

The Accidental Human Population

This includes Jesus, Mohammed, Abraham, Moses, Buddha, and all other founders of religions. The most recent common ancestor of all humans living today, called the concestor, lived before modern religions appeared.

Consider that the number of direct ancestors of every human living today, spanning 30 generations or about 1,000 years, totals over one billion people, a number greater than the world population at that time. It is a mathematical necessity that many of our direct ancestors who lived 1,000 years ago are in our individual lineages through more than one pedigree.



The first of several migrations out of Africa, where Homo sapiens originated, occurred about 1.8 million years ago. Those migrants proceeded to populate the remaining landmasses on Earth,

reaching the Americas only as recently as 17,000 years ago. Our concestor might have lived just prior to that first out-of-Africa migration, or she might have lived much more recently—some near-

extinctions of humans have occurred, including one caused by a supervolcano eruption about 70,000 years ago in modern-day Indonesia, which resulted in a decline in world human population to about 10,000 individuals. In any case, our concestor lived long before contemporary religions were founded.

Join me in a thought experiment—imagine the act of sexual intercourse that resulted in the birth of our concestor. The sperm cell that first reached and fertilized our concestor's mother's egg had 40 million to 1.2 billion competitors—other sperm that were produced at that moment, all swimming vigorously through her fallopian tube toward the awaiting egg.

Next, imagine the consequences if a different sperm had reached the egg first. If so, our concestor would have been a different person (i.e., a genetic sibling), and would have had different offspring (just as your siblings' children are different people from your own children). Consequently, no individual in her descendant lineage would have existed, which includes you and me and every other person who lived during the past tens or hundreds of thousands of years. The world would now be populated by an entirely different set of people—an entirely different human history would have taken place. All the great and notable people who fill our history books would not have existed—a world-full of other individuals, no doubt including many great

and notable people, would have existed instead. Those other people would have performed a different set of momentous deeds, resulting in an entirely different world history.



More to the present point, Jesus would not have existed, nor would any of the other prophets and founders of today's religions. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and other faiths would not now exist, though other superstitions likely would

have been invented to meet human needs and wish-fulfilling beliefs, discussed below.

How confident can you be that your religion is true, considering its existence depends on the success of the one-in-millions sperm reaching the egg of our concestor's mother first, eventually leading to the birth of your religion's founder many thousands of years later? Plausible?

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