

# Lying in the name of God

## The misadventures of creationists with Man's ancestors

Jean Staune

**Philosopher of science, Jean Staune confirms that evolution is an indisputable fact that should not be confused with Darwinism. Based on the research of leading palaeontologists such as Stephen Jay Gould and Simon Conway-Morris or on the work of Nobel Prize recipient Christian de Duve, Jean Staune presents an alternative to Darwinism compatible with the idea that evolution is a process leading, sooner or later, to beings like us, with a consciousness of their own existence ... And able to seek God.**

### **The misadventures of creationists with Man's ancestors [1]**

If there is one point on which *all* creationists agree, is that there are no intermediate fossils between apes and Man (or to be more rigorous, between the common ancestors of apes and Man, and modern humans). Whether they are Muslim like Harun Yahya or Catholic like Dominique Tassot, their strategy is always the same: reclassify all existing fossils either as apes or as purely sapiens human beings, a method which allows to eliminate all intermediaries. Problems start when we need to know in which category we put a given fossil.

It must be recognized that the creationists are not the only ones to whom this situation brings great perplexity. The extremely fragmented pieces of some skeletons are sometimes very difficult to classify and opinions about them can differ from one specialist to another. But this is understandable since, for classic palaeontology, there is a filiation from *Australopithecus* to *Homo sapiens*, going through *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*. It is therefore normal that there are sometimes hesitations, but these doubts should not exist for creationists since, for them, there is a clear break between apes and human beings. As stated by Tassot himself: "Let us conclude this rapid review of "intermediaries" between man and animal by noting that the difference is more clear-cut than ever," If the difference is so obvious, no doubts should remain.

*Australopithecus* are not a problem for creationists; they are apes, which, for Dominique Tassot as for Harun Yahya, were not able to walk upright. *Homo habilis*, too close to *Australopithecus*, can also only be a species of monkey that disappeared. But the creationist consensus disappears when we reach *Homo erectus*. It is doubtless an ancient human race for Harun Yahya: "All the fossils included in this species belong to particular human races" [3]. Whereas for Dominique Tassot: "No *Homo Erectus* withstands analysis under the triple relationship of the reality of fossils, bipedalism and the ancestral link to Man" [4]

And this situation gets worse if we look at things more broadly. A critic of creationism had the idea to put on a same figure the classifications given for the same fossils by half a dozen creationist authors (see Figure 1). The result shows that for known *Homo erectus*, such as the Java Man, the Peking Man or the ER 1470 fossil found in Kenya, and to which we will return, half of the authors clearly consider them as apes and the other half, clearly as men. We can deduce that these are excellent transitional fossils. We can, without any humour, say that one fossil is a transitional

fossil (a former missing link) between species A and species B, when a number of creationists say that it is purely a fossil of species A and other creationists say it is purely a fossil of species B. Because it then stands that the fossil in question relates *both* to the characteristics of species A and B and that each creationist only focuses on some of these characteristics while refusing to see the others.

**Creationist Classifications of Hominid Fossils**

Specimen		Creationist Classifications						
		Cuozzo (1998)	Gish (1985)	Mehlert (1996)	Bowden (1981) Menton (1988) Taylor (1992) Gish (1979)	Baker (1976) Taylor and Van Bebbler (1995)	Taylor (1996) Lubencow (1992)	
	ER 1813 (510 cc)	Ape	Ape	Ape	Ape	Ape	Ape	
	Java (940 cc)	Ape	Ape	Human	Ape	Ape	Human	
	Peking (915-1225 cc)	Ape	Ape	Human	Ape	Human	Human	
	ER 1470 (750 cc)	Ape	Ape	Ape	Human	Human	Human	
	ER 3733 (850 cc)	Ape	Human	Human	Human	Human	Human	
	WT 15000 (880 cc)	Ape	Human	Human	Human	Human	Human	

**Figure 1. Analysis of the differences among creationists regarding the classification of certain fossils.**

For Tassot the skull 1470 is completely human "Richard Leakey made in 1973 a troubling discovery: among scattered debris of Australopithecus, a human skull (Skull 1470)." Using (and this is of course his right) the dispute among specialists who, for some, see in the 1470 a *Homo habilis*, if not an Australopithecus, Harun Yahya triumphantly concludes his analysis by saying that it is a species of ape. The only problem is that he presents immediately afterward a *Homo erectus*, whose skeleton was found almost complete, the WT 15000. Harun Yahya correctly notes that there is no difference between the post-cranial skeleton of modern man and that of *Homo*

*erectus* [5]. The problem is that this fossil has a skull of 910 cm<sup>3</sup> capacity [6], whereas the 1470 skull has an estimated capacity of 750 to 780 cm<sup>3</sup>. The least one can say when you look at both skulls (see Figure 2) is that there is not any obvious difference between the two skulls. They are no longer apes, but neither are they yet human like us.



**Figure 2. The skull of WT 15000 (left) and of the KN 1470 (right). For Harun Yahya the first is the skull of a man nearly identical to that of a modern Man and the second is clearly an ape.**

Where these attempts to remove these transitional forms turn frankly comical, is when we see the contradictions that exist within an author. Thus, Dominique Tassot writes: "We therefore refuse the designation "Homo" to these beings of low cranial capacity (Australopithecus) or intermediate (Homo Erectus). It is not enough to call "Homo Erectus" a being of cranial capacity lower than 1200 cm<sup>3</sup> to endow it with consciousness" [7].

So things are clear. For Dominique Tassot, beings equipped with a brain less than 1200 cm<sup>3</sup> cannot belong to the genus Homo.

But we have seen that he considered the skull 1470 as that of a man (not even a primitive man), although the latter has a cranial capacity of ... 750 cm<sup>3</sup>, that is to say that it would be absurd to consider it as a man according to the definition given by Tassot.

Another obsession of creationists, is to show that *Homo Sapiens* is the oldest possible, that it already existed, not 150,000 years ago 1 or 2 million years ago. Thus Tassot also writes: "In 1978 Donald Johanson exuded in the Afar desert a whole family of "*Homo Sapiens*" fleeing from a great flood, dated 3 million years."

The discovery in the same layer as Lucy, the famous Australopithecus, of a family of *Homo sapiens* would of course be an incredible discovery, invalidating the theory of Evolution. But the wicked Darwinian palaeontologists would probably be good at keeping silent, once again misinforming the public: "Of course the giant flood and the human Johanson family will remain unknown to the public." In fact, when we look in some detail at this discovery, we realize that the supposedly "*Homo sapiens*" discovery amount to teeth or pieces of bone which may be attributed to either Australopithecus or to the more primitive *Homo* that are, that is to say, *Homo habilis*, those that Tassot rejects with no hesitation from the human family. These fragments are accompanied by a skull, AL 333 105, of a cranial capacity of 320 cm<sup>3</sup> which would probably have reached 400 cm<sup>3</sup> in adulthood [8]. A skull of such low capacity belongs of course to Australopithecus and, as we have seen, according to the criteria of Tassot himself, it would be of utmost absurdity to consider it as part of the family

*Sapiens.*

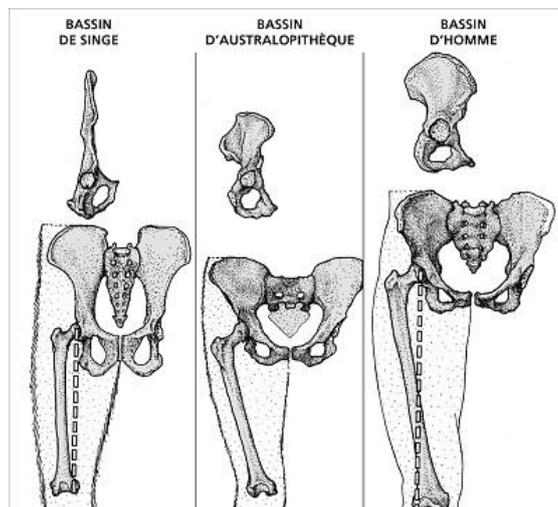
As to the great flood, which in the Tassot's mind refers of course to the Flood, it is the rupture of a natural dam which led to the drowning of this Australopithecus family.

### **When creationists oblige Australopithecus to crawl**

In their desire to show that Australopithecus is not an intermediate species between apes and Man, all creationists insist on the fact that Australopithecus could not walk upright, but that he moved like apes. In fact, it is exactly the opposite that is true. The Australopithecines were forced to walk upright. Their bipedalism certainly was not as perfect as ours, but to NOT walk upright would have inflicted the worst torments on them as shown in Figure 3. Indeed, the pelvis of chimpanzees is all in length, because when the chimpanzee moves, he does not need his upper body to be "carried" by his pelvis. Man, on the contrary, has a very characteristic pelvis, in the shape of a cup, and on which all the upper part of his body rests. This is a characteristic sign of bipedalism. However, the pelvis of Australopithecus, to starting with the famous Lucy, is much closer to that of man than that of the chimpanzee, as shown in Figure 3. Another argument that confirms the bipedalism of Australopithecus and of all other *Homo habilis* species that creationists want to reclassify as quadrupeds monkeys, is the position of the foramen magnum. This hole is located below the skull in Australopithecus while it goes backward of the skull in apes as in all other quadrupeds. This is evidence that the backbone of these beings was located below the head and not at its rear as in chimpanzees and that they were therefore bipeds.

Harun Yahya has published drawings of human pelvises and chimpanzee pelvises, as well as of Lucy pelvis [9]. It thus gives himself to the somewhat attentive readers of his book evidence that Australopithecus could only be bipeds. This does not prevent him to write about Lucy: "The latest research has shown that she was an ordinary ape who could not walk upright. " And again: "The great similarity between the skeletal and cranial structures of australopithecines and chimpanzees, in addition to the established evidence that these creatures did not walk upright, has caused enormous difficulties for paleoanthropologists [10]».

Yet we have just had evidence that Australopithecus walked indeed upright and that in addition, the structure of their skulls differed from chimpanzees on a crucial point, the foramen magnum being directed downwards and not to the rear.



**Figure 3. From the left: the pelvis of a chimpanzee, of an Australopithecus and of a human. The proximity of the latter two is obvious.**

In a final attempt to show that human beings like us have lived 3.6 million years ago, which would deeply disrupt the current accepted chronology for the origin of our species, Harun Yahya mentions the Laetoli footprints. These footprints are the oldest evidence of bipedal walking (see Figure 4). These footprints have been left in a layer of ash deposited by a volcano, layer that became fossilized and subsequently solidified. Amidst various animal prints, we can find traces of three bipedal hominids, one putting its footsteps inside another's', something that animals don't a-priori do. These prints continue on a sufficiently long distance to ensure that they don't belong to those of apes who, on short distances, can sometimes walk in a bipedal manner. Harun Yahya says: "The Laetoli footprints were not different from those that would have been left by a man today. Examination of the morphological form of the footprints have shown once again that these footprints were human, and even more, those of a man of our days. [11]. "

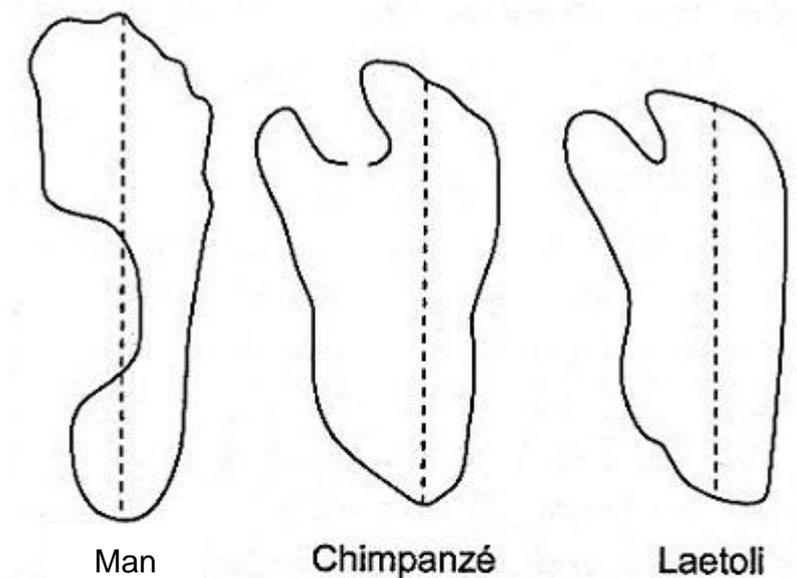


**Figure 4 The Laetoli footprints dated 3.5 million years. They were left by bipedal beings in volcanic ash.**

After so many disappointments, after discovering that there were no footprints of men mixed with those of dinosaurs, that the family of Homo Sapiens fleeing a great flood was instead Australopithecus, that numerous fossils considered as "men" were instead extremely primitive (the 1470s, the WT 15000), could creationists finally reach their Grail? Could they finally base their belief on a fact, even a single, small, irrefutable fact, showing the falsity of current timelines? Well, no, they missed again! Precisely because the Laetoli footprints are exactly the opposite of what Harun Yahya and other creationists say about them, this is one of the best physical evidence there is, about the existence of an intermediate species between man and

apes! Indeed, as shown by Yvette Deloison, foot specialist who has especially studied these prints: "They present characters that are not human: hallux varus (the big toe deviates inwards), presence of large space between the first toe and the four laterals, more marked sinking of the external edge of the foot indicating a leaning in varus, narrow heel and hollow in surface, not foot arch but instead a bulge reflecting the significant development of the retractor muscle of the first toe (musculus abductor hallucis brevis) developed in the foot of the great apes, but never of humans[12]". For those who could be confused by these technical terms, it must be said that the difference can be seen with the naked eye. Not when we look at the pathways left behind by the hominids themselves (Figure 4), but when we close-up on the traces and compare them to a human foot (Figure 5). Thus we see all the difference, among others, at the level of the position of the thumb, between the being who left these footprints and modern humans. Furthermore, when we compare (Figure 5) the general form of human footprints, with those left by chimpanzees and those of Laetoli, we realize that they are almost equivalent to those of a chimpanzee. Yet no ape could have left such a tracing of bipedal walking which, while not perfect, is much closer to what Man can do than to what a chimpanzee can do.

Thus, the beings who left the footprints at Laetoli are perfectly intermediary between the chimpanzee and us. Capable of a bipedalism close to ours, they still have feet whose shape is close to that of a great ape. Is there no such a being ? It is Australopithecus of course, whose pelvis, we saw, forced him to be bipedal, but who still exhibited numerous simian characteristics. You may not be surprised to learn that the bones of Australopithecus have been found in layers dating from periods similar to those where those footprints have been found. We have thereby a new proof of the bipedalism of Australopithecus and its nature of intermediates between apes and humans, and this, with those very fossilised traces that are used by many creationists to rebut evolutionary patterns [13].

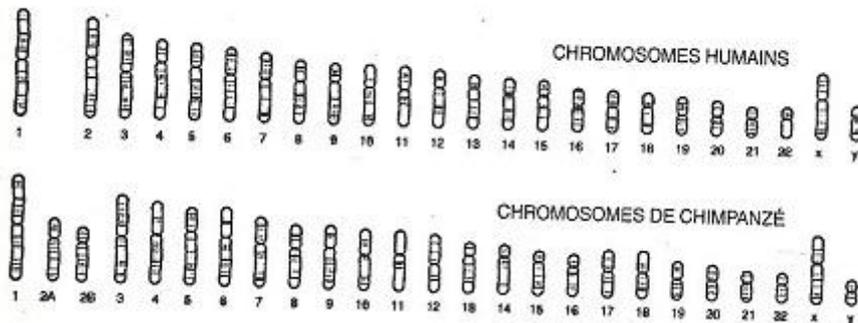


**Figure 5. Comparison of human, chimpanzee and Laetoli footprints left there 3.5 million years ago**

### These great ape chromosomes in us

Beyond the existence of a whole series of intermediate species, of the development of bipedalism in Australopithecus, of the existence of *Homo habilis* or beings whose brain was barely larger than Australopithecus, then of the *Homo erectus* exhibiting brains of all sizes ranging from 800 to 1200 cm<sup>3</sup>, how can we really be sure, beyond possible doubt, that indeed we descend from primates and that we share a common ancestor with chimpanzees and other apes?

An extraordinary proof exists. Humans have 23 pairs of chromosomes, and apes, including chimpanzees, have 24. So we have in us 46 chromosomes, while chimpanzees have 48 (see Figure 6). I remember reading a creationist who drew from it an argument against the passage of primates to man. How can we move from 48 to 46 chromosomes he asked? "By the merging of two pairs of chromosomes," seems to be an obvious answer. However, each chromosome has a very special structure. In its centre is a centromere that plays an important role in replication, while we can find at both its extremities specific structures called telomeres (see Figure 7).

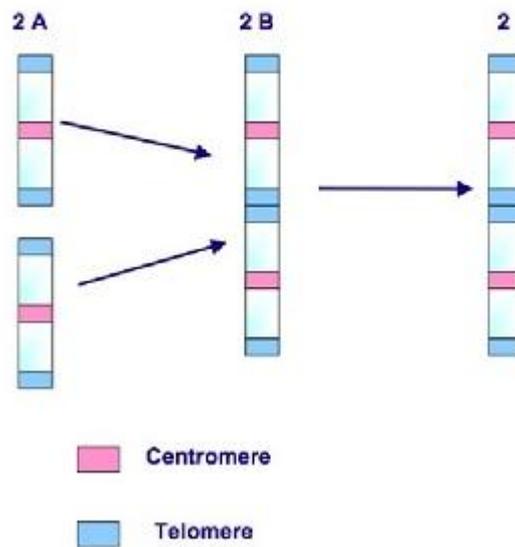


**Figure 6. Chromosomes of humans and chimpanzees. Note their striking resemblance in size and number, with one notable exception: the human chromosome 2 seems to be composed of a direct fusion between two intermediary-sized chromosomes of chimpanzee (here named 2A and 2B)**

The chromosomes 2A and 2B of chimpanzee are small, whereas chromosome 2 in humans is large (see Figure 6). And what do you think was found by closely analysing the chromosome 2? That it had four telomeres, two at the extremities and two at its centre, and two centromeres located one quarter of the distance separating them from each end. Icing on the cake, one of the two centromeres was "disconnected", and it is fortunate, because otherwise it would be like having a car with two steering wheels that could rotate in two different directions at the same time. Of course, the only explanation for this unique structure of the human chromosome 2, which is not found in any other chromosome of man or apes, is that there has been a merging of the two chromosomes inherited from the common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees in the lineage that led to us (see Figure 7). No other non-evolutionist explanation can be taken into account here, except to hypothesize that a

"trickster God" did everything to make us believe that an evolution from primates had taken place whereas He would have instead created Man separately, with a chromosome containing two centromeres and four telomeres, exactly where the apes have two chromosomes, with two telomeres and one centromere each, an impossible position to defend for a believer [14].

The chromosomes 2A and 2B of the chimpanzee merge to become chromosome 2 in Man



**Figure 7. The human chromosome 2 is formed from the fusion of chromosomes 2A and 2B of chimpanzees (left) as shown by its structure, unique among human or apes chromosomes, consisting of four telomeres and two centromeres (right) instead of two telomeres and one centromere as all other chromosomes.**

## Conclusion

We saw in the first part of this article that we had evidence, beyond all reasonable doubt, that there has been an evolution allowing different types of living beings to appear progressively the one from the other. And we have seen that the emergence of Man is also part of this process. Is that why we must accept the idea developed by many Darwinians that we are only the accidental result of a random process?

Of course not! As I emphasized at the beginning, we have to differentiate between evolution and Darwinism, that is to say, between a fact and a mechanism postulated to explain this fact. Yet a different conception of evolution from the Darwinian concept of evolution is possible. In the Darwinian view, the space of possible forms is immense. And each of the events that succeeded in history to allow these forms to appear occurred by chance (random mutations sorted by natural selection).

In such a conception, if evolution were to recur on a planet similar to Earth, it would give completely different results. That is why for a palaeontologist of the stature of Stephen Jay Gould, the appearance of man is an epiphenomenon. But a palaeontologist of similar stature, namely Simon Conway Morris, as well as the Nobel Prize recipient in Medicine Christian de Duve, have developed an alternative view of evolution, in which chance is channelled by laws of physics, which means that evolution would lead more or less to the same results on a planet similar to Earth.

This changes everything, as if this conception of evolution is correct, it is perfectly compatible with the idea that evolution is a process that is to lead sooner or later to beings like us, with the consciousness of their own existence ... And able to seek God.

But how to decide? We do not have a second Earth where evolution can be started over. This is where the concept of "convergence" developed by Simon Conway Morris comes into play. We can observe on Earth that *identical* complex structures appear throughout evolution in very different species, when the common ancestor of these species do not have this structure. There are numerous forms of eyes in living beings. We have, like all vertebrates, a particular type of eye (called "camera eye"), because it "focuses" the same way as a camera does. But this eye has appeared in evolution independently in a species of snail, in the squid, in a spider, and even in a jellyfish lacking brain. While the common ancestor of all these organisms was a bacterium, of course devoid of eyes, and the cousins of these cited organisms have, they, very different eyes from ours.

Without proving anything, it gives strong credibility to this notion of repeatable evolution. And therefore, to the fact that beings like us were, in some way, "expected".

Thus, the notion of evolution is perfectly acceptable for believers, because it may be the process chosen by God to create, provided, of course, that we are able to go beyond classical Darwinian conceptions. What is also important to remember for believers is that creationists, whether they are Muslims or Christians, ridicule the faith they claim to defend and provide important arguments to atheists. As we have shown here, almost every statement they make against evolution (not those against Darwinism) are not only false, but also sometimes based on facts that are excellent evidence for evolution!

It is impossible for believers to defend what they believe to be the truth with lies. That is why it is important for every believer to understand these questions scientifically, to study the evidence for evolution and alternative theories to Darwinism. Those who wish to do so may refer to my book "Beyond Darwin: a new vision of life" (French version: "*Au-delà de Darwin : pour une nouvelle vision de la vie*", published by Editions Jacqueline Chambon 2009) or to the Appendix of my latest book "*La science en otage*", Presses de la Renaissance 2010.

[1] This is an ironic allusion to the title of Chapter 3 of the book by Dominique Tassot titled "At the image of God" (« à l'image de Dieu »), *Les mésaventures des ancêtres de l'homme*, Editions Saint Albert, 1991.

[2] Dominique Tassot, *A l'image de Dieu*, Editions Saint Albert, 1991, p. 91

[3] Harun Yahya, Atlas of Creation, FRENCH EDITION, p. 649

ALL QUOTATIONS from Harun Yahya are translated from the French edition, pages numbers refer to this edition

[4] Tassot, *Op. cit.*, p. 80

[5] If we wanted to be rigorous, we would have to say, of course, no major differences.

[6] In fact, it is the estimation of what its cranial volume would have been at an adult stage, since it was a teenager with a skull of 880 cm<sup>3</sup>. See the following reference, accessible on the internet for further details: *Human Fossil Record: Brain Endocasts—Paleoneurological Evidence*, Ralph L. Holloway, Douglas C. Broadfield, Michael S. Yuan, Jeffrey H. Schwartz, Ian Tattersall, John Wiley & Sons, 2004, see p. 139.

[7] Tassot, *Op. cit.*, p. 90

[8] See *Human Fossil Record: Brain Endocasts—Paleoneurological Evidence*, *Op. cit.*, p. 45

[9] Harun Yahya, p 657 and 643

[10] Harun Yahya, p. 643 and 644

[11] Harun Yahya, *Op. cit.*, p. 654

[12] Footprints of Laétoli, Tanzania *Biom. Hum. and Anthropology* 2004, 22, 1-2, p. 61-65. Deloison Y. Can be consulted online at:

<http://www.hominides.com/html/references/empreintes-pas-laetoli-deloisson.php>

[13] Harun Yahya and other creationists have an excuse: there has been at least one professional palaeontologist, Russell Tuttle, found to have said: "In all visible morphological characteristics, it is impossible to differentiate the feet that have left these marks from those of modern humans". As I have myself studied these footprints, being among others the student of Yvette Deloison from the National Museum of Natural History, I must say that I do not understand how a serious scientist could say such a thing, so much do the differences jump at you as a notice, and even increase when you look more carefully at technical details (see the quote by Yvette Deloison in the text). This shows us that there are not only creationists that make enormous erroneous statements.

[14] For a detailed study about the chromosome 2, see the book *Only A Theory*, Ken Miller p. 103 - 107. A less detailed version also exists in French, in the book of Francis Collins *De la génétique à Dieu*, Presses de la Renaissance, 2010, p.128 - 134. English Version: *The Language of God*.