

Lecture 5 - THE RISE OF EVOLUTION (cont'd)

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(subhead)

THE PROBLEM OF VARIATION

In the preface to a recent handbook on evolution a professor at an American university declares: "We do not need a listing of evidences to demonstrate the fact of evolution any more than we need to demonstrate the existence of mountain ranges."

It is truly sad when a man who is trained in one area of thought speaks so dogmatically about an area in which he is not qualified. The declaration that all types of life have come into existence by descent with modification from one original source belongs properly to the field of history, rather than to that of science. To put such a statement in the same category with recognition of the existence of mountain ranges verges on the absurd. As we have seen, the sort of evidence needed for the establishment of such a historical statement is almost entirely non-existent, and the circumstantial evidence presented in its favor falls far short of being sufficient to label it as a fact.

On the next page of the preface the author asserts that his book is "unique among discussions on evolution at the college level in its emphasis on the two crucial unsolved problems in the understanding of evolutionary processes." One of "the two crucial unsolved problems" that he names is this: "What processes are responsible for the origin of major evolutionary changes above the species level."

Thus the book makes two contradictory statements in its preface. It declares evolution to be a fact, and then designates the question as to what process produces such changes above the species level as a "crucial unsolved problem."