

## *Chapter 1*

# *The Problem Won't Go Away 100 Years After Darwin*

There is a widespread and ever-escalating interest in the subject of origins, not only regarding the origin of the human race but how all life, the earth, and the universe came into existence. Mankind has always been curious about where things came from, but there has never been more concern about it than there is today.

With the mind-boggling advancement explosion in science and technology, solutions have been found for numerous problems and puzzles which for ages troubled the human race. Even in areas where complete solutions have not been realized, much encouraging progress has been made. Secrets of the atom have been unlocked and harnessed, worldwide transportation and communication have been made readily available to the public, the solar system has been explored, serious war has been avoided, many complex mysteries of the living cell unraveled, and cures for diseases developed. But with each step of progress, the search for a scientific, naturalistic explanation for the origin of things has consistently and paradoxically been producing more questions than answers.

Hundreds of scientists who once taught their university students that the bottom line on origins had finally been

figured out and settled are today confessing that they were completely wrong. They have discovered that their previous conclusions, once held so fervently, were based on very fragile evidences and suppositions which have since been refuted by new discoveries. This has necessitated a change in their basic philosophical position on origins. Others are admitting great weaknesses in evolution theory. One of the world's most highly respected philosophers of science, Dr. Karl Popper, has argued that one theory of origins, almost universally accepted as a scientific *fact*, does not even qualify as a scientific theory. A 1980 display at the prestigious British Museum of Natural History made the same admission.

Outer space was once believed to hold the key to unlocking the mystery of origins, but explorations of the moon, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn emphatically brought down those hopes with a resounding crash. Just a few years ago, prominent scientists were making bold assertions that the evolution of life was not only probable but inevitable on other solar system planetary bodies, and that the study of that life would help solve the mystery of the origin of terrestrial life. Now, however, they are giving up, convinced there is no hope of ever finding extraterrestrial life in the solar system and only the remotest hope of finding life anywhere except here on earth. The millions of dollars spent on radio-telescopes in search of intelligent radio messages from outer space have produced only negative results.

When Watson and Crick discovered the helical structure of the DNA molecule and the general way that it coded the formation and replication of proteins in cells, there were great expectations that a plausible scientific explanation for the origin of life was just over the horizon. The laboratory synthesis of amino acids from basic chemicals further heightened the expectations that man, with all his intelligence and resources, could synthesize a living cell. These hopes have also been dashed with the failure to generate life in the laboratory, and researchers are stating that new

natural laws will need to be discovered to explain how the high degree of order and specificity of even a single cell could be generated by random, natural process.

Geology and paleontology held great expectations for Charles Darwin, although in 1859 he admitted that they presented the strongest single evidence against his theory. Fossils were a perplexing puzzlement to him because they did not reveal any evidence of a gradual and continuous evolution of life from a common ancestor, proof which he needed to support his theory. Although fossils were an enigma to Darwin, he ignored the problem and found comfort in the faith that future explorations would reverse the situation and ultimately prove his theory correct. He stated in his book, *The Origin of Species*, "The geological record is extremely imperfect and this fact will to a large extent explain why we do not find intermediate varieties, connecting together all the extinct and existing forms of life by the finest graduated steps. He who rejects these views on the nature of the geological record, will rightly reject my whole theory."<sup>1</sup>

Now, after over 120 years of the most extensive and painstaking geological exploration of every continent and ocean bottom, the picture is infinitely more vivid and complete than it was in 1859. Formations have been discovered containing hundreds of billions of fossils and our museums now are filled with over 100 million fossils of 250,000 different species. The availability of this profusion of hard scientific data should permit objective investigators to determine if Darwin was on the right track.

What is the picture that the fossils have given us? Do they reveal a continuous progression connecting all organisms to a common ancestor? With every geological formation explored and every fossil classified it has become apparent that these, the only direct scientific evidences relating to the history of life, still do not provide any evidence for which Darwin so fervently longed. The gaps between major groups of organisms have been growing wider and more undeniable. They can no longer be ignored or rationalized away with appeals to the

imperfection of the fossil record. But those unwilling to accept defeat have altered the scenario a bit.

By the 1970s prominent scientists in the world's greatest fossil museums were coming to grips with the so-called "gaps" in the fossil record and were cautiously beginning to present new theories of evolution that might explain the severe conflicts between neo-Darwinian theory and the hard facts of paleontology. Back in 1940, Dr. Richard B. Goldschmidt had faced the horns of this dilemma-of-the-gaps with his hopeful monster theory, the idea that every once in a while an offspring was produced that was a monster grossly different from its parents.<sup>2</sup> Goldschmidt's revolutionary ideas were ridiculed for many years, but by 1977 respected scientific periodicals like the American Museum's *Natural History* magazine were publishing articles predicting the vindication of Goldschmidt's theory within a decade.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Niles Eldredge, curator of Invertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum, was collaborating with Dr. Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard, and calling their new theory, aimed at explaining the gaps, "punctuated equilibria." They thought that it was an improvement over Goldschmidt's hopeful monster theory, although it differed insignificantly.

Dr. David Pilbeam, curator of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale and later professor of anthropology at Harvard, wrote an article in 1978 entitled "Rearranging Our Family Tree" in which he stated that we had been wrong in the past and that he was convinced we would not hit upon the true or correct story of human evolution.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. David Raup, curator of geology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, published an article in the January 1979 issue of the museum's journal entitled "Conflicts Between Darwinism and Paleontology" in which he stated that the 250,000 species of plants and animals recorded and deposited in museums throughout the world did not support the gradual unfolding hoped for by Darwin.<sup>5</sup> The following April, Dr. Colin Patterson, a senior paleontologist and editor of a prestigious journal at the British

Museum of Natural History, wrote in a letter to the author that he didn't know of any real evidence of evolutionary transitions either among living or fossilized organisms.<sup>6</sup>

By the late 1970s, debates on university campuses throughout the free world were being held on the subject of origins with increasing frequency. Hundreds of scientists who once accepted the theory of evolution as fact were abandoning ship and claiming that the scientific evidence was in total support of the theory of creation. Well-known evolutionists such as Isaac Asimov and Stephen Jay Gould were stating that since the creationist scientists had won all of the more than 100 debates, the evolutionists should not debate them.

In December of 1978 the New York State Board of Regents directed the New York State Education Department to do a detailed study of how theories on origins should be treated in a revised version of the state's Regents Biology Syllabus. As part of their study they invited the author to supply pertinent scientific information to the Bureau of Science Education which was conducting the study.

During the next year the author conducted taped interviews with officials in five natural history museums containing some of the largest fossil collections in the world. The interviews were with Dr. Colin Patterson in London; Dr. Niles Eldredge in New York City; Dr. David M. Raup in Chicago; Dr. David Pilbeam in Boston; and Dr. Donald Fisher, state paleontologist at the New York State Natural History Museum. Written transcripts of the interviews were given to the New York State Education Department for use in their study on origins.

In these interviews, the paleontologists were questioned in detail about the nature of the fossil record from the deepest deposits containing fossils to the most recent. Typed transcripts of the five interviews were then sent to the interviewees for editing. All but Dr. Patterson made editorial corrections before they were published for use by educators in various states.

This book presents the substance of these interviews through the use of short excerpts and summaries of the replies to the questions. Anyone, however, can gain access to the original typed verbatim interview transcripts which were prepared for the New York State Education Department by going to any public library in the United States and asking for the ERIC Document Reproduction Service microfiche ED 228 056, *Darwin's Enigma: The Fossil Record*.

If information about the true nature of the fossil record, so vividly described in these interviews, were to be presented without bias in public school textbooks, there would be no need for over half of the state legislatures to be considering legislation requiring open academic inquiry into the teaching of theories on origins. It is not so much a problem of failing to include in textbooks the simple factual statement that there is an alternative to evolution theory — which is accepted by the majority of the public — that a supernatural power created the universe and first life. Rather, the main issue is that textbooks and other school materials are completely devoid of certain very significant scientific information which is talked about behind closed doors but not made available to the public. Should the information presented in this book be openly discussed in public education, the controversy would be defused and cease to be the hottest issue in public education.