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IDENTIFICATION OF ICHNOFOSSILS IN THE
GLEN ROSE LIMESTONE, CENTRAL TEXAS

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Fossil tracks discovered in the Paluxy River bed near Glen Rose, Texas, have for years been presented as important evidence in the creation-evolution controversy. Some of the tracks were interpreted as human-like, while others were obviously made by a dinosaur, and since humans and dinosaurs were supposedly separated (in evolutionary thinking) by about 65 million years, this interpretation was not allowable by evolutionists. As anti-creationists Milne and Schafersman admit, "Such an occurrence, if verified, would seriously disrupt conventional interpretations of biological and geological history and would support the doctrines of creationism and catastrophism."¹ These data were "the data which evolutionists feared the most" as paleontologist Tony Thulburn, President of the Australian APE (Association for the Protection of Evolution) related to me on January 8, 1986. In 1982, the American Humanist Association began sponsoring a team of four scientists in a continuing attempt to discredit the project,² and anti-creationists have over the years published a number of tirades consisting primarily of ridicule and "ad hominem" arguments.³

Now, however, the original interpretation is being called into question by those creationists who were most involved in the original discoveries and subsequent documentation.^{4,5,6} It seems that recent erosion has exposed aspects of certain ones of the human-like prints which were not visible before, and many of them now look quite reptilian. As might be imagined, the American Humanist Association and other anti-creationists are claiming a great victory.^{7,8}

What really happened? How did it happen? Who takes the credit and/or blame? The answer to these questions may lie in a brief reflection on the history of the project, especially looking at the factors which played a part in the interpretation of the data as well as presentation of the various interpretations.

When Stan Taylor and crew, under the auspices of Films for Christ, first discovered and documented these particular human-like prints,⁹ they based their interpretation on the facts that: 1) scores of local residents, whose honesty was beyond question, swore that they had for years seen unmistakable human tracks in the river bed; 2) while none of the prints looked unquestionably human, they did look like tracks a human might make while walking or running in slippery mud, later subjected to erosion; 3) the tracks did not match those left by any other animal, living or extinct, so far as was known. After having reviewed photos and films of the prints when originally excavated, having seen them on numerous occasions throughout the subsequent years, and having seen them recently with their newly acquired features, I am convinced that the original interpretation was not only a valid interpretation, but also that it was arguably the best and perhaps only valid interpretation given the data available at the time. However, the prints at the present time appear quite different, and no one would now call them human-like.

Although I saw the tracks in 1970 and 1971, my own research on the tracks did not start in earnest until 1975.¹⁰ The prints had changed substantially through years of exposure and erosion, forcing me to conclude¹¹ that the original evidence was forever lost, available for study only on film, in casts and in careful descriptions prepared by Taylor, Turnage, and other early investigators. By the late 1970's, the "in situ" evidence could hardly convince a skeptic, except for a few new prints found. I was convinced that the only way the original interpretation could be invalidated was: 1) for features of the prints not visible beforehand to be exposed by erosion; 2) for the testimonies of the old-time residents to be discredited, even though most were by then deceased; 3) by the discovery

of another animal which could leave tracks similar in size and shape to human tracks. Incredible as it may seem, all three of these criteria may have recently been satisfied.

What were evolutionists doing all this time? Did any attempt to study the data and provide an alternate interpretation? No. With a few superficial exceptions, no field work was done by evolutionists until the most recent few years. Instead, from a distance, they ridiculed "the man-trackers" and their interpretation of field data.

The problem lies primarily with pre-suppositions. The Biblical creation model predicts the co-existence of humans and dinosaurs and therefore allows for the discovery of their fossils in the same strata. On the other hand, the evolution model cannot allow such a discovery because it is presuppositionally "known" that man and dinosaur did not live at the same time. The evolutionist is not free to accept this interpretation no matter what the evidence. More than one evolutionist has been heard to remark "These man-like prints could not have been made by a man, because man didn't live in the age of dinosaurs. Therefore, they must have been made by some dinosaur, which we haven't discovered yet, that had a foot which looked like a man's." Hardly open-minded empiricism. More than a few evolutionists were convinced by the data, but most refused even to consider the possibility of dinosaur and human co-existence.

Most articles by evolutionists consisted of little substance. But on November 17, 1982, biologist Dr. David Milne wrote me (on NASA letterhead) asking for copies of original field notes from ICR sponsored investigations, permission to reproduce my photos, and for many other pieces of information. Quoting from that letter, Milne writes: "Last September, the editor of the Journal of Geological Education requested that I (i.e. Milne) write an article on the Paluxy River fossil footprints. I reluctantly accepted and promised myself that I would produce a fair and objective analysis of the prints, conducted from an open-minded standpoint, and call it as I see it, whether it favors evolution or creation." However, the stance of both the Journal, which has a long record of anti-creationist material,¹² and Milne, who had previously critiqued my Paluxy work and claimed it "would merit an 'F' as a senior thesis,"¹³ was well known and it was doubtful that a "fair and objective analysis" was forthcoming. I telephoned the editor of the Journal and suggested that Milne and I write companion articles in the same edition, thinking that would be fair. The laughter on the other end was loud and long, and not only was I refused an article, but the editor promised that even a letter of response to Milne's article would be subjected to the peer-review process and probably rejected. Furthermore, Milne's article had already been written, was scheduled in the next issue, and was to be co-authored by staunch anti-creationist Steven Schafersman, a member of the aforementioned American Humanist Association team of four scientists. Milne had never been to the Paluxy, and Schafersman had not been to the important sites, and so their article consisted almost entirely of a critique of my book. The only legitimate criticisms they posed were of typographical errors in my book. All others were either trivial, distortions of my position, or outright errors on their part (including printing one photograph upside down, giving it a distorted appearance). I was not allowed to respond, nor was I given other forums in which to defend my work. For example, in refusing to accept my abstract for a proposed talk at the Geologic Society of America South-Central Convention, the General Chairman wrote on February 8, 1984 that my talk "appeared to be a vehicle for creationist dogma rather than scientific thought."

Unfortunately, the Milne-Schafersman article appeared quite sober and scholarly, and provided other evolutionists with what they wanted to hear. Certain of the tracks were said to be pure imagination, others erosion marks, still others eroded dinosaur tracks. They even clearly gave the impression that I had fraudulently carved the "Morris track," which they describe as having an "impression, remarkably like that of a big toe, . . . the heel area (and indeed all the rest of the "foot") as remarkably deep and complete" (parenthesis theirs).¹⁴ Their explanations, not based on any field work of their own, are easy to refute. However, they follow a trend of irrational explanations which evolutionists have used for years. Some have called the prints worm burrows. Others have said they are all carvings. Many have used the flimsy erosion mark or pothole argument. One author even claimed that the tracks were real human footprints, recently made by careless creationist investigators walking on the river bank at times of low water. But no one ever claimed they were in reality partially obscured prints of a heretofore unknown dinosaur which walked in an atypical plantigrade fashion.

Somehow, since 1984, many of the important human-like tracks have acquired a reddish colored stain surrounding them in a three-toed shape. The stains, which are rather similar to other tridactyl prints in the area, frequently cross or ignore the "mud up-push" on the sides of the tracks, and seldom follow a depression in the rock surface. The

cause of this stain is as yet not fully understood, although it is still being studied. Some have suggested that the stain has been fraudulently added to the human-like prints, but no direct evidence of this has been seen.

It is my contention that the matter is far from settled. Evolutionists should find no room to gloat, for their ludicrous explanations never explained existing data or predicted the current state. In fact, their writings have seemingly disqualified them as objective, open-minded scientists. On the other hand, creationists' interpretations have attempted to handle the data as they existed, although some investigations have been of doubtful quality. But none predicted the current state of the evidence either. Only one thing is certain, attention has been called to the Paluxy once again, and many will renew efforts to extract her secrets. Perhaps soon the whole truth will be known.

In the meantime, ICR has closed its museum display on the Paluxy and my book is no longer sold unless the buyer is aware of recent developments, and even then accompanied by inserts describing the current controversy. Likewise, Films for Christ has removed its film Footprints in Stone from the market and is editing others which mention Paluxy. We are Christians, and since we follow the One who claimed to be Truth, we must love truth as it exists and not as we would wish it to exist. We must not continue to use the Paluxy as an anti-evolutionary argument unless we can be certain once again of a human-like interpretation. We must not be like the evolutionists who still use the outdated Neanderthal "half-men" as supposed human ancestors, the discredited horse series as evidence of transitional forms, and the discarded concept of "embryonic recapitulation" to prove evolution. We must be honest before men and before God.

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