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Centennial of Discovery of Neanderthal Man

The type specimen of Neanderthal man, that extinct relative of modern man, was discovered by workmen in a cave overlooking the Düssel River between Elberfeld and Düsseldorf, Germany, during the summer of 1856, hence just 100 years ago, and just 3 years before the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Actually, this specimen does not represent the earliest known discovery of the Neanderthal variety of man; for an unusually well preserved skull of that category had been found 8 years earlier, in 1848, in Forbes Quarry, on the Rock of Gibraltar, by Lieutenant Flint of the Royal Artillery, who presented it to the Gibraltar Scientific Society.

The Gibraltar skull, however, remained unnoticed until after its arrival in England in 1862. Hence the German skeleton of 1856 represents the first specimen of an extinct form of man that was subjected to serious scientific study. For some time after its discovery, this specimen was the subject of bitter controversy. Some scientists regarded it as a true fossil. Others, however, considered it to be nothing more than a pathological modern human skeleton. Indeed, one diagnosis labeled it the rachitic skeleton of a Cossack from the Napoleonic Wars! The scientific world was not yet fully prepared to embrace the concept of "antediluvian" man.

It is now quite clear, however, from numerous specimens subsequently discovered in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Palestine, Uzbekistan, and other localities, that the type Neanderthal remains are those of a distinct and now extinct variety of man that was widely spread over Europe, western Asia, and North Africa during the third interglacial and fourth glacial phases of the Pleistocene epoch or Ice Age. His major anatomical characters are well known. Although his precise relationship to the modern type of man and, hence, his exact phylogenetic status remain unsettled questions, his significance for the science of paleoanthropology remains undiminished. He was, in the words of the late Earnest Hooton, "Darwin's first witness" for human evolution.

It is therefore fitting that a symposium on Neanderthal man, to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the discovery of the type specimen, jointly sponsored by Section H of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Institute of Human Paleontology, is scheduled for the morning of 27 December during the forthcoming annual meeting of the AAAS in New York.—WILLIAM L. STRAUS, JR., *Johns Hopkins University*, and LOREN C. EISELEY, *University of Pennsylvania*

