

## WAS ADAM A REAL PERSON?

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*Belief in the historicity of Adam has been held firmly throughout the history of the church. In the light of modern biblical criticism and the evolutionary sciences, some conservative Christians are now questioning whether or not Adam was a real person. This paper argues that the existence of Adam in the opening chapters of scripture reflects an ancient understanding of biological origins. More specifically, the quick and complete (de novo) creation of life is the result of retrojecting an ancient phenomenological perspective of living organisms back in time to the origin of the world. The apostle Paul's references to Adam are rooted in this ancient scientific understanding of human origins. In moving beyond the belief in the historicity of Adam, this paper concludes that Adam is an incidental, though necessary, ancient vessel that transports inerrant messages of faith regarding the human spiritual condition.*

In the final chapter of my book *Evolution Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution*, I begin with the provocative assertion, “My central conclusion in this book is clear: Adam never existed, and this fact has no impact whatsoever on the foundational beliefs of Christianity” (Lamoureux, 2008b, p. 367). Of course, such a view of origins is not often heard in conservative Christian circles, especially within evangelicalism. Surveys of Americans reveal that a significant number still believe that Adam was a real person. Nine Gallop polls since 1982 indicate that nearly half of the nation accept that “God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so” (PollingReport.com). An ABC News Prime Time poll in 2004 asked Americans about the creation of the world in six days (Genesis 1) and the global flood of Noah (Genesis 6–9): “Do you think that’s literally true, meaning it happened that way word-for-word;

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or do you think it's meant as a lesson, but not to be taken literally?" (International Communications Research of Media). Sixty-one percent of Americans, and specifically 87% of evangelical Protestants, believe that these biblical chapters offer real historical facts; and by extension it is reasonable to conclude that they also accept the creation of Adam as a real person in Genesis 2.

This paper first examines how ancient peoples conceived of the origin of living organisms. It then focuses upon the creation of Adam as presented in scripture. Next, the challenging issue of what to make of the apostle Paul's references to Adam is dealt with. The paper closes with some preliminary suggestions on developing a conservative Christian approach to human origins that does not include a historical Adam.

### The *De Novo* Creation of Life

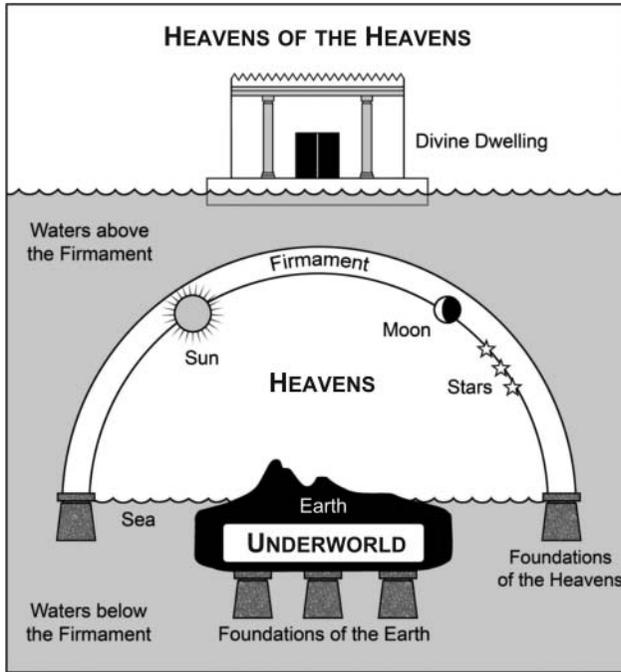
*De novo* creation is the ancient conceptualization of origins found in the Bible. This term is made up of the Latin words *de* meaning "from" and *novus* "new." Stated more precisely, it is a view of origins that results in things and beings that are brand new. This type of creative activity is quick and complete. It may include *creation ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) events, but not necessarily (Lamoureux, 2008b, pp. 391–396). *De novo* creation appears in a majority of ancient creation accounts and it involves a divine being/s who act/s rapidly through a series of dramatic interventions, resulting in cosmological structures (sun, moon, stars) and living organisms (plants, animals, humans) that are mature and fully formed (Dalley, 1989; Leeming & Leeming, 1994; Pritchard, 1969; Sparks, 2005).

Considering the limited scientific evidence available to ancient peoples, this conceptualization of origins was perfectly logical. As with all origins accounts, including those held by us today, the ancients asked basic *etiological* questions (Greek *aitia*: the cause, the reason for this). These included: Where did these things or beings around us come from? Why are they this way? Who or what is responsible for their origin? There was no reason for ancient peoples to believe the universe was billions of years old, and they were unaware that living organisms changed over eons of time as reflected in the fossil record. Instead, the age of the world was limited to the lengths of their genealogies, most of

which originated within an oral culture and were held by memory, and therefore quite short (e.g., Gen 4, 5, 11; Leeming & Leeming, 1994; Lindberg, 1992; Vansina, 1985). Biological evolution was not even a consideration because in the eyes of the ancients, hens laid eggs that always produced chicks, ewes only gave birth to lambs, and women were invariably the mothers of human infants. Living organisms were therefore immutable; they were static and never changed.

In conceptualizing origins, ancient people used these day-to-day experiences and *retrojected* them back to the beginning of the world (Latin *retro*: backward; *jacere*: to throw). Retrojection is the very same type of thinking used in crime scene investigations. Present evidence found at the scene is used to reconstruct past events. In this way, the ancients came to the reasonable conclusion that the universe and life must have been created quickly and completely formed not that long ago. And this was the best origins science-of-the-day.

Grasping the notion of *de novo* creation is one of the keys to understanding Genesis 1 and the modern origins debate. This creation account refers 10 times to living creatures reproducing “according to its/their kind/s.” Christian antievolutionists, including young earth creationists (Gish, 1972; Ham, 1987; Morris, 1974; Wise, 2002; Wood and Garner, 2009), progressive creationists (Collins, 2004, 2010; Ramm, 1954; Ross, 1998), and intelligent design theorists (Dembski, 1998, 2009; Johnson, 1991), argue that this phrase is incontestable biblical evidence against biological evolution, because God created separate groups of organisms. Most term these groupings “created kinds” or “baramins” (Hebrew *bārā’*: to create; *min*: kind). However, this popular antievolutionist belief that the Creator intervened dramatically in the creation of individual groups of plants and animals fails to appreciate the ancient mindset and its intellectual categories. The phrase “according to its/their kind/s” reflects an *ancient* phenomenological perspective of living organisms. This is not to be confused and conflated with our *modern* phenomenological perspective. What the ancients saw, they believed to be real and actual, such as the literal movement of the sun across the sky. In contrast, what we see today, we understand to be only apparent and a visual effect, such as the apparent movement of the sun (see Figure 1). Ancient people always saw that birds reproduce birds, which reproduce birds, which reproduce birds, and so forth. They retrojected this



**FIGURE 1** The 3-tier universe. Scripture compares the structure of the universe to a tent, with a domed canopy overhead and a flat floor below (Ps 19:4, Ps 104:2, Is 40:22). Other features of this ancient understanding of the cosmos include: a solid domed structure overhead, termed “the firmament,” that holds up a body of water over the earth (Gen 1:6–8, Ps 19:1, Ps 104:2–3); a divine dwelling set in the heavenly waters above (Ps 148:3–4); foundations that support the firmament (2 Sam 22:8, Job 26:11); a sun that moves across the sky daily (Ps 19:6, Eccl 1:5, Jos 10:13); a circumferential sea that borders a circular earth (Prov 8:22–31, Job 26:7–14, Isa 40:22); an immovable earth set on foundations (1 Chr 16:30, Ps 104:5, Job 38:4–6); an underworld in the heart of the earth (Phil 2:10–11; Matt 12:40, Rev 5:3, 13). Courtesy of Kenneth Kully.

experience back into the past and came to the logical conclusion that there must have been some first or original birds that the Creator/s had made *de novo*. Thus, the *de novo* creation of living organisms, such as birds in Genesis 1, is based on the classification of life in static or immutable categories, as perceived by ancient peoples like the Hebrews. More specifically, it reflects an ancient biology; and in particular, an ancient understanding of taxonomy (Lamoureux, 2008b, pp. 135–137). This biblical fact has a very challenging implication.

Ancient biology profoundly impacts the conceptualization of the divine acts that created living organisms in Genesis 1. Stated precisely, *God's creative action in the origin of life is accommodated through ancient taxonomical categories*. In the same way that Genesis 1 filters divine events regarding the origin of the heavens through a three-tier astronomy and the ancient notion of *de novo* creation (i.e., God using the firmament to separate the heavenly sea of “waters above” on creation day two, and his placing of the sun, moon, and stars in the firmament on day four; see Figure 1 [Seely, 1989, pp. 32–37; Walton, 2006, pp. 168–172; Lamoureux, 2008b, pp. 149–153]), the common phenomenon of seeing living organisms reproduce “according to its/their kind/s” profoundly shapes the events regarding the origin of life. The writer of Genesis 1 attributes the origin of the basic kinds of plants and animals to *de novo* creative acts by the Creator. In other words, ancient science directs the Holy Spirit-inspired biblical author's conceptualization of divine creative activity. Ancient peoples saw that the basic kinds of living organisms around them never changed, and that these reproduced only after their kinds. It was perfectly logical for them to connect these two observations and then come to the reasonable conclusion that creatures must have originally been created quickly and completely formed. We would have arrived at the same conclusion had we lived at that time. Consequently, and most importantly, Genesis 1 does not reveal how God actually created life.

To be sure, this idea is challenging, and even threatening, to most conservative Christians. But the Message-Incident Principle sheds light on the situation (Lamoureux, 2008a, 2008b, pp. 110–111; 2009, pp. 44–46; 2010a, pp. 43–44). Accordingly, the Holy Spirit descended to the level of the biblical author of Genesis 1 and used his *incidental ancient science* regarding biological origins in order to reveal the central *message of faith* that God was the creator of living organisms. Of course, some are quick to ask: Did God lie in the Bible? Absolutely not! Lying requires a malicious and deceptive intention. The God of the Bible is not a God of malice or deception. Rather, it is by grace that the Holy Spirit came down to the level of the ancient Hebrews and employed their ancient understanding of origins—the *de novo* creation of life—in order to communicate as effectively as possible inerrant, life-changing, spiritual truths. This is similar to the way

God speaks to each of us in prayer today. By grace, the Lord descends to our level. The ancient origins science in scripture is an incidental, though necessary, vessel that delivers “living waters” (John 4:10) to nourish our thirsty souls. In other words, God accommodates to the level of the inspired writers and his readers in the Bible (Enns, 2005, pp. 55–56; Ladd, 1967, pp. 11–12; Lamoureux, 2008b, 166–167; Pinnock, 1984, pp. 95–100; Seely, 1989, pp. 41–44; Sparks, 2008, pp. 242–259). Since this is the case, there is one profound implication: Scripture simply does not reveal how the Creator actually made plants, animals, and . . . humans.

### The *De Novo* Creation of Adam

Generations of Christians have firmly believed that the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 is an elaboration of the brief account of human origins on the sixth creation day in Genesis 1. In other words, most Christians, in particular evangelicals, are scientific and historical concordists, assuming there is an accord or correspondence between the Bible and the facts of science and history. Though there is a wide variety of concordist interpretations, young earth creationists, progressive creationists (Ross, 2005; Collins, 2010), and evolutionary monogenists (those who tack on an Adam at the tail end of evolution, e.g., Alexander, 2008; Berry & Noble, 2009; Catholic Catechism, 1992; Falk, 2004; Billy Graham is open to the evolutionary monogenism, Graham, 1964; Harrell, 2008; Miller, 2003; Waltke, 2007) all assert that human history actually begins in the garden of Eden with Adam. However, as noted above, the *de novo* creation of living organisms was the science-of-the-day in the ancient Near East, and this calls into question the historicity the creation of humans as stated in the Bible.

Like every account of origins, Genesis 2 is etiological. It offers an explanation for the existence of things and beings known to the Holy Spirit-inspired writer and his readers—vegetation, land animals, birds, and humans. And typical of ancient accounts of origins, the Lord God created these *de novo*; that is, they were made quickly and completely formed. But Genesis 2 focuses mainly on the origin of humanity. Adam is made “from the dust of the ground” (v. 7). Notably, the use of earth to rapidly form mature human beings appears in other ancient Near Eastern

creation stories. For example, the *Atrahasis* creation account tells of a goddess who mixes clay with the blood of a slain god to fashion seven males and seven females. In *Enki and Ninmah*, a drunken divine being uses earth to make imperfect human beings. And a pinch of clay is used to create a man in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Dalley, 1989; Middleton, 2005; Pritchard, 1969; Sparks, 2005). The gods in many of these pagan accounts create humanity in order to free themselves from work. The message is that men and women are basically slaves of the gods. In sharp contrast, Genesis 2 features the message of faith that the Lord cares for humanity. He meets their physical and psychological needs by offering food and companionship. In this way, the God of love is being revealed at this early stage of biblical revelation.

So what exactly am I saying about Adam? Yes, the forming of a man from the dust of the ground in Genesis 2:7 is an ancient understanding of human origins. Adam's existence is based ultimately on ancient science, and his quick and complete creation from earth made perfect sense from an ancient phenomenological perspective. The ancients saw that humans never change into other kinds of creatures, and that humans give birth to humans, who give birth to humans, who give birth to humans, and so forth. It was reasonable for them to retroject these day-to-day experiences back to the beginning of the origin of the world and to conclude that the Creator had made an original human or pair of humans. In addition, ancient peoples saw that after an organism died, it decomposed and became dust. This observation, coupled with their own activity in shaping clay into pottery, provided a conceptual framework for the fashioning of humans and other living organisms from earth. In fact, Genesis 2 uses the Hebrew word *yāsar* to describe the forming of a man, animals, and birds from the ground (v. 7, 8, 19). This word is the root of the term "potter", and it even appears in other passages where God is the potter who forms man in his hands (Isa 16:29, 45:9, 64:8; cf. Jer 18:1–6).

The *de novo* creation of Adam is another example of the Holy Spirit accommodating; that is, of descending to the level of the ancient Hebrews in the biblical revelatory process. He takes their view of human origins, which was the best science-of-the-day, and employs it as an incidental vessel to reveal that he is their Creator. And just like his use of ancient astronomy, when he separates the

waters above from the waters below with the firmament in Genesis 1, his forming of Adam from the dust of ground never happened either. No doubt about it, this idea is shocking to most conservative Christians. But the Message-Incident Principle offers perspective on this situation. *How* God made humans is incidental to the message *that* he made us. Thus, Adam is simply an ancient vehicle that transports inerrant, life-changing, spiritual truths.

The central purpose of Genesis 2 is to reveal infallible messages of faith about the human spiritual condition. Radically different from the pagan beliefs of the nations surrounding the Hebrews, this chapter complements the Holy Spirit-inspired theology of Genesis 1, which reveals that humans are created in the image of God (v. 26–27). Genesis 2 underlines our special and privileged status in the world, because we are the only creatures in a personal relationship with the Lord. The second creation account in scripture also discloses that men and women were made to enjoy the mystery of marriage. So beautifully stated, “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (v. 24). And most importantly, Genesis 2 reveals that the Creator sets limits on human freedom. He commands Adam, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you shall surely die” (v. 17). In other words, we are accountable before God, and failure to respect his commands has serious consequences.

### The Apostle Paul on the Historicity of Adam

Did the apostle Paul believe that Adam was a real person? Yes, well, of course he did. Paul was a first-century A.D. Jew and like every Jewish person around him, he accepted the historicity of Adam (Harlow, 2008, 2010; Lamoureux, 2008b, pp. 324–327). In fact, he places Adam’s sin and death alongside God’s gifts of salvation and resurrection from the dead through Jesus. In Romans 5:12 and 15, he writes that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . . For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and gift that came by the grace of the One Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” Paul also claims in 1 Corinthians 15:21 that “since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through

a Man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” Notably, these two passages play a central role in the rejection of human evolution within evangelical circles.

It is understandable why most conservative Christians believe that Adam was a real historical person. This is exactly what scripture states in both the Old and New Testaments. To defend their position, these believers often offer three arguments by appealing to the apostle Paul. First, they use a conferment argument. They contend that since Paul believed in the existence of Adam, then Adam in the opening chapters of Genesis must have been a real person. In other words, the apostle’s belief in the historicity of Adam confers historical reality to Adam. Second, these Christians employ a consistency argument. They argue that since Paul refers to Jesus as a historical person in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, then it is only consistent that his references to Adam in these chapters must also be to a real individual in history. Third, believers point out that the Gospel appears in these New Testament passages. In particular, it is explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 15:1–7 and introduced by the clauses “the Gospel I [Paul] preached to you” (v. 1) and “by this Gospel you are saved” (v. 2). They contend that we cannot simply pick and choose the Bible verses we want, such as accepting the Gospel and rejecting the existence of Adam. On the surface, these three arguments are quite reasonable. In fact, I used all of them 30 years ago when I was a fiery young earth creationist (Lamoureux, 1981; 2008b, pp. 332–366).

Let us examine these popular arguments. First, the conferment argument. Many Christians argue that since Paul believed in the existence of Adam, then Adam must have been a real person. But what else did this apostle believe? In one of the most important passages in the New Testament, the wonderful Kenotic Hymn (Philippians 2:5–11), he states in verses 10–11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (a) in heaven, (b) on earth, and (c) in the underworld (English translations often have “under the earth”. However, the Greek word *katachthonion* in this verse refers to the beings down [*kata*] in the chthonic [*chthonios*] or subterranean realm Cf., Matt 12:40; Eph 4:9–10; 1 Pet 3:19; and see Figure 1). Paul clearly accepted the three-tier universe. But does his belief confer reality to this understanding of the structure of the

universe? And since he believed the world had three tiers, do we have to believe it also? More specifically, Paul accepted that there was a subterranean region where beings exist. Does his belief bestow reality to such a place with individuals under the surface of the earth? And if we decide to reject the three-tier universe in Philippians 2, but to accept Jesus as Lord, are we to be accused of being inconsistent? Or worse, of picking and choosing the Bible verses that we want to believe? I doubt any conservative Christian would answer “yes” to any of these five questions.

Second, the consistency argument states that since Paul refers to Jesus as a historical individual in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, then references to Adam in these chapters must also be to a real person in history. However, this common line of reasoning fails to distinguish real history (the existence of Jesus) from an ancient understanding of human origins (the *de novo* creation of Adam). In other words, the often-used consistency argument is in fact inconsistent! It conflates (blends together) actual historical events of the first century A.D. with an ancient biology. This is similar to using the Kenotic Hymn in Philippians 2 and the historical fact that Jesus actually existed in order to argue for the existence of the three-tier universe presented in verses 10–11; and then to extend the ancient astronomy in this New Testament passage back to Genesis 1 to claim that God actually created a world with three tiers. I am doubtful that anyone would appeal to consistency in such a way.

But let me appeal to consistency in a way that is not often heard in Christian circles. Consistency argues that since Paul accepted ancient astronomy and ancient geology, then he must also have accepted ancient biology. The static 3-tier universe was the science-of-the-day embraced by this apostle and his readers, and so too was the notion that living organisms were static (immutable) and reproduced “according to its/their kind/s.” Paul refers to this ancient biological (taxonomical) conceptualization in 1 Corinthians 15:39 by stating that “all flesh is not the same: men have one kind of flesh, animals have another [kind], birds another [kind], and fish another [kind].” Since he viewed living organisms as separately created kinds, it is only consistent that he understood the origin of life through the ancient biological notion of *de novo* creation. In fact, the apostle presents this ancient science of human origins in Acts 17:26 when he states, “From one man God made

every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth.” Paul definitely believed that human life began with the quick and complete creation of Adam. In other words, he accepted the biology-of-the-day. In this light, I am doubtful there are any conservative Christians today that accept the ancient astronomy and ancient geology so clearly present in scripture; and consistency argues that neither should they accept the ancient biology in the Word of God.

Third, it is necessary to underline that Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross are not dependent on the existence of Adam. Now, there is no doubt that Paul believed in the historical reality of both Adam and Jesus. In particular, this apostle recognized that the Gospel is based on the Lord’s existence and his physical death and resurrection from the grave. Stating concisely the Good News and its implications, Paul writes:

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain.

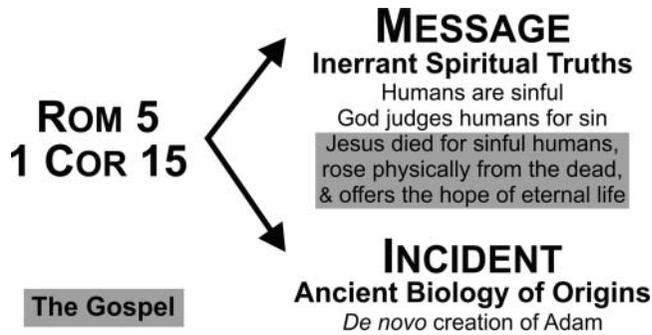
For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. . . .

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

. . . And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:1–7, 14, 17

This is the Gospel as stated explicitly in the Bible, and there is no mention whatsoever of Adam and whether or not he existed. Christian faith is founded on Jesus, not Adam. This religion is called Christ-ianity, not Adam-ianity. Also note that this passage refers to many people who lived during a well-known point in real history (first century A.D.) and who had actually met the Lord (Peter, the Twelve, 500 brothers, James, Paul). This is not the case with Adam. Of course, Paul believed that Adam existed, and mentions him later in 1 Corinthians 15. But Adam’s existence is based on *de novo* creation, the origins science-of-the-day for Paul and his



**FIGURE 2** The Apostle Paul and the Message-Incident Principle. The key to reading Pauline passages that refer to Adam is to recognize that the creation of Adam reflects an ancient biology of human origins—the quick and complete (*de novo*) creation of a human being. Consequently, it is necessary to separate, and not conflate, this ancient science from the Holy Spirit-inspired messages of faith.

readers. Therefore, in the same way that we must separate, and not conflate, the inerrant message that Jesus is Lord from the fact that the three-tier world presented in Philippians 2 does not exist, we must also separate, and not conflate, the historical reality of Jesus and his death and bodily resurrection from the fact that Adam never existed, because Adam's existence is rooted in an ancient biology of human origins.

Considering these three counterarguments above, it is possible to suggest a new approach to Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 by employing the Message-Incident Principle (Figure 2). The central message in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 is this: we are sinners and God judges us for our sins; but the Good News of the Gospel is that we are offered the hope of eternal life through the sacrificial death of Jesus and his physical (bodily) resurrection from the dead. In order to deliver as effectively as possible inerrant spiritual truths about human sinfulness, the divine judgment of sin and hope of eternal life, the Holy Spirit accommodated to Paul's level by employing an incidental ancient biological notion from the early chapters of Genesis—the *de novo* creation of Adam. To be sure, this is a very challenging and counterintuitive way to read scripture. Nevertheless, we must not conflate, but instead separate the inerrant, life-changing messages of faith from their incidental ancient vessel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. These passages in the Word of God do not reveal *how* God actually made humans, but *that* he created us; and that we are sinners in

need of a savior, whom the Lord has graciously sent to die on the cross for us.

### **Toward a Conservative (Evangelical) Theology Without a Historical Adam**

As I wrote this subtitle, I pondered with some amusement on what I would have said 30 years ago to anyone arguing that it was possible to reject the historicity of Adam and remain an evangelical Christian. As a fiery card-carrying young earth creationist who walked out of medical school in order to pursue a career as a creation scientist, I suspect it would not have been a pleasant exchange of ideas. Living without Adam is indeed challenging, and even threatening to most Christians. And some, like Wheaton College professor G. K. Beale, view my position on origins as indicative of the “erosion of inerrancy in evangelicalism” (Beale, 2008, pp. 198–199, 205; my response in Lamoureux, 2010b). However, let me propose three suggestions toward developing a conservative (evangelical) theology without a historical Adam.

First, despite the volatility of human origins in evangelical circles, we need to keep this issue in perspective. There are four foundational theological truths that unite all young earth creationists, progressive creationists, evolutionary monogenesisists, and evolutionary creationists (or theistic evolutionists): (a) God created humanity. We are not a mistake or merely an evolutionary by-product of blind chance and irrational necessity. It was central to the Lord’s plan to make men and women. (b) Every human has been created in the image of God. We are the only creatures on earth that enjoy such a privileged status. This spiritual truth stands in sharp contrast to the atheistic belief that we are nothing but animals, and it commands us to respect both others and ourselves. (c) Every man and woman is a sinner. We have all rebelled against our Creator, sinned against other humans, and even violated the creation. On the Day of Judgment, God will call on us to give an account of our conduct. (d) Only Jesus offers redemption from sin. Acts 4:12 reveals that “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Even as a young earth creationist, I would have acknowledged that these four theological tenets are far more important than the details of how God created the world. For me,

these eternal truths are nonnegotiable, inerrant messages of faith that are essential to Christianity.

Second, caution is required today with regard to our acceptance of traditional theological doctrines that are intimately related to science, because these religious formulations were developed within a historical context. The Galileo affair offers valuable insights to our current coming to terms with evolutionary biology, especially the evolution of humanity. Theologians in the early seventeenth-century conflated Ptolemaic/Aristotelian science with Christianity, and as Cardinal Poupard concludes in his “Galileo: Report on the Papal Commission Findings,” this resulted in “a disciplinary measure from which Galileo ‘had much to suffer’” (Poupard, 1992, p. 375). Stated more precisely, Poupard notes that “Galileo’s judges, incapable of *dissociating faith* from an *age-old cosmology*, believed quite wrongly that the adoption of the Copernican revolution, was such as to undermine Catholic tradition” (Poupard, 1992, p. 375; my italics). In other words, the conflation of geocentricity with Christian faith was a serious error made by the seventeenth-century church.

In the light of this historical episode, it is evident that a conservative theology without a historical Adam must revisit the doctrine of original sin. As formulated by St. Augustine in the fifth century, this doctrine features two central tenets: (a) original sin is the very first sin committed by the very first man, Adam; and (b) original sin is passed on from Adam to all humans (Berry & Noble, 2009, pp. 99–129; Pius XII, 1950, p. 182). However, Augustine lived at time well before modern science. For example, as a Platonist, he believed in geocentricity, with a spherical earth suspended in the middle of the entire universe, enveloped by a solid spherical firmament holding back a heavenly sea of water (Augustine, 415, vol. 2, p. 61). Moreover, Augustine accepted a global flood that destroyed all living organisms, except those in the ark with Noah. In order to repopulate the world with creatures after the flood, he contended that on distant islands like the Azores far into the Atlantic, certain animals, “like frogs, [could] spring directly from the soil” (Augustine, 426, p. 364). In other words, he embraced spontaneous generation, the biology-of-the-day. As well, Augustine believed that other animals could “spring up from the earth, as they sprang up in the beginning

when God said: ‘Let the earth produce a living soul [Gen 1:24]’ (Augustine, 426, p. 364). This view of biological origins is often termed Augustine’s Seed Principles (*rationes seminales*), and it too derives from ancient Greece, the *logos spermatikos* of Stoic philosophers (Howell, 2008, pp. 135–139).

Where I am going with this line of thought should be obvious. Augustine embraced ancient views of astronomy and biology. His belief in the ancient conception of human origins, the *de novo* creation of Adam, was conflated to his understanding of human sin, and in particular his doctrine of original sin. With this being the case, it is possible to modify and recast the words of Cardinal Poupard in the context of the modern church: Augustine’s followers in the church today, incapable of dissociating faith from an *age-old biology of human origins*, believe quite wrongly that the adoption of the Darwinian revolution is such as to undermine the conservative (evangelical) Christian tradition. Or to put it another way, the light of human evolutionary biology is making it clear that throughout church history, Christians have conflated an incidental ancient feature in scripture (the *de novo* creation of Adam) with the inerrant message of faith (humans are sinners). To be sure, I quite recognize that this dissociation of a central tenet of faith from its incidental ancient vessel will not be easy or comfortable. But it needs to be done. History reveals that after the Galileo affair the church eventually decoupled Christianity from an ancient astronomy; and in a way with hopefully fewer calamities, the same will be done in separating the foundations of faith from the ancient biology of human origins in scripture.

My third and final suggestion is a plea. Evangelical colleges and universities must offer their scholars the freedom to explore the possibility that Adam never existed. Scientists and theologians need to open the Lord’s two great revelations—the Book of God’s Works and the Book of God’s Words—on the chapters dealing with the issue of human origins without fear of reprisal. And if they arrive at a nonconcordist approach to the two divine books, as I have, so be it. Let the teachers of the church be led by the Holy Spirit, and let the teachers formulate doctrine (1 Cor 12:28–29). I believe that mission statements similar to those at America’s most important evangelical school, Wheaton College, are intellectually and spiritually oppressive:

WE BELIEVE that God *directly created* Adam and Eve, the *historical parents of the entire human race*; and that they were created in His own image, distinct from all other living creatures, and in a state of original righteousness. (Wheaton College Mission Statement; my italics)

The embarrassment in 2000 of dismissing an anthropologist from Wheaton College only confirms the observations of another Wheaton professor made six years earlier (McMurtrie, 2002, pp. A12–A14). Mark A. Noll opens his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, with a sharp indictment, “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind” (Noll, 2004, p. 3). Loving God with all our mind, as the Lord Jesus commanded us (Mt 22:37), means using our mind *faithfully* and *fearlessly*. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created humanity through an ordained, sustained, and designed-reflecting evolutionary process, then Wheaton College professors will never be able to testify the truth about human origins to their students. The significant pedagogical and pastoral implications of this problem should be obvious. And it should also be obvious that the mammon of wealthy members of a college constituency should not dictate doctrine (Mt 6:24). Continuing this course will only see our evangelical academic institutions fall into irrelevance and become cult-like in character.

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