

THE FIRST MAN...ADAM

by

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INTRODUCTION

As the young shepherd David tended his father's sheep by night and gazed into the starry heavens above him, he was overwhelmed by the magnitude of God's seemingly infinite Universe (Psalm 19:1). Could a God of such power and transcendence have any **real** interest in these "cosmic specks of dust" called men? Astronomy could provide David with little or no comfort in this desperately crucial problem, and the unbelievable advances we have made since his day still leave us in utter darkness. Modern astronomers, peering through their giant telescopes, have yet to find a single scientific trace of the grace and love of God in the Universe. Christians, of course, understand that the answer to this question must come from the inscripturated Word of God and from there alone. It was, understandably, to the first chapter of Genesis that David appealed as his source of assurance that God had created man just a little lower than Elohim (the realm of deity; the divine nature) and crowned him with glory and honor, giving him dominion over all creation (Psalm 8:5-8; cf. Genesis 1:26-28). In spite of the conspicuous failure of **natural revelation** at this point, **special revelation** (the Word of God) assures us that man is the object of God's loving concern and that one human being is more important to God than an entire Universe or its non-human inhabitants (Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:7).

Looking carefully about him at a world groaning under the bondage of sin and corruption, the brilliant writer of Ecclesiastes saw little strictly empirical basis for distinguishing human beings from beasts in regard to eternal destiny. "I saw under the sun...that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no preeminence above the beasts; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again" (3:19-20). Three thousand years later, our scientific advances have not helped much in solving this problem. No one can prove experimentally that the spirit of a beast vanishes at death but that the spirit of a man lives on forever. Modern scientists, peering through the most powerful of microscopes,

have yet to find a trace of the image of God in the mere chemical makeup of man's body. Christians, of course, understand that the final answer to this question must come from the Word of God and from there alone.

But some Christians are unwilling to carry this principle of the ultimate authority of the Scriptures to its logical conclusion. They acknowledge that the Bible—rather than astronomy or chemistry—is the final source of information concerning the **dignity** of man. But they cannot seem to bring themselves to accept that the Bible—rather than anthropology, geology, or paleontology—is the sole source of truth concerning the **creation** of man. Here, we are told, natural revelation has at least equal authority with special revelation from Scripture, and wherever there appears a conflict, the Bible then must be “molded” into the framework of contemporary scientific theory concerning the origin of man. This has come to be known as the “Double Revelation Theory,” the idea which suggests that God has given man two revelations of truth, each fully authoritative in its own realm: the revelation of God in nature and the revelation of God in Scripture.* The theologian is supposedly the God-appointed interpreter of Scripture, while the scientist is the God-appointed interpreter of nature. But more than that, this false notion suggests that whenever there is an apparent conflict between the conclusions of the scientist and the conclusions of the theologian with regard to such items as the origin of the Universe, the Earth, plant and animal life, man, etc., the theologian must “rethink” his interpretation of Scripture at these points so as to bring the Bible into harmony with the general consensus of scientific opinion since “the Bible is not a scientific textbook and these problems overlap the territory in which science alone can give us the detailed and authoritative answers.” As one writer put it:

Both the Bible of nature and the Holy Bible are infallible, each in its own way, because both are written by the almighty hand of God; otherwise, speaking with all reverence, God could not be trusted. Evolution is not just about all hypothesis. We are compelled to believe that at least much of it is true. And we may not be silent about that.... It is the result of reading the Bible of nature directly (Berkout, 1965, p. 22).

* For an excellent discussion on the “Double Revelation Theory,” and a clear and exhaustive refutation of it, see Whitcomb and DeYoung, 1978, pp. 54ff.

And so, with one fell swoop of the pen, the first chapters of Genesis (and all others which follow that speak on such matters) are “molded” to fit “scientific theory,” with the concept of origins being hardest hit. What will be the result of such thinking? Edward John Carnell suggested:

Since orthodoxy has given up the literal-day theory out of respect for geology, it would certainly forfeit no principle if it gave up the immediate-creation theory out of respect for paleontology. The two seem quite parallel.... If God was pleased to breathe His image into a creature that had previously come from dust, so be it (1959, p. 95; see also Ockenga, 1962, p. 12).

Thus, natural revelation as interpreted by the scientist cannot long remain on equal footing with special revelation, but finally supersedes it entirely. The imperfect (science) replaces the perfect (the Word of God), and any objective standard becomes a thing of the past. Each person is left to his own devices, or the “current scientific thought of the day,” to reach a conclusion on the origin and dignity of man. A more palpably false doctrine it would be difficult to imagine, yet it has become popular both in religion in general and even among some in the Lord’s church (see Jackson and Thompson, 1992). Bible must be “strained” through science to see if it can be accepted. And, one of the most oft’-attacked areas of Scripture is that section dealing with the creation of the first man—Adam. It is, therefore, to Adam (whom the inspired apostle Paul himself called “the first man,” 1 Corinthians 15:45) that we now turn our attention.

THE FIRST MAN...ADAM

All men should be interested in the history of the first man who ever breathed, man’s great ancestor, the head of the human family, the first being who trod upon the Earth. What a beautiful world Adam found himself in—a world without sin and sorrow with everything to make him happy. God first created, as it were, the great house of the world, and then brought His tenant to occupy it. It was not an empty house, but furnished by the Master Builder with everything needed to make man content. There was not a single need that God had not satisfied.

Adam was a necessary complement to the divine plan. Genesis 2:5 reminds us that “there was not a man to till the ground.” The accomplishment of God’s eternal plan required human instrumentality. God made Earth for man, and then made man for the Earth. For those who are willing to search the Scriptures and believe what they say, nothing could be clearer than the fact that God directly created the bodies of

Adam and Eve wholly apart from the previously existing animal kingdom. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:39, drew a clear distinction when he wrote that “All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of man, and another of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes.” The attempt by many today to accept in whole or in part current evolutionary pseudo-science has led to the strange notion known as “theistic evolution,” which asserts that God used evolutionary processes to bring the creation into existence. One part of the theistic evolution concept has to do with man’s creation. Theistic evolution would have us believe that man is merely a twig on the branch of anthropoid mammals. As Lutheran theologian Helmut Thielicke put it:

I have no objection, even as a Christian, to your deriving man from previous animal forms and declaring that the monkey is his grandfather and the tadpole his great-great-grandfather. Why should I? That is something for science to inquire into (1961, pp. 79-84).

Or, as Neal Buffaloe, professor of biology at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, Arkansas and former elder in the church, once remarked: “What do we care that man the animal is a product of evolution as long as man the spirit is begotten of God” (1969, pp. 17,20-21).

Paul, however, speaking through inspiration, denied this not only in 1 Corinthians 15:39 but in 1 Corinthians 11:8,12 where he produced what is considered by many to be the clearest New Testament teaching on the supernatural origin of mankind: “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman is **of** the man...for as the woman is **of** the man, so is the man also by the woman.” The preposition “of” (*ek*) has reference here to ultimate physical origin, while the preposition “by” (*dia*) refers to the process of birth. Paul stated here that while men today are born of women, women had their ultimate origin in a man (compare Genesis 3:20 with Acts 17:26, ASV). This, of course, can be true only if all evolutionary views (including theistic evolution) are false, for otherwise the first woman would have come physically from a female animal, not a man!

Turning from the New Testament to the Old Testament, we come to the crucial text on man’s physical creation, Genesis 2:7—“And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” We are told by theistic evolutionists, of course, that this act involved only the impartation of a **spiritual** nature to a subhuman creature, since the

Bible says that “man became a living soul.” Note, however, that the phrase, “man became a living soul,” does not allow for a pre-human form of life for Adam’s body. The phrase, “living **soul**,” (*nephesh hayah*) may be translated properly as “living creature” for the same phrase appears in Genesis 1:20-21 where it is applied to sea creatures. In other words, the purpose of Genesis 2:7b is not to tell us that Adam had a unique soul (which we already learn by implication from Genesis 1:26-27), but that Adam was not **any** kind of living creature until he **became** one by the creative breath of God. Until that moment, he was lifeless, inanimate matter. The significance of this fact hardly can be overestimated.

The statements of Christ in Matthew 19 also contain a wealth of information on this subject. When the Pharisees confronted our Lord on the divorce question (Matthew 19:3), He answered them by asserting the permanence of the marriage bonds in terms of Genesis 2:24—“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” It is important to note that the Lord introduced this reference to the first marriage by appealing to its physical basis: “Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning of the creation made them male and female?” (Matthew 19:4; cf. Mark 10:6). In opposition to the theistic evolution position, then, our Lord confirmed the teachings of Genesis that God not only created man in His image and likeness (spiritually) but also made male and female (physically). If man had been an animal physically before he acquired his spiritual nature, he already would have been male and female and the statements of Genesis 1:27 and Matthew 19:4 would be incorrect. Harry Rimmer has reminded us of something we should keep in mind:

The theory of Theistic Evolution starts man as far down in the scale of minute things as is conceivably possible. Then, by gradual and continued ascent it brings man to the head of creation’s present order, of which he is recognized as lord. In other words, in this theory, man started low and has continually ascended from plane to higher plane.

The theory of specific creation, on the other hand, starts man **higher than he now is!** It has him in the hour of his origin a sinless, perfect being, dwelling in instant communion with his Maker. The record of the Word states that from this high place man fell until in his sin he became lower than the animals of the field. From this low and fallen state man never rose until Jesus Christ came and lifted him (1937, p. 275, emp. in orig.).

Adam had such a covenant relationship with God that he not only could communicate directly with God, but even could walk in his cool of the garden with Him. Adam was the zenith of God’s creation—the only being of which it is said that the creation was “in the image of God.” Rather than beginning as some

amorphous mass rolling up on some primeval seashore, the true biblical picture of man is that of God's most prized creation enjoying a covenant relationship with Him. What a difference in this view and that we are asked to accept by those who espouse theistic evolution.

THE CONTINUED ASSAULT ON THE BIBLICAL ADAM

There always have been those who, by ignorance or by design, have ignored, misunderstood, or refused to accept Bible teaching on man's creation. The situation is not appreciably different today. Consider, for example, the following erroneous concepts.

(1) **Adam is a myth.** In a blasphemous little book titled *Creationism and Evolution*^{*} co-authored by Neal Buffaloe and N. Patrick Murray (an Episcopal rector), the writers commented: "When we read the ancient Hebrew accounts of the creation—Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, man's 'fall' by listening to the seductive words of a serpent, and God's Sabbath rest—we must understand, says Napier, that **'these things never were, but always are...the stories are told and retold, recorded and read and reread not for their **wasness** but for their **isness**'** " (1981, p. 8, emp. added). And so once again, with a single swoop of the critic's pen, Adam is made to be a man "who never was." It is the privilege, of course, of men such as these to dispense with a historical Adam if they so desire. But they do not at the same time have the privilege of claiming that Jesus Christ spoke the truth. **Adam and Christ stand or fall together**, for Jesus said, "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47). Our Lord insisted that "till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law [**and this includes Genesis!**] till all things be accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). If Genesis is not historically dependable, then Jesus is not a dependable guide to all Truth, and we are without a Savior.

The apostle Paul said that "as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19); and, "as in **Adam** all die, so also in **Christ** shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). In Romans 5:14, Paul even called

^{*} For reviews and refutations of the Buffaloe/Murray booklet, see: (1) Jackson, 1981, pp. 522-523,532; and (2) Thompson, 1981, pp. 11-12.

Adam by name. If Adam “never was,” and therefore did not fall from righteousness, then there is no sin and Christ died for nothing. If universal death through Adam is a myth, then so is the doctrine of the resurrection and Paul is a false witness (1 Corinthians 15:15). The historicity of the Genesis account of Adam and Eve is absolutely crucial to the God-revealed scheme of redemption.*

(2) **There was a “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, during which the long geological ages occurred and during which a pre-Adamic race of men lived and died.** In Genesis 1: 1-2 we find the following statements: (1) “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” These verses, and those that follow, discuss the creative activity of God. The Bible believer who wishes to insert millions or billions of years of geologic time into the creation account somehow must fit this vast time into Genesis 1. Since the first chapter of Genesis covers the creation of all forms of life (including man), it is obvious to even the most casual reader that the geological ages could not have occurred **after** the creation week. Therefore, those who seek to align evolutionary theory with the Genesis record advance two alternatives: (1) insert the geological ages **before** the creation week; or (2) insert the geological ages **during** the creation week. I have dealt with the attempt to insert the alleged evolutionary time during the creation week elsewhere.** I now would like to examine the attempt to insert evolutionary time before the creation week.

For over 100 years Bible believers who were determined to insert the geologic ages into the space before the creation week studied Genesis 1 with the intent of doing just that. They came to conclusion that it is possible to place the geologic ages between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This idea, known as the Gap Theory,* was made popular by such men as G.H. Pember (*Earth’s Earliest Ages*) and Harry Rimmer (*Modern Science and the Genesis Record*) The *Scofield Reference Bible* also helped popularize the theory

* The statement, “The full historicity of the Genesis account of Adam and Eve is absolutely crucial to the entire God-revealed scheme of redemption” is intended to refute claims to the contrary as set forth by: (1) Robert Milligan, 1972, pp. 24-25; and (2) George W. DeHoff, 1974, pp. 27-34.

** See: (1) Thompson, 1977, pp. 125-168; (2) Thompson, 1982, pp. 176-180; Thompson, 1995, pp. 125-155.

* Synonyms: Ruin and Reconstruction Theory, Ruination/Re-creation Theory, Pre-Adamic Cataclysm Theory, Restoration Theory.

in its footnotes on Genesis 1. In more recent times, a strange new twist has been given to the theory by John N. Clayton, developer of the “Modified Gap Theory” (1976, p. 128). The Gap Theory states that a vast “gap” of time existed between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 that may be accommodated to the geological time scheme of modern evolutionary theorists. During this supposed gap, there lived successive generations of plants, animals, and even pre-Adamic men. According to this view, God destroyed the original creation because of a Satanic rebellion and so Genesis 1:2 is translated to suggest that “the earth **became** waste and void.” Denominationalists such as Arthur C. Custance and others have advocated the Gap Theory in one form or another. Some among the churches of Christ likewise have championed the Gap Theory or modifications of it. George Klingman (1929, p. 128), Robert Milligan (1972, pp. 23ff.), and George W. DeHoff (1974, pp. 27ff.), for example, have advocated acceptance of the Gap Theory.

It is sad indeed that men must stoop to such “exegetical hocus-pocus” to pervert the plain teachings of the Bible in attempts to accommodate evolutionary presuppositions. The Gap Theory (and modifications of it) is (are) false.

Exodus 20:11 (cf. Exodus 31:17) plainly states: “For in six **days** Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and **all** that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (emp. added). Notice all the statement includes. If **everything** was created in six days, then **nothing** was created prior to these six days! The Bible is its own best interpreter. This one verse demolishes the Gap Theory and all modifications of it.

Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) was called by an inspired apostle, “the **first man**.” That excludes any pre-Adamic race of men. Adam was the **first**. [NOTE: The “Modified Gap Theory,” which does not postulate mammals or man in existence during the “gap” period, was invented to try to circumvent this problem (Clayton, 1976, p. 148)].

At the conclusion of the sixth day, God saw **everything** that He had made, and behold it was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). If Jehovah’s original creation had become contaminated through Satan’s rebellion, and thus subsequently was destroyed—and the new creation rested on a veritable graveyard of corrup-

tion—it is difficult indeed to see how God could have surveyed the situation and then used the expression “very good” to describe it.

Gap theorists claim that the Hebrew word for “was” (*hayetha*) should be translated “became” or “had become,” thus indicating a change of state from the original perfect creation to a chaotic condition (v. 2). Yet none of the scholarly translations of the Bible translates the verse in this manner. Noted Hebrew scholar J.W. Watts stated: “In Genesis 1:2a the verb is perfect. It indicates a fixed and completed state. In other words, original matter was in a state of chaos when created; it came into being that way” (1947, p. 16). Harold Stigers, in his commentary on Genesis, stated:

The cataclysmic theory (also called the restitution theory) respecting v. 2 can have no place in a proper translation. The construction of “became void,” etc., is not justified by Hebrew syntax. When the verb “to be” (*hayah*) is to be constructed as “became,” the addition of the prepositional lamedh is required with the following word to provide this meaning, and this preposition is absent here (1976, p. 49).

The Gap Theory is false because it infers death and destruction of the human world prior to Adam. This is in direct contradiction to New Testament teaching (1 Corinthians 15:21; Romans 8:20-22; Romans 5:12), which states that sin and death entered into the human race through Adam’s sin. If the Gap Theory is true, Paul is a liar.

Gap theorists assert that the “without form and void” of Genesis 1:2 (Hebrew *tohu wabohu*) can refer only to something once in a state of repair but now ruined. To that John Whitcomb replied:

Many Bible students, however, are puzzled with the statement in Genesis 1:2 that the Earth was without form and void. Does God create things that have no form and are void? The answer, of course, depends on what those words mean. “Without form and void” translate the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu*, which literally means “empty and formless.” In other words, the Earth was not chaotic, not under a curse of judgment. It was simply empty of living things and without the features that it later possessed, such as oceans and continents, hills and valleys—features that would be essential for man’s well-being. In other words, it was not an appropriate home for men... (1973, 2:69-70).

With Gedney, we criticize the Gap Theory on these grounds:

(i) It calls for an entire re-creation of the animal life of the world in six days; (ii) it fails to explain the orderly progression of the appearance of fossils; (iii) it fails to offer any correlation between definite Biblical statements and geology, for the six days in the gap theory refer solely to a creation of a few thousand years ago; (iv) there is no geological evidence for the catastrophe postulated; and (v) the Hebrew exegesis involved is incapable of defence (1950, p. 49).

Exodus 20:11 stands as God’s own inspired commentary on what He did, and how He did it. The Gap Theory, with its pre-Adamic race of men and its ruination-reconstruction scenario, is false!

(3) **Adam was of the “ignorant cave-man” sort of human, a brutish-type of being far removed intellectually from modern man.** As hard as it is to believe, some among us teach this very concept. John N. Clayton, for example, has stated that “Genesis 3:21 says that man was so ignorant that God had to make his first clothes for him” (1976, p. 170). Clayton has also gone on record as stating: “This writer sees no need to view Adam as a highly advanced and sophisticated individual. God had to make the first clothes man wore, so he wasn’t very advanced” (1978, 5[4]:2-3).

First I would like to point out that Genesis 3:31 does **not** say that Adam was “so ignorant that God had to make his first clothes for him.” The verse actually says “And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.” The fact that Genesis says that God “made” Adam and Eve coats of skin does not imply that the Lord actually manufactured the garments. The Hebrew term can denote that which one appoints to be done [cf. Jacobus (1984), p. 128; Spence and Exell (n.d.), 1:72]. Second, notice this statement from professor John Davis: “Adam’s intellectual capacity probably surpassed ours; he was able to name all the animals which inhabited that early environment (vv. 19-20). This silences the argument that Adam was some type of primitive man groping for self-identity and self-consciousness. God created him with a complete, unhindered intellect” (1978, p. 82). David C.C. Watson has noted that not only did Adam have to name each of the animals, but **he also had to remember what he had called them** (1976, p. 56). Watson explained how Adam could do this: “Adam was a better man than we are, so he had a better mind. He was better because he was perfect—without **sin**. Sin not only spoils our bodies, by disease and decay; it also spoils our powers of learning, memory, imagination and invention” (1976, p. 56, emp.. in orig.). Those who see Adam as some sort of low-level, unintelligent brute fail to consider that Adam actually was in much better shape than we are today because he was without sin! Further, we must not overlook the divinely inspired commentary of Genesis 4:22 that gives a clear indication of cultural achievement, including the forging of “every cutting instrument of brass and iron.” And let us not forget the great ark-building episode of Genesis 6. These accounts make it clear that man was not “brutish” or “unintelligent” but, on the contrary, quite intellectual and advanced.

CONCLUSION

Adam (whose name means “of the red earth”) was fashioned as a creature of God, bearing His image and possessing God-like faculties (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:6; Ecclesiastes 7:29). When God saw his loneliness, He provided Adam an “help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). It was Adam who, in receiving the promise of the Savior, became a “type” of the Savior. Paul, in Romans 5:14, spoke of Adam “who is a figure of him who was to come.” The word “figure” is the translation of the Greek *tuπος* (type). Paul said, “The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven ... and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:45-48). In closing this discussion, it is entirely appropriate that I end with a comparison of “the first Adam” and “the last Adam,” since one is the type of the other. Consider, therefore, the implications of Paul’s statement in Romans 5:14.

ADAM

1. Is called “the son of God” (Luke 3:38)
2. Was uniquely (miraculously) brought forth by God (Gen. 2:7)
3. Was the head of the physical race (1 Cor. 15:45)
4. Was named by God (Gen. 5:2)
5. Was caused to sleep an unnatural sleep (Gen. 2:21)
6. In his sleep, his side was opened (Gen. 2:21)
7. From his side was taken the rib—the price for his bride (Gen. 2:21-22)
8. Adam loved his bride (Gen. 2:23)
9. Adam was “head” over Eve (1 Tim. 2: 12-13)
10. Through Adam sin came into the world (Rom. 5:12)
11. Because of Adam, death reigned (Rom. 5:14)

CHRIST

1. Is called “the Son of God” (John 3:16)
2. Was uniquely (miraculously) brought forth by God (Matt. 1:23)
3. Is the head of the spiritual race (Eph. 1:22; 4:15).
4. Was named by God (Matt. 1:21)
5. Was caused to sleep an unnatural sleep (Acts 2:27)
6. In His sleep, His side was opened (John 19:34)
7. From His side was taken His blood, the purchase price for His bride, the church (Acts 20:28)
8. Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25)
9. Christ is “head” of the church (Eph. 4:15)
10. Through Christ salvation came into the world (Matt. 1:21)
11. Because of Christ, righteousness and eternal life reign (John 5:24)

The fact should be stressed that Paul called the Lord the “second Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). There is a definite sense in which we regain in Christ (and the church) what was lost in Adam (and the Garden of Eden). In Christ, we regain the close relationship that was destroyed by Adam’s transgression. “Friendship” is restored. Reconciliation occurs. Separation from God’s favor and from the tree of life brought death. In Christ and His church we have life, and that more abundantly (John 10:10b). Truly we

regain in Christ what was forfeited in Adam; we regain in the church what was lost in Eden. Paradise lost becomes paradise regained—but only through the grace of God.

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