World are of fully modern man.

Neanderthal man (*Homo sapiens*), whose morphological variations are found among modern man today (Brace, 1964), is generally considered to have existed

between 40,000 and 70,000 years ago, with consistent radiometric determinations on a number of finds in the 40,000-to-45,000-year range — such as Shanidar man in Iraq and several of the Mount Carmel finds from Palestine (Braidwood, 1964; Brace, 1964, 1967; Howell, 1968). While the general skeletal and facial structure and dentition of Neanderthal appear to be more rugged than those of most modern men today, Brace (1964) says that “no one of these differences is outside the range of variation of modern man” and that “there is reason to believe that they were at least as intelligent as modern man, if not more so” (1967). Birdsell (1972) observes that there is “little reason to doubt that these early Europeans were intellectually as bright as present-day ones.” Binford (1969) has also observed, “Once considered to be a species separate from ourselves, Neanderthal man is generally accepted today as a historical subspecies of fully modern man. A great deal of archaeological evidence collected in recent years strongly suggests that the behavioral capacities of Neanderthal man were not markedly different from our own.” On the basis of his completely erect posture, a cranial capacity every bit as great as (and sometimes greater than) that of modern man, and the fact that his skeletal remains have been found in direct association with cultural artifacts and ceremonial burials, present-day anthropologists now consider Neanderthal man as *Homo sapiens*.

Nevertheless, whatever differences of opinion may still be held by a few scientists as to Neanderthal man’s being an integral part of our own species, there is decided unanimity as to the completely modern nature of Cro-Magnon man, who made his appearance approximately 35,000 years ago in Europe (Brace, 1967; Braidwood, 1964; Birdsell, 1972; Howell, 1968). From about 25,000 to 10,000 years ago there are abundant skeletal remains — including complete skeletons — of Cro-Magnon man, a superbly built specimen of modern man. Then in another part of the world, Australia, there are confirmed early-man sites with accurate carbon-14 samplings that go back at least 16,000 years (Mulvaney, 1966).

From these observations, I would project Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon man as being modern man, as evidenced not only by morphological criteria but by the artifacts he left behind, which are of far-reaching significance: bone awls and needles, excellently manufactured pressure-flaked tools and burial goods found in association with planned burials of different types (Bordes, 1968; Braidwood, 1964; Birdsell, 1972; Howell, 1968). One of the most striking finds of early man is that of Shanidar in Iraq, who was buried upon a bed of hyacinths and hollyhocks and then covered with floral wreaths of similar flowers (Birdsell, 1972). Does not man do much the same thing in funerals today? Confirmed radiocarbon datings of Shanidar man consistently place him over 40,000 years old (Brace, 1967; Howell, 1968). Another evidence of modern man in the Paleolithic is seen

in the magnificent Aurignacian cave murals of 30,000 years ago (Howell, 1968; Comas, 1962; Leroi-Gourhan, 1968). Considering the beautiful Solutrean laurel-leaf projectile points with delicately tooled pressure-flaked edges, the wide selection of other skillfully made implements in the Paleolithic period of Europe, together with the abstract nature of highly developed cave paintings, one cannot help being impressed with the quality of the being that was responsible for these cultural artifacts. These were certainly human qualities.

As to the possibility that *Homo sapiens* or modern man is older still, there seems to be some evidence in this direction: the sapiens nature of the Steinheim, Swanscombe, and Fontechevade finds (Brace, 1964, 1967; McKern, 1966; Birdsell, 1972), as well as the more recently discovered Vertesszollos human fossil remains (Scientific Research, 1967; Birdsell, 1972). It should be pointed out, however, that all these earlier dated finds not only are fragmentary but are based on relative methods of geological dating; therefore, unlike Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon man, their absolute chronology cannot be confirmed at this stage of investigation.

In view of how much has often been read into Scripture that is really not there, it is significant to know not only what Genesis tells us about man's origin but also what it leaves unsaid. For example, what about an actual description of Adam's physical features from the Genesis account of man's creation? Could he have been a Neanderthal — in other words, a perfectly legitimate variation of modern man? What about his color? What does the Bible actually say? Was he black, yellow, brown, white, or none of these? Do we really know anything about his race?

Then what about the crucial question that is before us in this essay, the time in which he made his appearance on this planet? I must take exception to Robert Brow's statements that "the Bible tells us that this kind of person was created suddenly in comparatively recent times, let us say roughly 3900 B.C. . . . Given Abraham's dates as 1952-1777 B.C., the closely interlocking chronology of Genesis 11 would place the biblical flood at 2244 B.C., and the dates of Genesis 5 if we take them literally then place the origin of Genesis man as 3900 B.C." (Brow, 1972). There is certainly a difference of opinion among biblical scholars as to Brow's way for assessing the date for Adam. Samuel Schultz of Wheaton College points out, "Nowhere do the Scriptures indicate how much time elapsed in Genesis 1-11. . . . Regardless of what date man may approximate for the beginning of the human race it is still within the scope of the scriptural account. . . . By using the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to calculate time Bishop Ussher (1654) dated the creation of man at 4004 B.C. This date is untenable since genealogies did not represent a complete chronology" (Schultz, 1970). Francis Schaeffer re-

inforces this: "Prior to the time of Abraham, there is no possible way to date the history of what we find in Scripture. . . . When the Bible itself reaches back and picks up events and genealogies in the time before Abraham, it never uses these early genealogies as a chronology. It never adds up these numbers for dating" (Schaeffer, 1972). Old Testament scholars also recognize that the numbers given in these genealogies vary in the Massoretic, Samaritan, and LXX texts so that we cannot be sure just what the original manuscripts stated in this regard. If one day is really as "a thousand years" and "a thousand years as one day" with the Lord (2 Peter 3:8), then why couldn't Adam have been a Neanderthal — as the Mount Carmel caves of modern skeletal remains may indicate — and lived 50,000 years ago? It seems significant that the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to give more detailed answers to these questions in the Genesis account of creation. If the reader should choose to ignore Neanderthal man as a legitimate human being, created in the image of God, what about Cro-Magnon man, who lived at least 30,000 years ago and whose every indication is 100 percent modern? Then of course there are the many early-man sites of morphologically modern man in the New World that clearly antedate 10,000 B.C. In the light of these facts, is the 3900 B.C. date projected in the "Late-Date Genesis Man" article really tenable?

A word about a so-called pre-Adamic "race" is also in order as this concept is mentioned by several evangelical theologians, including Brow. There is, however, no real basis for this in Scripture, as Brow himself points out: "It is wise to remind ourselves that the Bible tells us nothing whatever about the first animals that stood upright, or that may have looked like men. The Bible begins with a very particular species of person. Let us call him Genesis Man. This is the race that began with Adam." The concept of a pre-Adamic creature looking like man but not being man appears to be a way of avoiding implications of all the fossil and cultural evidence for the existence of man early in time. I find it most difficult to believe that God would make a being so very much like us physically and mentally, with a definite cultural tradition, along with a capacity to bury the dead in a carefully planned ritual manner, that yet was not created in His image. This type of culture-bearing being is exemplified in both Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon man, and this would, on the basis of the evidence at our disposal, qualify him as being part of the Adamic race. As Dr. Schultz recently told me, he sees no problem in postulating the creation of Genesis man 50,000 years ago (personal interview, 1973). In view of the significant amount of modern skeletal remains found in clear association with definite cultural artifacts early in time, it is increasingly difficult to understand how present-day evangelicals can still hold to an Ussher type of chronology for the creation of man.

It appears that the major problem of the time of man's origin lies more in the area of interpretation than in a reconciliation of facts for or against a specific theory. The problem becomes more acute when scientists attempt to push the evidence too far by stating, for example, the concept of evolution as "fact," or, on the other hand, when theologians attempt to push the Scriptures too far into science and thus beyond that which the Holy Spirit intended. A case in point is Luther's remark that Copernicus, who later became the father of modern science, erred in his "stupid notion" that the earth revolves around the sun since the "Scriptures (Joshua 10:12) prove that the sun goes around the earth" (MacKay, 1965)!

As far as science is concerned, noted physical anthropologist Loren Eiseley warns us that "the gap between man and ape is not as the early Darwinians saw it — a slight step between a gorilla and a Papuan. . . . Instead, it stretches broad and deep as time itself. . . . The key to the secret doorway by which he [man] came into the world is still unknown. The fortunate thing in terms of modern anthropology is that we know the disparity between man and ape is great, not small" (Eiseley, 1955). What distinguishes man from the rest of the primate world and makes him unique is his brain size (more than three times greater than that of the gorilla), his tool-making ability (one of the great hallmarks of man), and his complex language (there is no such thing as a "primitive" language anywhere on earth). Only man has culture, which for a number of anthropologists constitutes a difference in kind rather than degree from the animal world. It would seem that God made Adam separate from the primate world with all his physical, mental, moral, and spiritual characteristics present at the same time.

One wonders, nevertheless, about the mind-set of Moses when he gave us that beautiful description of man at the top of God's creative order. In fact, would it be so far out to say that possibly the Holy Spirit was not really addressing himself to twentieth-century scientific theory at all but rather to God's great purpose for man on the earth?

I conclude by saying that man is unique in the animal world and that his uniqueness is best reflected in the fact that he alone was made in the image of God. As a student of prehistory and physical anthropology I see that same kind of uniqueness in Neanderthal man, Cro-Magnon man, and the many examples of early man in the New World — whose burial offerings and cave murals seem to indicate an intelligent belief in the supernatural, whose cranial capacities and skeletal morphology are clearly within the scope of present-day man and whose skills were highly developed. All this, in my opinion, places Genesis man early and not late in time. Is it then really necessary to have a late-date Genesis man to substantiate one's faith?

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