

Light Brings Salt

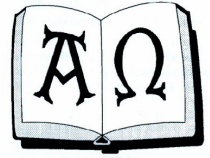
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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



How Big Is God?

by David F. Coppedge

Most people know the universe is "vast," but until we visualize it, we shortchange ourselves of some healthy awe. The heavens glorify God, but should also humble us—as should become apparent in the following mental journey.

Recently, the New Horizons spacecraft blasted off on a ten-year express flight to Pluto. (A manned flight to Pluto, at the maximum speed of the Apollo astronauts, would take about 17 years.) Since Mars (1/26 the distance to Pluto) seems at the limit of our reach, human travel to the stars beyond must remain a dream for now. But Pluto is very near compared to the stars; if the Sun-Pluto distance were represented by a one-foot ruler, the nearest star would be over a mile away.

Movies mislead us with their talk of warp speeds; real interstellar travel is limited by the speed of light—186,282 miles *per second*. In our imagination (and ignoring relativistic effects) let's aim for the nearest star at light speed. First, we would be disappointed at how slowly the scenery changes. Only after 4.3 years would Alpha Centauri appear larger than a pinpoint of light. Star-hopping within our galaxy, we would be amazed at how much is empty space.

Turning up out of the plane of the Milky Way, it would take 100,000 years for the full spiral of our galaxy to become visible. Though stars at our sun's radius orbit the center at nearly 500,000 mph, the galaxy would appear motionless. A whole human

lifetime would pass with no apparent change except for the rare supernova. As for the earth—if the galaxy were represented as the size of North America, our entire solar system would fit in a coffee cup somewhere in Idaho.

Astronomers estimate that there are as many galaxies outside the Milky Way as there are stars in it. The Hubble Ultra Deep Field, taken in 2004, imaged 10,000 galaxies in a cone of space so slim you could cover it with a grain of sand held at arm's length. Integrated over the entire sky, that would mean there are more than 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe, many with more than 100 billion stars each. According to Psalm 147:4, God calls them all by name.

Contemplating such things is humbling, but also raises questions. Can a God of such a vast domain really care about us? It's important to understand the Biblical doctrine of omnipresence in answering this question. Learning that God is everywhere does not mean that part of Him is here, part there, and part in a distant galaxy, as if His love were spread thinly across all of space. No; omnipresence means that *all of God* is present at every place, at the same time.

This means that no matter how large the universe, and how many beings reside within His kingdom, each of us can have His full and undivided attention in our own hearts. Let us pray with the spirit and with the understanding also (I Corinthians 14:15). As the country song insightfully claims, "How big is God? He's big enough

to rule His mighty universe, yet small enough to live within my heart."

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How Coherent Is the Human Evolution Story?

by William Hoesch, M.S.

"Australopithocines evolved into *Homo erectus* around 1.5 million years ago and *Homo erectus*, in turn, evolved into *Homo sapiens* around 400,000 years ago." This is presented to school children as no less certain than Washington's crossing of the Delaware. The statement makes dual claims: (1) there are fundamental anatomical differences between these three categories, and (2) each occurs in the right time frame. Let us examine these claims.

The anatomical differences between these three groups must be very substantial for the statement to have any meaning. Any anthropologist should be able to spot a *Homo erectus* on a crowded subway train, even clean-shaven and in a business suit, as different from modern humans. Not so. In fact, leading anthropologists Milford H. Wolpoff (University of Michigan), William S. Laughlin (U. of Connecticut), Gabriel Ward Lasker (Wayne State U.), Kenneth A. R. Kennedy (Cornell), Jerome Cybulski (National Museum of Man, Ottawa), and Donald Johanson (Institute of Human Origins) find the differences between these fossil categories to be so small that they have wondered in print if *H. sapiens* and *H. erectus* are one and the same. Fossils classified as *H. erectus* all share a set of "primitive" traits including a sloping forehead and large brow ridges, yet these all fall comfortably within the range of what are called normal humans today. For example, the very same traits are found in some modern people groups, including Eskimos! Eskimos might not like being referred to as "primitive" humans, yet evolutionists must do so if they are to be consistent. There are a lot of problems with

the continued use of this taxon, yet it is essential to the evolution story.

The second truth claim embedded within the statement given to school kids has to do with these fossils occurring in the right time frame. For example, fossils with a *H. erectus* anatomy should be found exclusively in rocks that are older than those with its youthful descendents, "anatomically-modern" humans. This is decidedly not the case. Putting aside the validity of age-dates for a moment, the range for *H. erectus* is usually given at between about 1.5 million years and 400,000 years. Studiously avoided in most museum depictions is the fact that fossils with a *H. erectus* anatomy that are younger than 400,000 years number well over 100, including some as young as 6000 years. Even more amazing is this: fossil humans that are easily interpreted as "anatomically modern" (i.e., non-*H. erectus*) have been found in rocks that are much *older* than 1.5 million years. From a dozen different sites have come cranial fragments, including one good skull, teeth, several arm and leg bones, a fossil trackway, and stone structure that each screams out "modern human." The trackways at Laetoli, Tanzania, dated at 3.6 million years, and tibia (leg bone) and humerus (arm bone) from Kanapoi, Kenya, dated at 3.5 million, are especially significant for these pre-date even "Lucy," the celebrated upright-walking ape. These embarrassments have been revised, reinterpreted, and re-dated, but will not go away.

Keep these things in mind the next time you hear of a "missing link" being reported, for example, between *H. erectus* and modern man (as has been in the recent *popular press*). God made His creatures to reproduce "after their own kind," and it appears from the fossils that they have done just that.

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