



FIGURE 11.2.

A comparison of the modern human skull with the "classic" Neanderthal skull. The latter is less rounded and lacks a predominant chin.

A new look at Neanderthal has tended to correct this image. Richard Leakey cites an anatomical reconstruction of European Neanderthal performed by William Strauss and A.J.E. Cave. They comment on Neanderthal as follows: "If he could be reincarnated and placed in a New York subway -- provided he were bathed, shaved and dressed in modern clothing -- it is doubtful whether he would attract any more attention than some of its other denizens."²

Furthermore, our classic picture of Neanderthal has been modified by discoveries that indicate there were more "generalized" (slightly more modern) types living concurrently in areas of the world other than Europe, particularly in the Near East. Differences in skull structure appear in the fossil record as they do today among various races of modern man in various geographic regions of the world. There was also apparently some intermixture as there is among present races of the world. There is a recent trend in anthropology to refer to the period from 100,000 years ago to 40,000 years ago as the "Neanderthal phase" in human history rather than draw a sharp line between classic Neanderthal and the more modern Cro-Magnon man who succeeded him.

Nevertheless, there are differences between Neanderthal man and the more modern man who replaced him more than 35,000 years ago. Neanderthal man is classified as *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*, whereas the subspecies to which we belong is called *Homo sapiens sapiens* (man of wisdom). The difference in skull morphology is seen in Figure 11.2.

Basically, the classic Neanderthal has a much flatter skull on top with the impression of a bun or knot on the back. He lacks the well-defined, rather flat forehead of modern man, and he has massive prominent brow ridges. The jaws are thrust forward. His chin appears to be receding when compared with modern man's.

Neanderthal's body is thought to have been stocky and somewhat bulky. His limb bones were slightly bowed. An appearance of great strength is deduced from the points where muscles would have attached to his bones. His stature was similar to ours (average height was 5 feet 8 inches).

We have no way of knowing with certainty if Neanderthal man could talk. His brain cavity size was not only equal to but exceeded that of modern man. However, he reportedly lacked the frontal lobe, the speech center of our modern brain. Nevertheless, reconstruction of the Neanderthal larynx and brain has led anthropologists to believe he may have had some sort of spoken language.