

# God's First Fishermen

How a humble tribe of Beachwalkers  
conquers the world

Out of Africa *carpensis*

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Published by Philip Copeman, 2008  
Cape Town, South Africa  
[philip@pinksoft.co.za](mailto:philip@pinksoft.co.za)  
[www.philipcopeman.com](http://www.philipcopeman.com)

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To my children, Africa belongs to all of you.

## Paleoanthropology grows up

3<sup>rd</sup> February 1488. Bartholomew Diaz, the famous Portuguese mariner and explorer, jumps out of his small landing boat into the surf of Mossel Bay,<sup>1</sup> South Africa. The first European to round Africa's southern tip wades onto the stretch of white sand which we know today as Diaz Beach. The smell of shellfish, mussels and oysters, which are abundant on this coastline, fills the air. Through the shimmering heat of the distant sand dunes, a group of local Beachwalkers<sup>2</sup> shuffles towards the Portuguese landing party with an energy-saving, half-run, half-walk peculiar to this "newly-discovered" race. They are curious to meet the new people that the sea has just spewed up onto the beach.

Diaz, an intrepid explorer, has sailed halfway around the world. Expeditions by others over the previous ten years have failed to get this far. Diaz, as the first person to round the Cape of Good Hope, the sea route to India, is fully aware of the history of the moment. He is filled with the majesty of his achievement and looks down on these beach people with the arrogance reserved only for the colonial aspirant. Looking at these small brown people, their bodies covered in animal fat, entrails and ochre, like most Europeans of his time, he feels a sense of revulsion. If Diaz knew better, he would get down on his knees and worship his ancestors, the mothers of all modern humans!

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- 1 Mosselbaai is the correct Afrikaans word. This translates to Mussel Bay after the mollusks freely available on the rocks. I will use the bastardized terminology Mossel Bay. Originally called Bahia dos Vaqueiros by the Portuguese.
  - 2 The Dutch word *strandlopers* means "beachwalkers". Racial nomenclature is a sensitive issue in anthropology and particularly so in South African anthropology. These people have been called Hottentots, Bushmen, Khoisan, Bywoners, Coloreds. They called themselves "Bushies", but for now I will call them the Beachwalkers.

Get ready to rearrange the way you think about yourself and your ancestry. Over the next 300 pages I will show you how these Beachwalkers emerge less than 200 000 years ago from the southern tip of Africa to overwhelm all before them. The earth has been here for 4.5 billion years; we have not. Human history is a heartbeat in the evolution of life.

This story is a radical review of how we think of ourselves, drawn from the work of thousands of scientists contributing from multiple disciplines. Instead of having a diverse ancient and remote origin, modern humans are all part of a radical revolution that has a comparatively recent beginning. It is the Big Bang of human evolution and we are still in it today. This is the remarkable story of how these humble Beachwalkers changed the course of the Earth's history. It is also the story of how our Western intellectual arrogance has suppressed their story.

This is an African story. A story of lost civilizations, on a scale much older and grander than you have been exposed to before. The Third Reich fell in 12 years, the Roman Empire lasted barely 1000 years, the Egyptians lasted less than 5000 years. Our story concerns a 150 000-year-old civilization that is still with us today! It is ironic that the oldest story of our history is the one that is unraveled last. This story is not only hidden beneath the jungles and ancient stones of Africa, but is also obscured by our own religious dogma and racial myopia. This is not the story you want to hear and you will indeed need to unblock your ethnocentric preconceptions in order to believe the true story of our human origins.<sup>3</sup> For what reason are we here in the first place?

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<sup>3</sup> Ethnocentricity is our weakness to view the world's affairs from the bounds of our own culture. For example, we always think our own race should win the Miss World competition.

This is the search for the missing link and the search for the missing female G-spot. It deals with the central role of women in our lives. Hot blooded alpha males bash about on center stage, but the smell of fish dominates this story.

Five billion of you have never been to Africa. For you it is a dark and forbidding continent. However, no matter where you live, be aware that you are of African origin. Africa is where you come from and Mossel Bay is your unlikely home town. You may find some of the stories and events in this book foreign to you. Have no fear, some of us have already made the pilgrimage back to Africa. Strange, yes, but far from threatening. The spiritual gateway to our common ancestors is open, and Africa's children are welcome home.

Pilgrim, most books on paleoanthropology don't take into account that many people in the world believe in creation. According to a recent survey, 48% of Americans believe that man was created more or less as he is, less than 10 000 years ago.<sup>4</sup> If you are a modern Jew, Muslim or Christian we can still get through these pages together. Many books on the subject of human origins are completely dismissive of religious views, yet when you read these pages you will see that some of the ideas that are presented by professional scientists are themselves far-fetched. Some of you may find some of my conclusions offensive, but you will find them rational and backed by evidence. If you are versed in the philosophy of religious freedom, then you should have no problem with this process.

Most thinking people are concerned about human origins. There are as many theories as there are cultures. These theories can be very different and we will often have differences in opinion. On these pages we solve these differences with scientific debate. Here we place little value on human testimony or faith. Unfortunately there is no middle ground for truth; only one of us can be right.

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4 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*.

You should also not be surprised that I view your most holy sacraments with little more regard than you do my lack of reverence. If you find my conclusions offensive, you are welcome to blog on [www.philipcopeman.com](http://www.philipcopeman.com) and give me your views. I am always open to change and willing to revise my position if you have a superior interpretation of the evidence presented.

The mechanism of evolutionary theory is a contentious and complex process. Fortunately, we can defer this debate. Theologians and scientists tend to have very different approaches to this methodology. It is not necessary in these pages to take on the debate of the fundamental processes underlying evolution. We are interested here only in the evidence of modern human origins. If you have religious convictions, but are not fundamentalist, then you most likely fall into the group that rationalizes scientific and religious contradictions by stating, up front, that evolution is acceptable and that the areas covered by science and religion do not intersect. Alternatively you could fall into the large group that thinks that the Bible is subject to interpretation, although we are still living in a world driven by Intelligent Design.<sup>5</sup>

I am a scientific realist and follow the rules developed by the scientific method. At any time I am willing to change my atheist model given scientific proof, but I am not an agnostic, waiting for delivery of someone else's theology. If giving an atheist a fair hearing is offensive to you, it is best that you stop reading right now. You would be far better off to light a candle, bow to the east, slaughter a cow or a sixteen-year-old virgin and pray for my forgiveness. No amount of logic or revision of the facts is going to cover the gulf that exists between us.

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<sup>5</sup> Intelligent Design is the great modern Christian movement, sweeping American science and placing God in the driver's seat, right at the center of the evolutionary engine room.



If you are able to recognize that my philosophy, scientific realism, is rooted in humanism and goodwill and is open and capable of dealing and coexisting with different views, then read on.

Scientific thinking will lead to questions of theology. For most religious people, dealing with atheist philosophy is anathema. Similarly, for non-religious people theology is a strange mistress. We can still learn about each other and can tolerate the good parts of each others' cultures. There are precedents. Vaughan Williams, a known atheist, wrote large parts of the Anglican hymn book. I myself find religious choral music wonderful and appreciate it without religious conviction. *Belief*, for scientists, has a very different meaning than for theologians. We will take a position and turn 180 degrees the moment a viable alternative is presented. So everything you read here can be taken merely as hypothesis and everything is subject to revision and open to reversal.

My personal take on Intelligent Design is that it is a place where atheists like myself, who have doubted the Word of God, are sent when they die. It is for all those that did not heed the word of John 16, "No one comes into the Kingdom but through me." The day-to-day workings of evolutionary design are dirty work, but someone has to do it. The punishment for atheists is an eternity of tinkering away in the Intelligent Design workshops keeping the daily grind of evolution going. Intelligent Design must be an enormous place and the sprawling campus would dwarf the organizations that we are used to on earth. Intelligent Design will need an enormous network of computers to track all that paperwork. The Old Man is going to need thousands of us working on this, for in every corner of life on this planet alone, millions of species are daily committing hundreds of billions of DNA decisions to determine where life is going. The office politics at Intelligent Design must be a nightmare. A battle for supremacy is raging under every leaf and billions of sperm race daily

to the jackpot hoping to be the next big thing. Intelligent Design gives evolution a purpose, a direction. I call it the Vector of Evolution. It takes an army of professionals to field the billions of incoming calls, asking for a ruling on the next mating decision.

Creationist proponents of Intelligent Design should warm to the Out of Africa *carpensis* theory.<sup>6</sup> As opposed to the multiregionalists, who propose a long evolution through extended natural selection, *carpensis* advocates a latter-day, rapid development of man. In my opinion, *carpensis* represents the creationists' best shot at a single-day creation for man. Like Stalin and Hitler in 1941,<sup>7</sup> for the short winter of these pages we can hold an unholy truce on the nature of the evolutionary process. We can hold off on the mass killing until we have finished this story. Human origins are not really affected either way by whether you think God put them there or they got there by themselves. However, Pilgrim, if it is God's work that you are looking for, prepare yourself for a spiritual rollercoaster ride, for He truly works in strange ways indeed. This may not be quite how you have interpreted your own ancestry to date.

Religious fundamentalism is gripping the world today. We are in an escalating world war that is fueled by religious prejudice. Both sides are convinced of their own God-given right to victory for their side. It is a classic misinterpretation of who we are and how small our differences are. This is a not a fight to extinction, this is a difference within a family. A small step, a gesture to tolerate the intolerable, that someone else might have another point of view, is all that is required to stop this conflict.

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6 Out of Africa 1 was the hypothesis that *Homo erectus* left Africa approximately 2 million years ago. Out of Africa 2 is the hypothesis that modern man, *Homo sapiens*, left Africa 60 000 years ago and colonized the world. OOA *carpensis* is my name for an African start to *sapiens* in the Cape.

7 The German–Russian treaty of 1941, which carved up Poland and the Baltic Countries, was known as an Unholy Alliance and was spectacularly broken by the Germans in June of the same year.

It is ironic that fundamentalists, the very people that can benefit most from reading this book, will probably put it on their banned list. Not all fundamentalists want to fly airplanes into buildings or invade foreign countries; most fundamentalists I have met are kind and unselfish people. You meet them every day out shopping and at parent school meetings. With fundamentalists it is great fun to have a cup of tea, solve computer problems or play football, but it starts to break down if you discuss politics, sex or religion. Don't take them on a pub crawl or with you to score dope, and don't introduce them to your parents or children. They are a real drag at a party and usually leave before the orgy starts. It is best we keep human origins out of the relationship.

If you are a true fundamentalist, I am surprised you have read this far. Obviously you have not asked your rabbi, priest or imam for permission to read this. What we will discuss here is going to rock you to the core of your beliefs. To stay with me on these pages you are going to have to do what most fundamentalists really struggle to do: give atheists a fair chance to express themselves. If you do want to get this story and you are worried about being turned into a pillar of salt, think of this book as science fiction, like you would watch *Terminator* or *Die Hard*. That way you can get through the story without having to worry about the compromising issues.

Through these pages I keep visiting the topic of racial prejudice. If you are sensitive about who you are and what people call you, some of you may take offense here. The fault is probably with you. South Africa, where much of this story takes place, is a country with a strong mix of different races. We are confronted daily with people of different races and cultures, and have had successive governments determined to define us as separate and to keep us separate. The tone of this book is that race is largely a cultural perception. There is very little genetic or morphological difference between races.

Throughout this book, keep foremost in your mind the difference between racialism, where we recognize small differences and use this positively and racism, where we close off options and use this negatively.

The topic of human origins has always been looked upon from the prejudiced eye of the beholder. No other scientific observation carries the same emotional baggage. It is the Heisenberg uncertainty principle of biology.<sup>8</sup> Who we are impacts our core self-image and our view of ourselves perverts truth on the altar of our own self-esteem. If you are a student of human origins, you will probably have a completely different view of other races from that of the average Joe.

*According to the Kinsey report,  
Every average man is not,  
When the thermometer goes right up,  
It's too darn hot.<sup>9</sup>*

The differences that are emphasized between us daily in all forms of media play to a world ignorant of the real story of humanity and completely miss how really close, rather than different, we are. Once we know who we are, it becomes a lot easier to accept who others are. From there, it becomes easier to build beautiful things.

South Africa is a cesspool of tribal racism and religious fundamentalism. Right here in the Cradle of Humankind, you will find that the majority of people believe that we began in a European or Middle Eastern Garden of Eden and our first mistake was letting the blond bite the apple. Most South Africans will simply kill a snake without thinking, the moment they see it. They certainly believe a snake to be an embodiment of evil.

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<sup>8</sup> Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is a theorem in quantum physics that says that nothing is truly measurable.

<sup>9</sup> With apologies to Cole Porter.

Most South Africans would not even read this book and would denounce it as demonic. That's the good news. The bad news is that those who do read the book are not going to like the conclusions reached here. However, these are not my personal ideas, they are simply the reduction of the reality that lies revealed in front of us. God's work, to those who must have a Creator in the story. Some of you may not like this. It may run contrary to the prejudices which are now second nature to you and you may wish it were otherwise, but you will struggle to fault the logic or refute the evidence. All of this I will recant at the first suggestion of being stoned to death or burned at the stake. Please no *fatwas*. Don't shoot me, I am just the messenger.

South Africans have a history more closely intertwined with human origins and overt racism than any other country on the planet. Genetically we are a mixed race, but even today we package ourselves as a rainbow nation, separate races living in harmony, having put 350 years of racial conflict behind us – the miracle of peaceful transformation. However it is the rare exception to find a South African who thinks of themselves first as a South African and then as a citizen of the world. We see ourselves first as a member of our tribe. How we live is how our tribe fits into the world.

The ruling party of our government is the ANC, the African National Congress. This is a party that endorses racial classification, albeit in the name of affirmative action and racial equity, and governs with a constitution which defines a citizen first and foremost by racial group. Racial classification is perpetuated in an act of parliament. That this is still so in the year 2008, particularly given our late 20<sup>th</sup> century institutionalized racial history, is perplexing.

However this is not a book about politics or sociology, but rather about why the true story of human origins has been suppressed for so long. This background on modern thought serves only to explain why a story about a tribe of fishermen who came to dominate the world

would not fit comfortably into the white European structure of superiority, the New World Fundamentalist Order or the emerging Black African Nationalism. What should be so obvious is so obnoxious to us.

In South Africa, our black religious groups are dominated by an African franchise of the mainstream Christian churches, a bush-drumming Catholicism. African whites are usually reborn evangelicals or apostolic Calvinists. Islam is the fastest growing religion and strongest among the Cape Coloreds. You can add as much crushed ice as you like, but this cocktail mixture is not easily shaken or stirred into a secular society that can look at human origins subjectively, even one with beginnings right here in our own backyard. Anthropologists, along with atheists, Jews and homosexuals, are looked upon with suspicion and a sense of pity, and at best a patronizing tolerance.

The idea that we are all very recent descendants of a small group of Hottentot *Strandlopers*,<sup>10</sup> who have rapidly colonized the world, is a heresy that does not sit easily with any of these power groups and does not make for a story that promotes their ideals of racial separation and tribal promotion. But science, like God, is not interested in petty racial squabbles. Science seeks a truth irrespective of political correctness. This lack of political correctness is primarily why the story of the Beachwalkers has not been told to the world. Human emergence was neither black nor white, it was cream and toffee.

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<sup>10</sup> Hottentot Beachwalkers. Historically Afrikaners have looked on the Coloreds as a second rate race. Not as bad as the blacks, only half as bad.

I am a member of the white English Settler tribe.<sup>11</sup> On my paternal side is a line of Anglican priests and on my maternal side converted German Jews. Our ancestors come back to Africa in the mid-1800s and settle in the Eastern Cape. Besides small forays into colonial control and civil wars with the Xhosas, Zulus and Afrikaners, Settlers are secondary players in the political battle for control of South Africa, which is a two-way fight between the Afrikaners and the Xhosas. More about them later. My ancestors settle first as cattle farmers in the Eastern Cape, but very soon give this up for the comforts of commercial careers in the towns and cities of the colony. My family patriarch, Philip Walker Copeman, performs the first christening at Alexandria in the Suurveld area in 1851. Settlers have come to spread the Word of God to the heathen masses and to give our interpretation of the world and human origins.

With the opening of the diamond and gold mines in the Northern Cape and Transvaal, the Settlers move north. We live as priests, shopkeepers, accountants, academics and golfers. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cecil Rhodes, a British Settler, becomes the richest man in the world from his dealings in diamonds and gold. Settlers dominate the field of science and technology in South Africa, and our relative freedom from religious dogma enables us to become leaders in the fields of geology, evolutionary biology, genetics, applied statistics, archeology and human prehistory. We build the premier university in South Africa, the University of the Witwatersrand. Many of the central players in this story come from Wits. Anthropology is the study on modern humans. paleoanthropology is the study of early human beginnings, which is the two-hour traffic of our stage.<sup>12</sup>

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11 The colonial English are a late arrival in Africa, coming from 1795 onwards. They bring with them a colonial savagery not seen before. The monuments and wealth of London and England are built with materials stolen from Africa and India.

12 With apologies to William Shakespeare.

At school in the 1960s and 1970s, we are fed an oily gruel called Christian National Education. This is the apartheid government's broth of Dutch colonial history, white civil wars and a smattering of European history. Black Africans are spectators to South African history. We are taught of the undoubted superiority of the white race. Biology is a dry description of body parts and plant cells with lots of Latin names. Religious education is the backbone of the teaching. We live in a world created by the Almighty, where Adam and Eve emerged from the Garden of Eden, and Ham, their poor cousin, is the water-drawer and the ancestor of all black people. God is on our side and we give thanks to him every year for helping us defeat the Zulus at Blood River in December 1836. We are fortunate indeed to be members of God's ruling race. We sing out every morning:

*Oh God our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come.  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.*

If you grow up in the south of the USA or in East Germany in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, you live a childhood similar to mine. American colonial history has many similarities to South Africa. East Germany in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has a similar history to our experience. I have spent much time in these two countries and find the people and circumstances similar. These are societies with real racial issues to solve and people living in the making of history. Loss of life is actually relatively small and victory is attained with little bloodshed. This is not out of disrespect to those who die in these countries to set us free, but out of respect for those who negotiate us through to peace with minimal force. Without leadership, South Africa could easily be Yugoslavia, Cambodia or Rwanda.



In Intelligent Design terms, the Old Man deals me a picture card. No matter how hard we make it out to be, it really is not that difficult being white in apartheid South Africa or in today's Africa. We lead a life of privilege. It is true of white South Africans that they would rather die in their beds than make them.<sup>13</sup>

We grow up under a totalitarian regime, but we also grow up in the golden age of sex, after the collapse of prudishness and before college students invent Herpes B simplex or pretty girls start passing on HIV. We grow up in the Cradle of Humankind during a period of relative world peace. We do go to war against the East Germans in Angola, but it is hardly Stalingrad. The closest I get to danger is riding a motorcycle to camp each day. The civil rights movement of the American South is a great inspiration to us, as is East Germany. I am proud to be a part of the movement that stamps out the burning crosses and pushes over the wall in South Africa and even more excited about what we find underneath – fossils of early man.

As a boy I believe in Adam and Father Christmas. In dreams I see Jesus at the foot of my bed. At school, the subject of evolution is taboo. Anthropology is studied by the leftists, the *kaffirboetjies*<sup>14</sup> and traitors to our race. Christian National Education is vehemently creationist. Anthropology is part of the “total onslaught”<sup>15</sup> against apartheid South Africa. This is a world before The Internet, before *Newsweek* publishes the monumental African Eve cover story in 1988. We share information in dour papers and cheaply printed journals, which we read furtively at home. I am isolated from my friends and my family. It is not as bad as Billy Elliot learning ballet, but it is a

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13 Afrikaners point out that it is only Settlers that can't make their own beds.

14 “Brothers of the blacks”, the derogatory name given by Afrikaners to those who did not accept white superiority and harbored feelings of kinship with black people.

15 This was the term for the activities of all those outsiders who questioned our right to white rule.

solitary, introverted journey. The more I read, the more I find myself slowly but inexorably turning to the dark side.

I first become interested in paleoanthropology in the sixties as a prep school scholar. Christopher Copeman, my father, works for the SABC, the national broadcaster. He produces a series of programs on the heroes of the field, Raymond Dart and Robert Broom, entitled *The Dawn of Man*. He brings home the program manuscript and my interest in paleoanthropology begins. Other boys put up posters of soccer stars and guitar players in their rooms. I have a poster of the human tree.

In the early seventies paleoanthropology is a confused field with horrendous terminology like *Australopithecus africanus*<sup>16</sup> and *Pithecanthropus erectus*. We defend Darwin, but are grappling with the confused images of our origins. We are always apologizing to the religious right. Every doubt that is ever expressed about the chain of human development will be jumped on by the fundamentalists claiming that there is no firm link from ape to man. And it is true – paleoanthropology cannot provide it. The obsession is finding the “missing link” and for a schoolboy in Johannesburg, knowing that the site of “Mrs Ples” is a short distance from my home puts me at the center of the search for human origins. For 30 years, I devour every new book on the subject. In the army, the rest of the platoon find it strange that I don’t believe in God and that I think we come from monkeys. On Sundays they go to church and I lie alone in the bungalow reading Louis Leakey.

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16 If you are not used to reading books on biology, each species has a two-barreled Latin name, the first being its genus and the second its species. There are a number of ways of representing this and I fluctuate between them. So *Australopithecus africanus*, *A. africanus* or my casual *africanus* are the same thing, a short bipedal ape ancestral to man that lived in Africa between 4 million and 2.4 million years ago. I also refer to some species by their English names, e.g. humans or Neanderthals.

For most of the last 50 years, the East Africans have dominated the search for human origins. Every few years a new specimen is found and the ancestral tree is rearranged. This brings up exotic names like *Zynjanthropus*, *Australopithecus boisei*, *Homo heidelbergensis* and *Homo ergaster*. Once we have gotten over the religious objection that we could not possibly have descended from monkeys, the debate becomes about the shape of the tree of human evolution, rather than about the existence of a tree at all.

The eighties see the debate come down to a battle between the “lumpers” and the “splitters”. In the most extreme form, lumping asks if there is even a difference between chimps and man.<sup>17</sup> We share 98% of our genes with chimps, and under a microscope it is tough to tell us apart. The splitters are the diggers, working in the field. Splitters need new species and for these species to keep flowing and to keep getting earlier. This is how they motivate their research grants. In the extreme form of splitting, its proponents create new species almost every time there is a new find. The lumpers are the guys in suits working in air-conditioned university offices, looking at computers. Lumpers’ field trips are to London, Las Vegas and Hanover, and our idea of roughing it is slow room-service. Lumpers vs splitters is a classic case of the suits vs the dungarees, and as always happens, the suits win. After all is said and done, there is a lot more said than done. Once religious dogma is peeled off, the human tree, from the split with the chimps six million years ago to the “Out of Africa 2” exodus 60 000 years ago, is finally revealed as a straightforward series of events.<sup>18</sup>

In the nineties paleoanthropology almost splits into two sciences. The bone collectors rush around South and East Africa, developing a culture of their own in which science seems to play a minor role to the more important game of politics and finance.

<sup>17</sup> Not quite, *Pan troglodyte* is definitely a separate species.

<sup>18</sup> It is agreed today that chimps and man share a common ancestor around six million years ago that is yet to be discovered.

Donning Indiana Jones style bush hats, they chase around the ancient sediments and look for the early link between man and chimp. The other branch is the geneticists who take the search for modern man into laboratories. They have their own turf wars about who owns the genome. By analyzing how human diversity has been revealed, we can infer the processes that led us here.

At this stage I should reveal myself as a super-lumper. Lumping is more of a necessity than a philosophy, brought on by the fact that the Latin names for each split are confusing. I don't collect hominids myself and have little time for those that would immortalize themselves by adding a new branch named after them to the phylogenetic tree. The line of human descent is simple: Common Ancestor, *Australopithecus africanus*, *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo sapiens*.<sup>19</sup> Simplified, we get out of the trees, walk on two legs, build tools and colonize the world, first by organized hunting, then by farming, and finally by the division of industrialized labor. For much of the last five million years there is more than one hominid present at any time. In the end only one species makes it through, *Homo sapiens*, and we likely killed our nearest cousins in a global fratricide. To the lumper, the side experiments of evolution and arguments about comparative anatomy seem trivial.

Where the boundaries of a species and group are placed is called taxonomy and was started by Linnaeus, a French biologist. In humans, taxonomy is emotive and subjective. Primates formed around 55 million years ago as part of the explosive adaptive radiation of mammals into the gap left by the dying out of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Primates have separated thumbs that can be opposed to the other four fingers, clavicles that allow lateral shoulder movement and a centrally placed hole in the base of the skull, the foramen magnum. This is how we keep our heads up straight.

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<sup>19</sup> This would be bitterly disputed by those to whom these names are important.

Apes share a common ancestor with monkeys and are part of the Anthropoid branch, Prosimians include lemurs and bushbabies. Apes have migrated southwards from Europe and/or Asia into Africa to avoid the cold, eating bananas, poking the harem and basically going nowhere for 15 million years.<sup>20</sup> In the great Intelligent Design plan, they have been penciled in for a climate change extinction and destined to be a footnote in the Great Library of Evolution. While the Old Man is out for lunch on the sixth day, someone in the mailroom gets the packages confused, messes up on the paperwork and the monkeys' fortune swings the other way. God himself proves the old adage, if you want something done properly do it yourself.

Chimpanzees, *Pan troglodyte* and the hominid line share a common ancestor who swings about in trees in East Africa six million years ago. In a cooler drier period, trees become sparse and some climb down and walk over the savannah from tree to tree. The long grass makes it a whole lot safer to walk on two legs and get a better lookout for predators. The walkers go on to found an evolutionary dynasty, the swingers stay in the trees, evolve into chimps and are forever confined by the extent of the forest and zoo cages. Every now and then they see a delicious piece of fruit propped up in the bush, step on a shiny circle and get caught in a wire snare.

Their 300 cc brain can never figure a way out. After a while a hairless ape arrives and helps to free them. If they are lucky they end up in a zoo. More likely they become lunch in a bush meat market.

Around four million years ago, *Australopithecus* first begins walking, possibly somewhere in modern Ethiopia, walks all the way through East Africa and down to South Africa. The exact location of the start of *Australopithecus* is still a source of great competition between East African paleoanthropologists, who call each other really

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<sup>20</sup> The jury is still out on this one too. It is possible that even apes developed prior to the Miocene in Africa.

nasty names, block each others' work permits and steal each others' bones. From the rich pickings of South Africa's human origin sites, this looks like impoverished natives squabbling below the poverty line over reducing budgets and hominid rations in the desert. Any moment now these scientists will be hacking at each other with *pangas*.<sup>21</sup>

With a bipedal lifestyle, *Australopithecus* has free hands, which he begins to use; he adapts his separated thumb less for hanging in trees and more for working in the kitchen and playing a now defunct style of rockabilly guitar. Of a few evolutionary experiments, the most notable is *Australopithecus robustus*, 2.6 million years ago, with a thick ridge on his head and big vegetarian molars.<sup>22</sup> The dominant player is the more gracile version, *Australopithecus africanus*, who evolves into *Homo habilis* about 2.3 million years ago and increases the use of tools with his free hands. *Homo habilis* evolves into *Homo erectus*, who is very successful working as a hunter scavenger. *Homo erectus* evolves the ability to adapt his body to varied climates and over the next 1.8 million years *H. erectus* spreads from Africa right through Asia and into Indonesia. Splitters love to debate each other about the details of this transition. There may still be a few revelations here, but they are unlikely to affect our final destination. If this was any other species, the blanks would have been filled in and accepted by everyone. With the exceptions of a few scuffles about the shape of toes and teeth, this period of the science of paleoanthropology is pretty much done and dusted.<sup>23</sup>

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21 The genocidal tool favored by technologically challenged East and Southern Africans. A cross between a pirate's cutlass and a garden scythe, best used in a hacking action.

22 First discovered in South Africa and credited to the East Africans.

23 Some East African paleoanthropologists, supporters of Lucy, *Australopithecus afarensis*, would launch a thousand ships to bury the conclusions of this paragraph.

The jury is still out on the cause of the event and creationist proponents of Intelligent Design should hold on to Out of Africa 2, for it is here, 200 000 years ago, that *Homo erectus* grows his brain dramatically and becomes *Homo sapiens*, thinking man. In creationist terms, man walks out in God's image, created in an evolutionary instant. This process of growth in brain size and thinking ability is called *encephalisation*. Human brain size under the management of *H. erectus* remains almost static for 1.8 million years. In a separate exercise, Neanderthals develop large brains in Europe. In a dramatic burst, African brains grow from 900 cc (*erectus*) to 1400 cc (*sapiens*). Around 100 000 years ago *sapiens* challenges for the world title and *H. erectus* is knocked out, with the Neanderthals going down a few rounds later.

To see who won the fight, check the scorecard. *Sapiens* 6 billion – Other Hominids 0.<sup>24</sup> The entire balance of other primates could fit into the Superdome, with lemurs getting the corporate boxes and free drinks.

When the Americans discover human origins in the eighties and nineties, things begin to move quickly. Paleoanthropology moves from the fringe science of a few bone collectors to the massive multi-disciplinary industry that it is today. Dating techniques, DNA analysis and computer models have simplified a vague landscape into a clear picture of our origins. Competing theories can be tested from independent starting points. Modern man spreads quickly from Africa to Asia 60 000 years ago, getting to Australia 50 000 years ago, Europe 40 000 years ago, North America 13 000 years ago and South America 10 000 years ago.

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24 There has been a recent move to refer to our sub group as “homonins”, to reflect the close relationship between chimps and Man. I use the old-fashioned “hominid” to refer to species close to the human line.

Christianity develops, is reformed and is exported to North America. Christians who die rich leave their money to a plethora of foundations dedicated to disproving the evolutionary story. American colonial history is well documented and propagated in the mass media. It is remarkably similar to South African history.

A sparse indigenous people (Native Americans / Khoisan) is overwhelmed by two groups of invaders (Africans and Europeans). The invaders battle each other for control of the country and the original people are sidelined and murdered. Colonial history tells of a succession of wars against the local people. These are little more than slaughters, based on trumped-up charges, with the underlying aim being the occupation of land. Both countries fight Britain for independence and then have a civil war for local control. Waves of European immigrants continue to dominate right up to the present and bring with them technical innovation, gold rushes and European religion. Both groups, right up to the present, see themselves as separate races and the irony of 300 years of assimilation is lost on both sides.<sup>25</sup>

Sprawling over seven continents, *sapiens* is undoubtedly one of the most successful expansions in the evolution of life. There have been others, but none with this scope, speed and total dominance over the environment. Cattle, dogs, chickens, domestic cats, rats, poa anoa<sup>26</sup> and cockroaches are clear winners. Mammoths, saber tooth tigers, giant sloths, spitting cobras, flightless birds and pelagic fish are the losers. The jury is still out on Ground Zero and the first three minutes of this Big Bang.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Mathematical models show that when two groups meet, even at low rates of intermixing, genes pass quickly between them in a few generations.

26 Water grass, a plague that infests almost all golf courses.

27 Physics terminology for the epicenter of the explosion and the expression of the early moments of the universe.



The hypothesis put forward by this book is that this starting point is the Southern Cape. This is Out of Africa *carpensis*. Proving this is what the rest of this book is about.

The ethnocentric nature of human beings means that, predictably and emotionally, we all root for the home team. We would all like to believe that humanity started in our own backyard. I am sure that you feel a lot like I do, that I am an ideal model specimen of humanity. If God was going to make the human race in his own image then surely we would all look like Philip Copeman and orchestras would be led by bass players.

Surely each of you has a beautiful place that you know, that is very special to you. For me it is Bassas da India.<sup>28</sup> You may know an awesome lake setting on the south side of Chicago and it may look, to you, like the obvious place for the cradle of humanity. Don't worry, you are not alone in this egocentric thinking. When God delivered the tablets to inspire Joseph Smith to start the Mormon church, he didn't leave them, like the first time, 5 km away from where Moses happened to be camping at Mount Sinai, but conveniently dropped them off in Pennsylvania in 1827.<sup>29</sup> When the Jews invented the idea of the coming messiah, they did not have him landing in Rome or Tokyo; wonder of wonders, he was to be born right in their own backyard in 4 BC Bethlehem, a rural backwater 100 meters from the center of the universe! *Mazeltoy!*

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28 Bassas da India is an uninhabited, roughly circular atoll enclosing a lagoon about 10 km in diameter. It is located in the Southern Mozambique Channel, and the surrounding sea life is bounteous.

29 Smith said that an 1823 visitation from a resurrected prophet named Moroni led him to a long-buried book, inscribed on metal plates. It told the story of the long lost history of the Israelites in America. Smith was more reluctant to show anyone the plates than Tim White to show us the original skull of *Ardepithecus*.

The stakes for claiming the starting site of human origins are high. It is not democratic to claim a single starting point for modern humans, therefore the multiregionalists<sup>30</sup> will have us believe that the exact location of modern man's beginning is not a contest. Multiregionalists see a long history of the development of man, with interbreeding on three continents. This would mean that we do in fact all come from the same stock and that we have all been happily interbreeding for millions of years. This would make us all one happy family with no real starting point for humanity. It is a cute bedtime story, guaranteed to avoid nightmares, but unfortunately in the cut and thrust, winner takes all, world of evolutionary biology it is simply fantasy. The Old Man does not pussyfoot around with this kind of thing. He will have his chosen race. It just may not be the one that you want.

It is a revelation for us to discover, as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that rather than being near the center of the universe, we are actually orbiting around an ordinary star in a very ordinary part of a very ordinary galaxy. When you look up into the Milky Way you are not looking at the center of the galaxy, but rather at a minor side tail of the rotation.

Similarly, unless you are a Cape Colored, or one of their close cousins, the Afrikaners, San, Tswana or Xhosa, you are going have to come to terms with the fact that it is not you but an impish race on the southern tip of Africa that is the chosen race. This truth is going to annoy publicists for TV celebrities, paparazzi for world royalties and praise-singers for tribal chiefs.

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<sup>30</sup> Multiregionalists are paleoanthropologists that still choke on the Out of Africa 2 hypothesis and the awful thought that we all descend from Africans.

No matter what the surface characteristics that make our appearances different or whatever your priest or shaman tells you about how your precious congregation is *the* vital cog in *the* Divine Plan, chances are that you are like me and the other 5.95 billion, who merely descend from a slim indirect branch of the original tribe. You should take solace in the fact that this descent is very recent. We are not far removed from these Beachwalkers and while this is their story, it also our story

– the story of all of us.