Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology
Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology

Published once yearly by

The Center for Pastor Theologians

Editorial Staff

General Editor: Gerald L. Hiestand
Article Editor: Gerald L. Hiestand
Book Review Editor: Zachary Wagner
Editors’ Assistant: Soo Ai Kudo

The Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology is published by the Center for Pastor Theologians. The essays contained within the Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology are drawn from the papers presented at the Center’s tri-annual theological symposia for pastors. Views of the contributors are their own, and not necessarily endorsed by the editorial staff or the Center. For more information regarding the Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology or the Center for Pastor Theologians, please visit www.pastortheologians.com.

ISBN 10: 1987484118
ISSN: 2471-075X
Indexing available in Christian Periodical Index, owned by the Association of Christian Librarians and produced by EBSCOHost.

Copyright 2018
Printed in the United States of America
The person of Adam has occupied the attention of Christian theologians and biblical exegetes for nearly two millennia. The Apostle Paul, of course, develops his soteriological (Romans 5) and eschatological (1 Corinthians 15) claims based, in part, on the role Adam plays in the canonical storyline. The church fathers, from Irenaeus to Augustine and beyond, all pay particular attention to the role that Adam plays in shaping the plan of redemption. In particular, the Augustinian notion of original sin, wherein sin is passed from Adam to all human beings, has massively shaped western Christianity’s notions of the atonement, the incarnation, salvation, and eschatology. It is difficult to overstate the importance of Adam in the Christian theological tradition.

Yet the advent of Darwin, and the subsequent consensus regarding common descent that has emerged in the scientific community since Darwin, has called into question the place of Adam in the Christian theological tradition. What, if anything, are the consequences for Christian theology if Adam was not, historically and literally, the progenitor of the human race? What are the consequences for Christian theology if Adam never existed at all, after all?

The essays contained in this volume of the Bulletin tackle the difficult question of the “historical Adam.” The answers provided here are provisional. As with earlier editions of the Bulletin, this volume contains papers that originated from the Center for Pastor Theologians’ three annual Fellowship symposia. The 2016–2017 symposia was generously funded by the John Templeton Foundation.

In this issue, volume 5.1, Mickey Klink invites us to reflect on the role Adam plays in the gospel of John. Klink challenges the idea that “Second Adam” Christology can only be found in Paul, and, in an insightful reading of the whole gospel, shows the many ways that John presents Jesus as the Second Adam. Matt Ward’s essay explores the role that Adam has played in the Christian liturgical tradition. Ward surveys a broad sweep of the Christian tradition, demonstrating that the Augustinian account of Adam, and its corresponding account of original sin, is woven intricately throughout the liturgical tradition. Joel Willitts, in his essay, offers Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a model for how to think about Adam in a post-Darwinian world. For Willitts, following Bonhoeffer, the question of Adam’s historicity
(however important) must not distract us from the theological importance of Adam as presented by Scripture. John Yates’ essay offers us a close reading of 1 Corinthians 15, and argues that Paul assumes Adam’s fall, focusing on Adam as an image of sin and death contra Christ, who is the image of life. And finally, my essay explores what resources Irenaeus, contrasted with Augustine, may offer Christian theologians who are sympathetic to evolutionary accounts of human origins. The essay examines Irenaeus’ theme of maturation and growth, as well as Irenaeus’ view of the incarnation. Both aspects of Irenaeus’ thought, while not erasing the tension between Christian theology and evolutionary science, offer fresh ways of thinking about Adam, the fall, and original sin.

The question of Adam’s historicity, and his appropriate role in Christian theology, is an important question for Christian theologians. May what is offered here serve the church as she continues to explore what it means to be faithful to God and his Word in light of the cultural and scientific challenges and opportunities of the late modern world.

Gerald Hiestand
Calvary Memorial Church
Oak Park, Illinois
ADAM AND EVE “ABOVE AND BEYOND” DARWIN: DIETRICH BONHOEFFER AS MODEL FOR A FAITHFUL THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE “FIRST HUMAN BEINGS”

JOEL WILLITTS

Humankind is to go forth from God as the last work, as the new work, as the image of God in God’s work…This has nothing to do with Darwin…We in no way wish to deny humankind’s connection with the animal world—on the contrary. Our concern, our whole concern, nevertheless, is that we not lose sight of the peculiar relation between humankind and God above and beyond this.²

The humanity of Adam lives on in the humanity of Christ.³

The place where the Bible begins is one where our own most impassioned waves of thinking break, are thrown back upon themselves, and lose their strength in spray and foam…where the beginning begins, there our thinking stops; there it comes to an end …Thinking pounds itself to pieces on the beginning.⁴

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Today the thoughtful evangelical pastor-theologian finds herself in an extremely challenging dilemma. In the eyes of a growing number of Christian pastors and clergy, including evangelicals, the findings of both modern science and biblical criticism related to Genesis have proven too convincing to dismiss any longer.⁵ Consequently, they have found it

---

¹ Joel Willitts is Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at North Park University, Chicago, Illinois.
² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3 (DBW 3; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 61-62
⁴ Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 25, 27.
necessary to reevaluate what they believe about the so-called “historical” Adam and Eve, and how they measure the issue’s theological significance.\(^6\) In my anecdotal experience, I know many educated evangelicals pastors—and that would be most of the pastor-theologian crowd—between the ages of 25-45 who believe in theistic evolution, but are quiet about their views because of fear that exposure could mean sure dismissal. The fear is not misplaced. We have heard stories of academics and pastors in recent years who have lost positions for even a nod in the direction of evolution. But if recent surveys do not lie, the percentage of Americans who believe in evolution is growing steadily year by year. This means that the pastor-theologian is going to be required to offer a theological interpretation of Adam and Eve that is able to hold in tension science and biblical criticism with a confessional commitment to the authority of Scripture.

The present essay is an attempt to serve these pastors by presenting Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s approach to the interpretation of the “First human being[s]” as an example of a faithful reading and appropriation of the story of human origins for our modern world. Bonhoeffer’s theological exegesis of Genesis 1-2 in his book *Creation and Fall*, published in 1937, reveals his extraordinary theological ability to navigate a dialectic that was honest about the text and science while asserting the priority and authority of Holy Scripture. I wish to offer Bonhoeffer as a model for pastors today, who, like him, find it increasing more difficult to deny the achievements of science and biblical criticism on the one hand, yet hold unswervingly, on the other, to the authority and primacy of Scripture as having ultimate relevance to address significant issues of identity in our world.

In this article, I do not defend either science or biblical criticism. While in a better position to do the latter, I am in absolutely no position to do the former. I have been a student of several brilliant Christian minds in science, philosophy and biblical studies along the way. I will name them in due course. In the essay, I take the truth claims of modern science and biblical criticism for granted. Let me be clear, however, that I do not think anyone can uncritically accept conclusions from either one of these sources of truth. A Christian must have both a chastened view of the limits of the truth that science and biblical criticism can offer, and a critical mind to assess the presuppositions inherent in these methods. On this point, I agree

---

6 Scot McKnight, in his *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2017), 107-08, has usefully defined the term “historical Adam.” See below.
with Andrew Torrance’s recent work. One thing is certain though, we need to depend on trusted interpreters of the truth of other disciplines outside our expertise. No human is capable of wrestling alone with the complexities in the data and analysis in the diverse disciplines of science, history, philosophy of religion, theology and biblical studies. As finite beings, we necessarily have to outsource knowledge to trusted and faithful followers of Jesus who are experts in their field and who can distill and inform the rest of us of the truths revealed in the latest academic research.

I begin by contextualizing the discussion among evangelicals, today by charting my own coming of age story of a critical embrace of both science and historical biblical criticism. You could call it my “conversion” from the traditional assumptions of the theological necessity of the historical Adam and Eve. In the last decade, I have journeyed to a point where I assess the importance of Adam and Eve on a theological level, which does not require the belief in the so-called historical Adam and Eve, though by no means does it preclude it. By the historical Adam and Eve, I mean to name the belief that Adam and Eve were the first two human beings created by God on earth.

I present the recent efforts among evangelical Christians to embrace science and biblical criticism; and I raise a concern at the center of the hermeneutic at work in the most influential of these new approaches. As an alternative, although in agreement with much of what is espoused in this recent development, I present a sketch of Bonhoeffer’s theological approach to Adam and Eve. His conclusions are not my primary interest, though we will have occasion to mention some of them. Rather I want to expose the underlying assumptions that informed them.

What is evident is that Bonhoeffer’s theological creativity, his clear-eyed embrace of science, and his neo-orthodox commitment to Holy Scripture combined uniquely to produce a profound theological anthropology centered on his close word-for-word reading of Genesis 1–3. His approach is worthy of serious consideration; and, I would suggest, is worthy of emulation in our present ministry context.

Bonhoeffer is a powerful resource today for the formation of a holy people founded on Holy Scripture, authentically self-aware, cultivating community in redemptive mission to the world.

In the conclusion of the article, I will add a brief observation about an unfortunate omission of a key part of the significance of Adam and Eve in Bonhoeffer’s interpretation. I happen to think it was there all along, but he simply left it underdeveloped for reasons emerging out of his own historical context. The implication will be that a kind of historical Adam must be retained as fundamental and indispensable for faithful Christian interpretation: the storied Adam and Eve, who are the forefather and foremother of the historical people of Israel.

---

7 Andrew B. Torrance, “How to Do Religion and Science?,” *Zygon* 52, no. 3 (2017). I found his article ultimately hampered by an either/or fallacy. He reads to me like those who argue against the use of biblical criticism in the study of the Bible. Evangelicals since the middle of the twentieth century have shown an ability to faithfully employ methodologies derived from contexts outside the church, and in some cases created for the very purpose of separating faith and history.
I. MY STORY

I grew up in a conservative, fundamentalist ecclesial environment that was suspicious of modern science. I was told that there were all kinds of problems with the theory of evolution from a scientific perspective and that it could not ever be proven. “It’s only a theory,” I was always told. I emerged into adulthood in a Christian culture that was attempting to “win back” the US from those forces that were taking prayer out of schools and teaching evolution. I was fostered by my spiritual leaders to wage cultural war on behalf of God’s Word in defense of creationism against the onslaught of secular, ungodly science. Our side apparently had its own scientists and philosophers of religion too. I was told that there was a solid minority of legitimate scientific voices that rejected the theory of evolution. So, it was taught, evolutionary biology and biblical truth were incompatible. I went to public school from grade school to high school. In high school, I stood up for creationism in my biology class, resourced and supported by my youth pastor. After high school I went to Liberty University, ground zero for the Moral Majority, and in my freshman year I took a class on creationism.

I was taught to read Genesis 1–11 in a literal–historical way and as such to treat its presentation of human origins as the alternative to a scientific explanation. What I was taught was not dissimilar to Ken Ham’s views. Ham is the founder of the organization Answers in Genesis. On their website, they state: “the Bible—the ‘history book of the universe’—provides a reliable, eye–witness account of the beginning of all things and can be trusted to tell the truth in all areas it touches on.” Ham believes that the age of the universe is only 6,000 years old. I found it appropriate that in 2004, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in 2004 from Liberty University. Young Earth Creationists (YEC), like my freshman college professor and Ken Ham deny evolution and attempt to reinterpret the scientific evidence to make it line up with Genesis’ account. From childhood into adulthood, then, I had no reason to ever question the assumption that evolution was wrong and thought only those who had an atheistic agenda would believe in such pseudo-science. When I left college in 1993, I did not know one Christian who believed in evolution. I was convinced the two ideas were incompatible.

The question of evolution and the Bible never animated my curiosity all that much after college. I was much more interested in youth ministry and then the study of the New Testament. I kept quiet and distant from the whole debate for two decades. But during those years I became an academic as well as a pastor. I learned the skills and methods of historical research and became increasingly less suspicious of science.

Along my circuitous path through graduate school, which took me first to Dallas Seminary, then Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and also Wheaton Graduate School, I was introduced to a much less militant version of the historical interpretation of Genesis 1–11. While far from dismissive of YEC, my professors did not think a young earth position was a necessary
conclusion from Genesis, given the ambiguity of the Hebrew language. Furthermore, they avoided the term “literal” altogether. Still they insisted that Genesis is a historical account of what actually happened. They taught, like the YEC crowd, that the integrity of the Bible’s story and Christian doctrine was at stake. For these more generous Christians, a faithful biblical commitment and agreement with Darwinism is incompatible, but they don’t heap aspersions and condemnation on those who disagree, since for them, one’s personal salvation is not at stake. Thankfully! Along with this view of the Bible, also comes a scientific critique of Darwinism they believe is fatal to the theory. Unlike the YEC, they do not attempt to make science fit the Bible; instead they argue that science does not accurately explain reality.  

What seems to be most at stake for both groups, however, in their insistence on a historical reading of Genesis is the threat they perceive against the gospel. This perspective is represented in another recent book edited by Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin*. In their “Postscript” the editors make plain their perspective:

> It is that we find the Old and New Testaments do not finally support a mythological or purely figurative reading of Adam and Eve. Nor does the scientific evidence, such as it is, demand it. Biblical theology has a coherent story and systematic theology a coherent framework only with a historical Adam. We should not think that the latest scientific consensus on these matters gives us an opportunity for creative doctrinal tinkering and readjustment; the threads of Adam and original sin run throughout the cloth of the faith: remove them and the cloth must be wholly reconstructed. Historically, this has long been recognized, and so belief in a historical Adam and original sin has long been championed as theologically and pastorally vital.

According to these two positions, a plain reading of Genesis 1-3 reveals historical facts about Adam and Eve; and because a plain reading of Adam and Eve is tied to the entrance of sin into the world through *only* the male human Adam, according to Paul’s argument in Romans 5, a historical Adam is a matter of gospel truth. John Walton then is correct when he states, “the historicity of Adam finds its primary significance in the discussion of the origins of sin rather than the origins of humanity.” It’s this theological issue that creates the most anxiety for evangelical Christians. But why? Is it biblical exegesis? Is it the falsely claimed “ecumenical consensus” on the

---

10 For a recent example of this position see J. P. Moreland, et al., eds., *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).
12 Madueme and Reeves, *Adam*, 323.
subject?\textsuperscript{14} The exegetical anxiety is easily assuaged by a proper reading of Romans 5:12-21.\textsuperscript{15}

Let me briefly speak to the presumed consensus of opinion in the history of the church. The problem is the evangelical Protestant church is deaf in one ear. From evangelically produced literature on the subject, one would think that only the Western theological tradition has anything to say about the origin of sin. Madueme and Reeves’s “ecumenical consensus” on original sin is objectionable. In the global breadth of historic orthodox Christianity there wasn’t and still isn’t such a consensus. The western side of the church is not the only word to be heard. And, as it may turn out after serious consideration, the western understanding of original sin may not represent the oldest or the most consistent position within the Bible’s own canonical story.\textsuperscript{16} When the wider church’s voice is heard, one discovers that the eastern fathers offer more room for theological imagining around the question of historical Adam and Eve. Andrew Louth recently clarified the difference between the east and west on original sin: “Here I draw a distinction between the notions of ancestral sin, found in the Greek Fathers and accepted by Orthodox theology, and of original sin, characteristic of much of Western theology, under the influence of Augustine.”\textsuperscript{17} The Eastern church’s theological voice needs to be much more thoroughly integrated into our thinking about human origins and human inheritance of sin. When it does, we may be in a far better position to hear a true voice of Scripture.

During the season of graduate and post-graduate study in my late-20’s and early 30’s both in North America and the UK, I began to develop friendships with scientists who were also committed to the conclusions and methods of modern science. Then something extraordinary happened about midway through my studies at Cambridge that fully freed me into an uninhibited openness to the conclusions of modern science.

In 2004, the leading analytic and Christian philosopher Alvin Plantiga came to Cambridge University where I was a PhD student and gave a series of lectures on methodological naturalism. The details of his arguments, which were mind-blowingly logical, have but since left my memory. However, the central claim affixed deeply in my heart and mind. He argued that science and methodological naturalism, the belief that all reality can be explained naturalistically without God, are not one in the same. The former is a method of research while the latter a philosophy, one that should be rejected on grounds of pure reason. Plantiga, over the course of a few lectures, thoroughly decoupled naturalism from science. His conclusions were incontrovertible to my mind and forced me to question why I should keep them coupled; if the scientific method and the belief in God as creator were not incompatible, what prevented me from embracing the conclusions

\textsuperscript{14} Madueme and Reeves,\textit{ Adam}, 324

\textsuperscript{15} See footnote 65 below.

\textsuperscript{16} It seems Augustine got us off track with this misreading of Romans 5:12. His translational error has been mentioned many times. See most recently McKnight’s discussion in Venema and McKnight,\textit{ Adam and the Genome}, 173.

\textsuperscript{17} Andrew Louth, \textit{Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 77-78. See also Timothy Ware, \textit{The Orthodox Church} (Penguin Religion and Mythology; London; New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 223-24.
of the scientific method? After those lectures, I decided to have an open mind to scientific conclusions that did not exclude God.¹⁸

At this point, however I was still not all that interested in pursuing the question of science and faith. The need to focus attention on completing my doctorate and getting a job took precedent. I was unaware of the great strides that had been taken in the most recent scientific work, especially in the last decade in the field of genetics. Unknown to me, in the first decade of the new millennium, the arguments against the theory of evolution on which I was raised were evaporating, and the theory was strengthening by the day through continuing tests and discoveries.

Then in 2010, I read the book *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* by Denis Alexander.¹⁹ Alexander sums up the book’s intent with this important concluding statement:

> Personal saving faith through Christ in the God who has brought all things into being and continues to sustain them by his powerful Word, is entirely compatible with the Darwinian theory of evolution which, as a matter of fact, provides the paradigm within which all current biological research is carried out. There is nothing intrinsically materialistic, anti-religious or religious about evolution—all these categories are imposed upon the theory from the outside. Evolutionary history is perfectly consistent with the creator God revealed in the Bible who has intentions and purposes in the world... Holding to evolution as a biological theory should not affect one whit the Christian’s belief in the uniqueness of humankind made in God’s image, the fall, the reality of sin and our need for redemption through the atoning work of Christ on the cross for our sins.²⁰

The book introduced me to the exciting field of genetics and to the very recent discoveries that have come from the Human Genome Project. This work in many cases is so new, the findings have not yet been absorbed by those who have assumed that science has not demonstrated the theory of evolution. I had been open-minded to modern scientific discovery and its implication for understanding human origins, and now I had something bordering on proof of the theory.

About that the same time I read Denis’s book, I also became aware of the growing critical acceptance among evangelicals of both the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context of Genesis 1–11 which refocused the exegetical point of the primordial stories away from ontological origin to teleological and the conclusions of modern science, in particular, Darwinian evolution. In addition to Alexander’s book, there has been a spate of other evangelical

---


¹⁹ Denis R. Alexander, *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* (Oxford: Monarch, 2014).

²⁰ Alexander, *Creation or Evolution*, 461.
works published recently on the subject: John Walton, Peter Enns, and Christopher M. Hays and Stephen Lane Herring’s essay “Adam and the Fall” and, most recently, Dennis Venema and Scot McKnight’s book *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science*. Perhaps the most influential voice today in the US advocating for an affinity between evolutionary biology and the Bible is BioLogos. The mission of BioLogos to invite “the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as we present an evolutionary understanding of God’s creation.” This representative list demonstrates evangelical perspectives that embrace Darwinian science.

In 2016, the evangelical publisher InterVarsity Press Academic published the book *How I Changed my Mind About Evolution*. It presents a number of prominent evangelical leaders in the church and academy who came to the position of affirming evolution. The contributors include Francis Collins, Scot McKnight, John Ortberg, James K. A. Smith, Jennifer Wiseman and N. T. Wright.

It is impossible to say whether this position is in the minority among evangelical biblical scholars, theologians and pastors, but more and more seem to be willing to admit what they have thought true for a long time. Scot McKnight is a good example of this. No one would question his evangelical credentials. He has proven over a long teaching and publishing career that he is a deeply faithful Christian. I quote him at length:

Genesis itself awakens us to fresh readings of itself because the text itself has some mighty unusual features that make an honest reader wonder whether they are meant to be strictly historical. For example, the earth has a dome over it, the man is formed out of dust while the woman is formed by removing a rib (or more) from the man, their names are fraught with meaning (the Earthling and the Mother of All Living), a snake talks and fools two nonsinners into sinning, there weren’t any women other than sisters available, Cain is given a mark to distinguish him and protect him, the names of Cain (“spear”) and Abel (“fleeting breath”) seem allegorical, people live to incredible ages, a flood covers the whole earth leading to nothing less than a cosmic do-over starting with eight human beings who immediately do stupid things, and then we get a group of humans intent on building a tower into the skies, and so if this doesn’t make

---


23 Christopher M. Hays and Stephen Lane Herring, “Adam,”.

24 Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*.


you wonder about what kind of literature this is, then nothing will. Only someone trained to think otherwise will think otherwise.\(^{27}\)

Although a diverse group, these evangelicals agree that science and biblical faith are not at odds with each other.\(^{28}\) After reading Alexander, I became convinced that it was not possible any longer to deny that the theory of evolution is the best explanation for human origins. Genetics has put this conclusion beyond any reasonable doubt. Alexander states it succinctly: “modern genetics has established our common inheritance with apes beyond any reasonable doubt;”\(^{29}\) “no other explanation makes any sense.”\(^{30}\)

There is a tipping point. The conclusions of modern science about human origins, which among other things, have demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt the reality of universal common descent is inescapable and now all but irrefutable. What’s more, the intrinsic reasonableness of the contributions of modern historical criticism of the Bible, with its comparative methodology, has made a significant impression on evangelical scholarship.

### II. BIBLICAL CRITICISM

I was raised and educated through college to believe that modern biblical criticism was dangerous for a Bible-believing Christian. Looking back, I now see that there was something of an anti-intellectualism in my Christian formation. Before I headed off to Cambridge University to pursue a PhD, I remember running into one of my former college professors. When I told him that I was going to Cambridge to do doctoral work, he showed a concerned look and warned me to be careful. He said, “People go to university and change their beliefs. You need to be very careful.” Since completing my PhD I am occasionally asked by people if I ever struggled to keep my faith while studying the Bible at a “secular university.” I understand where they were coming from and answered kindly and truthfully that I had never run into a crisis of faith because of my learning. But both my professor’s warning and the occasional questions from interested people reveal the presupposition that studying the Bible in a university is dangerous because of the methods and assumptions used. Such concerns may be

\(^{27}\) Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*, 96.

\(^{28}\) Enns, Hays, and Herring go about making the point differently. The latter set up their discussion as an “imaginative exercise” (Christopher M. Hays and Stephen Lane Herring, “Adam,” loc. 541) attempting to maintain neutrality in the process of making a very convincing argument for the freedom to embrace both biblical criticism and science. By the end of the chapter, it is difficult to believe that they have not actually advocated for their own position – either its fantastic rhetoric or they really believe what they presented. On the other hand, and with a much more detailed book-length study, Enns advocates for the position without apology (Enns, *Adam*, xiii). He does attempt to forestall potential critics from the other side by narrowing his implied audience to those who are convinced by the science but are troubled by the implications of it for the Bible. He writes to offer assurance that one can be a biblical, evangelical Christian and agree at least in a general sense, if not in every detail, with the conclusions of biblical criticism about Genesis 1–3 and science about human origins.

\(^{29}\) Alexander, *Creation or Evolution*, 237.

\(^{30}\) Alexander, *Creation or Evolution*, 243.
well-meaning and no doubt there are examples of people who have lost their faith while engaging in the academic study of Scripture. However, I believe someone never loses their faith for one single reason; and it is unlikely that those who have abandoned faith during their graduate and post-graduate work in Biblical Studies did it purely because they were introduced to the methods of biblical criticism.

I may be preaching to the choir here but what biblical criticism has most taught me is this: let the Bible be the book it actually is—human and divine, rather than force it to be a book my faith community needs it to be. In the words of Pete Enns, “a thoroughly encultured Bible [the human nature of the Bible], like a thoroughly encultured Jesus, is exactly what God has given the church and should therefore be embraced as it is and engaged honestly and without apology.”

Along these lines, John Walton recently has done a great service to evangelical Christians in situating Genesis 1–3 in its ANE context. He has done more than anyone to show both the likeness and uniqueness of this section of Genesis to other literature from the same time period and region.

In his two books *The Lost World of Genesis One* and *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, Walton has presented an accessible and convincing case that Genesis 1–3 needs to be read as ANE literature and not as a scientific text; its purposes and meaning should be derived from comparison with other ANE texts and not with evolution. In *The Lost World of Genesis One*, Walton states, “Though our understanding of the ancient world will always be limited, ancient literature is the key to a proper interpretation of the text.” Walton presents a convincing case for the relevance of modern biblical criticism and its comparative methodology and how it can deliver a more accurate and appropriate reading of the text we venerate.

Pete Enns calls this “genre calibration” and insists that it is a necessary step to take if one is to read Genesis rightly. He writes,

> Placing Genesis side by side with the primordial tales of other ancient cultures helps us gain a clearer understanding of the nature of Genesis and thus what we as contemporary readers have a right to expect from Genesis...archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century introduced an external control by which to assess the nature of Genesis, to calibrate its genre.

When compared with ANE parallels such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh, Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*, the genre of Genesis 1-11 requires a change of expectation on the part of the modern reader from historical to theological, and that, “an ancient idiom.” Rather than being a historical description about the universe, it is a theological “statement about Israel’s God and Israel’s place in the world as God’s people.”

---

33 Enns, *Adam*, 35.
34 Enns, *Adam*, 56.
Though they don’t see things the same way, both Walton and Enns have demonstrated that modern biblical criticism demands a reorientation by readers. The new perspective must acknowledge what Genesis 1–11 actually is as literature. It then presses on traditionally minded readers a challenging realization: it is not intellectually honest to read Genesis in isolation from its ANE context. A historical or even semi-historical reading of Genesis’ account of Adam and Eve does not comport with its own historical situateness as a text. A demand for some level of historical correspondence when reading Genesis 1–11 comes not from the implied reading of the text, but from one’s own theological pre-commitments about what the Bible is. As Enns puts it, “Literalism is a hermeneutical decision (often implicit) stemming from the belief that God’s Word requires a literal reading.”

III. THE SABOTAGE OF HERMENEUTICS

So far, I have presented the situation facing the intellectually open, evangelically leaning pastor-theologian when faced with the question of the historical Adam and Eve. Many evangelical Christians feel we have reached the tipping point: we must embrace both modern science’s virtual proof of universal common descent and biblical criticism’s nearly irrefutable reorientation regarding the genre of Genesis. Genesis 1–2 does not present a scientific explanation of origins, and it does not tell history.

Richard S. Briggs steps into our story at this point, however, with a provocative thesis that sabotages any confidence we might have thought we had through the guidance of those like McKnight, Walton or Enns, with their instance that the historical context of the ANE is the key to a Christian interpretation of Adam and Eve. As you read this quotation notice Briggs’ observation about the methodology of making something external to the text the key to interpreting the “dialogue of the text.” He writes:

Readers of Genesis in the late nineteenth century thus found themselves pressed on two fronts—by Darwin et al., on the one hand, and Gilgamesh et al., on the other—and it is important to look carefully at how one might distinguish the nature of these two issues. In one significant sense, they are the same: they are both hermeneutical challenges to how to read Genesis because they both offer a reference point exterior to the dialogue of the text and the reader(s), which makes up the basic Christian engagement with the nature of the biblical text. One might almost say that they offer a triangulation of the text: between the reader and Genesis comes a third framework, which changes the nature of the questions we want to put to Genesis...My thesis is that historically relevant frameworks [those from the ANE] function hermeneutically in comparable ways to historically irrelevant ones, and on closer inspection, the case

of the ancient Near Eastern texts and their relevance to Genesis is primarily hermeneutical rather than historical.36

Further he argues:

With Genesis 1, the textbook case, it is particularly intriguing to recognize that scholarly disagreement over the polemical background to the Genesis text may have inadvertently demonstrated our thesis that the key results of comparison are hermeneutical rather than historical. For all those who have followed Gunkel in reading Genesis 1 “against Babylon” (to simplify the labeling for the sake of argument) and have found this to shed great light in the interpretive firmament, it has to be noted that this light may have been generated by the comparison rather than discovered in it.37

Briggs’s comments about the comparative approach now advocated by some evangelical scholars is immediately relevant; Richard Hess, whom he names, is an evangelical OT scholar:

In his helpful survey of comparative approaches to Genesis 1–11, Richard Hess offers, by way of brisk conclusion, the thesis that “[if] we are to understand the biblical text in terms of its own message, the comparative approach is necessary to show parallels and points of incongruence.” What I have tried to demonstrate is that this is not quite right. It does not help us to evaluate the points of incongruence and may not even enable us to identify them properly. The conclusion, however, is not that it should be abandoned nor that we have wasted our time with it. Rather, there is a significant hermeneutical achievement at stake; it is just not (in general) the achievement of telling us what the historical agenda of Genesis was. What the comparative approach has highlighted is the ways in which Genesis, to some extent regardless of what its intentions historically, speaks in response to issues put to it from other perspectives.38

Briggs’s critical observations are worth deep reflection which is why I have provided longer quotations here. Briggs invites us to be more honest about what modern historical criticism can actually deliver.

The point I take from Briggs’ critical reflection is: comparative contextual approaches advocated by recent interpreters as the way forward for proper interpretation of the meaning of Genesis 1-11 may be better than those that read the text as a scientific and realistic historical account, but in the final assessment they too fall short of telling us the “truth” of the text. While they may be an improvement over literalism and concordism, they still do not produce certainty on the meaning of the text sufficient to

ground a theology and anthropology. We may be able to talk of better and worse hermeneutical frameworks, but we are still left with significant areas of uncertainty about the actual meaning of Genesis, and for that matter the wider meaning of its place in canonical Scripture.

Before finally getting to Bonhoeffer, let me build a bridge to his theological interpretation by highlighting a deep theological problem with the recent evangelical readings of Adam and Eve. I will briefly engage the work of John Walton. He, of course, cannot be said to represent all the hermeneutical approaches among this diverse group, but Walton’s work is most influential. I will analyze Walton’s hermeneutic to expose the problem and move the discussion a step closer to Bonhoeffer by leaving the abstract for the tangible.

In both his “Proposition 1” and in his “Conclusion and Summary” of the book *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, Walton wrestles with the question of how this ancient text can be authoritative when it is full of culturally bound assumptions in light of what he has said about the nature of Genesis. This is the principal question for those who consider Genesis inspired Scripture. To address the question of what is cultural background and therefore not binding on the faithful reader, and what is inspired and inerrant revelation and so normative, Walton employs this hermeneutic: Does “the text hang theology on the belief?” By this he intends a practice of determination and discernment. The reader must decide when a proposition is “inspired inerrant” and when it is “a cultural way of thinking: “Once that is recognized as simply a cultural way of thinking in the ancient world rather than the inspired authoritative revelation of God, I can safely set aside that belief.” In a longer passage he writes,

> I propose instead that our doctrinal affirmations about Scripture (authority, inerrancy, infallibility, etc.) attach to the intended message of the human communicators...This is not to say that we therefore believe everything they believe...it is important to differentiate what the communicators can be inferred to believe and the focus of their intended teaching. But since the text's message is not an assertion of the true shape of cosmic geography, we can safely reject those details without jeopardizing authority or inerrancy.

Read the last line again:

> Since the text's message is not an assertion of the true shape of the cosmic geography, we can safely reject those details without jeopardizing authority or inerrancy.

In reflecting on Walton’s hermeneutic here I am both curious and disturbed. First, I am uncomfortable with arbitrariness of the decisions I am required to make as a reader. How does any of us really know enough to pass such judgments over the text? Furthermore, I have a problem with

---

40 Walton, *Adam and Eve*, 201, emphasis added.
41 Walton, *Adam and Eve*, 19-20, emphasis added.
such a transparent relinquishment of authority from the text of Scripture to the reader. With such an approach who, then, is the real authority through or in over the text?

In the end, while I have great respect for John Walton and have greatly benefited from his work on Genesis, I am troubled with this hermeneutic. And I think others of an evangelical ilk should be as well. It seems not all that far different from the one employed by the non-confessing Christian scholar. In both cases, it is I, the reader, through my application of methodology that passes ultimate judgment on Scripture.

IV. DIETRICH BONHOEFFER’S THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

So far in this article, I have sketched the current landscape of evangelical views on the historical Adam and Eve through my own story highlighting the evangelical turn toward an embrace of both science and historical criticism of the Bible. It is fair to say, that a growing number of evangelical Christians, including myself, do not read Genesis 1–11 as we were taught to in Sunday School, as a scientific historical account of the origin of human beings. We also concluded from the recent gains of evolutionary biology that the argument of human origins has largely been settled in favor of universal common descent. However, I also problematized the approach of evangelicals like John Walton who teach us that the key to unlocking Genesis’s meaning is the proper application of a comparative methodology. What seems to end up happening in the process is that we put ourselves over Scripture rather than under it.

So, I am in a bind. I don’t want to go back to an earlier mode of reading Genesis that ignored or was unaware of the ancient nature of the early chapters of Genesis. I am convinced that the church has not read Genesis rightly. What is more, while I am not a scientist, I trust that those faithful Christians who have been pioneers in the field of evolutionary biology are knowledgeable and reliable guides to assessing the conclusions of modern science. Finally, I see no obstacle philosophically in the way to keep me from rightly rejecting the either/or in the debate between scientific and theological explanations of reality. Nevertheless, I refuse to put myself in a position to adjudicate what statements of the Bible are meant to be authoritative for a Christian and those which are not.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer directly criticized this very kind of exegetical methodology in his Finkenwalde lecture “Contemporizing New Testament Texts.” Bonhoeffer critiques here the attempt to find the eternal truth in the ancient text that can be freely transferred from one historical-cultural context to another, while in the process leaving the irrelevant historical accoutrements behind.

Contemporization [bring the ancient text into the modern world] involves finding this eternal element, this meaning, this essence, which is just as valid today as earlier...This method hands us the key interpreting Scripture...we can distinguish the word of God from the word of human beings and extract it. The criterion to be applied to the word of God resides in us, either in our reason, in our conscience,
or in our ethnnonational or other experiences. The criterion for the
word of God resides outside the word itself, in us—the norm of
contemporizing resides within us; the Bible is the material to which
this norm is applied. This sentence must now be exactly reversed so
that our own concept of exegesis and contemporization may become
clear—the norm for the word of God in Scripture is the word of
God itself. 42

Bonhoeffer is known widely for his works Discipleship,43 Life Together44
and for his rather complicated, and incomplete Ethics.45 Lesser known,
though, are his lectures on Genesis 1-3 published under the title Creation
and Fall. Bonhoeffer’s Christo-historical methodology [this is my own
terminology] in his exposition of the biblical text provides a framework to
affirm all of Scripture as God’s word while at the same time agreeing with
the gains of both evolution and biblical criticism.

Bonhoeffer thought the Genesis account of origins was disinterested in
Darwin, but not dismissive of him. Of the image of God, he wrote, “This
has nothing to do with Darwin...we in no way wish to deny humankind’s
connection with the animal world—on the contrary. Our concern, our
whole concern, nevertheless, is that we not lose sight of the peculiar rela-
tion between humankind and God above and beyond this.”46 I think this
phrase is brilliant.

Rather than running transversally through evolutionary biology creat-
ing contradiction, the account of human origins in Genesis is a parallel
line of imagination running alongside and independent of it. The Bible is
offering another account, no less true, of the relationship between humanity
and God. It’s a view of reality along a different line. Evolution is a true
explanation of how things came to be, but it is not the whole truth; and,
for a Christian, it is not to be the most formative view of the truth; God’s
revelation in Scripture is the truest truth.

Bonhoeffer is a guide away from methodological hubris, even among
those who hold to the authority of Scripture, that presumes that with the
right set of comparative instruments derived from an ANE context the
Scriptures can be analyzed and their original intention articulated with a
high enough degree of certainty to build theological structures. Bonhoeffer
concurs with my discomfort and makes clear that historical exegesis alone
is a flimsy foundation for theology.

His theological exposition of Genesis takes the Bible as “the book of
the church.” The church “is founded upon the witness of Holy Scripture.”

Education at Finkenwalde:1935–1937, eds., H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S. Brocker, DBW
43 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Discipleship (eds., Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey; DBW
44 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible (DBW 5; Minneapolis:
45 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (ed., Clifford J. Green; DBW 6; trans., Reinhard Kraus,
46 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 67.
He states, “This is its presupposition and this presupposition constitutes its method; its method is a continual returning from the text to this presupposition.” Bonhoeffer, to the incredulity of all his university teachers, read the words of the text literally, not figuratively or historically or scientifically. He listened to the story the literal words told. He took it all without apology or exception. One of Bonhoeffer’s students remembered him saying, “The word of God [is] neither fiction nor fairy tale nor myth; on the contrary one must read it word for word like a child and learn to rethink completely what the historical commentaries teach. One can never hear it, if one does not at the same time live it.”

To paraphrase, Bonhoeffer invites us as Christians to read the early chapters of Genesis as true stories whose intent is to incite and shape imagination. And out of a theologically formed imagination, the Christian community by the work of the Holy Spirit discovers what it means to be human and how we as humans relate to God, other humans and the earth we inhabit. This is the essence of his approach. In describing his exegetical method, he wrote:

Contemporizing comes about not through the selection of certain texts but by making the whole of Holy Scripture audible as a witness to the word of God. The only method of contemporization is thus the substantive textual exposition [of the Holy Scriptures]...The contratissimum of the sermon is not the application I provide but the Holy Spirit itself speaking through the text of the Bible.

For Bonhoeffer, modern science and historical biblical criticism are not enemies of the message or authority of the biblical text. He affirmed them with critical sympathy as sources of truth. Martin Rüter and Ilse Tödt, the editors of the afterword to the German edition of Creation and Fall, wrote:

Bonhoeffer was not interested at all in the rejection of scientific knowledge. The reconstruction of the empirical world by the exact sciences and the reality that his scientific construct represents, in which heavenly bodies and atoms as well as living creatures are to be found, he saw embraced by the one who is most real of all. All that mattered to him was to witness to the revelation of this one God.

Bonhoeffer came to Genesis with an intentional disinterest in debates about science and religion or evolution and creation. “His concern was to hear the word of God that had spoken in the beginning – and that was seeking even then to speak to Germany and the nations of the world.”

In the socially and politically turbulent winter semester of 1932-33, Bonhoeffer offered a course at the University of Berlin where he was a docent called “Creation and Sin.” It was a theological exposition of Genesis

---

47 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 22.
48 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 23.
49 Bonhoeffer, “Theological Education,” 422, emphasis his.
50 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 161.
51 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 5.
1-3. At the age of 26, when the class began, Bonhoeffer had completed writing his two academic books required to qualify as a lecturer in the German university system. In addition to his academic accomplishment, he had also been ordained within the previous year in the German Lutheran church, having completed his ordination process. Part of that preparation included a year as a pastoral assistant in Barcelona.

His lectures on Genesis 1–3 proved popular among students, if also, controversial. His Barthian theological approach to the text put him at odds with his teachers in Berlin. Yet, in spite of this or because of this, the importance of the lectures was demonstrated both by the popularity they held in the university during the semester, and also by the interest students took in their publication, which was titled Creation and Fall. As it turns out, the publication of Creation and Fall, represents our only full set of lectures Bonhoeffer gave as a professor. Other lectures have been published, such as the “Christology Lectures,” but these are the result of judicious student notes and did not come from Bonhoeffer’s own manuscript.

Creation and Fall is viewed by most scholars as a turning point in the thinking of Bonhoeffer. John W. de Gruchy, the editor of the English critical edition, states “[it] represents a turning point in Bonhoeffer’s theological development and as such is of particular significance for our understanding of it.”

The turning point consisted, according to de Gruchy, of a turn from “an abstruse academic theologian whose context was solely the university to a theologian for preachers.” This turn of posture toward the church is confirmed by the witness of students who took his course. One in particular stands out. Inge Sembritzk, in an interview for the documentary called “Bonhoeffer,” powerfully described how Bonhoeffer’s teaching of the Bible was very different from the rest of the professors who taught the Bible in the early twentieth century in German Protestant liberalism. She said:

“I learned in my first class with Bonhoeffer that he taught in a different way than the professors I had had up until then. He continued to express this difference later when he said explicitly: “When you read the Bible, you must think that here and now God is speaking with me”...From the beginning, he taught that we had to read the Bible as if it was directed at us, as the Word of God, directly to us.”

Bonhoeffer turned to Genesis to offer the word of God to the contemporary world entering the middle twentieth century. He took for granted, although not uncritically, the findings of science regarding the origins of

---

humanity and cosmology. What’s more, he was conversant and convinced by many of the conclusions of biblical higher criticism. Science and biblical criticism had an inherent reasonableness to them that had rendered the more traditional understanding of Genesis 1–3 distant and irrelevant to the vast majority of Germans. The result, in Bonhoeffer’s view, was that God’s Word was set aside by the German culture makers at a time when German history most needed the truth.

Genesis remained God’s word above and beyond the findings of both science and biblical criticism. Bonhoeffer believed that Genesis was a theological text through which God directly addressed his contemporary world. The stories about Adam and Eve in Genesis’s early chapters were not to be read as historical facts since “the ancient image of the world confronts us in all its scientific naïveté. To us today its ideas appear altogether absurd.”

Bonhoeffer pokes the eyes of the liberal and fundamentalist Bible reader by, on the one hand, exposing of the hubris of the modern person in their contemptuous attitude toward the worldview of the ancients, and, on the other, stating honestly the culturally bounded nature of the ancient text we confess is inspired:

In view of the rapid changes in our own knowledge of nature, a derisive attitude that is too sure of itself is not exactly advisable here; nevertheless, in this passage the biblical author is exposed as one whose knowledge is bound by all the limitations of the author’s own time. Heaven and the sea were in any event not formed in the way the author says, and there is no way we could escape having a very bad conscience if we let ourselves be tied to assertions of that kind...
The writer of the first chapter of Genesis sees things here in a very human way.

Beyond both of these positions, Bonhoeffer assumes instead that the opening chapters of Genesis were theologically symbolic stories whose intent was to address its hearers with immediacy and to shape the identity of God’s people out of the stuff of the presuppositions of the ANE author[s] and the experience of ancient Israel. In his discussion of the biblical statement in Genesis 2:24: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is untied to his wife,” Bonhoeffer wrote,

One could say that this is the point the storyteller plainly stumbles. How can Adam, who knows nothing of father and mother, say such a thing? One could also call this saying “the storyteller’s own practical application” or put forward similar ways of looking at it. Deep down, however, we recognize a basic fact that until now has been kept more in the background and that now unintentionally as it were, breaks out into the open. The Adam who speaks like this is we ourselves, we who have mothers and fathers, we who know the uniqueness of belonging to one another in the love of man and woman...

55 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 50.
56 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 51.
57 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 100.
The theological significance of Adam and Eve becomes apparent. No matter what science may teach us about universal common descent, God has given us revelation whose purpose is to shape the faith community’s understanding of what it means to be human through a story of unique descent from two solitary and gendered humans. The Bible’s message about humanity’s descent from a single male and female couple must be maintained as theologically essential, since its source comes not from nature but from revelation. Whether in fact the concept of biological gender complementarity can ultimately be a convincing interpretation of the word of God given here in this story would be of little concern to Bonhoeffer, though as we will see he would view gender complementarity as part of the theologically essential meaning of the story.\(^{58}\)

In light of this insight, it is interesting to imagine what side Bonhoeffer would be on in the debate about human sexual identity today, since a significant element of the contemporary debate, as James Brownson has recently pointed out, rests on the question of whether Genesis 2:20–25 teaches the doctrine of male/female gender complementarity. Would Bonhoeffer’s approach and theological interpretation allow him to more easily welcome and incorporate a redefinition of gender and marriage? Or would his emphasis on the revelation of God through the very details of the story, no matter their exact relationship to nature, secure the traditional Christian position of the abiding and essential difference between gendered humanity, since Bonhoeffer’s conclusions are made on a purely theological ground and flow from the Christian tradition?

My own sense is that he would not support attempts by Christians to redefine gender and marriage. I base my opinion on Bonhoeffer’s discussion of Genesis 2:18–25. He observes that Adam and Eve become one yet retain their individual identity as ish (man) and isha (woman), emphasizing that their “becoming one” was “based precisely on their being different from each other.”\(^{59}\) Bonhoeffer speaks of Eve helping Adam bear the limit of his creatureliness. Being human, having creatureliness, according to Bonhoeffer, is a dialectic between freedom and limit. Eve’s difference to Adam was a tangible reminder of Adam’s limits as a human. Bonhoeffer writes,

The helper who is a partner had to be at once the embodiment of Adam’s limit and the object of Adam’s love...For Adam the bodily representation of the limit that should make Adam’s limit easier for Adam to bear...That is why the other person is once again a grace

---

58 In his recent book, James Brownson (Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-sex Relationships (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2013), 25–34) offers a strong critique of the traditional interpretation that Genesis 2 teaches biological complementarity. In the last half-century, the position of John Paul II has been extremely influential in and outside the Catholic Church. See for example the discussion by Linda Hogan, Conflicts within the Roman Catholic Church (ed., Adrian Thatcher; The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 323–39. Brownson is especially critical of the work of Robert A. J. Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 56–62.

59 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 97–98.
to the first person...In this common bearing of the limit by the first two persons in community.  

That Bonhoeffer included male/female gender distinction in his definition of human limit, is demonstrated by this continuing discussion where he explicitly names sexuality. The limit of the two humans, man and woman, is expressed in their distinct genders, now joined together as a differentiated oneness.

One can perceive, however, a dialectical in Bonhoeffer’s conception that complicates the outworking of this theological ideal in real lived existence. And I think this hugely significant. In view of the embodied nature of being human, Bonhoeffer vigorously argues against a dualistic understanding of the human being. The story of Genesis is crystal clear to Bonhoeffer that humans come from the earth and are bodies. With humorous irony Bonhoeffer observes “Even Darwin and Feuerbach could not use stronger language than is used here. Humankind is derived from a piece of earth.”

Theologizing from there, he writes:

The body belongs to a person’s essence. The body is not the prison, the shell, the exterior, of a human being; instead a human being is a human body. A human being does not “have” a body or “have” a soul; instead a human being “is” body and soul...people who reject their bodies reject their existence before God the Creator...It is the image of God not in spite of but precisely in its bodily nature. For in their bodily nature human beings are related to the earth and to other bodies; they are there for others and are dependent upon others. In their bodily existence human beings find their brothers and sisters and find the earth.

Here’s the dilemma. Reading Genesis’ story of Adam and Eve theologically along with Bonhoeffer invites us both to a conviction about the essential nature of gender differentiation, while also to a profound understanding of the irreducibility of our body. So, in cases where persons experience their body in a way that is contrary to their biological gender how would Bonhoeffer advise us to respond? What would his advice be on how we acknowledge the embodied nature of the humanity of LGBTQ person, while also convinced of the theological necessity of gender difference in marriage?

In these changing times, this is the question that is haunting me at present. How do I faithfully live in this dialectic? I so wish I could ask “Bruder Bonhoeffer.” What does the introduction of human sin have to do with this? What does it mean to live as an authentically embodied human when the experience of your body does not reflect the revelation of male-female gender duality, as is the case for a number of Christians through no fault of their own?

60 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 98-99.
61 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 100-02.
62 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 76.
63 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 76-79.
Is it possible that we might be able to both grieve what is not because of the kind of world we now inhabit, but also bless what happens to be until God makes all things new? Neither giving up on the truth of Scripture’s clear teaching nor denying the reality of a person’s real body? I wonder.

Most importantly, for Bonhoeffer, the proper theological interpretation of Adam and Eve comes only from knowing Christ first; Adam and Eve’s significance for the church could not be grasped esti Christus non daretur (“as if Christ were not there”). In the words of Martin Kuske, “Bonhoeffer understood the Old Testament as the book of Christ at all times, to the extent that it never became the Word itself, but always only in relation to Christ.” Thus, Bonhoeffer’s knowledge and his exposition of the meaning of Adam and Eve in Genesis was through the Messiah of Israel. The incarnation of God in the Messiah of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, in both his concrete human body and resurrection body, was the starting point for appropriating the meaning of Adam and Eve for the church. Here Bonhoeffer and Paul align in their impulse for a messianic appropriation of Adam, since the same can be said of Paul’s use of Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and Romans 5:12-21.

In both Sanctorum Communio and Creation and Fall, Bonhoeffer described the method he believed can grasp the meaning of human origins. Bonhoeffer asserted that theological knowledge of the “primal state,” the period of humanity before the Fall, comes only from the perspective of the end, that is eschatology. He wrote, “Every aspect helpful to its comprehension is imparted through revelation. Nothing about it can be ascertained by pure speculation. It cannot speak of the essence of human being, of nature, or of history in general terms, but only in the context of revelation that has been heard. The doctrine of the primal state is hope projected backward.”

This directional approach he took to be the very methodological structure of theology. For Bonhoeffer, only in this way does it become possible to see “the real course of things from unity through break [then back again] to unity.” Further, “concepts of person and community, for example, are understood only within an intrinsically broken history, conveyed in the concepts of primal state, sin and reconciled.” Here Bonhoeffer implicitly names his interest in history. A kind of historical Adam is essential because there is continuity between Christ and Adam, and between Adam, Christ, and the church. For the Christian, however, the nature and necessity of that historical Adam is defined not by a biblicism, but by a Christology, by the nature of Christ and the community he created. Here’s how he further frames the idea,

66 See recent discussions of Romans 5:12-21 in Peter Enns, Adam; Venema and McKnight, Adam and the Genome; Christopher M. Hays and Stephen Lane Herring, “Adam,” loc. 833–846.
68 Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, 62.
If the revelation in Christ speaks of the will of God to create from the old humanity of Adam a new humanity of Christ, i.e., the church, and if I know myself to be incorporated into this church of Christ, then it follows that we should project the idea of unbroken community with God and with human beings back to the doctrine of the primal state as well. This explains why we cannot essentially go further than what is said in the teaching about the church, for example.69

V. AN ISRAEL-CHRISTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTIC

Bonhoeffer’s statement here is followed by an important qualification which needs careful articulation; the qualification then necessarily leads me to add a significant missing piece to complete Bonhoeffer’s Messiah-centric hermeneutic. First the qualification.

Bonhoeffer’s messianic hermeneutic is not uni-directional, like that of Richard Hays’ recent concept of Reading Backwards.70 After making the point that one has to read “from the end,”71 from Christ,” Bonhoeffer states, “But within the logic of the doctrine of the primal state itself [grasped first from the end], the doctrine of original community will be developed on its own terms.”72 Now, with the concepts of development and “on its own terms,” Bonhoeffer turns his hermeneutic around in the other direction, from the beginning to the Messiah.

Again, in another passage as he put the two directions together:

Instead, methodologically, all statements are possible only on the basis of our understanding of the church, i.e., from the revelation we have heard. Thus social-philosophical and sociological problems can be dealt with in the context of theology not because they can be proved generally necessary on the basis of creation, but because they are presupposed and included in revelation. Only in this perspective can they be fully understood. Of course here, too, the reversed logic of the theological system applies to the description of what is known, in that the concept of the church only appears to emerge out of the amalgam of issues worked out in the doctrine of the primal state.72

69 Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, 62.

70 Richard B. Hays, Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014); the much fuller study of which this was but a foretaste is Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016). Interesting in this regard is the personal email Markus Bockmuehl sent to Hays in response his approach, part of which Hays quoted in his preface to Reading Backwards, referring to it as a cautionary counterpoint. Bockmuehl seemed to press Hays on the same uni-directional point. He wrote, “I wonder if there may not be an equally important dynamic whose force operates the other way. Its seems both a matter of fact and part of the biblical authors’ intent that their engagement with the Old Testament is at least as much a function of the text’s own agency in terms of its (divine) claim and impact on them, rather than their ‘use’ of it” (x).

71 Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, 62.

72 Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, 65.
In *Creation and Fall* Bonhoeffer is more direct in his assertion of this method. The first line of the book states: “The church of Christ witnesses to the end of all things. It lives from the end, it thinks from the end, it acts from the end, it proclaims its message from the end.” Further, he wrote:

*The church speaks within the old world about the new world. And because it is surer of the new world than of anything else, it sees the old world only in the light of the new world. Only the church which knows the end, knows also of the beginning...It views the creation from Christ; or better, in the fallen world it believes the world of the new creation, the new world of the beginning and the end, because it believes in Christ and in nothing else...in the church, therefore, the story of creation must be read in a way that begins with Christ and only then moves on toward him as its goal; indeed, one can read it as a book that moves toward Christ only when one knows that Christ is the beginning, the new, the end of our whole world.*

The bi-directional hermeneutic suggests a missing link in Bonhoeffer’s thinking: between Adam and Messiah is Israel. While presuming it implicitly, Bonhoeffer’s hermeneutic explicitly omits the place of Israel and the Jewish story in proper biblical-theological assessment of the importance of Adam. Adam and Eve are anchored in history not by their existence in primordial time, but by the sheer fact of Israel’s ethnic past. Israelites and early Judaism told Adam and Eve’s story in order to secure a contested identity for their own historical experience. For Bonhoeffer and for Christians in general, Christ, the savior of the world, is the Messiah of historic ethnic Israel.

Without Israel there was no savior, and without Adam and Eve there was no Israel. While this may sound like a concession for the so-called “historical Adam” argument, it is not. The real mediating figure in Bonhoeffer’s hermeneutic is historic ethnic Israel; his Christological foundation would then be better called an “Israel-Christology.”

Bonhoeffer’s Christological assessment, namely that the only access to Adam is through the person and work of Christ, needs to be modified. In fact, the interpretive key for both Adam and Christ is Israel. It is not Christ to Adam directly then as Bonhoeffer thought; rather it’s:

---

73 Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 21.
74 Rüter and Tödt, “Editor’s Afterword,” 173.
75 This observation compares with McKnight’s “genealogical Adam” (Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*, 107–08). There remains, then, a necessity for a historical Adam and Eve. They are the source of ethnic Israel and their story forms a corporate self-awareness of Israel’s place and purpose on the earth.
76 The term is borrowed from Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 52.
In the Afterword of the German edition, the editors speak of Bonhoeffer’s unique theological exposition having been the result of his view of the Old Testament being “the word of the one God.” They reference the statement by Jewish theologian Pinchas Lapide, referring to Bonhoeffer’s thought as “primordially Jewish.” For Bonhoeffer, they conclude “the name Jesus Christ is the name of the very same One who in Genesis is named Yahweh.”

From our sketch, it is clear that Bonhoeffer interpreted the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis as “Adam and Eve as Everyone.” Scot McKnight makes explicit what likely Bonhoeffer took for granted:

What will become evident to the one who reads the whole Bible is that Adam and Eve are not just two individuals but representatives of both Israel and Everyone. Hence, Adam and Eve’s sin is Israel’s prototypical sin, their “exile” is Israel’s exile, and they therefore represent the sin and discipline of Everyone.

The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus to enthronement [let’s not forget the ascension!], is not only the answer to Israel’s plight, as the authors of the New Testament affirm and reaffirm nearly on every page, but also, and as a direct consequence, is the answer to the plight of all humanity.

77 Rüter and Tödt, “Editor’s Afterword,” 173.
78 Venema and McKnight, Adam and the Genome, 142-44; see also Enns, Adam, 66.
“Both scientifically informed and grounded in a carefully nuanced interaction with the biblical text and early Jewish traditions.”
—John H. Walton, Wheaton College

“A long-overdue book on a crucial flash point in evangelical faith and theology.”
—Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“A serious attempt by well-established and emerging scholars to grapple with the most pressing theological issues.”
—Celia Deane-Drummond, University of Notre Dame

COMING JULY 2018
Available Fall 2018

Edited by
Gerald Hiestand
& Todd Wilson

Creation and Doxology
The Beginning and End of God's Good World

With contributions from
Andy Crouch,
Deborah Haarsma,
John Walton, and more

Essays from CPT Conference 2017 presented by:

The Center for Pastor Theologians
in partnership with

IVP Academic
The opening chapters of Genesis are notoriously difficult to interpret, especially because of the subject matter—the origin of the world. The account of Adam, Eve, Satan, a garden, a betrayal, and, of course, God, have long been an area of interpretive debate, not only in regard to the manner of creation, but also in regard to several doctrines of the Christian faith. A good portion of the debate centers on Adam, about whom both historians and theologians have issues at stake. Adam is not only the source of the human race, but he is also the source of sin and the ensuing salvation—replaced only by Jesus Christ himself, the new and improved or “Second Adam.” All these issues start in Genesis, but they do not stop there, for the entire biblical canon is utilized to explain Adam—both the historical Adam and the biblical (Christological) Adam.

While several parts of the biblical canon have been utilized to explain Adam, what has been sorely neglected as an essential resource is the Gospel of John. One example of this disregard is obvious when it comes to the second Adam. Interpreters immediately turn from Genesis to Romans 5:12–21 when gathering data for an Adam Christology, assuming it provides the clearest and most robust depiction of Jesus as the Second Adam. As important as Romans 5 is for an Adam Christology, it is dwarfed by the second Adam Christology detailed throughout the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. Much of this is because of the unique connection between John and Genesis.

The connection between the Gospel of John and Genesis has long been noted, but descriptions of the nature of the connection too often fall short. John does not simply use Genesis, borrow motifs, or make allusions. The connection is much stronger and more innate. John and Genesis share the same subject matter. John has been so infused with the meaning and matter of Genesis from its very “beginning” (1:1), especially regarding the story and theology of creation, that between them it is as if the reader is looking through bifocals, yet neither lens is dominating or distorting the other. No other description does justice not only to the interdependence but also the (mystical) union that exists between John and Genesis.

The debates regarding the interpretation of the creation account in Genesis and the Bible’s theology of creation do not give due credence to

---

1 Edward Klink is Senior Pastor of Hope Evangelical Free Church in Roscoe, Illinois.
2 Thanks are due to the St. John Fellowship of the Center for Pastor Theologians for their helpful suggestions regarding an earlier draft of this essay at our colloquium in June 2017.
the Fourth Gospel’s own telling of the story and theology of creation. More specifically, John not only gives a detailed and even unique account of the context and characters involved in creation, but carries forward the creation story that begins in Genesis through the ministry of Jesus Christ and to the new creation. The full story of creation requires, therefore, a reading between John and Genesis for their shared subject matter.3

It was Augustine who said that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. That statement is no truer than in the revealing relationship between John and Genesis. The purpose of this essay is to provide a theological-exegetical examination of John’s contribution to the story of creation and a second Adam Christology, and to explore briefly its connection to the contemporary discussion regarding the historical and biblical (Christological) Adams.

I. THE CREATION STORY BETWEEN JOHN AND GENESIS

John’s intimate use of Genesis is more than simply to create parallels and analogies. It is even doing more than providing an interpretation of the original creation account. John is also telling the story of creation, so that only when read in symphony does the full story of creation get told. Two aspects of the full creation story told between John and Genesis are in order. First, although not his primary task, John is offering some new insights regarding the origin of creation. For example, it was the Son, Jesus, who was the primary agent of creation (1:3). But that is not John’s primary role, for second, as much as John is speaking about creation in the sense of origin, he is also speaking about creation in the sense of goal (telos). Said another way, if Genesis is speaking about the first creation, John is (primarily) speaking about the second or “new creation.” It is the premise of this essay that the full story of creation is located between John and Genesis, which under the direction of John can be explained as having five important aspects, each of which will require some exegetical explanation.

3 This essay cannot avoid some methodological clarifications. When we speak of the shared “subject matter” of John and Genesis, we are referring to what Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 80, refers to as the movement from a description of the textual witnesses “to the object toward which these witnesses point, that is, to their subject matter, substance, or res.” Our task is to interpret the reality about which John and Genesis reveal in textual symphony. To do this we are making some methodological assumptions about their identity and relation: that they are cooperatively part of the unified Word of God, and that both witnesses (texts) are essential and equal—one may be a later part of “progressive revelation” but it does not become primary or preferential. Both are equal in authority and innate to the subject matter they co-communicate. Any distinction in chronology is nullified dogmatically by an ontological equality. Proof of this comes from Jesus himself, as recorded in John when explaining interpreting the intention of the author of Genesis: “[Moses] wrote about me” (John 5:46). By such a statement Jesus is declaring himself to be the ultimate and fullest subject matter of Genesis, and the OT Scripture in general. Our method must read likewise.
A. “IN THE BEGINNING...JESUS” (1:1)

John begins with an introductory formula that matches the style, vocabulary, syntax, and general sense of the opening statement of Genesis. This is not merely an echo or allusion but serves conceptually to place John within the entire biblical story’s redemptive-historical and theological framework. Similar to the two-fold creation account in Genesis (chs. 1-2), John is offering a second creation account, giving further clarification and insight on the nature and meaning of both creation and Creator. While both applications of the phrase “In the beginning” might seem the same, three aspects of the biblical characters and story are more fully in view in the symphony of John and Genesis.

First, John’s creation account describes a God who is personal. According to John, God created the world, but it was Jesus, the second person of the Trinitarian God, who was the active agent in creation (1:3). And the mysterious nature of “God” is made more revealing, for Jesus’ very purpose is to make “God” known (1:18). Even the label for the Creator is made personal. While it might often function like a name, “God” is not a name. But “Jesus” is a name, a personal name. In the first “beginning” God was known by what he did; in the second “beginning” God is known also by Jesus, whose very person will make God known.

Second, John’s creation account tells a story that is eschatological. In Genesis, the phrase “in the beginning” introduces God and the “old” creation. In John the same phrase is used to introduce Jesus and the new creation. The first creation account pointed backward, to the source of everything, to the root of the universe. The second creation account points forward, to the goal of everything, to the purpose of the universe. Befitting the irony so prevalent in the gospel, John may be talking about “beginnings” but he is looking and explaining what is still to come. Just as God spoke in the first creation and all things sprang to life (Gen. 1:2), so also in the second creation God has spoken more definitively and with finality as the “Word,” offering eternal life to all things (1:1).

Third, John’s creation account depicts a world that is relational. If the first creation ends with humanity, the second creation starts with humanity. Even more, the seemingly inanimate parts of creation are described with relational qualities, with creation at war with God, humanity, and itself. The “darkness” can neither “recognize” nor “overcome” the Light (1:5). The “world,” a technical term in John, is depicted as a personal entity and relational in nature: “the world did not know him” (1:10). In short, with its relational use of “world,” creation itself in John is personified as a theatre of interpersonal conflict and as a character in the drama of salvation. If the first creation account happened before sin entered the world, the second creation account describes a world that is clearly sin-laden and separated from its Creator in every way.

---

4 This essay stands upon and is a summary of the more detailed exegesis of these texts and themes in Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ZECNT 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

The significance of this is clear: the point of creation was never simply its created self (that it exists), but its created purpose (for whom it was created), and that purpose is grounded entirely in Jesus. Jesus is not simply the Creator of all things (1:3), but also the Redeemer. The goal of creation, therefore, was never its mere existence but its redeemed-through-Christ perfection. From “the beginning,” then, creation was pointing to Christ and his redemptive new creation.

B. “The Light shined in the darkness” (1:5, 11)

If Genesis could declare that creation was “good” in the sight of God (cf., Gen. 1:10), creation’s story progresses in John so that what God sees in creation is good no longer. The term John uses for the condition of creation, and what becomes a technical term in the gospel, is “darkness.” In Genesis darkness is nothingness, “without form and void” (Gen. 1:1), or what God has not yet touched; the same can almost be said in John. Creation has a form in John, but it is void of God, and in need of his touch. The world had the light of Genesis but not the Light of John; creation had the life of Genesis but not the Life of John (1:4).6

The Gospel of John is intentionally connecting its opening verses (1:1-5) to the opening verses in Genesis (1:1-5). The use of such loaded terms in John—darkness, life, light—could clearly be referring to either physical or spiritual realities. It is quite logical to assume that the terms are in connection to the first creation account and thus refer to physical creation. Yet in the remainder of John the terms are related specifically to salvation, that is, to the second or new creation. “Life” in John, for example, is used throughout the gospel as a reference either of resurrection life or spiritual life that is its foretaste.7 It is unfortunate that interpreters feel forced to decide between the physical and spiritual dimensions of John’s opening statements, since the gospel never limits itself with narrow definitions. In fact, it is quite routine for John to use a word in one way and to be simultaneously intending a further, secondary meaning. The developing biblical story told by the divine author never intended for the reader to move beyond the account of a physical creation in Genesis to an abstracted or detached spiritual creation in John. What God had in mind all along was a symphonic account that told the full and multifaceted story of creation—from creation to new creation.

The relational nature of the world is magnified in two ways by John as he writes his account with Moses’ pen. The first is when John explains that the Light shined in the darkness “and the darkness did not overcome/recognize it” (John 1:5). The verb in the second clause can be translated as either “overcome” or “recognize” (katelaben). The former emphasizes the physical confrontation between light and darkness, and explains that the darkness could not “overcome” or “overpower” the light. This is certainly a

---


viable meaning based upon the nature of the verb, and was assumed to be the meaning by most Greek commentators since Origen. Yet the latter rightly emphasizes the developing narrative context, especially in the prologue, and the misunderstandings that will become so prevalent throughout the Gospel between Jesus and his opponents.8 John has deliberately chosen, as he often does, a term that is speaking simultaneously on multiple levels. In both senses of the term one thing is clear according to John: Christ’s appearance as the “Light of the World” is met with direct and robust confrontation by the darkness (cf., 3:19-20, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35).

If John wanted to give further proof that the coming of Jesus to the world was taking place in a context of relational conflict, he did this in 1:11. In this verse John makes a significant claim with a playful use of one word in two different genders: “what belongs/his own people” (idia/idioi). The first clause is speaking about the world as the “property” or “possession” (idia) of the Word.9 Not as the Word’s “home,” but as his creation that properly “belongs to him.”10 Here one might prefer the term “property,” yet the relation between the Word and the world is more intimate than “possession” can express. This first clause, then, describes not merely the creation of the world by the Word, but the innate ownership and belonging that exists between them. In the second clause the same term has been changed from a neuter, “what belongs” (idia), to a masculine, “his own people” (idioi). The flow of v. 11 would seem, therefore, to be as follows: while the first clause shows the separation and conflict between Jesus the Creator and his world, the second clause shows the separation and conflict between Jesus the man and his race (Israel).11 According to v. 11, then, creation rejects its Creator; the loved reject their Lover. When Jesus was not received by the people to whom he belonged, God himself was not received by the world that belonged to him.

The entire prologue of John (1:1–18), written with the same font and ink of Genesis, is providing an account of creation that embraces not merely Gen 1-2, but also Gen 3—the entrance of sin into the world. Reading between John and Genesis, the reader of Scripture is seeing the cosmic context of the biblical story and the nature of life in the contemporary world. The combined effect of these creation accounts is that both physical and spiritual issues are in view. Creation has been placed in its full context—“good” yet “not good,” created light yet covered in darkness, with creation rebelling against its/their Creator. At this point in the biblical story one thing is clear: creation never stopped needing its Creator or his “ministry of creation.”

8 According to Morris, John, 76, the verb almost assumes we will “think of darkness as equivalent to certain people, or perhaps the human race at large.”
9 BDAG, 467.
Just as the creation account in Genesis climaxes when God makes “man” (Gen. 2), so also does the creation account in John climax at the arrival of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. John’s account of Jesus is so clearly infused with the account of creation in Genesis that interpreters have found a host of allusions or connections between Adam and Jesus, that is, between the first and second Adams (cf., Rom. 5:12–21).12 But John does not appear in the least interested in analogies, for his interest is located in how Jesus, as the second Adam, fulfills and exceeds the first. Jesus, according to John, is not simply arriving in a manner like Adam and his descendants; in sharp contrast, Jesus is reestablishing Adam and creating a family of his own. Three key aspects of the second Adam are made clear between John and Genesis.

First, John uses the incarnation of Jesus to narrate the arrival of the second Adam. If “the Word” (1:1, 14) in John emphasizes God’s self-expression, then it is important to note that in Jesus God has been made known in the “flesh” (1:14) This term is probably the harshest term for the body John could have used to describe a human being. Why not use the Greek term for man/person, which is clearly the natural term for depictions of a human being? Two reasons are likely.

The term “flesh” (sарx) depicts well the context of the incarnation of Jesus. The term refers not merely to the skin and meat, but also to the bones, blood, and even the soul. That is, the reality to which it points, more than anything else, is the physical or material. By using this base term to depict the coming of God into the world, John declares that Jesus did not simply join the created order with other humans, but entered fully into its fallen condition. In the context of John and especially in the prologue, the meaning “became flesh” entails much more than embracing human nature; it means embracing a human nature that is in hostile opposition to God. By becoming “flesh” the Word embraced humanity in its fullness, the very nature and state of Adam. None of this is to say that Jesus embraced the spiritual condition of the flesh; it merely describes the spiritual context Jesus took upon himself. He was the Light shining in the darkness (cf. 1:5).

The term “flesh” also depicts well the purpose of the incarnation of Jesus. The baseness of the term points less to metaphysical description and more to the developing message of the Gospel, that the person of Christ is not removed from the work of Christ. By using “flesh” and not “man/person,” John employs a term that is intimately bound up with the notion of sacrifice, a use the Gospel will make explicit in 6:51–56. The imagery of sacrifice, which involves the graphic elements of flesh and blood, is redefined in light of the Gospel, where the sacrifice—the flesh—is nothing less than the Word—as-God.

What 1:14 declares is the new-creation work of God. Just as God took dust/mud and made humanity in the image of God, so now Jesus, God himself, takes on the image of humanity. If in Genesis the condition into which the newly formed man was made could be described as “very good”...
(Gen. 1:31), in John the condition of the newly formed man was quite the reverse. But that is the reason for which he came.

Second, John uses the trial of Jesus to narrate the announcement of the second Adam. Although the reader of the Gospel had been told from “the beginning” about the nature and authority of the person of Jesus, for the characters in the narrative, those experiencing Jesus during his life and ministry, Jesus was still enigmatic, either in their understanding or acceptance. The Jews and Romans, however, knew enough to fear him—or hate him, and had facilitated a series of judicial hearings that directed him to the cross. He had been viewed as a prophet, a messianic figure, a teacher (like Moses), and even a king, but there was one key aspect of Jesus’ identity that the narrator needed to explain to the reader and the world: that he was the second Adam.

After the gerrymandering between the Jews and Rome (Pilate) regarding the legal handling and responsibility of Jesus (18:13–19:16), the judicial hearings end with a potent moment. Probably at the command of Pilate, who tried to rid himself of this problem (19:4), Jesus comes outside before the crowd dressed in royal attire, a sarcastic rebuke and mockery by the Roman guards regarding the claims of Jesus’ kingship. Then Pilate introduces Jesus to the crowd, Jews and Romans—the whole world—with a phrase that is more of a title. “Behold, the man.” Several things require explanation.

The particle of exclamation, “behold,” serves as a “prompter of attention” before a verb, but when it is used before a noun, as in this case, it serves as a “marker of strong emphasis.” The Fourth Gospel uses it in the latter sense when there is a challenge to perceive with the mind a truth not outwardly evident to human eyes, as when the Baptist declared: “Behold, the Lamb of God” (1:29). Speaking beyond himself in a manner similar to Caiaphas (see 11:49–52), Pilate not only introduces this title with emphasis, but directs his listeners to see in it a deeper truth and reality about the person to whom it is applied.

The title, “the man,” though given several suggestions in the history of scholarship, has one significant referent within the larger context of Scripture: Adam. Whatever the political (or simply cruel) intentions of Pilate regarding his introduction of Jesus, in the cosmological context of the Fourth Gospel this title provides for the reader rich insight into the person and work of Jesus Christ. Although the LXX uses a different noun for “the man” (Adam) than the Gospel (anthrōpos), the noun not only means “man/humanity,” but the Hebrew term can be translated as “the man,” which is how most English translations render it (cf., RSV, NIV, ESV, NKJV, NASB, NJB, NRSV). Even the article, “the man,” is significant in the title, suggesting that the allusion is in reference to a particular man,

13 In light of the Adam connection to be discussed below, the royal imagery is actually even more fitting for Jesus, the second Adam. See Alan Richardson, The Gospel according to St. John (London: SPCK, 1959), 197.
14 BDAG, 468.
Adam. The title is spoken by God in Genesis 3:22 in the context of God’s announcement of the guilty verdict to be placed upon all creation (Adam, Eve, and the Serpent). In Genesis 3, then, the title declares the mortality of Adam, and assumes an ironic reality, for “Behold, the man” declares Adam’s alienation from God and existence in a state of death. The title announces to the first human life that it now exists in a state of depravity and impending death.

In the Gospel of John, however, a reversal of this state of death has begun with the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the Life (1:4, 14:6) who has entered into the depraved condition of the world, even more, the depraved flesh-condition of “man” (1:14), in order to recreate, to reverse the curse by fulfilling in his person “the man.” Reading between John and Genesis, the reader can see that what started “in the beginning” in the first “week” of creation will be finalized by a renewal of “Adam” in a “garden” (see below). By this declaration Pilate’s words make the point explicit to the reader. Rather than garnering sympathy for Jesus, as is often assumed, Pilate is extending publically the application of shame to Jesus performed by the soldiers inside the praetorium, serving to expose before the same public his own prideful ignorance. Like with Caiaphas, however, the reader is coming to see how Pilate is an “unconscious witness to Christian truth.”

Third, John uses the resurrection appearance of Jesus to narrate the accomplishment of the second Adam and the creation of the new humanity. In a remarkably symbolic scene, the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples on the newly-established day of worship—the first day of the (new creation) week, speaking peace and, almost strangely, blowing on them the Holy Spirit. John 20:22 has long confused interpreters, but the complexity has one obvious referent, helpfully detected by the striking absence of a direct object and a very pointed verbal parallel.

While the disciples are clearly the implicit recipients of Jesus’ blowing, the lack of a direct object distances the act from this specific situation and emphasizes the symbolic nature of the gesture. In light of the fact that the verb “he blew” (enephusēsen) is more common in the OT (LXX) than the NT, and in light of the Genesis-laden context of the Gospel of John and the Genesis lens or spectacles applied to its interpretive telling of the person and work of Jesus, it is difficult not to see the connection to Genesis 2:7, where the exact same verb is used: “Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living person.” Given that rare use of this verb, the use of it here is clearly intended to echo the first story of human enlivenment. The Gospel is guiding the reader to see an act of (re)creation. This connection is strengthened even further by the use of the same verb in Ezekiel 37:9 (LXX), which envisions the breath/wind/Spirit

16 Ibid., 135.
17 Ibid., 136, 139.
of the Lord recreating the temple and the people of God: “Blow into these slain that they may come to life,” and the same phrase, “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2, which depicts the Spirit’s role at creation.

The “blowing” of the Spirit by Jesus is the recreation of the temple of God and the people of God. At this moment this quorum of ten, fearful men was being established as a new creation, the church—a “new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15) and even a “New Israel” or priestly class. That is, Jesus is establishing by the Spirit his Body—the Body of Christ—as a ministering agent in the world, and by the same Spirit Jesus is empowering this new humanity to do what Adam and his descendants had failed to do: to be God’s representatives and ministers in the world. The climax of the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as ‘blowing’ upon the apostles after the pattern of the creating God who [blew] upon the Edenic couple; now they receive the Spirit, and not simply the gift of life.” And this aspect of the (new) creation account extends to the end of the Gospel, when the narrator explains the purpose of the Gospel: that the reader may have “life” re-created in Jesus Christ (20:31). In this remarkable moment the church becomes both a recipient and a minister of the renewing work of God.

D. “On the First Day of the Week” (2:1, 20:1)

John is infused with Genesis not simply at the level of words/phrases and themes, but also at the structural level. A clue is suggested in the narrative itself as the evangelist appears to structure the opening to the narrative proper by designating certain days: “on the next day.” While John does not stress the collective nature of the days, they might be taken to refer to the first full week of the ministry of Jesus. The structure of days appears to be the following:

Day 1—1:19-28
Day 2—1:29-34 (“on the next day”)
Day 3—1:35-42 (“on the next day”)
Day 4—1:43-51 (“on the next day”)
Day 6—2:1-11 (“on the third day,” i.e., two days later)

When read between Genesis, as well as the cumulative (new) creation motifs employed in John, the designation of six days implies that the “week” in 1:19-2:11 is to be seen as parallel to the creation week, which also took six days! Several interpreters have minimized the “week” imagery because it is

---

six, not seven, days. Other commentators who try to extend the six days to seven, in order to get a true “week,” fail to do justice to the narrative details. The days can only be counted as six days.\(^{25}\) Warning about symbolic parallels must be heeded, for clearly an arbitrary connection cannot be allowed. Yet John certainly intended to communicate by means of the six days. John is intentionally suggesting that the first six days of Jesus’ ministry, or really his ministry as a whole, are to be seen as parallel to the first six days of creation.

It is not insignificant that John depicts Jesus’ ministry as a new creation week of six days in length and not seven. Three reasons can be given. First, by describing Jesus’ ministry by a six-day week, John is intentionally depicting Jesus’ ministry as occurring on the sixth day, that is, on the last day of creation when humanity was created. In this sense, then, the entire ministry of Jesus, until the end of the Gospel when declared “the man” by Pilate, is happening on this symbolic sixth day. In this way the ministry of Jesus is engaging with the pinnacle of God’s creation, humanity, those through whom the rest of creation was beholden to sin. Just as sin did not arrive until humanity was created, so in the new creation “week” of his ministry Jesus is viewed as working on the significant sixth day.

Second, just as humanity destroyed its union with and service for God, so also Jesus, representative of the entire human race throughout creation history, works to restore both humanity’s union with and service for God. Jesus did not merely serve as a substitute for the death humanity deserved, he also served as a substitute for the life humanity failed to live.\(^{26}\) By positioning the ministry of Jesus as occurring on the sixth day, John established Jesus as the Adam, the new humanity, through whom the rest of his descendants might receive and have life (see 1:12–13; 20:31). Jesus, the one through whom all things were created and by whom new creation takes place, is recreating humanity through his person and work. That is why Jesus’ disciples require “new birth” (John 3), and why the Gospel ends with Jesus infusing his disciples—the church—with the “blowing” spirit with which humanity first came to life in Genesis 3:22. The person and work of the second Adam facilitate descendants who are the new humanity—a category that describes the new creation.

Third, John is not ignorant of the fact that the full creation week took seven days. The reason Jesus’ work happened on the sixth day was because this is not the time for rest (day seven); it is the time for work. But the seventh day is coming, that is, the day when Jesus’ work is “finished” (19:30). With this structure the whole Gospel story/new creation story is in view. Although he is announced to the reader in 1:14 and through the imagery of the six-day “week,” the world will be only partially introduced until he is officially introduced in 19:5, when the world—Rome (i.e., Pilate)—declares: “Behold, the Man!” Like the first Adam, at the end of his public ministry, just before his death, Jesus was finally announced as the (second) Adam. It was on the sixth day that the second Adam was announced to his creation.


\(^{26}\) Helpful here is Crowe, *Last Adam*, who makes this clear: “Jesus’s life [that is, the one he lived during his incarnate life and ministry] is necessary for salvation” (200).
All of this makes sense of the first verse after crucifixion scene, 20:1, the opening phrase of the resurrection account: “On the first day of the week.” Since the entire Gospel has been crafted within a “creation week” structure, this “new week” now following the resurrection beckons the reader to see the text speaking about the beginning of the new creation. The focus of the majority of John’s narrative space was spent on the sixth day, the creation of the God-man, awaiting the seventh day, the day of rest, to arrive. But the seventh day has now come and gone! Jesus, “the man” (19:5) has completed his work (see 19:30), ceasing from all his activities. The biblical irony is stark: the Son of God rested from his creative work in a tomb located in a garden (19:41). In this one statement the entire biblical story is summarized, for all of creation has been reborn. From this garden tomb life (eternal) was recreated. Thus, as the sun rose on this new “day,” so did the Unique Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom this day would henceforth be named: the Lord’s Day.27

It is no wonder that the earliest Christians were convinced that this day, Sunday, the first day of the week, was the most appropriate day for the gathering of the church. Not only was it the day of the resurrected Lord, the day creation itself was reclaimed by God, but according to John it was also the day the “church” met for the first time.28 In fact, the first three post-resurrection appearances of Jesus occur on this day—Sunday (20:1, 19, 26). Regarding the third and final recorded appearance of Jesus (20:26), the silence of the narrator on so many other issues (e.g., Why were the doors locked again, even after the first appearance? Why did Jesus appear and greet in exactly the same manner?) makes emphatic the mentioning of the specific day of the appearance.29 It is as if the narrator is magnifying the importance of this day, the Lord’s Day, imaging in his account what all Christians receive when they gather on Sunday, the presence of the Lord with his people, the church. Although this is impossible to know, it is almost as if the disciples had decided to meet again on the next Lord’s Day, one week later, starting what would become the customary day of gathering for the church, when Jesus appeared a second time to them (cf., Rev. 1:10).30

E. “There was a garden” and a “gardener”
(18:1-2; 19:41, 20:15)

The prominence of the “garden” in the Genesis creation account is no less prominent in John. In fact, the entire death and resurrection of Jesus is framed in John 18-20 by an anonymous “garden” that is central not simply


29 Although 20:26 claims the appearance was “eight days later,” according to the Jewish mode of reckoning time, with both the first and last day being counted, this appearance was exactly seven days after the first appearance to the disciples, which according to 20:19 occurred on “the first day of the week.”

to the historical context, but the theological context of Scripture. This garden appears three times, with each occurrence at a central place in the story, at Jesus’ betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection. Read cumulatively this anonymous garden is describing “the biblical garden,” with the events of Jesus’ life in this second garden in John recapitulating and reversing the effects of the first garden of Genesis. The biblical garden about which John speaks has three aspects.

First, there is betrayal in a garden (18:1–2). The unnamed “garden” in 18:1 clearly serves to establish the historical context of the scene to follow, but more can be argued. The term “garden” also serves to establish the theological context of the scene, denoted not only by what might be a purposeful anonymity (in contrast to the details of the “stream”), but also by means of noting that the Fourth Gospel is the only Gospel that even mentions the arrest taking place in a garden. The Gospel has so clearly applied a Genesis lens to the story it tells that it is difficult not to see the connection between this “garden” and the first garden in Genesis 2:8–16.

This anonymous “garden,” therefore, is introduced here in order to prepare the reader for the eventually full-orbed contrast between the first and second Garden (in lieu of chapters 18–20), related to the first and second Adam (cf., 19:5). As the Gospel is intending to show, both gardens saw the production of life and death, but the second reversed the order of the first: the first garden was the place where death was born out of life; the second garden was the place where life was born out of death.

After the introduction of this “garden,” in 18:2 one of the most significant characters is introduced, Judas. The narrator is careful to describe Judas in relation to Jesus as “the one who betrayed him.” Since his first appearance Judas has been described in this way by the narrator (6:71; cf., 12:4), and known as such by Jesus (6:64). But Judas is described not only as the betrayer, but as the one who “knew the place,” with the place being “a garden” at which Jesus frequently assembled with his disciples. The stated emphasis on betrayal again serves to connect this garden with the first garden. Like the first garden, Jesus is betrayed by Judas who (like Adam) was prompted by Satan (John 13:27: “Satan entered into him” at the supper; cf., Gen. 3:1–5). By positioning the story of Jesus’ arrest within the grand story of Scripture, the Gospel displays not merely “a garden” but the biblical garden, the place where the world betrayed God, making a

---

31 See Michaels, John, 886.
32 Unfortunately, this is in contrast to the majority of modern interpreters.
garden not only a fitting place of this final betrayal, but also a fitting place for it to be overturned (see 19:41; 20:15), even more, as a fitting description of the New Creation (Rev. 21–22).

Second, there is resolution in a garden (19:41). In John’s account of events of the crucifixion the narrator is not only concerned with the fact of Jesus’ death, but also with the place. The narrator gives an important qualification about the place: “in the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden.” This statement not only situates the tomb in which Jesus was laid in the vicinity of the crucifixion, but it also connects the crucifixion to “a garden.” Jesus was arrested in a garden (cf., 18:1), and now he is crucified and buried in a garden; he will also rise from the dead in a garden (cf., 20:15). In the developing and immediate context of John, the significance of attaching the crucifixion to an “anonymous garden” magnifies further the “biblical garden” the Gospel is announcing to the reader. If the first reference to this garden (18:1–2) was in relation to the betrayal, in relation to the crucifixion it is resolution. In the biblical garden God himself replaced his people with his own “flesh” (1:14). If in the first garden humanity betrayed God when humanity took the place of God, in the second garden God redeemed humanity when God took the place of humanity, taking upon himself the penalty for their sins (cf., 1:29).

Third, there is recreation in a garden with a gardener (20:15). The resurrection of Jesus is powerfully described as occurring in a garden—the biblical garden John has so carefully been describing. But there is more intentionality than simply another occurrence of “garden.” In 20:15 the narrator provides an important explanation of Mary’s mistaken assumption regarding the identity of Jesus. Mary was “thinking that he was the gardener.” Mary’s assumption is further expressed when she questions him to see if he is responsible for the missing body of Jesus. Although Mary’s statement to Jesus would have been enough to show that she did not recognize him, certainly the narrator intended to state the assumption for the readers, guiding them to see the beautiful portrait of this Gardener in his Garden. The narrator is again showing how another character in the Gospel is speaking so beautifully beyond themselves in spite of their ignorance (cf., 11:49–52). Like the term “garden,” the term “the gardener” directs the reader not only to the biblical garden, but also to the (original) biblical gardener—Adam. The narrator reveals Mary’s mistaken assumption primarily to reveal what God—not Mary—had in mind: “the cross to be in Paradise, as the tree of life from which the first man had been raised from the dust as the primordial King,” now the second Man, also raised from the dust in resurrection, took up his rightful place in the garden… tilling the soil and caring for Eden from which the first Man had been banished.”

38 Wyatt, “Supposing Him to Be the Gardener,” 38.
therefore had become the second Adam, the Gardner assigned by God (see Gen. 2:15), here standing in his “garden” on the first day of the “week” (cf., 20:1). In the second Garden, the Gardener himself came to tend his (new) creation (Gen. 2:15; Rev. 21–22).

Mary’s presence was hardly inconsequential, especially in relation to the first and second biblical gardens. In the first Garden a woman was asked a question that would soon reveal that the questioner was intending to become the source of grief (Gen. 3:1); but in the second garden a woman is asked a question that would soon reveal that the questioner had already become the source of grace. The Serpent promised that the first Woman would be like God, whereas Jesus announces that the second Woman would be with God. The difference is stark, for the actions in the second Garden return the creation to the intended state of the first Garden. The concern of early Christianity (cf., Mt. 28:1–8; Mk. 16:9–11; Lk. 24:1–10) to connect the Garden of Easter with a woman may have less to do with gender in the first century, and more to do with gender in the first Garden, the Garden of Eden. In this way Jesus fulfills and repairs the fall of his creation in every way. Even the Serpent has been silenced and his grief-inducing question has been replaced with a grace-filled response of the true Gardener!

II. THE BIBLICAL ADAM(S) AND THE HISTORICAL ADAM(S)

For the full story of creation, one must read both or between John and Genesis. The biblical-theological reading of the Fourth Gospel above intended to show a robust second Adam Christology in John that is drawn from and grounded in the first Adam of Genesis. That is, John is clearly interested primarily in the biblical Adam—who is finally established in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet the full story of creation located between John and Genesis also allows us to make a few observations regarding the contemporary discussion about the historical Adam.

First, any survey of the debates for or against the historical Adam will reveal that the Gospel of John and the biblical theology of creation it presents cannot solve the debate. If anything this essay hopes to establish John as a significant source regarding the story and theology of creation, both old and new creation. Even more, if Romans 5 is recognized for its second Adam Christology, how much more the entire Gospel of John! In the least John should be included more readily and prominently (even primarily!) in the discussion regarding the full story of creation.

Second, when creation is read and interpreted between John and Genesis it becomes clear that the old and new creations are not really two but one, unified creation. Only in the symphony of Scripture, but especially between John and Genesis, is the complete story of creation revealed—a story that moves from creation to new creation. The full story of creation is not only explaining origin but also purpose, and not only the Fall but also its redemptive resolution. Between John and Genesis creation is not

39 This is most visible in the way the interlocutors in the volume, *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, ed., Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), have very different assumptions regarding the way biblical evidence outside of Genesis can and should be used to establish the historicity of Adam.
only past but also future. As we explained above, the point of creation was never simply its created self (that it exists), but its created purpose, and that purpose is grounded entirely in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not simply the Creator of all things (1:3), but also the Redeemer of all things. The goal of creation and the message of the creation story, therefore, was never its mere existence but its redeemed-through-Christ perfection. While this might not solve the origin debates, it certainly puts such debates in their larger and rightful context.

Third, when read between John and Genesis, the full story of creation demands to be taken as a foundational principle of interpretation regarding origins, including the person of Adam. Although others have tried to connect the redemptive-historical narrative to this debate, specifically regarding the connection between the first and second Adams (usually with Rom. 5), certainly John’s robust second Adam Christology only makes such a case stronger. Can the historical and narratival witness to Adam be less or different than the historical and narratival witness to Jesus? Said another way, can we so easily distinguish between the biblical and historical Adams? These questions force dogmatic necessities regarding Jesus’ work and (historical) person rooted in the full story of creation to be applied in kind to the work and (historical) person of Adam in ways that cannot be easily dismissed, or at least not without consequences.

III. CONCLUSION

For too long the connection between John and Genesis has been nearly a play thing for literary and theological comparison. The connection is much deeper than that, for John and Genesis have the same genetics and speak to the same subject matter, especially in regard to the full story of creation. And as much as they both speak about the same “beginning” (1:1), they also speak to the same end (telos): the second Adam, the true human, the Word of God—Jesus Christ. Maybe what Augustine suggested about the two testaments could be said specifically about John and Genesis: Genesis is John concealed, and John is Genesis revealed.

The full story of creation told between John and Genesis makes several claims for the Christian and the Christian faith. The first is that the gospel message declared by both the Old and the New Covenant are centered upon the fact and message of the full story of creation. Second, that the truest teaching about creation should not only direct us to the past (origins) but should also direct us to the future (purpose and goal). The full story of creation gives a more three-dimensional look at the characters and context of the creation account, with the deceiver, the betrayer, the man, the woman, the garden, and the gardener being understood to have a much thicker role not only in the Bible, but also in the very history of the world.
“A milestone in publishing. The ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible provides readers views from above the landscape to ensure a coherent and certain trajectory through the sixty-six books of the Bible.”

**Derek W. H. Thomas,**
Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina; Chancellor’s Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardcover</th>
<th>978-1-4335-5337-0, $39.99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TruTone®, Brown/Cordovan</td>
<td>978-1-4335-5338-7, $59.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine Leather, Black</td>
<td>978-1-4335-5339-4, $89.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Now Available from Crossway”

“A first-rate edition of the New Testament text, behind which stands an extraordinary amount of work on the earliest Greek manuscripts. Lucidly and handsomely presented. A volume that all New Testament scholars will want to have on hand.”

**Simon Gathercole,**
Reader in New Testament Studies, University of Cambridge; Fellow and Director of Studies in Theology, Fitzwilliam College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardcover</th>
<th>978-1-4335-5217-5, $39.99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TruTone®, Black</td>
<td>978-1-4335-5856-6, $69.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judy S. was in the front yard playing with her grandchildren’s exuberant puppy when she became entangled in the dog’s leash and fell. She hit her head on the ground and soon began showing signs of what appeared to be a concussion. Only it was not a concussion. Within hours she was dead from a massive hemorrhage. Death struck swiftly, cruelly and almost mockingly. Judy had beaten breast cancer several years prior and was enjoying the best health she had experienced in over a decade. But, as the on-call neurosurgeon explained in the dreary confines of the surgical waiting room, radiation can weaken the structure of blood vessels, making them brittle. That was how a simple fall in the grass resulted in catastrophic injury.

Almost everyone can tell a similar story of death without warning. Each one reminds us of the cruel tyranny of death and the frailty of our human existence. Death is an essential part of our humanity, and yet it is undeniably foreign. In most cases we fight against it with every fiber of our mortal being. This tension between the inevitability of death and our rebellion against it reflects a biblical truth rooted in the story of creation and expressed in the life and death of Adam.

The creation of Adam and Eve in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) has long been a touchstone of biblical and systematic theology. When it comes to discussing the nature of human identity we start here, and for good reason. Here our vocation is apparent, our natural endowments discovered and our unique glory affirmed. But this is not the only image that we bear. In an extended reflection on the contrast between Adam and Christ in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes that we also, “have borne the image of the man of dust.” We have been created in the image of God, but we bear the image of Adam. While the one imparts glory, the other brings death.

My interest in this paper is to demonstrate that when Paul alludes to the image of Adam he is interested principally in death. This connection is not new to Paul, but rooted in the early chapters of Genesis, particularly Genesis 5, the only other Biblical text to speak explicitly of the image of Adam. While this exploration breaks little new ground, exegetically speaking, it leads to reflection on the nature of Adam, the meaning of death and the increasingly complex discussion of the “historical Adam.”

---

1 John Yates is the Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Anglican, in Raleigh, North Carolina.
I. THE IMAGE OF THE EARTHLY MAN
IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

Paul’s purpose in the final and climactic chapter of 1 Corinthians is to affirm the resurrection of Christ and its importance for the life of the Christian. As he says in vv.3–4, “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...” Arguing against those who believe resurrection to be impossible, he says, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (vv.17–18).

At verse 20, having affirmed Christ’s resurrection, Paul turns from his opening argument to a reflection on the origin and ordering of fallen humanity contrasted with that of redeemed humanity. He writes, “For 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.” This leads to a glorious consideration of the future reign of Christ, in which the final enemy—death—is defeated and all things come under the rule and authority of God the Father.

The latter half of the chapter begins with a rhetorical question in v.35, “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” Paul appears to enter into an ongoing argument with the Corinthians at this point, the details of which are hidden from us. The basic contrast, however, is between present life, ending in death, and future, resurrected life.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being;” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

The Adam-Christ typology introduced in v.22 and repeated in v.45 is the governing idea behind 15:42–49, which climaxes in Paul’s midrash on Gen. 2:7 in vv.45 and 47, and is developed in his re-orientation of the concept of “image” in vv.48–49. We will return to this momentarily.

---

2 We have already encountered Adam in 11:7–9, though not by name. Here his function is representative of all men, described as “the image and glory of God.”
A. A Pre-Fall Adam?

Paul’s *midrash* on Gen. 2:7 in vv.45 and 47 explicitly introduces what has up until then only been implied: that Adam’s creation stands in contrast to Christ’s resurrection. The Adam described here is under the reign of sin and death. However, because the reference to Gen. 2:7 in v.45 is to Adam before his sin, some scholars argue that references to Adam in this part of Paul’s argument (vv.35-49), and hence references to the *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, refer to Adam in his original state prior to sin and death.3 This is a tantalizing possibility with potentially fascinating implications for discussions about the “historical Adam,” but it imports a distinction between two Adams (pre- and post-fall) that Paul never seems to make.4

That Adam’s fall is assumed in the logic of the chapter is evident in several places: 1) The connection between sin and death in vv.16–17 and v.56, 2) Adam’s role as the bringer of death to humanity in vv.21–22, and 3) The antitheses in vv.42–44a which portray the *σῶμα ψυχικόν* in terms which are not easily reconciled with the “goodness” of God’s creation.5 In vv.42–43, that which is sown is described as being sown in *φθορᾷ, ἀτιμίᾳ* and *ἀσθενείᾳ* as a *σῶμα ψυχικόν*. The latter two descriptions could arguably be classed as neutral; these do not necessarily imply a cursed or fallen humanity. It would be difficult for Paul to argue, however, that the first human was created *ἐν φθορᾷ*, “perishable” (with a connotation of physical corruption) when elsewhere in the chapter death is portrayed as a foreign enemy (v.26), as introduced to the human race by Adam, not God (vv.21–22), and as a force over which man will have ultimate victory through Christ in the eschaton (vv.54–55).6 It seems equally implausible that Paul would describe God’s creation as an object without honor (*ἀτιμίᾳ*).7

---

3 See Andrew Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology*, SNTSMS 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 42; following G. Vos and H. Ridderbos. This train of thought is followed extensively in much of the scholarly literature.

4 Of the various other texts in which scholars find Adamic references (explicitly in Rom. 5:12–21 and 1 Tim. 2:13–14, and by allusion in Rom. 1:18-32; 3:23; 7:7–13; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20) only Rom. 7:9 might conceivably refer to Adam’s sinless existence prior to his fall. While the ongoing dispute regarding the nature of the first person singular in Rom. 7 makes it impossible to say to whom this verse refers the point of the verse is to demonstrate that sin leads to death. If Adam is the referent then this fits clearly with Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15. Taken in conjunction with the indisputable and highly similar portrayals of Adam in Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15, the likelihood of any kind of pre-fall description focused on Adam’s initial splendor becomes even slimmer.

5 Lincoln and Penna both avoid the problems caused by these verses for their view of Adam by claiming that a new argument begins in v.44b/v.45, where Paul’s view of Adam is not connected to his depiction of bodies in the previous argument. That a significant change in context or argument occurs between v.44a and v.44b remains to be adequately demonstrated. See Lincoln *Paradise*, 42; cf., Romano Penna, “Adamic Christology and Anthropological Optimism in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49,” in *Paul the Apostle, Volume One: Jew and Greek Alike*, 206–231 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), 208.

6 See also Rom. 8:21 where creation is described as being in bondage to φθορᾶ.

7 Greg Beale has argued, in personal conversation, that ἀτιμίᾳ is used by Paul in comparative contexts where the negative sense of the term is limited to the contrast, appearing in light only of the better, more honorable alternative. The implication of this argument is...
The point of v.47 is to demonstrate that Adam and Christ stand as signifiers for the two creations that they represent. The comparison highlights the differences between two orders of existence, two distinct ages, two creations. This is in evidence as far back as vv.23–38 in which Paul adopts the language of Psalms 8 and 110 in order to show Christ’s supremacy over all creation. This is the language of ruling kingdoms, and initiating epochs. There is no pristine Adam in view in this chapter.

To summarize: Paul is not concerned with Adam apart from how he serves to explain the existence of sin and death, and stands in contrast to Christ. There is no thought of a return to Adam’s pre-fallen state in this chapter. As Anthony Thiselton has said of Adam’s role in vv.45–46, “Adam is no archetypal model who represents Ideal Humanity; he stands for all that is fallen and destructive...the resurrection carries with it no “myth of eternal return” but the promise of new creation.”

B. The Icon of Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:49

In v.49 Paul continues to use the language of vv.47–48, bringing it to a climax by applying the condition of the “earthly” man and the condition of the “heavenly” man to humanity in its two distinct spheres (creation and new creation). Paul describes himself and his Corinthian correspondents as bearing τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ while longing to bear τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου. What, however, does Paul mean by ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ χοϊκοῦ? The term χοϊκός is rare, possibly coined by Paul himself. It links back to the LXX of Gen. 2:7 where the noun χοῦς is used to describe the dust out of which Adam is formed. Dust is indicative of mortality, a reminder that all life eventually turns to dust under foot.

The existential and theological problem that lies behind 1 Corinthians 15 is the problem of death. This has led at least one scholar to declare that “death itself is the focal issue” in 1 Cor. 15. Emphasis on the death of

that ἀτιμία can be used rhetorically to describe the movement from lesser to greater without making a substantive claim as to the nature of the object in question. This is possibly true of the use of the term in Rom. 9:21; 2 Cor. 6:8; 11:21 and 2 Tim. 2:20. However, in both 1 Cor. 11:14 and Rom. 1:26 the term is used in regards to activities that are specifically described as contrary to nature. Given this fact it seems impossible that Paul would turn around and use the term in 15:42 to describe Adam in a pre-fallen, sinless state set in contrast to future, eschatological perfection along an axis of movement from lesser to greater.


9 See Lincoln, Paradise, 46, and Dunn, Christology, 107.

10 Anthony Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1284, italics original.

Christ in vv.1–11 points to this cosmic problem of death, a theme which is re-emphasized in vv.25–28 where the future destruction of death serves to remind the letter’s recipients that it remains a problem for them in the present, even while its future annihilation is assured. The theme of death and its destruction is repeated as the denouement of the chapter in vv.54–57, where the prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea are fulfilled in the promised final destruction of death.

The sheer repetition of the vocabulary of death in this chapter gives some indication of the centrality of the theme. The noun νεκρός occurs 13 times between vv.12 and 52 alone. The verb ἀποθνῄσκω occurs 5 times throughout the chapter, and κοιμάω, as a reference to death, is found on 4 occasions. Furthermore, the contrast between perishable and imperishable, which is first articulated in v. 42a, is repeated four times.

Given this context it seems clear that the ἔικων τοῦ χοϊκοῦ of v. 49 refers to Adam’s death as the consequence of his sin and the inheritance of humankind. But how does Paul come to use the language of “image” in this context? Some scholars believe that the context of 15:45–49 is an underlying debate between Paul and those espousing a Philonic anthropology based on a dualistic interpretation of Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:7. They therefore assume that Paul is interacting with a tradition rooted in Gen. 1:27 and offering an alternative interpretation of that text. Paul has already alluded to the creation of Adam in the image of God in 11:27, when he refers to man’s status as the image and glory of God (εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων). However, in 15:49 it is not the image of God (εἰκὼν θεοῦ) to which Paul refers, but the image of the dusty man (τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ). This very different description of the εἰκὼν born by man suggests the possibility that Paul is referring to something entirely different.

It is right to look back to the creation narrative for the answer, but one should not be limited to the narrative of Gen. 1–2. Because Paul’s focus is on Adam and not merely the narrative of creation, it is quite possible that this allusion refers to another passage where Adam is mentioned, especially where the concept of “image” is discussed. If Paul is drawing on the story of Adam captured in the early chapters of Genesis, then it is more likely

13 See Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 794.
14 James Dunn and C. K. Barrett are fairly representative. See Dunn, Christology, 100, and C. K. Barrett, From First Adam to Last (London: A&C Black, 1962), 75. Neither Barrett nor Dunn want to argue that Paul had read Philo, rather, they believe that his ideas and others like them were common currency in the Alexandrian based Judaism of Paul’s day. One problem with this view of the discussion in 1 Cor. 15 is that it assumes that Paul distinguishes, like Philo, between a pre-fall and fallen Adam. As argued earlier this distinction plays no part in Paul’s clear references to Adam.
15 This verse proves troublesome to most commentators as Paul’s reference to “image” here does not fit in with any of his other explicit descriptions of “image.”
that the background to this reference is Genesis 5, which speaks of Seth's birth in the image of Adam.\textsuperscript{16}

II. GENESIS 5 AND THE IMAGE OF ADAM

Death is first mentioned in Scripture in Gen. 2:17. God says to Adam, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Use of the infinitive absolute emphasizes the starkness of the warning: "dying you shall die." In chapter 3, the woman repeats this warning, adding that to touch the tree is to bring on certain death, to which the serpent responds, "you will not surely die." Having eaten, the guilty pair is discovered and a curse pronounced in 3:19, where dust signifies death,

\begin{quote}
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.
\end{quote}

Much has been made of the fact that the promise of instant death and the curse of death do not align. Adam and Eve do not physically die on the day of their eating.\textsuperscript{17} They are very much alive in exile, enduring the pain of rebellion and passing it on to their children. But this apparent inconsistency is almost certainly overstated. We ought to take 2:17 at face value, allowing it to shape our understanding of the meaning of death, rather than the other way around. It is far more likely that Adam and Eve do die upon eating, but we have so narrowed down the meaning of death that we miss the full extent of its meaning. This is the first hint we have that punishment by death means more than mere mortality. It is a theme to which we will return.

In chapter 4 the curse of death is realized in the appalling violence of Abel's murder. Cain is cut-off from the generations of Adam and replaced by Seth. But even with this fresh start, there is no escaping the reality of death. Genesis 5 begins,


\textsuperscript{17} See Jubilees 4:30, Genesis Rabbah 16:6 and 19:8 for early attempts to explain this apparent inconsistency.
This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created
man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he
created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they
were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in
his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of
Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons
and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years,
and he died.

The toledot of Adam begins with the glory of creation. Gen. 5:1–2 recall
God’s creation of man and woman in his image and likeness in 1:26–28. In
v.3 Adam is depicted as fulfilling the command to be fruitful by fathering
a son in his own image and likeness. He then exercises the authority of his
vice-regency and the likeness he bears to God by naming his son.

Elsewhere in Genesis the idea of creation in the éikon of another is
mentioned only in 1:26, 27 and 9:6. In each of these the reference is to the
éikon of God. Only in Gen. 5:3 is the éikon τοῦ Ἄδαμ mentioned. Many
commentators treat this simply as an echo of Gen 1:26–27, asserting that
Adam passes on the image in which he was created to Seth. In other words,
the “image of Adam” is the “image of God.” However, this is not the only
way to read the text. One must first ask why Seth is described as the “image
of Adam,” if the writer’s intent is to say that he was born in the image of
God. Would it not have been simpler to say that Seth too was born in the
image of God? Second, while this interpretation of 5:3 rightly notes the
mention of Adam’s creation in God’s image in 5:1 it ignores the remainder
of the chapter as it develops. It is precisely in the remainder of the chapter
that an alternative understanding becomes more likely.

Genesis 5:5 ends with the starkly final phrase, “and he died.” The
description of each of the generations from Adam to Noah (with the
notable exception of Enoch) ends in the same formulaic manner with the
final verb, ἀπέθανεν. Prior to the eight occurrences of ἀποθνῄσκω in Gen.
5 the term occurs only three times in the Genesis narrative, as we have
already noted: in God’s warning of the penalty for eating of the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), in Eve’s repetition of that warning
to the serpent (Gen. 3:3), and in Satan’s denial that this promised death
will come (Gen. 3:4). Death is present after the eviction from the garden,
as evidenced in the story of Cain and Abel described in Gen. 4, but the
multi-generational reality of death is a fresh emphasis in chapter 5, echoing
the earlier language of death as divine penalty.

In 5:5 the parallels with creation come to an abrupt end in the stark
conclusion of Adam’s life. Death now beats a dreary rhythm throughout
the chapter as the one, enduring continuity from generation to generation.
Rusty Reno describes the path worn by the genealogy as it unfolds,

Seth is enrolled with Adam in the project of physical survival that
brings death as its future. He cannot but live in the shadow of the
first sin. The patriarchs of old live long lives, but they die in the

18 See Gordon Wenham, Genesis 1–15, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 127; and Nahum
Sarna, Genesis, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 42.
end. Thus the genealogy flowing from Adam gives us a picture of a fresh but failed effort to escape the gravitational force of the first sin. Even as the genealogy begins anew with Seth, he and his descendants slowly but inevitably trace a declining arc toward the target of death.¹⁹

Two themes dominate Genesis 5: fruitfulness and death. The first is fulfillment of humankind’s divine vocation; the second is fulfillment of the divine curse. For the author to explain that Adam “fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth,” does not merely indicate a passing on of the divine image.²⁰ This is now the image of Adam, and that image is death.

This interpretation of the image of Adam finds limited support in other Jewish literature.²¹ 2 Baruch 17:2–3 points to Genesis 5, noting that Adam’s life, though long, ended in death and led to death for others. There is no mention of Adam’s image, but the writer recognizes that Adam’s death is the root cause of the death of his descendants based on his reading of Genesis 5. In a text that relates indirectly, Wisdom of Solomon 2:23 links the image of God in man to immortality. This is one of the few passages in the LXX that uses the term εἴκων in reference to man’s creation as the image of God.²² In v.24 this eternal image stands in contrast to death, which has been brought into the world by the devil and is reserved for those who take his side. James Dunn notes the confluence in thought between this passage in Wisdom of Solomon and the Pauline writings, and goes so far as to say that “the vocabulary and ideas here form an echo chamber for several of Paul’s own theological assertions in this area…we can be confident that Paul was aware of such theological reflection and probably drew on it.”²³

¹⁹ R. R. Reno, Genesis, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 111–12.
²⁰ Contra Sarna, 42
²¹ In addition to the works briefly cited here, one must consider the astonishing parallelism of a passage in the Sifra (Sifra Hova, parasha 12:12), with Romans 5:12-21, in which the sin of Adam leads to the condemnation of all men. This work is discussed at length in, Menahem Kister “Romans 5:12–21 against the background of Torah-Theology and Hebrew Usage,” in The Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 100, No. 4 (2007): 391–424. Kister argues that the Sifra passage depends on earlier Jewish traditions that Paul was likely to have known. See also a saying attributed to Rabbi Yehuda in Sifra Deuteronomy 323, commenting on Dt. 32:32; and 4 Ezra 4.31–32 which has overtones of Rom. 5:16. Both appear to link Adam’s death with that of his descendants.
²² Levison concurs that the sage’s understanding of the “content of the image is immortality,” although he specifies that this is an immortality of the soul, which he points out may be quite a different understanding of immortality than that presented by Paul (See John R. Levison, Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch, JSPSS 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 50–51 and 293, n.31.
²³ James Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 86. See also Sirach 17:3. However, a nearly opposite perspective on human mortality is found in Sirach 33:7–13, where the author argues that humankind is mortal from birth due to our formation from the dust. This mortality is in no way linked to the divine image, but neither is it linked to Adam’s fall. As Levison has said, for Sirach “death is part of God’s ordering of the cosmos…not a later aberrance in the cosmos; it has the purpose of punishing the wicked and bringing release from the burdens of life” (see Levison, Portraits, 43).
Peter Enns claims that “what is missing from the Old Testament is any indication that Adam’s disobedience is the cause of universal sin, death, and condemnation, as Paul seems to argue.” While Enns is right to point out the paucity of Adamic references in the Old Testament, his claim here seems at odds with Genesis 5. Add to this the likelihood that Paul is drawing on Genesis 5 in 1 Corinthians 15 and we see that Paul’s understanding of Adam’s sin and death are in fact dependent on a close reading of the Hebrew Scriptures. Enns claims that, “Paul’s understanding of Adam is shaped by Jesus, not the other way around.” There is truth to this, but it is overstated. Paul has an understanding of Adam’s role that is consistent with other strands of Jewish tradition and rooted in Genesis 3 and 5.

One final speculation regarding Genesis 5 is worth indulging. In treatments of Gen. 1:26–28 commentators refer to the practice of kings in the Ancient Near East who placed images of themselves at the border of their territories in order to denote the place of their rule. This practice, if it was indeed well-known, has implications for our understanding of the language of Genesis 5 in addition to Genesis 1. When Adam fathers Seth in his image is there not an implication that Adam’s image stands over Seth and his descendants as a symbolic power? If that image is death, then it stands cruelly over humanity in the land east of Eden.

III. THE REIGN OF DEATH IN ROMANS 5

The only other place in the undisputed letters in which Paul refers to Adam by name is Rom. 5:12–21 (cf., 1 Tim. 2:13–14). Here Adam is portrayed in similar terms to that of 1 Corinthians 15, as the representative man through whom sin and death are introduced to humanity.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

I want to address this passage only very briefly, in order to highlight Paul’s interest in and understanding of death.

Much like in 1 Corinthians 15, the broader context of Rom. 5:12–21 is the contrast between life and death. Of the 113 appearances of ζωή and cognates in the undisputed Pauline letters, nearly 25% appear in Rom. 5–8 alone. Similarly, the term θάνατος and cognates appear 95 times in the undisputed Pauline letters, with a remarkable 44%, occurring in Rom. 5–8. Although one can only learn so much from the concentration of particular vocabulary, this high concentration points to the fact that the

fundamental contrast in Romans 5–8 is that between death and life. It is in this context that the contrast between Adam and Christ once again appears.

Here, as in 1 Corinthians 15, Adam is the death-bringer. As a result of his sin, Adam brings the curse of death on himself and all humanity. One theme developed in Romans 5, which is not clearly mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15, is that of the reign of death. Three times in vv.12–21 Paul describes death as “reigning” over humanity (vv.14, 17, 21). This depiction of death as an alien power, or usurping king, is a potent one. As Tom Schreiner writes,

> Death reigns as a power over those who are in Adam, for death is not merely an event that occurs but a state in which human beings live as a result of Adam’s sin...death can’t be limited to spiritual or physical death, for both realities are designated by the word “death.”...physical death stands as the culmination point for the spiritual death that dominated human beings during their earthly lives.27

Schreiner’s observations remind us of the depth of Paul’s theological reflections on death and force us to take seriously this persistent focus in his thought.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BEAR THE IMAGE OF ADAM

When Paul refers to image of the earthly man in 1 Corinthians 15 he means Adam, whose primary identity in the course of Paul’s argument is death-bringer. This understanding of Adam’s image is, I believe, rooted in Paul’s reading of Genesis 1–5, particularly the reference to Seth, whom Adam fathered in his own image and likeness. Paul’s interest in the death of Adam and the subsequent death of all humankind continues in Romans 5. There too, Adam’s primary identity is death-bringer. In this passage, the oppressive rule of death as an alien power over humankind is particularly emphasized in the thrice-repeated refrain that “death reigns.” These observations lead me to several reflections.

The first is to wonder: have we in the evangelical community focused on Adam’s sin at the expense of tending to his death? It is far more common to hear a sermon or teaching on “original sin” than on “original death,” and while the former is crucial to Paul and inextricably tied to the latter, the latter seems to carry greater weight in the argument of Romans 5–8 and 1 Corinthians 15 than is generally noted. Treatments of Romans 5, in particular, tend to focus on Paul’s understanding of sin rather than the reality of death. This imbalance ought to be addressed.

---

A second reflection, related to the first, is that too often scholars seem to regard death in Paul’s writings as a “theological” issue, not an existential or pastoral one. These were letters, written mostly to friends, with whom Paul had shared the intimacy of death. This seems clear from his references to those who have already died in 1 Cor. 15. As students of Paul we must remember this reality because it encourages us to read his letters as profoundly pastoral theology. We do well to follow Paul’s example by reflecting faithfully on the reality of death, the foreignness of death (as an invading tyrant to be defeated by Christ), the pain and tragedy of death, and the astonishing new reality that death for Christians is now considered “sleep,” because we share the life of Christ in our mortal bodies—that life which transcends physical death.

The pastoral necessity for this kind of multifaceted reflection came home to me as I sat in the surgical waiting room with the family of Judy S., listening as her neurosurgeon gave us the awful news. Her death was, as I described it at the beginning, almost a mockery of life. To be killed by a tuft of grass after successfully battling cancer points to the awful absurdity of this foreign power in our lives. There is a great existential need for us to think, preach and teach on death. One excellent example of this kind of theologizing is Ephraim Radner’s recent book, *A Time to Keep*. More such volumes are needed, and the need is both exegetical and pastoral.

There is a cultural need as well. As many observers have pointed out, we live in a culture of death. Abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide and euthanasia abound in western cultures. But alongside these wanton acts of murder the culture we inhabit is one that keeps death at a great distance: behind closed doors, with no shared language for discussing it. The serpent’s great lie in Genesis 3 is to convince Eve, “You shall not surely die.” We live in a culture where death is sometimes described as a “choice,” a cultural paradigm in which the lie is more readily believed than we like to think. This is due principally to abortion, but it is also the indirect result of myriad life-saving and life-sustaining medical innovations that are an enormous gift to humanity, but at the same time give a greater sense of control over the one great power we cannot control. Death reigns, to be sure, but it is often viewed as a distant monarch. We must close that distance in order to see it more clearly. We must resist the current trajectory, followed by many who have become convinced of the truth of evolutionary theory (of some kind), to minimize human death as a part of the natural course of life.

This leads to my third reflection. As someone who believes in an “old-earth” I am convinced that death occurs in creation prior to the curse of Adam. This means that the nature of the curse of death must signify either, that newly created human beings had not yet been subject to death, or that the death that followed Adam’s sin is substantially different from the kind of death experienced by pre-Adamic *homo sapiens*. The common distinction between physical and spiritual death seems unhelpful at this point, because it has never been clear to me what “spiritual death” actually means. John Walton’s approach, in which death is both a reality of non-ordered creation and a result of dis-ordered creation, may prove helpful, but his approach woefully underappreciates the disordering power of death brought on by
Adam’s sin, as depicted by Paul. This is seen most clearly in his proposal that the tree of life was an “antidote” to death, which is demonstrably false in the divine logic that lies behind expulsion from the garden (Gen. 3:22).

Death is an enemy to be defeated, not a reality to be overcome or a disease to be cured—it is disorder, not merely non-order. I believe we need to theologize more carefully and systematically about what might be called “total death,” which seems at least marginally better as a description of the death that Adam bestows, than to simply call it “spiritual.” This will allow us to speak about death as more than the cessation of breath and the stilling of hearts, inviting us to consider death in all its ramifications as a product of human sin.

I want to end with two conclusions. First, the significance of Adam’s death for Paul’s theological and pastoral logic requires that he was in fact a living man who endured the curse he brought on us all. This is not limited to physical death, but certainly includes that death. That this is obvious for Paul has been affirmed even by those who themselves question the historicity of Adam. For Paul, Adam had to be a living man because he died. The way in which I have phrased that last sentence, however, might give one pause; I believe it reflects Paul’s logical priorities. Paul is more interested in the death of Adam and what that signifies, than in the life of Adam. For Paul it is the life of Christ and the death of Adam that matter. But because his theology requires the actual death of Adam it seems undeniable to assert that he lived as well!

Second, and building on the first conclusion, if Adam has agency as the bringer of death, must he not be an actual person? Adam is a type of Christ, to be sure, but he is also the agent of death. I do not see how a type can also be an agent without being an actual person. Agency would seem to imply historicity.

---

The reception of Darwin by Christian theologians has been a mixed bag. Anglican theologian J. R. Illingworth, as early as 1889, was little troubled by Darwin’s (then) new theory. “If we believe…in a Divine Creator…the method of His working, though full of speculative interest, will be of no controversial importance. …we shall need to readjust the focus of our spiritual eye to the enlarged vision, but nothing more.” So too more recently Colin Gunton believes the dust up between Darwin and Christianity has been much ado about nothing, “…the problems are not chiefly dogmatic” but rather philosophical and cultural; “it should not have been difficult for orthodox believers to accept the theory of evolution.”

But many Christian theologians and biblical scholars (especially in North America) contend that much is at stake in this conversation. Arguably, the Darwinian challenge extends to a wide range of biblical and theological disciplines—from hermeneutics, to soteriology, to anthropology, to the incarnation, to atonement, all the way to eschatology. The challenge of Darwinian science has been most acutely felt with respect to the cluster of questions related to human origins and the fall. In particular, Darwinian assertions about pre-fall death are difficult to reconcile with the traditional Augustinian narrative. Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves articulate the concern for many when they state, “Adam and the fall do not float free in Scripture like rootless, atomistic, independent ideas. They are central nodes that hold together and are completely enmeshed in a much broader, organic, and theological matrix.” For Madueme and Reeves, and for others who share their concern, the Darwinian account of death and human origins is not a mere speed bump for Christian theology.
The degree to which one views Darwin as a challenge for Christian theology is connected, in large measure, to the degree that one affirms the basic Augustinian account of sin and death.\(^5\) In the Augustinian narrative humans are created perfect and fully mature. Sin represents a “fall” away from perfection and human maturity. Redemption then, is largely conceived of as a return to the original rectitude established at creation. The Darwinian account, of course, upends this basic narrative. Death can no longer be conceived of as a direct result of human sin, but rather is at work prior to Adam’s entrance on to the world’s stage. Indeed, in the Darwinian account, human-like beings have been dying for millions of years prior to the arrival of homo sapiens. Insofar as death is built in to humanity’s original condition, it cannot be considered solely a consequence of sin.

Where to from here? Some, like Madueme and Reeves, have doubled-down on the Augustinian account, insisting that Darwinian science, insofar as it cannot be squared with Augustine (and more importantly, with Augustine’s perceived correct reading of the Bible), is simply wrong. But others, convinced by the claims of contemporary science and the strong evidence for common descent, are looking beyond Augustine for an alternative theological framework more friendly to Darwin. Enter Irenaeus, the second-century bishop of Lyons.

A number of contemporary theologians have put forward Irenaeus’ soteriological narrative as an alternative to Augustine’s.\(^6\) As we will see in what follows, Irenaeus maintains the same basic account of the fall as Augustine, placing death on the far side of sin. But Irenaeus’ anthropology provides an alternative to what later became the shaping anthropological framework for Christian theology in the western tradition. For Irenaeus, Adam was not created “complete,” but rather in seminal form—on a trajectory toward completion. For Irenaeus, it is through “long ages” that humanity comes to maturity and thus grows into all that God intends. This provisional nature of Adam at the time of creation, it has been suggested, provides an

---

\(^5\) Augustine is not the inventor of this narrative, but he does give it its most robust expression, and it is through him that it largely achieves consensus in the western tradition.

anthropological paradigm that offers more “flex” when thinking about the possibility of incorporating pre-fall death into the Christian narrative.

This paper explores what contribution Irenaeus might fruitfully make to the questions posed to Christian theology by a Darwinian account of human origins. Toward this end, I offer an executive summary of two key aspects of Irenaeus’ anthropology: 1) creational “perfection” is viewed as infantile and typological rather than as mature and complete, and 2) the incarnation addresses human mortality even apart from sin. My goal is to show the possibilities of utilizing Irenaeus as an ally for reworking the Christian narrative more in line with a Darwinian account of human origins and death.

1. CREATIONAL “PERFECTION” VIEWED AS INFANTILE AND TYPOLOGICAL RATHER THAN AS MATURE AND COMPLETE

For Irenaeus, the problem with humanity is not that it is “human, all too human” (to quote Nietzsche). Indeed, quite the opposite; the problem with humanity is that humanity is not yet human enough. For Irenaeus, the initial perfection of humanity at the time of creation is only infantile and typological. The full and complete perfection of Adam’s humanity awaits the completion of Christ’s redemptive work at his second coming. In order

---


8 The question of whether the Darwinian model is sufficiently established to warrant such a move, I leave to the judgment of the reader. My main aim is to show what possibilities may exist for those who have become convinced of such.
to make this plain, we must attend to Irenaeus’ Adamic typology, followed by a close reading of his account of human infancy.

A. ADAMIC TYPOLOGY

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Irenaeus’ Adam is that for Irenaeus, Christ’s incarnation forms the pattern for Adam’s creation, rather than the reverse. As Denis Minn’s aptly states, “Adam was consequent on Christ, and not the other way around.” In like manner to the typological logic of the Apostle Paul, Irenaeus insists that Adam’s humanity is made according to the image of Christ’s humanity, rather than Christ’s humanity made according to Adam’s. He writes,

For in times long past, it was said that humanity was created after the image of God, but it was not shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image humanity was created \( [\text{cuius secundum imaginem homo factus fuerat}]. \) Wherefore also [humanity] did easily lose the likeness \( [\text{similitudinem}]. \) When, however, the Word of God became flesh, he confirmed both these: for he both showed forth the image truly, since he became himself what was his image \( [\text{ipse hoc fiens quod erat imago eius}]; \) and he re-established the likeness \( [\text{similitudinem}] \) after a sure manner, by assimilating humanity to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.\(^9\)

And again he writes, “For he made humanity in the image of God; and the image of God is the Son, after whose image humanity was made: and for this cause he appeared in the end of the times that he might show the image (to be) like unto himself.”\(^12\)

For Irenaeus, the embodied Adam is made according to the image of the embodied Christ. Though Adam was first in order of time, Christ’s humanity was first in order of divine intent and pre-eminence. Irenaeus’ typology here is helpfully clarified by setting it in parallel with the New Testament’s typological reading of the Passover lamb. For the New Testament, the Passover Lamb of the Exodus was first in order of time, but was nonetheless understood by the New Testament writers to be patterned after the future sacrifice of Christ; the lamb of the Passover is but a shadow of the Lamb of God, and the lesser (historically earlier) lamb finds its meaning and identity in the fact that it points to and participates in the greater (historically later) Lamb.\(^13\) In the same way, Irenaeus understands humanity, though historically earlier than Christ, to be typologically pointing toward

---

10 In Romans 5:14, Paul speaks of “Adam, who was a type [\(\text{to,poj}\)] of the one who was to come.” Irenaeus quotes this passage with commentary in *Adversus Haereses*. 3.22.3, more on which below.
11 *Haer*. 5.16.2.
12 *Epid*. 22. See also *Epid*. 11 and 55 where Irenaeus speaks of humanity as made in the image and likeness of God.
13 See John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7. This example is not used by Irenaeus, but it helpfully illustrates his logic with respect to the typological nature of humanity.
the true human, Jesus. For Irenaeus, Adamic humanity is made according to the image of Christ’s humanity. It is this typological relationship between Adam and Christ that for Irenaeus provides the basis of humanity’s value and worth.

Notably, the typological relationship between humanity and Christ underscores the value of not only Adam’s humanity, but even more so, Christ’s humanity—an important point in Irenaeus’ larger polemic against the Gnostics. Christ’s humanity, indeed Christ’s flesh, is the anti-type according to which fleshly humanity is made. For Irenaeus, since Christ’s incarnation precedes (logically, even though not temporally) the creation of Adam, it is valuable in its own right, and part of the Son’s identity. Yet until Christ’s incarnation, it was not clear in what way humanity was made according to the image of God. But the coming of the Word reveals the typological relationship between Adam (and humanity more generally) and Christ. Adam possess the image of God insofar as he resembles the incarnate Son.

Fascinatingly, Irenaeus states that Christ “became himself what was his image.” Here we might conceive of Adam as a living pencil sketch, a self-portrait drawn by Christ himself as a prophetic witness pointing toward his own incarnation. Or again, using a modern analogy to illustrate the point: in the popular 1940 Disney adaptation of Carlo Collodi’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Pinocchio is a wooden puppet who dreams of becoming a real boy. At his creation, Pinocchio occupies a middle space between not real and real. He is more than an inanimate doll, but less than a real boy. He is stuck between non-being and full being. Thus what he is at creation is not a fulfillment of his real destiny, but only a shadow (or a type) of what he has the potential to become, i.e., a real boy. As the story unfolds, Pinocchio falls in with some bad characters and through his naiveté and poor choices becomes even less than what he was when he began. His resemblance to a real boy is marred by the addition of donkey ears and a tail. But through his repentance and the love of his “father-creator” Geppetto, the effects of his poor choices are taken away and he becomes what he was typologically pointed toward on the day of his creation—a real boy. Thus the redemption story of Pinocchio (at least in the Disney version) is not a story about a return to an original condition, but rather a story about a progression into the anti-type. This, in a way, is also true for Irenaeus’ conception of Adam. Adam on the day of creation is like Pinocchio—more than a mere creature, but not yet fully human. In Christ (and ultimately through Adam’s participation in his resurrection) Adam becomes what he was typologically pointing toward; which is to say he becomes a full human being.

Yet the above analogies fail to convey the complexity of Irenaeus’ thought in its entirety. For Irenaeus, the movement from creation to new creation is not a movement from natural to supernatural (as the above analogies might suggest). Irenaeus’ conception of human “infancy” must

---

14 In Collodi’s original novel Pinocchio is hanged and killed!
15 hus Behr rightly observes, “It is only in the eschatological event…that the full perfection of man is manifested. Thus the truth of man is eschatological, not protological.” John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57.
be taken into account. This topic will be taken up below, and thus I will postpone a detailed exposition until then. But this much bears stating at present: for Irenaeus, Adam at creation possessed \textit{in toto}, even if in seminal form, all that was necessary to grow fully into the image and likeness of the Word. Wingren helpfully uses the illustration of a child who has not yet learned to talk, but who possesses the inherent native resources to grow into this skill (baring unusual circumstance or injury). Unlike the pencil sketch and Pinocchio, both of which must undergo a change in ontology to realize their full transformation into the archetype, Irenaeus conceives of humans as moving forward in growth into what they already are in seminal form. Thus Irenaeus can affirm that those who are redeemed in Christ regain the “likeness” of God—the very likeness which humanity had at creation before the fall. “Wherefore also [humanity] did easily lose the likeness \textit{[similitudinem]}. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, he confirmed both these: for he both showed forth the image truly, since he became himself what was his image \textit{[ipse hoc fiens quod erat imago eius]}; and he re-established the likeness \textit{[similitudinem]} after a sure manner.”

Yet the likeness humanity is restored to is not the seminal likeness of infant Adam, but rather the mature, perfect likeness of the incarnate Son. In this way, the return is not simply a return to original perfection, but a return to the future, a return to the end toward which original perfection typologically pointed from the start.

This way of conceiving of Christ and Adam serves to collapse Irenaeus’ Christology and anthropology into each other. For Irenaeus, the only true human is the divine human—the anti-type. He writes, “How, then, shall he be a God, who has not as yet been made a human?” The remark is fascinating, and underscores the deep connection in Irenaeus between anthropology and Christology. Insofar as Adam is typologically related to Jesus Christ—the true human being, Adam (and all humanity with him) is not yet fully human. So Cartwright astutely comments, “[For Irenaeus]


18 \textit{Haer.} 5.16.2.

19 Both types of illustrations—Wingren’s “speech” illustration and my sketch/Pinocchio illustration are important for capturing the full scope of Irenaeus’ thought. Wingren’s illustration of speech development accurately reflects Irenaeus’ emphasis on a return to original perfection. And the sketch/Pinocchio illustration helpfully captures the movement from type to archetype in Irenaeus’ soteriology. These two concepts are compatible, and we need not resort to speculations about different sources as a way of explaining these complementary emphases. See also John Lawson, \textit{The Biblical Theology of Irenaeus} (1948; repr., Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 211–13, who likewise notes this “return to the future” motif in Irenaeus’ anthropology and soteriology.

20 \textit{Haer.} 4.39.2. This same basic sentiment, even if left undeveloped, can be found in Ignatius: “Suffer me to receive the pure light [of martyrdom]; when I shall have arrived there, I shall become a human being. Suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God.” \textit{Ad Rom.} 6. For Ignatius, to become like Christ in his death is to become, at last, a true human being.
Christ not only reveals Adam but also fulfills Adam; he is, in a sense, more Adam than Adam.”

Thus human beings are such only in hope—only insofar as we come to fully participate in the likeness of the true human being, Jesus. The full and final realization of the imago Dei in humanity is accomplished at the resurrection. Or again, it is only when the pencil sketch becomes a fully living, three dimensional being that the pencil sketch (now no longer a pencil sketch) can be said to be truly human.

The salient point here, underscored below with relevance to our larger conversation regarding Darwin, is that Irenaeus conceives of human perfection at the time of creation in a provisional and finite sense. Humanity must progress and develop into true humanity.

B. Human Infancy at Creation

As can be seen in Irenaeus’ typological anthropology, Irenaeus conceives of salvation as a process of maturation; the created being must grow and increase in capacity to receive the uncreated God. This basic theme is woven throughout Irenaeus’ extant works. He writes,

For he formed him for growth and increase [Plasmavit enim eum in augmentum et incrementum], as the Scripture says: “Increase and multiply.” And in this respect God differs from humanity, that God indeed makes, but humanity is made; and truly, he who makes is always the same [Et quidem qui facit semper idem est]; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase [quod autem fit et initium et medietatem et adiectionem et augmentum accipere debet]. And God does indeed create after a skillful manner, while [as regards humanity] it is created skillfully. God also is truly perfect in all things, himself equal and similar to himself, as he is all light, and all mind, and all substance, and the fount of all good; but humanity receives advancement and increase towards God [homo vero profectum percipiens et augmentum ad Deum].


22 See Haer. 4.38.4. Here also we see the basic form of Irenaeus’ concept of divinization. For Irenaeus, it is only insofar as humanity participates in Christ’s divine humanity that we become fully human. For a helpful look divinization in Irenaeus, see M. David Litwa, “The God ‘Human’ and Human Gods: Models of Deification in Irenaeus and the Apocryphon of John,” Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum 18.1, (2013): 70–94. Litwa helpfully demonstrates that Irenaeus’ clear Creator-creature distinction pushes his divinization motif in a substantially different direction than the Gnostic Apoc. of John. For Irenaeus, true deity is not native to human nature. Thus humans can become god-like only insofar as God first becomes human. But for the Apoc. of John, (consistent with other Gnostic texts), human nature is already divine insofar as it is an emanation (albeit indirectly) from God. Thus divinization in the Apoc. of John is about losing the outer shell of materiality so that one’s ‘real’ humanity—that part of one which has always been divine—can shine through unsullied.

23 Haer. 4.11.1–2. For more on this same theme see also Haer. 4.38.1–3.
This soteriological theme of human maturation is not unique to Irenaeus; however, it takes unique shape in Irenaeus with his idea of the infancy of Adam and Eve at the time of creation. Irenaeus, with the exceptions of Theophilus (and possibly Clement) is the only extant early Christian writer to speak about the infancy of Adam and Eve. (The idea is absent in early Jewish or Gnostic writings.) According to Irenaeus, the first human pair was created as infants—as children who needed to grow into physical adulthood. This idea occurs five times in Irenaeus, two times in Epideixis, and three times in Adversus haereses. For Irenaeus, the physical growth of the first human pair underscores their need for spiritual and mental growth. Irenaeus writes,

And Adam and Eve...“were naked, and were not ashamed,” for there was in them an innocent and infantile mind, and they thought or understood nothing whatsoever of those things that are wickedly born in the soul through lust and shameful desires. For at that time they preserved their nature intact, since that which was breathed into the handiwork was the breath of life; and while the breath remains in its

25 For this idea in Theophilus, see his Ad. Autol. 2.25, where he writes, “But Adam, being yet an infant in age, was on this account as yet unable to receive knowledge worthily. For now, also, when a child is born it is not at once able to eat bread, but is nourished first with milk, and then, with the increment of years, it advances to solid food. Thus, too, would it have been with Adam; for not as one who grudged him, as some suppose, did God command him not to eat of knowledge. But he wished also to make proof of him, whether he was submissive to his commandment. And at the same time he wished man, infant as he was, to remain for some time longer simple and sincere.” See also Clement, Ad Heath. 11 where Clement refers to Adam as a παιδίον τοῦ Θεοῦ prior to his fall, and then remarks that through the fall he became a grown man, ο παῖς ἀνδρίζων ἐπεξειρισθεὶς. The reference is suggestive, but only passing, and therefore difficult to associate with Irenaeus' concept of human infancy. See also Clement's comment in Stromata, 3.17, likewise passing and suggestive. Behr sees a clear connection between Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Clement on this point. See his Aseticism and Anthropology, 135, 143–44.
27 Epid. 12, 14; Haer. 3.22.4, 3.23.5, 4.38.1-2.
28 In his commentary, Ian MacKenzie rightly notes the link between human infancy and Irenaeus' maturation theme, “This idea of the potential of growth of Adam from infancy to the fullness of human stature in the Word, and therefore in perfect community of union with God, whereby Adam will be made like unto God points to an integral and characteristic of Irenaeus’ theology; namely that humanity is given the opportunity to grow and advance in the knowledge of God.” See MacKenzie, Irenaeus’ Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 116.
29 Gen 2:25.
30 Smith's translates the Armenian, “for their thoughts were innocent and childlike.” Robinson, “for there was in them an innocent and childlike mind.”
31 The Armenian is literally “pleasurable desire, concupiscence;” often a translation for ἐδομεία. See Smith, Proof, 151, nt. 81.
32 The Armenian is literally, “shameful desire.” See Smith, Proof, 151, nt. 81.
order and strength, it is without comprehension or understanding of what is evil. Thus “they were not ashamed,” kissing and embracing each other in holiness in the manner of children.33

The focus in this passage is on the pre-pubescence of Adam and Eve, and their lack of awareness of sex and sexual desire.34 Thus Irenaeus’ concept of infancy does not equate to a literal baby, but rather seems to have something more like “young child” in mind.35 This same basic idea is also found in Haer. 3.22.4, where the infancy of Adam and Eve is again identified as a pre-pubescent state.

…and even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin [virgo tamen adhuc existens]. For in Paradise “they were both naked, and were not ashamed,” inasmuch as they, having been created a short time previously [quoniam paulo ante facti], had no understanding of the procreation of children: for it was necessary that they should first come to adult age [opportebat enim primo illos adolescere], and then multiply from that time onward.36

33 Epid. 14.

34 The phrase “in the manner of children” introduces a certain amount of ambiguity regarding the exact nature of this infancy. Are Adam and Eve only acting like children, but are not really such themselves? Or are they acting “in the manner of children” because they are indeed themselves children? I take Irenaeus to mean the latter. See the note below.

35 Commentators of Irenaeus are divided about how to interpret Irenaeus at this point, with the majority of Irenaeus scholars interpreting Irenaeus as speaking of Adam and Eve as spiritual children, not literal children. Of the five passages that reference the infancy of Adam and Eve, only one seems more naturally read as spiritual infancy. The passage is found in Haer. 3.23.5, where Irenaeus writes, “For [Adam] showed his repentance by his conduct, through means of the girdle [which he used], covering himself with fig-leaves, while there were many other leaves, which would have irritated his body in a less degree. He, however, adopted a dress conformable to his disobedience, being awed by the fear of God; and resisting the erring, the lustful propensity of his flesh (since he had lost his natural disposition and child-like mind, and had come to the knowledge of evil things), he girded a bridle of continence upon himself and his wife, fearing God, and waiting for his coming.” It is difficult to suppose of Adam here as a literal young child, for his sin makes him immediately aware of sexual lust and a desire—a post-pubescent reality. But this passage notwithstanding, the other four passages seem difficult to interpret as anything other than a reference to physical childhood. For a detailed analysis of the infancy motif in Irenaeus, along with an examination of the relevant Latin and Greek terms, see Matthew Steenberg, “Children in Paradise,” 1–22. Steenberg himself leans strongly toward a literal interpretation, while noting that some of the ambiguities in Irenaeus make a final assessment difficult. He concludes, “One can be certain that Irenaeus did not mean ‘children’ to imply [merely] adults with a simple lack of experience…but this is as far as one can go with any attempt at a ‘physical’ description of the first humans” (21). I agree with Steenberg’s assessment.

36 Haer. 3.22.4. Notably Irenaeus does not associate procreation with human sinfulness. Procreative sexuality is the destiny of Adam and Eve when they reach adulthood. Irenaeus, unlike many of the later Christian writers, does not rail against sex and sexual desire; what we find in Epid. 14 above is about as critical as he gets—which is to say, not very critical. Irenaeus’ desire to preserve the goodness of the human body and of the material world prevents him from becoming overly critical of sexuality. See Behr, Asceticism and Anthropology, 209, who rightly observes, “For Irenaeus, sexuality is a fundamental characteristic of human
As noted above, the introduction of Adam and Eve as children serves Irenaeus’ larger maturation motif. The linking of these two themes finds full expression in an extended passage of *Adversus Haereses* (a portion of which we have already seen above). Irenaeus writes,

But created things must be inferior to him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin [τὰ δὲ γεγονότα καθὸ Μετέπειτα γενέσεως ρένω διὰν ἐσχε]; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect [ὑπερούντα οὗ τέλειον]. Because, as these things are of later date, so are they infantile [νήπια]; so are they un=accustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. For just as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant [βρέφει], but the [infant] is not yet able to receive substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God himself to have made humanity perfect from the first, but humanity could not receive this, being as yet a child [νήπιος]…

And on this account does Paul declare to the Corinthians, “I have fed you with milk, not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it”. …so, in like manner, God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to humanity [διό οὐ τῷ τέλειον τῷ ἁγθρώπῳ]; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it, could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it. It was for this reason that the Son of God, although he was perfect [τέλειον ἦν], passed through the state of childhood [συνενηπίαζεν] in common with the rest of humanity, partaking of it thus not for his own benefit, but for that of the infantile stage of humanity’s existence [ἄλλα δὲ τοῦ ἁγθρώπου νήπιου ὄσω χωρομένους], in order that humanity might be able to receive him [ὡς ἁγθρώπος αὐτὸν χωρεὶν ἡδύνατο]. There was nothing, therefore, impossible to and deficient in God, [implied in the fact] that humanity was not an uncreated being; but this merely applied to them who were lately created, [namely] humanity.37

For Irenaeus, the human infancy concept explains how humanity is simultaneously perfect at the moment of creation, and yet incomplete. As Lawson rightly observes, the human infancy motif in Irenaeus “lights up his work,”38 and allows us to see how Irenaeus is able to both preserve the

---

37 *Haer.* 4.38.1–2. See also *Epid.* 12.
38 Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 213. Lawson helpfully continues, “Irenaeus does not indeed explicitly say that there is one perfection of the infant, innocent, and complete in every faculty appropriate to infancy, and another perfection, which is the crown of the saint who has contended with sin and triumphed. This vital distinction is, however, not far
goodness of the original creation, while at the same time making room for genuine progress beyond original perfection.

Once again, the salient point here is that Irenaeus views human perfection at the time of creation as provisional and incomplete. “But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect.” To be created is to fall short of the perfect in an absolute sense. God’s pronouncement of “good” over the man and the woman is genuine; but the temporal goodness of Adam at his creation is not the infinite goodness of the Creator.39

C. IRENAEUS AND PRE-FALL “PERFECTION”

When we bring together these two aspects of Irenaeus’ thought—his Adamic typology and his concept of human infancy—we see that for Irenaeus, humanity is not created mature and fully formed, but rather is created in process. Indeed, while Irenaeus conceives of Adam as created perfect, it is the limited perfection of a fresh canvas, a tilled field. It is a perfection that must become something other than it is in order to reach maturity.

As it relates to our broader conversation about Darwin and pre-fall death, this basic anthropological framework yields potential dividends when applied to the larger creation narrative. Just as humanity was created perfect but not yet complete, so too we might envision an entire cosmos that was created perfect but not yet complete. This accords with the divine command in Genesis 1:28 about the need to have dominion over and subdue the earth. The implication of the command is that the world, as it stood at the time of creation, was in need of humanity’s guiding and taming hand to bring it into maturity. Is it possible then, to conceive of an initial “goodness/perfection” of the world that nonetheless contained death? If we view the initial goodness of God’s creative activity as a mature, completed goodness (like we find in the Augustinian account), then the answer to such a question must be no. But if we conceive of God’s creative activity in Genesis 1-2 as a beginning, an establishment of a provisional and initial goodness (such as we find in Irenaeus’ anthropology), then there is more room to answer this question in the affirmative.

Perhaps the mandate of humanity to “subdue the earth” can be read as a mandate to bring order out of chaos, to bring an end to the death that was present in the mortal world up to that point. In such a scenario, Adam and Eve, as representatives of humanity, were offered the gift of immortality, and the authority to rule that came with it. In this sense, the world (or narrowly, the land of Eden and its garden paradise) was perfect in that it was suited to the constitution of Adam and Eve as its first king and queen. But in their sin against God they failed to break free from the

from being implied by what is said of Adam as on the one hand perfect, and on the other hand, as possessed only of the destiny and equipment to perfection.”

39 Here we must not understand Irenaeus to be suggesting that humanity was created sinful. Quite the contrary; Irenaeus views Adam (and Eve along with him) as the pinnacle of God’s perfect and glorious creation. The provisional nature of perfection stems from Adam’s creaturehood not from any moral defect.
confines of mortality and thus forwent the chance to move on toward the maturity that God intended for humanity and the world. In Adam, humanity sinned and remained mortal; death, which had simply been the way of all flesh prior to Adam’s sin, was now a curse; it need not have been. Adam and Eve thus forfeited their potential to become the agents of life for the world that God had intended.

A comparison with the Augustinian account highlights the difference. For Augustine, humanity is created perfected in maturity; so too the world. Sin brings about death, which in turn brings about the ruin of a fully matured and perfected humanity, and along with it, the world humanity inhabits. Christ’s redemptive work then, is God’s activity to restore humanity back to Adamic perfection, and to confirm humanity in this perfection. For Augustine sees the final state of humanity as surpassing that of the original creation insofar as humanity ascends to the place of the angels and is confirmed in perpetual righteousness.

But in Irenaeus’ narrative, humanity is not created in a perfected maturity, but is created with potential to become perfected in maturity. Sin is an interruption of a well-begun upward trajectory, not a fall away from final perfection. Thus in Irenaeus, Christ’s redemptive work is God’s activity to restart the process of maturation that was interrupted by sin and death, and to enable humanity to progress onward toward full maturity.

Here we can see why Irenaeus’ soteriological plotline fits better with a Darwinian account. A Darwinian account requires a more modest starting point than what we find in Augustine. Irenaeus’ narrative does not start at the pinnacle of maturity and then fall away toward ruin (such as we see in Augustine), but rather starts at the bottom and moves upward toward maturity. In Irenaeus, sin is less of a “fall” from an already achieved objective, and more of a “derailment” from achieving said objective.

We now move to an exploration of the second element of Irenaeus’ anthropology that opens up more room for Darwin in Christian theology—Irenaeus’ “incarnation anyway” framework.

II. THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN MORTALITY AND THE INEVITABILITY OF THE INCARNATION

Irenaeus’ “incarnation anyway” framework—arising out of his Adamic Christology—is perhaps the first salvo in a debate that will emerge in the later Christian tradition regarding the necessity of the incarnation. Would the Son have incarnated if Adam had not fallen? Theologians who answer this question negatively typically view the incarnation solely (or primarily) as a response to sin. But Irenaeus, foreshadowing the logic of Athanasius, seems to view the incarnation as inevitable due to human mutability, and not solely a result of sin. It is because humanity is inherently (even prior

40 Augustine sees the final state of humanity as surpassing that of the original creation insofar as humanity ascends to the place of the angels and is confirmed in perpetual righteousness.

41 John Duns Scotus argues for the necessity of the incarnation apart from sin. Robert Grosseteste, the first Chancellor of Oxford tentatively suggests the same. See his De Cessatione Legatum 1.8.7–13.

42 For Athanasius, human nature occupies a place of inherent “ontological poverty” (a phrase coined by Khaled Anatolios) quite apart from sin. See Khaled Anatolios, Athanasius:
to the fall) ontologically contingent that the Son—who is not ontologically contingent—must incarnate. We return again to our extended passage from *Haer. 4.38*, already cited above. Note how Irenaeus argues for the necessity of the incarnation of the Son based primarily upon the creaturehood of humanity. He writes,

If, however, anyone says, “What then? Could not God have created humanity as perfect [τέλειον] from the beginning? let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects himself, all things are possible to him. But created things must be inferior to him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin [τὰ δὲ γεγονότα καθὸ Μετέπειτα γενέσως ἀρξὴν ἵδαν ἔσχε]; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect [ιστεροῦντα τοῦ τέλειον]. Because, as these things are of later date, so are they infantile [νήπιοι]; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. For just as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant [βρέφει], but the [infant] is not yet able to receive substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God himself to have made humanity perfect from the first, but humanity could not receive this, being as yet a child [νήπιος].

Irenaeus is here providing a theodicy on behalf of God against the accusations of the Gnostics who claim that God was somehow impotent because he did not create humanity absolutely perfect at the beginning (i.e., incapable of sin). Irenaeus is thus keen to maintain both God’s unlimited power to do anything, and yet offer an apologetic for the necessity of God not creating humanity absolutely perfect at the beginning. The problem, Irenaeus’ argues, is with the inherent limitations of the finite creature, not with any deficiency in the power of the Creator. He continues in the same passage,

And for this cause our Lord, in these last times, when he had summed up all things into himself, came to us, not as he might have come, but as we were capable of beholding him. He might easily have come to us in his immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that he, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered himself to us as milk, [because we were] as infants [ὡς νηπίως]. He did this when he appeared as a human, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of his flesh, and having, by such a course of milk-nourishment, become
accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the bread of immortality [ἀθανασίας], which is the Spirit of the Father.

And on this account does Paul declare to the Corinthians, “I have fed you with milk, not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it”…so, in like manner, God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to the man [διόνυσι τὸ τελεῖον τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ]; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it, could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it. It was for this reason that the Son of God, although he was perfect [τελειώς ὄν], passed through the state of childhood [συνενηπίας εἰς] in common with the rest of humanity, partaking of it [i.e., human infancy] thus not for his own benefit,45 but for that of the infantile stage of humanity’s existence [ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων νηπίων οὐτῶ χωρούμενος], in order that humanity might be able to receive him [ὡς ἀνθρώπος αὐτὸν χωρεῖν ἥρωντο]. There was nothing, therefore, impossible to and deficient in God that humanity was not an uncreated being; but this merely applied to those who were lately created, [namely] human beings.46

Thus for Irenaeus, the incarnation is first a response to human contingency, before it is a response to human sinfulness. Only the one who is inherently perfect, namely the Son, can grant perfection to those who are inherently imperfect, namely creatures. Of course for Irenaeus the incarnation overcomes human sinfulness just as much as it overcomes human contingency; it is not a zero sum game. But Irenaeus’ atonement theology takes seriously the question of human contingency in ways that later atonement theories will not.47 And the overall effect is to position the incarnation as a necessity.48

Here we can fruitfully revisit Irenaeus’ Adam/Christ typology. Deepening and solidifying Irenaeus’ position on the necessity of the incarnation is the manner in which he typologically links the image of God in humanity to the incarnate Son. Those theologians who argue against the necessity of the incarnation tend to link the image of God in humanity to the non-embodied Father. From this perspective, humanity can exist fully in the image of God quite apart from the incarnation. But this is not possible

45 I take the phrase “not for his own benefit” to be referring to Christ’s participation in human infancy, not the incarnation generally. In other words, Christ did not pass through human infancy for his own sake, but for the sake of humanity.

46 Haer. 4.38.1–2.

47 The atonement theories that emerge out of Anselm, and on through the Protestant reformers, tend to focus on sin and the satisfaction of divine justice, rather than on death and overcoming the inevitable contingency of human creature-hood.

48 Ian MacKenzie, in his commentary on Irenaeus’ Epidexiosis likewise suggests that Irenaeus’ logic here pushes strongly toward the inevitability of the incarnation. “Incarnation, therefore, is not only the conclusion of the work of creation, but the very initial purpose of it, the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem of creation.” MacKenzie, Irenaeus’ Demonstration, 117.
for Irenaeus. For Irenaeus, humanity is made according to the image of the incarnate Son. As such, the Son's incarnation logically, even if not temporally, comes first in the divine plan. From this typological starting point, the incarnation becomes a necessary fulfillment of the type—even apart from sin. Christ's identity as incarnate savior precedes those on whose behalf Christ would incarnate in order to save. Commenting on Paul’s typological connection between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:14, Irenaeus writes,

Hence also was Adam himself termed by Paul “the figure \textit{typus} of him that was to come,” because the Word, the maker of all things, had formed beforehand for himself the future dispensation of the human race, connected with the Son of God \textit{quoniam futuram circa Filium Dei humani generis dispositionem in semetipsum Fabricator omnium Verbum praeformaverat}; God having predestined \textit{praedestinante} that the first man \textit{hominem} should be of an animal nature, with this view, that he might be saved by the spiritual One. For inasmuch as he had a pre-existence as a saving being \textit{Cum enim praeexsisteret salvans}, it was necessary that what might be saved should also be made \textit{oportebat et quod salvaretur fieri}, in order that the being who saves should not exist in vain \textit{uti non vacuum sit salvans}.\textsuperscript{49}

For Irenaeus, Christ had a “pre-existence as a saving being.” Here Irenaeus pushes, almost to the limit, not only the necessity of the incarnation—but indeed the necessity of humanity! The logic here runs similar to Origen’s insistence on an eternal creation—i.e., that an eternal Creator requires an eternal creation.\textsuperscript{50} Steenberg interprets Irenaeus as positing that God is in some way—however mysteriously and freely—bound up eternally and necessarily in the existence of creation and the salvation of that creation.\textsuperscript{51} Again, the important point here is that Irenaeus’ soteriology is not limited to salvation from sin. Christ’s identity as a pre-existent saving being has significance for Irenaeus independent of human sinfulness; humanity must necessarily be saved from its innate ontological contingency.

\textsuperscript{49} Haer. 3.22.3.

\textsuperscript{50} Origen, \textit{Princ}. 1.2.10.

\textsuperscript{51} See Matthew Steenberg, \textit{Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption} (Leiden, 2008), 33-36, who argues in this direction, focusing on the goodness of God as God’s inevitable motivation in creating. Minns rejects Steenberg’s interpretation of Irenaeus on the grounds that it raises significant problems for Irenaeus’ perspectives on divine freedom and goodness, and further, that it suggests a co-eternity of creation—a position that Irenaeus explicitly rejects (see \textit{Haer}. 2.28.3). See Minns, \textit{Irenaeus}, 44. In my estimation, it seems likely that Irenaeus’ thought at this point is not fully systematized. Steenberg’s reading of Irenaeus follows naturally from much of Irenaeus’ thought. But Minns is right to caution us from reading more into Irenaeus than he intended, however logically such a reading might follow. As Minns rightly observes, “There are, no doubt, problems about time, freedom and necessity bound up in all this, but they are not problems that Irenaeus addresses.” Minns, \textit{Irenaeus}, 102. Likewise MacKenzie, reads \textit{Haer}. 4.20.4 as seemingly indicating the inevitability of the incarnation, even apart from sin, yet resists the temptation to speculate about what Irenaeus may have thought on this matter, minus an explicit statement. “It is better to leave such questions unanswered, for only conjecture upon conjecture would ensue.” \textit{Irenaeus’ Demonstration}, 118.
Yet even given the above, Irenaeus does not explicitly address the question of the incarnation's necessity. Whether he followed his own logic to its end remains uncertain. In any event, the overall effect of Irenaeus’ incarnational theology underscores the significance of humanity in the divine economy. Even more, one is left with the strong impression (especially in passages like that quoted above) that for Irenaeus, the incarnation was not ultimately a detriment to the person of Christ—a medieval hair shirt, worn perpetually as a testimony of divine condescending love—but rather humanity was a gift from the Father to the Son and the very means by which the Son is exalted. Though certainly the Son’s incarnation of mortal flesh was an act of divine condescension, the ultimate victory of the Son over sin, death, and the Devil leads to the Son’s final and eternal exaltation. In this sense, Adam’s humanity was created for the sake of Christ’s future humanity, rather than the other way around. Thus for Irenaeus, the humanity by which we are human is God’s own humanity. Such logic serves in Irenaeus to simultaneously underscore the significance of humanity in creation, while likewise repositioning humanity in a typological and subordinate role that undercuts human pride and independence.52

For after his great kindness he graciously conferred good [upon us], and made humanity like to himself in their own power [et similes sibi suae potestatis homines fecit], while at the same time by his prescience he knew the infirmity of human beings, and the consequences which would flow from it; but through love and power, he shall overcome the substance of created nature. For it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that humanity should be made after the image and likeness of God [secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei], having received the knowledge of good and evil.53

The relevance of all of this for our discussion about pre-fall death becomes clear when we see that for Irenaeus, human contingency and mortality are part of the pre-sin condition for Adam, and constitute a driving need for the incarnation. Or again, mortality and the innate inevitably of creaturely death precedes sin. For Irenaeus, Adam was not created immortal, as though he had within himself the potential of unending life. Rather he was created with contingent mortal life—a life that needed to be wed to God’s own divine eternal life (through the incarnation) lest it pass away.

---

52 The debate regarding the centrality of humanity in Irenaeus’ theology is often unhelpfully polarized within Irenaen scholarship as an “either-or.” Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, 91, points to Mark Werner as one who argues strongly that Irenaeus’ soteriology must be understood as primarily anthropocentric, as opposed to theocentric. See Werner’s Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas (Bern and Leipzig, 1941) 275, 390, 477. But Wingren rightly challenges this binary interpretation and insists that we need not pit Irenaeus’ anthropocentrism against his theocentrism. See Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, 91-96. It is in Irenaeus’ Christology that both anthropology and theology come together. Humanity finds its identity and telos in Christ, while Christ is ultimately exalted through and reigns as human.

53 Haer. 4.38.4.
Christ as the incarnate Word of God had to be, lest Adam cease to be, even apart from sin. Sin then did not reduce Adam’s immortal life to a mortal life—Adam was made mortal from the start. Rather, sin cut Adam off from his destiny to participate in God’s eternal divine life. The important point in all of this is that for Irenaeus, death was in some way an innate reality (or perhaps better, an innate potential) of Adam’s pre-fall condition.

This basic anthropological starting point is (in my estimation) theologically compelling in its own right (quite apart from our discussion about Adam and Darwin); and even better, it fits neatly with the Genesis 1-3 account. According to the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve live forever only insofar as they are able to eat from the tree of life. Thus the power to live forever is not inherent to their nature as human beings. This is seen clearly in the way that God enacts the sentence of death upon Adam and Eve after they have sinned—he cuts them off from the tree of life “lest they take and eat and live forever.” Clearly it is the tree of life, not something inherent within Adam and Eve, that serves as the sustaining source of their life. Further, sin does not bring about immediate human death, but rather severs Adam and Eve’s contingent human life from the “outside” divine source that feeds and sustains their humanity. Sin allows their inherent mortality to run unchecked toward its natural end (i.e., death).

Insofar as Irenaeus’ paradigm more comfortably incorporates mortality into the original “goodness” of Adam at the time of creation, thus far is the tension between Darwin and Christian theology reduced. For Darwin, humans enter the stage of history already marked by death. Irenaeus’ emphasis on human contingency offers more room to maneuver at this point. For Irenaeus, to be mortal is the nature of being created, and should not be considered a mark against the creator or the creature. God cannot create an immortal creature from the outset, for creatures are, by definition, mortal. To create an immortal creature would require God to create himself; but God by definition cannot be created. That unfallen creatures are prone to decay and death is simply the way of creaturehood.

III. CONCLUSION

Irenaeus’ starting anthropology is more modest than what we find in the Augustinian account. Irenaeus would have us understand Adamic perfection at the time of creation in a limited and finite, even mortal, sense. For Irenaeus, the humanity of Adam in Genesis 1 and 2 is not consummated, but seminal. Adam is on his way toward true humanity and immortality, but has not yet arrived. He has, in a very real sense, not yet escaped death, even prior to his sin. The curse of death in Genesis 3, then, is not an outside force that lands upon Adam like a virus, but rather an interior liability that is allowed to run its course because of Adam’s rebellion.

All of this lends itself to the Darwinian account of human origins. Yet a return to Irenaeus, full stop, does not eliminate all the tension. As LeRon Shults appropriately remarks, “Accepting the task of reconstructively articulating the doctrine of the incarnation in dialogue with evolutionary biology will mean more than repairing the Augustinian model or even
simply opting for a more Irenean model.\textsuperscript{54} Irenaeus, every bit as much as Augustine, conceives of the world as created free of death, with death entering creation as a result of Adam’s sin. This can be seen especially in the opening chapters of \textit{Epideixis}.\textsuperscript{55} Further, it is unlikely that Irenaeus, in his argument against the Gnostics, would have wanted to yield to the idea of a Creator who made a world originally full of death and animal predation, insofar as the goodness of the creation and its Creator was the chief point of contention between Irenaeus and his Gnostic opponents. Thus even with an embrace of Irenaeus’ account, more work remains to be done for those wishing to bring Darwin into the fold—work that will inevitably take one beyond Irenaeus. Yet for those committed to such a task, Irenaeus’ framework is a more amicable starting point than the traditional Augustinian model.

\textsuperscript{54} Shults, \textit{Christology and Science}, 43.

\textsuperscript{55} See \textit{Epid}. 9–16.
LITURGICAL ADAM: WHAT EVERY PASTOR NEEDS TO KNOW

MATT WARD1

In a vacuum, the existence of Adam is purely a historical question. But churches and church members do not exist in a vacuum. While other works on the subject of “historical Adam” have rightly focused on paleontology and anthropology, I suggest that “liturgical Adam”—Adam’s presence and role in Christian worship—is of equal pastoral significance. When reading this article, be aware of two things. First, I am not wondering if Adam existed but rather how Adam’s existence (and identity) affects a church’s worship. Elsewhere in this volume and the books referred to therein, several different theories on the identity of Adam are explained, from the single progenitor of the human race to a special representative of an existing group of homo sapiens. I will explain their significance where appropriate. Second, I will be surveying a range of Christian traditions; please engage even those examples that may not apply to your ministry setting. My argument is simple: Adam is so integral to Christian worship that he can be reinterpreted only so far before traditional Christian worship becomes incoherent or even insincere.

1. WORSHIP, THEOLOGY, AND THE LEX ORANDI

A previous volume of this journal, “Essays on Liturgy, Worship and Spiritual Formation,” established the centrality of corporate worship for Christian identity and formation, and I refer you to its contributions.2 We can think of worship as primary theology—an act of theology on the part of the congregation (and thus more formative than secondary theology, including the didactic ministries of the church; is a language more indelibly learned by memorizing a dictionary or by having conversations?).3 But worship is not quite the same thing as theology. For example, a conversation cannot be reduced to a grammatical exchange. A conversation is an

---

1 Matt Ward is Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church in Thomson, Georgia.
3 Kevin Irwin asserted that “liturgy is an act of theology in the sense that its statements and actions are addressed to God and are made about God.” Kevin Irwin, Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 44. Irwin’s Roman Catholic tradition depends on written liturgies. Because documents can be analyzed easier than rituals, discussions of liturgical theology like that of which I am engaging in this article have often originated in Roman Catholic circles. However, I contend that Irwin’s point is equally valid for those services of worship not guided by such a written liturgy. All corporate worship is organized in some way, and those organizing principles and any texts used can be studied as theology.
encounter that transcends philology. Similarly, worship cannot be reduced to words on a page. Theology learned through worship, like connotations of language, tends to be rooted deeply. Yes, worship is shaped by theology just as connotation is shaped by denotation, but it also establishes theology in hearts and minds. To demonstrate this, ask members of your church a challenging question about Christian living; do they respond with a Bible verse, a sermon point, or something from a worship experience?

As any secondary educator could explain, connotation does not always follow denotation. Similarly, theology obtained through worship does not always follow the rules of “official” theology. But some theologians have concluded that just as connotation can change denotation, worship can determine theology. Liturgical shorthand for this is lex orandi, lex credendi—the rule of prayer determines the rule of faith. In other words, the theology that results from a church’s act of worship is not only more real, it is more right. Primary theology is not only more indelible than secondary theology, it is superior and thus should not be corrected by secondary theology.

As a free churchman, I believe that the Bible is the only given authority for all matters of faith and truth; it is the foundation of all theology (our encounter with the Word of God is primary theology). However, I recognize that there is no such thing as “pristine” primary theology. Martha Moore-Keish must be correct when she wrote, “Meaning does not exist independently prior to practice. Lex credendi does not exist prior to lex

---

4 Aidan Kavanagh explained that no one in his right mind would believe that “language is controlled by philologists rather than by the social transaction which is the act of speech itself—an act which is coterminous with the origin of human society and continuously constituting that society as a continuum of meaningful discourse between its members.” Aidan Kavanagh, On Liturgical Theology (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1984), 84.

5 Allow me to make one historical point in defense of the man to whom this statement is often traced, Prosper of Aquitaine in his Defense of Augustine. Defending Augustine’s doctrine of election, Prosper pointed out that churches everywhere prayed for God to save lost sinners. His original statement was “legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi,” which in context meant, “Let the law of that which must be prayed establish/decide/settle the law of that which must be believed.” In order to appreciate his point, however, we must also recognize that he believed the apostles themselves passed down these prayers to the church; thus, the prayers of which he spoke had apostolic authority. Augustine’s was the minority position at the time, so Prosper could not be appealing to Roman tradition; rather he appealed to the prayers of the people inasmuch as he believed that they accurately reflected the apostolic tradition. J. P. Migne, ed., Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, tomus LI, “S. Prosper Aquitani” (Paris: n. p., 1861), 209–10.

6 The great Restorationist Alexander Campbell famously boasted, “I have endeavored to read the scriptures as though no one had read them before me; and I am as much on my guard against reading them today, through the medium of my own views yesterday, or a week ago, as I am against being influenced by any foreign name, authority, or system, whatever.” Alexander Campbell, The Christian Baptist, ed., D. S. Burnet, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: D. S. Burnet, 1835), 229. That claim led to the rallying cry, “No creed but the Bible,” that defined the Free Church movement in America for generations. However, the influence of Protestant thought, and particularly the philosophy of Common Sense Realism, can be seen throughout Campbell’s writings.
II. THE THEOLOGICAL POWER OF WORSHIP: INFANT BAPTISM

Regardless of one’s theological position on infant baptism, the development of this practice first in Roman Catholic tradition and later in the Magisterial Reformation offers a very clear and powerful illustration of the role of Adam in the church’s corporate worship. With the reminder that the Roman Catholic Church considers its liturgies to be authoritative, I submit Yaroslav Pelikan’s assertion,

Two themes from the cultus probably deserve to be singled out for their bearing upon the dilemma of Christian anthropology: the confession of the virgin birth of Christ and the practice of infant baptism. It was upon these that Christian doctrine, especially in the West, drew for support, inferring from them a more complete explanation of the relation between the inevitability of sin and the responsibility for sin than had been set forth by the spokesmen of orthodoxy. Both themes were present in the life and language of the church before they were ever exploited for their anthropological import; at least there appears to be little or no warrant, on the basis of evidence available now, to argue that they were derived from a previously defined theory of the fall and original sin. But given their

7 Martha Moore-Keish, Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 69. Her purpose was primarily to establish the principles of liturgical analysis: “Before any normative judgments about Eucharistic practices can be made, therefore, one must first live and worship with a community.” Ibid. But her point remains that what a church believes cannot be separated from what a church practices.


9 For example, Geoffrey Wainwright said directly, “Popes and councils have frequently used the liturgy as a theological source of arguments.” Geoffrey Wainwright, Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 223. His defense of this claim begins on page 218, and he appeals to the encyclical Mediator Dei (1947) as his basic example. Pelikan, in describing the debate over justification at Trent, mentioned the power both of the lex orandi and the Vincentian canon over the participants, so much so that the “various participants at Trent cited the ‘tradition’ of the church’s prayers as an authority on justification.” Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 4:281.
increasingly secure place in cultus and confession, they became the premises from which conclusions could be drawn about the fall and original sin.10

In the earliest days of the church, adults were baptized by immersion for the remission of sins, usually shortly after conversion. In short order, to the ritual of baptism was added an exorcism and exsufflation. The association between baptism and the forgiveness of sins (compounded by the lack of an established canon and the overall illiteracy of the population) soon led parents to ask for baptism for their infant children. Cyprian both defended this practice and used it to develop what would become the doctrine of original sin: “if no one is denied access to baptism and to grace; how much less right do we have to deny it to an infant, who, having been born recently, has not sinned, except in that, being born physically according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of the ancient death by his first birth!”11 That the early church used the same baptismal liturgy for infants as it did for adults heavily influenced Augustine, who could only justify an exorcism on an infant (who was not yet guilty of personal sin) if that infant was guilty of a more fundamental sin—the original sin of Adam: “why have recourse to the remedy if the ailment is absent?”12 Kavanagh summarized, “Thus a doctrine of original sin involving personal culpability for everyone did not produce change in liturgical practice; rather, change in liturgical practice concerning infant baptism produced the Augustinian concept of original sin as necessarily implying personal guilt.”13

In summary, the practice of infant baptism shaped the doctrine of original sin. And as the next section will demonstrate, the doctrine of original sin depends on an original sinner. Every infant’s baptism directly spoke to the existence of Adam and a specific, historical sin he committed.14 That is still the case in the Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican traditions, each of which is rooted in a Cyprian view. Even the Presbyterian tradition, though it clearly considers infant baptism not as a remission of sin but a sign of covenant, does not fully escape the presence of Adam. Westminster’s Directory instructed ministers to explain baptism, “That the water in baptism, representeth and signifieth both the blood of Christ, which taketh away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the spirit of Christ against

---

the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature.”15 With that
illustration in mind, it is time to explore the many ways Adam’s presence
can be felt in Christian worship.

III. ADAM’S ORIGINAL SIN AND THE SETTING
OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Come, ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you’re better, you will never come at all.16

One does not have to have much experience with corporate worship
before gathering a sense that something is terribly wrong with human-
ity—something that requires the intervention of a divine Savior. Yes, the
act of sin is the focus, but sin springs from some kind of inherent corrup-
tion. Humans sin because humans are sinful. Cardinal Newman defined
original sin as “the doctrine that all men, naturally propagated from fallen
Adam, are in consequence born destitute of original righteousness.”17 Many
Christians trace this sinfulness to an original sin of Adam in the Garden
of Eden. In the Eastern traditions, Adam’s sin is viewed as the archetype
of all subsequent sins; all humans join Adam in the free choice of sin. In
the Western (Augustinian) traditions, Adam is the fountainhead of sin;
because of him, all of his descendants have inherited a corrupted nature
bent to sinning and helpless in guilt.18 While Adam sometimes seems
conflated with humanity as a whole,19 in most forms of Western orthodoxy,

15 The Directory for the Public Worship of God (reprint, Halifax: J. Munro, 1828), 20. The
first proposed American revision (1789) only made the connection more obvious, “Sanctify
this child by the grace. May his original guilt be done away, through the blood of the Lamb
that was slain.” Cited in Charles W. Baird, The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 240. Note that this revision was never put into
public use due to political pressures.
16 Joseph Hart, “Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy.” Each section will begin with a
lyric from an influential text that reinforces that section’s idea in the liturgy of the church.
I will select these lyrics from a range of centuries and traditions; Hart’s song has recently
been re-released with a new tune by the Robbie Seay Band.
18 H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man (Edinburgh: T & T Clark,
1958), 165–66, 171. Pelikan explained the difference between the two as that of inheriting
sin from Adam (Western) and inheriting death from Adam (Eastern). Eastern theologians
emphasized the embodiment of humanity in Adam when he sinned—the mystic unity of
the human race. Pelikan, Christian Tradition, 2:182. Harnack said that the East blamed the
seduction of demons and the transmission of wicked traditions for the continued presence
of sin. Whereas for the East the presence of sin was almost accidental, for the West it (related
directly to Adam) was the decisive fact of anthropology. Harnack, History of Dogma, 3:263,
5:49. Newman said that for the East, the consequence of Adam’s sin was death and an
extraordinary sensuality. For the West, it was the corrupt and contaminated soul. He insisted
that the doctrine of the imputation of original guilt was never taught by either original group.
19 As in Irenaeus, Methodius, and Gregory. Cf., Harnack, History of Dogma, 3:106–07,
original sin is tied “to one single man.” 20 Indeed, it is difficult to see how the doctrine of original sin can exist at all unless Adam existed and committed an original sin in the sense given in Genesis. Roman Catholic teaching declares, “Original sin is the result of a sin committed, in actual historical fact, by an individual man named Adam, and it is a quality native to all of us, only because it has been handed down by descent from him.” 21 I propose that the following elements of corporate worship—baptism, confession, and revivalism—are rooted in the basic idea that mankind “has derived some disadvantage from the sin of Adam.” 22 Without an actual original sin, pastors will have to redefine these practices for their congregations. It remains to be seen if the traditional doctrine of original sin requires that Adam be the progenitor of humanity, however; if this sin can be propagated through means other than heredity, then additional theories of Adam can be accepted without similar effect on corporate worship.

A. Baptism and the Death of the Old Adam

_In the waters of baptism we were plunged into the death of Christ._

*We died forever to the sin of the First Adam,*

*So as to rise again into the grace of the Second._

Rowan Williams beautifully proclaimed, “To be baptized is to recover the humanity that God first intended.” 24 Baptism relocates us from Adam’s sin into Christ’s righteousness (symbolically or otherwise). I have already mentioned the early Roman Catholic connection between baptism and cleansing from Adam’s original sin. Modern Roman Catholic practice reinforces this connection by prioritizing confirmation over baptism, thus reducing baptism to little more than an exorcism of that original sin. Additionally, the _Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults_ plunges headlong

---

20 Nicolas Corte, *The Origins of Man*, The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Theology 29, trans., Eric Earnshaw Smith (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 137. With respect to a different conciliar setting, Pelikan noted that the five anathemas of Trent assumed the historical Adam: “the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, ‘which the Catholic Church scattered throughout the world has always taught,’ [triumphed] over against the ‘winds of doctrine’ of the age, whether Semi-Pelagian or Manichean, Lutheran or Anabaptist. The sin of Adam consisted in the loss of ‘the holiness and righteousness in which he had been created,’ and, being ‘transmitted by propagation, not by imitation,’ it had involved the entire human race in death and captivity to the devil: this the council defined against various kinds of Pelagianism, including what it took to be Zwingli’s doctrine. The only ‘remedy’ for sin was ‘the merit of the one Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has reconciled us to God by his blood.’ In opposition to Anabaptism, the council defended the baptism of infants as appropriate and necessary because they had inherited original sin from Adam through their parents. And in opposition to Luther, it rejected the idea that through baptism ‘the guilt of original sin’ was not removed but was only ‘not imputed.’” Pelikan, _Christian Tradition_, 4:279.

21 Corte, _Origins of Man_, 139.


23 Ambrose, _We Give You Thanks and Praise_, trans., Alan Griffiths (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2000), 335.

into those miraculous elements associated with traditional, historical Adam by associating baptism with the water themes of creation, flood, and crossing the Red Sea. But other traditions bring Adam into their baptismal practices as well.

Orthodox traditions (some of which still include an exorcism of the original sin of Adam) emphasize the “old man/new man” imagery in baptism, particularly by a white baptismal robe. This robe symbolizes the “Garment of Light,” the fullness of divine grace that Adam and Eve possessed before the fall that is found in Jesus Christ. By changing clothing after baptism, “The believer strips off the old man and dons the new man who is Christ,” entering a new life purified of original and actual sin. The parallelism matters—if the old man, Adam, did not exist, then the new man, Christ, is thrown into confusion. The Lutheran tradition makes use of the white garment of baptism to similar purpose as the Orthodox. According to Luther’s small catechism, baptism signifies “that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God’s presence.”

In the Lutheran liturgy, the officiant explains, “We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life.” These baptismal practices demand an historical Adam, one with a special relationship to humanity (though that relationship may be flexible). Without such, these baptismal liturgies would have to be reinterpreted or rewritten.

25 Kavanagh, On Liturgical Theology, 95. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is rather vague on original sin, speaking mostly about the spirit and power of evil without rather than within. See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 42–43. Such vagueness, present in many liturgies, will play a role in the conclusion of this article.

26 Wainwright, Doxology, 413. The Greek Orthodox liturgy describes baptism as “the putting away of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him that created him.” See Liturgical Texts of the Orthodox Church, “The Service of Holy Baptism,” <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-service-of-holy-baptism> [last accessed on April 4, 2017]. Wainwright described the Eastern exorcism, “This is dramatized in the Byzantine apostaxis and syntaxis just before baptism: the candidate turns to the west, the place of darkness, in order to renounce Satan, and then turns eastwards, towards the light, in order to profess adherence to his new Lord.” Wainwright, Doxology, 413. In some traditions, such as the Greek Orthodox, an office of exorcist exists to catechize the baptismal candidate and offer the prayers of exorcism at his or her baptism. See, for example, Liturgical Texts of the Orthodox Church, “Exorcism,” <https://www.goarch.org/-/exorcism> [last accessed April 4, 2017], which clearly roots this need for exorcism in the original sin of Adam.


29 Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian liturgies are less evidently dependent on Adam, apart from echoing the biblical water motifs (including creation and the flood). But the teachings in those traditions, like the earlier quote from Rowan Williams, reveal a deep connection with Adam. Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright taught, “[In baptism,] God sets us free from our selves, in our capacity as the old Adam, and begins making new persons of us through participation in Christ, the new Adam.” Wainwright, Doxology, 412.
B. CONFESSION AND THE STAIN OF ADAM

I am full of earth; You are heaven’s worth.
I am stained with dirt, prone to depravity.  

If a congregant is somewhat uncertain about the nature of original sin, eventually he or she will experience a liturgical confession that strongly implies natural corruption. Many church leaders recognize that coming before God in worship is an awesome privilege; sin cannot exist in God’s presence. Consider confessions in classic Reformed liturgies. John Calvin: “Lord God! Eternal and Almighty Father: We acknowledge and confess before thy holy majesty, that we are poor sinners; conceived and born in guilt and in corruption, prone to do evil, unable of ourselves to do any good; who, by reason of our depravity, transgress without end thy holy commandments.” John Knox: “O Eternal God, and most merciful Father! We confess and acknowledge here before thy Divine Majesty, that we are miserable sinners, conceived and born in sin and iniquity, so that in us there is no goodness...All the days of our life we have continued in sin and wickedness, to follow the corruption of our fleshly nature.” In these, our sins are rooted in a sinful nature which must have been inherited in some way from Adam, else how could we explain why every human needs Jesus for salvation?

Some prayer services, intentionally or not, seem to emphasize actual sins rather than the sinful nature. Their definitions of sin tend toward Nathaniel Taylor’s “sin is in the sinning” that has long influenced the revivalist traditions (see the next section). Consider this Methodist confession: “We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty.”

Even the Reformed tradition with its insistence on baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant cannot always leave that image behind. The Christian Reformed Church liturgy of 1976 included the instruction, “First, Scripture teaches that we and our children are sinners from birth, sinful from the time our mothers conceived us...Second, baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ.” “Service for Baptism,” Psalter Hymnal  

Even the language does not appear in the service of baptism for adults. Second, in the versions released since—1981, 1991, 2013—the language has progressively softened until it now reads, “In baptism God promises by grace alone to forgive our sins.” But even in such services, it is

---

30 David Crowder, “Wholly Yours.”
33 The Book of Worship (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1964), 91
impossible to avoid a sinful nature inherited from Adam because Christians eventually must acknowledge that they cannot conquer sin on their own. “Most merciful God, we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.”34 “We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.”35 “Almighty and most merciful God, we acknowledge and confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, and word, and deed.”36 This connection is further suggested by the frequent use of a form of Psalm 51 in confessional services.37 Humans do not need to be made better—they need to be made new.

C. REVIVALISM AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS

All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain,
Who has borne all our sins and hath cleansed every stain.38

In each major section I want to make sure to connect directly with readers from my Free Church tradition. Adam plays a slightly different role in the hymn-based revivalist traditions that live on in today’s Free Churches. In the early days of American Christianity dominated by Jonathan Edwards’s determinism, Nathaniel Taylor wanted to formulate a soteriology that could be used in service of the Awakenings—one in which the common American could understand his or her freedom to accept salvation. This necessarily involved softening the doctrine of depravity. According to Taylor, people had “power to the contrary” (people were sinners because they sinned, not because they were descendants of Adam). People could listen to the preaching of the gospel and respond to it for salvation unhindered by their sinful nature.39 Today, such a development might lessen a need for a historical

---

34 Manual on the Liturgy, 18.
36 Minister’s Worship Manual (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1969), 65. To be fair, at the very beginning of the prayer service, the minister is encouraged to pray, “Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto thee that we are by nature sinful and unclean.” Minister’s Worship Manual, 32.
37 Book of Common Worship, 54. The Lutheran Manual exhorts that the only music appropriate for the confessional service is Psalm 51. Manual on the Liturgy, 192.
38 William P. Mackay, “Revive Us Again.”
39 Taylor’s very influential teaching led to the Arminian ascendancy that outlasted the Awakenings through revivalism (as well as many accusations of Pelagianism). But Taylor believed in an historical Adam and original sin, and Adam played a necessary role in his theology. Humans inherited a disposition toward sin from Adam, but under a very nuanced definition of inherit and disposition. Taylor taught that sinful human nature was prelapsarian; humans shared that nature with Adam. What Adam lost in the fall was an original holiness. Thus, Taylor could say both “that the entire moral depravity of mankind is by nature” and also “God does not compel [a human being] to sin by the nature he gives him.” Nathaniel Taylor, Concio ad Clerum (New Haven: A. H. Maltby, 1842), 5, 30. This led of course to much consternation and a widened divide between Old School and New School Presbyterians of that era. What is important to note is that these theological nuances were lost on the people directly influenced by the spread of revival across the American frontier. See Doug Sweeney, Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards, 80–87, for a fuller review of this confusing topic.
Adam, but the Awakenings touched a unique group of people, the same people who would be heavily swayed by the Restorationist call of “no creed but the Bible.” The earliest revival hymnbooks, such as The Sacred Harp and The Christian's Harp, would be dependent on a pre-Taylor hymnody (such as “On Jordan's Stormy Banks,” “We're Marching to Zion,” and “There Is a Fountain”). But the hymnody that came out of the Awakening would be like the people it touched—simple, straightforward, and creatively biblical.

The persistent Awakening calls to salvation (and baptism) intersected in a common theme of cleansing by the blood of Jesus. “Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind, yea, all I need in Thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!” 40 “For nothing good have I where-by Thy grace to claim; I'll wash my garments white in the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.” 41 “There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean, O be washed in the blood of the Lamb.” 42 Those strange lyrics, without theological nuance, led to the parallel adoption of the heart's ability to respond to the gospel and the heart's inherent corruption. Thus Adam, who appeared prominently in many important anthropological passages, would remain a part of the problem that Jesus came to fix. Inheritors of the revival tradition maintain this connection between the fall of man, the condition of the human heart, and the need for a Savior—a connection seen in the use of those hymns today.

IV. ADAM AND THE OCCASIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Where He displays His healing power,
death and the curse are known no more;
In Him the tribes of Adam boast more
blessings than their father lost.43

I believe very strongly in contextualized worship. The Bible does not prescribe many circumstances of worship precisely so worship can find a home in different cultures and eras. However, church leaders must be vigilant that they have not uncritically absorbed unbiblical elements of tradition and culture into their worship practices. They must always do the hard work of evaluation: what factors are playing “behind the scenes” in our choices of action and rubric? As we have seen, Adam is one of those factors that silently influences worship practices. Even though we can say that Adam is biblical (in the sense that he appears in the Bible), our understanding of who he is and what purpose he serves in the biblical narrative must also influence our worship. In some situations, such as whether we can explain

---

40 Charlotte Elliott, “Just As I Am.” Elliott wrote this hymn in London in 1834, and it began appearing in hymnals on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1850s and was a favorite of revivalists including D. L. Moody and Billy Graham.
41 Elvina M. Hall, “Jesus Paid It All.” Hall, a Methodist laywoman, wrote this song during choir in Baltimore in 1865. It was discovered and published by Ira Sankey.
42 Elisha A. Hoffman, “Are You Washed in the Blood.” Hoffman wrote this hymn in 1878 while serving the Evangelical Association in Cleveland.
43 Isaac Watts, “Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun.”
original sin, that influence is obvious. In others, it is not. In the special
crances of Christian worship throughout the year, we will see some of
the deeper (and more difficult) influences Adam has in worship. For these
situations, a pastor’s theological leadership is critical for helping a church
reconcile its theology of Adam with its worship.

A. Eucharist and the Unity of Humanity

The bread that we break is a sharing of the body of Christ.
We who are many are one body, for we all share the same loaf.44

Much like baptism, the Eucharist has a very complicated and varie-
gated history. And much like baptism, the forms of the Eucharist heavily
influenced early doctrine. For example, prayers for the dead in the early
Eucharistic service led to a doctrine of purgatory.45 In Roman Catholic
tradition, the extended service (now known as the Mass) grew into a full
sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. More than prayers, the Mass
became the ultimate intercession for sin, for the living or the dead.46 And
because infants participated in the same liturgy, the Mass reinforced the
hopeless state of humanity and God’s just punishment on all.47 In Roman
Catholic teaching, this points directly to the unity of the human race in
Adam—we all suffer the same disease, and we all have recourse only to
the same medicine.

While disagreeing with the nature of the Mass, other Christian tradi-
tions agree that the unity of the human race is a key image of the Eucharist.
Citing 1 Corinthians 10:17 ("Because there is one bread, we who are many
are one body, for we all partake of the one bread"), the Lutheran Book of
Worship recommends the use of one loaf as opposed to wafers precisely for
that reason, "The use of one loaf which is then shared by all is fundamental
to the concept of the Lord’s Supper."48 It is difficult (impossible) to see
how any theory of polygenesis can be reconciled with this practice or

44 In the proposed liturgy for the Lord’s Supper, The Worship Sourcebook (Grand Rapids:
45 Cyril had early argued, “Now, surely, if when a king has banished certain [people]
who had given him offence, their connexions should weave a crown and offer it to him on
behalf of those under his vengeance, would he not grant a respite to their punishments?” Cyril,
Mystagog, 5; cited in Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 364. Gregory ultimately
concluded “that the prayers of the faithful availed in obtaining release from purgatorial fire.”
47 “This inheriting of sin and Adam’s death is, however, not merely a fact, but it is just,
because Scripture says that we have all sinned in Adam, because all owe their life to sinful
lust.” Harnack, History of Dogma, 5:215. Anselm went so far as to say that God condemned
infants not for Adam’s sin but for their own. Anselm, The Virginal Conception and Original
Sin, in The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury, trans.,
Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur Banning Press, 2000), 452–53.
48 Manual on the Liturgy, 232. Even the World Council of Churches highlighted the
“one single body and one single spirit in Christ” in its eucharistic celebrations. The Sacred
even theology of the Eucharist in which our unity is in Jesus Christ as equal guests at His table.\(^49\) A Catholic rubric explains, “The act of creation called all men in Adam to unity, since all were called and created in the image of God, which was the same in each of them.”\(^50\) James Torrance explained the significance of the Incarnation in terms of Eucharist in that Jesus “becomes a man that he might fulfill for us in his own person God’s purposes of love and obedience and worship. Thus what is lost in the one man (‘in Adam’)—communion with God—is restored and fulfilled for each one of us in Christ (‘the last Adam’), and held out for us by the Spirit in the Lord’s Supper.”\(^51\) An academic might happily quibble with this, but a pastor should fear to, for the integrity of the Lord’s Table as experienced in worship is threatened by any theory of polygenesis.\(^52\)

\[\text{B. Weddings and God’s Institution of Marriage}\]

\[\text{As it was in the beginning is now until the end:}\]

\[\text{A woman draws her life from man and gives it back again, and there is love.}\]\(^53\)

The history of Christian weddings is sketchy. Many early church leaders were ambivalent toward marriage, supporting it primarily as the divine institution for procreation (but teaching a form of “carnal begetting” through a millennium of private wedding ceremonies).\(^54\) The church

\(^49\) Cf., Pope Pius XII’s 1950 encyclical *Humani generis* [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_end_12081950_humani-generis.html] [last accessed October 13, 2017].

\(^50\) Rene Le Troquer, *What Is Man?*, The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Theology 31, trans., Eric Earnshaw Smith (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 104. Pelikan related this directly to the modern debate on origins, “From the biblical version of ‘the descent of man,’ which consisted in the creation of Adam and Eve after the divine image as the common ancestors of all humanity and therefore in the descent of the entire human race from them, it followed that humanity did not have a multiple origin but was one race.” Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 5:206.


\(^52\) Many Eucharistic liturgies include other elements that point to Adam. For example, multiple versions of the Great Thanksgiving in Presbyterian liturgies include explicit references to creation, the image of God, and the fall. One rubric states, “A good eucharistic prayer gives thanks for creation and then for redemption, moving through Christ’s conception and virgin birth to his suffering and death and then to his resurrection and ascension.” Daniel Meeter, “The Heart of Holy Communion,” *Reformed Worship* 22 (Winter 1992): 35. I will deal with those topics in a subsequent section on thanksgiving.

\(^53\) Noel Paul Stookey, “The Wedding Song,” made famous by Peter, Paul, and Mary.

\(^54\) “We believe that lawful marriage, and the begetting of children, is honourable and undefiled; for difference of sexes was formed in Adam and Eve for the increase of mankind.” *The Apostolic Constitutions*, Book 6, Section 3 [http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07156.htm] [last accessed September 13, 2017]. But also note the Augustinian tradition that conception itself, an act of concupiscence, transmitted sin from parent to child. Anselm did not believe that guilt was transmitted but agreed that sin could be traced back through what we would call genetics to Adam. Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:299–30; Anselm, *On the Virginal Conception*, chapter 7.
viewed matrimony in two images, Christ and the Church, and Adam and Eve. Clement of Rome, lamenting the undermining influence of envy in his generation, defined marriage through the words of Adam, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Methodius explained that the wedding allegory Paul used of Christ and the Church only made sense if Adam and Eve were real people in which God could embody the mystery of salvation. Until Trent, the Roman Catholic Church was not uniformly convinced that a marriage needed more than a declaration of consent, but once it determined that marriage as a sacrament demanded a wedding as a ceremony, it chose Matthew 19:3–6 as the Gospel reading (“Have ye not read, that He who made man from the beginning, made them male and female?”). The institution given by God in history to a man and woman who were the first to enjoy it served as the foundation of the church’s understanding of marriage. It would be fair to note that Adam and Eve did not have to be the first humans in order to enjoy the first marriage, but many Christians probably assume that correlation.

Adam’s influence on contemporary weddings may be deep, but it is also quiet. A Baptist worship manual recommends explaining that God instituted marriage and reading Matthew 19:3–6. A Presbyterian service of marriage includes Genesis 2:18–24 as one of the readings and gives as a preface, “You made us in your image, male and female you created us, and gave us the gift of marriage.” The Book of Common Prayer includes the rubric, “The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation,” a prayer, “O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image,” and recommends readings from Genesis 1 and 2. In a Lutheran service, the minister explains that “marriage and sexuality are part of God’s good creation and show the Creator’s intention of community for his people.” One of his options is to say, “The Lord God in goodness created us male and female, and by the gift of marriage founded human community in a joy that begins now and is brought to perfection in the life to come.” Weddings then become a case for the theological leadership mentioned above. Perhaps Adam and Eve do not

---

55 Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, Chapter 6 [http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1010.htm] [last accessed September 13, 2017].
57 See, for example, “The Nuptial Service” [http://missale.heliohost.org/nuptial.html] [last accessed February 1, 2018].
59 *Minister’s Worship Manual*, 184, 190.
60 *Book of Common Worship*, 137.
63 “Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of marriage can be overcast and the gift of the family can become a burden. But because God, who established marriage, continues still to bless it with abundant and ever-present support, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored.” *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 203.
have to be the first people, or even exist literally, for those liturgical elements to retain their integrity. But many Christians probably assume as much, so the minister must decide how to handle those potential divergences.

C. Lent, Funerals, and Mortality

*Draw nigh, ye sons of Adam; viewing a likeness of yourselves in clay: Its beauty gone; its grace disfigured; dissolving in the tomb’s decay.*\(^{64}\)

The season of Lent, and particularly Ash Wednesday, may just now be finding its way onto the calendars of Baptist churches, but it is one of the Christian church’s oldest traditions. By the time of Ambrose, this had become a 40-day fast. Ambrose taught his church to pray, “Through Adam’s greed in defying your command we had been justly cast out of paradise; now by the remedy of a fast your grace has prevailed to call us back to the blessedness of our ancient home.”\(^{65}\) The Ash Wednesday service calls clear attention to Adam through the explanation of dust as a symbol for mortality.\(^{66}\) In the Lutheran tradition, the minister is taught, “The imposition of ashes should be available for those who desire to receive this sign of frailty, repentance, and renewal. Those who desire to receive ashes kneel before the altar (as is often done at communion). The ministers apply the ashes first to each other and then to the forehead of each penitent, with the words of God to Adam, ‘Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.’”\(^{67}\) A Presbyterian service calls for the pastor to pray in the opening, “Gracious God, out of your love and mercy, you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and neighbors,” and during the imposition of the ashes, “Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence.”\(^{68}\) God could have spoken these words to Adam metaphorically and these liturgies would remain viable. But if He did not speak them to Adam at all (Genesis 2 is myth), I believe that at least some Christians would be confused as how to understand their participation in this service. A pastor must offer clear leadership for a church through such experiences.

Similarly, Christian funerals have long been a reminder of the consequence of Adam’s fall and our inheritance of sin. A Presbyterian minister counsels others, “Death is very real, and no minister is entirely honest with himself or his people if he fails to indicate that it entails ‘earth to earth, earth to earth.’”\(^{64}\) John of Damascus, *Stichera of the Last Kiss*, sung at the conclusion of the funeral office. This version trans., J. M. Neale <https://hymnary.org/text/take_the_last_kiss_the_last_for-ever> [last accessed December 28 2017].

Ambrose, *We Give You Thanks and Praise*, 64. This was his preface for Ash Wednesday.


Manual on the Liturgy, 308.

Book of Common Worship, 222, 227. Note that this is nearly identical to the service in the Book of Common Prayer, 265.
Ward: Liturgical Adam

ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The long history of Christian teaching on death can be pictured in three curves of a spiral—that of Adam, of Christ, and of the new humanity in Christ—going back to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” A Baptist worship manual recommends quoting that passage at a burial, followed by the exhortation, “we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” The Book of Common Prayer offers the commendation, “Thou only art immortal, the creator and maker of mankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and unto earth shall we return. For so thou didst ordain when thou createdst me, saying, ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.’” Of all of the worship services, the funeral may be the most difficult to navigate the deep influence of Adam, for it combines all of the doctrines of humanity with a strong emotional charge. As a pastor, I could not envision discussing Adam’s historicity on such an occasion.

D. Christmas and the Virgin Birth

_No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground._
_He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found._

In the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, churches put on full display the doctrines of incarnation and atonement, buttressed as they are by some form of recapitulation and/or typology. Indeed, Irenaeus’s entire doctrine of recapitulation began with Christmas: “therefore our Lord took up the same first formation for an incarnation, that so he might join battle on behalf of his forefathers, and overcome through Adam what had stricken us through Adam.” This theme would permeate Ambrose’s prefaces for the season of Advent, “that of Christ undoing or reversing the fall of Adam and restoring the likeness of God in the human race. This is expressed through a parallelism: by Christ’s human nature our human nature is restored.”

---


70 Pelikan, *The Shape of Death* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), 113. In this, Pelikan summarized Irenaeus’s doctrine of recapitulation, which will be explained in greater detail in the next sections. Pelikan saw humanity’s existence in history as a spiral; he used other shapes to describe our understanding of eternity and immortality.


72 *Book of Common Prayer*, 482.

73 Isaac Watts, “Joy to the World.”


75 Ambrose, *We Give You Thanks and Praise*, 11, translator’s comment. For example, on the third Friday of Advent, “With boundless love you sent him to us to become incarnate in our human flesh, so that, just as through Adam’s fall we fell victim to death, even so through the victory of Christ we might rise to new and eternal life.” Ambrose, *We Give You Thanks and Praise*, 23. Basil found the theme so important that he included it in the Anaphora of his Divine Liturgy: “For, since through man sin came into the world and through sin death, it pleased Your only begotten Son, who is in Your bosom, God and Father, born of a woman,
can still be heard today in a Christmas prayer of adoration, “Almighty God, you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature.”\footnote{Worship Sourcebook, 468.} Even the famous Unitarian Christmas hymns, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” and “It Came upon the Midnight Clear,” cannot help but root their calls for peace in the unity of humanity that Christ came to reestablish.\footnote{Edmund Sears, “It Came upon the Midnight Clear,” and Henry Longfellow, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day;” both reduced the message of Christmas to a vague call to peace on earth among humans.}

But a more immediate connection with Adam takes place with respect to the virgin birth, a doctrine of the earliest Christian creeds. I mentioned earlier that along with infant baptism, the virgin birth most heavily shaped early Christian anthropology. In his treatise on the Apostle’s Creed, Hedley explained, “As time went on, and Christian thought was developed in more detail, the theory of the Virgin Birth of Jesus came to be used in connection with the doctrine of original sin. Because Jesus had no human father, went the argument, he escaped the sinful heritage of Adam, and so was free from the taint which all men else had inherited.\footnote{Anselm said plainly that “by his virgin birth Christ was the only one who had not been implicated in the fall of Adam.” Pelikan, Christian Tradition, 3:142. A variation of this idea, the Immaculate Conception, will be addressed in a later section.} Thanks to “Silent Night, Holy Night,” the virgin birth will remain seared in the general consciousness of Christmas. And thanks to “Away in a Manger,” that particular connection between the virgin birth and original sin will as well (implying that crying is a sin for an infant).\footnote{Martin Luther, “Away in a Manger.”} The Christmas liturgies hold in tension for us a Christ who is like us in every way and yet is not stained by sin (both of which are necessary to make sense of Hebrews 2:17 and 4:15). And as with all of the liturgies of this section, Adam lies firmly in the background; the incarnation implies that something about humanity itself needs redeeming.

\section*{E. Easter and the Second Adam}

\emph{A second Adam walked the earth, whose blameless life would break the curse, Whose death would set us free to live with Him eternally.\footnote{Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, “Gethsemane Hymn.”}}

Easter bookends Christmas in the story of the incarnation, so it should not be surprising to see similar themes of recapitulation in the historic Easter liturgies. Again, Irenaeus championed this idea, seeing Christ truly as the second Adam—birth from the virgin Mary/birth from the virgin the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary; born under the law, to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who died in Adam may be brought to life in Him, Your Christ.” “The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great” [https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-basil-the-great] [last accessed August 14 2017].
earth; Mary’s obedience/Eve’s disobedience; Christ’s victory over Satan’s temptation/Adam’s fall to Satan—“For Irenaeus, the imitation of Christ by the Christian was part of God’s cosmic plan of salvation which began with Christ’s imitation of the Christian or, more precisely, with Christ’s imitation of Adam.”81 This was no novelty on the part of Irenaeus; it was the mind of the Christian community, found throughout the early liturgies.82 Ambrose gave as an Easter preface, “In Adam’s fall, the human race knew death; now through the suffering of Christ it is made new. For Christ has followed our human journey even into the harshness of death, so that he might call us to follow his footsteps through the resurrection into eternal life.”83 For Irenaeus, only the reality both of Christ and Adam can ensure the reality of salvation: “[Christ’s] history must be as genuine a part of the human story as the history of Adam or the history of any other man. ... Only if his history is a real history can it save men who live and die in real history.”84

The liturgical connection between Easter and Adam probably begins with the Exsultet, the ancient Proclamation Hymn of Easter. In it, the hosts of heaven and the church of God are called upon to exult in Christ the Lord, “Who for our sake paid Adam’s debt to the eternal Father, and, pouring out his own dear Blood, wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.”85 The Exsultet is found in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist liturgies. In the Lutheran liturgy, the paschal candle is subsequently lowered into the baptismal font “so those who are made his by Baptism drown the old Adam and rise as new people.”86 A truly moving appearance of Adam occurs in a second century homily of Melito of Sardis, given in the form of a message from Christ to Adam, “Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise.”87 The protevangelium of Genesis 3:15 finally finds its fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, celebrated at Easter in the words of 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” The parallelism of Adam and Christ in these liturgies would seem to restrict the potential

82 “Liturgical sources and the writings of other church fathers suggest that in this doctrine of recapitulation, as in his teaching generally, Irenaeus was reflecting the mind of the Christian community.” Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:144.
83 Ambrose, *We Give You Thanks and Praise*, 124.
84 Pelikan, *Shape of Death*, 114.
87 Melito of Sardis, “The Lord’s Descent into the Underworld,” <http://www.catholic.org/lent/story.php?id=33177> [last accessed November 2, 2017], now used as a Holy Saturday homily. For Melito, recapitulation came in many forms, “For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.” “I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side.”
reinterpretations of Adam, and the importance of Easter in the life of a church makes it critical for a pastor to consider carefully.

V. ADAM AND THE INFLUENCES ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Ye saints redeemed from Adam’s race, ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace, and crown Him Lord of all.88

Early in this essay, I explained that worship influences theology, but theology informs worship. Whereas the previous section described how Adam already exists within expressions of Christian worship (a lex orandi that shapes one’s personal lex credendi), this section will explore the influences that shape experiences of Christian worship (those beliefs that help one understand his community’s lex orandi). Those influences vary from tradition to tradition—a Lutheran tradition may emphasize catechesis; a Catholic, the blessed virgin; a Baptist, the inerrant Word of God—but each means that a person will come into an experience of worship with a certain perspective of Adam (or sin or humanity) already in place. Most importantly for this essay, those influences are themselves gleaned from the very experiences of worship that they will go on to shape.

These liturgical influences are necessary for every pastor to understand based on what I will call “the integrity of worship.” Christians will not (should not) participate in liturgical acts containing what they believe to be falsehoods. They would be participating hypocritically, something that God does not tolerate (and God does not make exceptions for religious tourism). People bring these beliefs with them into a worship experience, and every pastor must be aware how that experience’s lex orandi integrates into everyone’s lex credendi. This, then, is why we must have a firm grasp on what we believe about Adam, what our churches believe, and how that extends to our worship. If our beliefs change, our worship must change. If we do not want our worship to change, perhaps we should reconsider how our beliefs are changing.

A. THE FELIX CULPA AND OTHER THANKSGIVINGS

O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer.89

Christians are taught to be thankful people, and that thankfulness should drive one’s desire to worship God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. In some traditions, Christians are taught in worship that Adam’s fall itself is a cause for thanksgiving. Part of the Exsultet cited above is a phrase called the Felix Culpa, “O happy fault.” Augustine used it as his version

---

88 Edward Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.” The earliest version of the hymn I can find, in The Hartford Hymnal (1799), has a yet different variation on the phrasing most common today, “Ye seed of Israel’s chosen race.” In those days, there was no protection for authors against unsanctioned edits. Being so widely printed, the hymn exists in many versions, including the one cited above.

89 “Exsultet.”
of the theodicy, now highly influential in many Christian traditions, “For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist,” though the concept can be traced to Gregory and even Ambrose. God’s omniscience and omnibenevolence guarantees that the world we live in must be the best of all possible worlds, meaning the fall must have been good (the “fortunate fall”). Consequently, those traditions sing the Exsultet to praise God for Adam’s sin which sets in motion God’s plan of salvation.

Most traditions tie thanksgiving to creation and salvation, the connections to Adam being implied through the biblical imagery. For example, “With joy we praise you, gracious God, for you created heaven and earth, made us in your image, and kept covenant with us—even when we fell into sin.” The eucharistic thanksgivings in particular often focus on creation in God’s image. “It becometh us, the workmanship of thine own hands, at all times to reverence and magnify thy godly Majesty. First, for that thou hast created us in thine own image and similitude.” “You formed us in your image, setting us in this world to love and serve you, and to live in peace with your whole creation. When we rebelled against you refusing to trust and obey you, you did not reject us, but still claimed us as your own.”

Many thanksgivings have to do with salvation, using language similar to that which was mentioned in the section on Easter. “Where sin had triumphed over Adam in the weakness of our mortal flesh, your justice has prevailed and sin is overthrown by your own Godhead in that same flesh incarnate.” Adam’s relationship with original sin and the image of God must play a role in how these prayers may continue to be used.

B. Icons and the Image of God

Come, Desire of nations, come! Fix in us Thy humble home:
Rise, the woman’s conqu’ring seed, Bruise in us the serpent’s head;
Adam’s likeness now efface, Stamp Thine image in its place:
Final Adam from above, Reinstate us in Thy love.⁹⁵

There is a very tight relationship between Adam, Jesus, worship, and the image of God. Whatever one believes about the exact nature of the image of God first mentioned in Genesis 1:26, the Bible teaches that Adam was uniquely created to reflect and relate to God, that in his sin that image was marred, and that in Jesus Christ that image can be renewed (Col. 3:10). Irenaeus explained, “When [Jesus] became incarnate, and was made man, he commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished it, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that

⁹¹ Worship Sourcebook, 308.
⁹² Presbyterian Liturgies, 124.
⁹³ Book of Common Worship, 69.
⁹⁴ Ambrose, We Give You Thanks and Praise, 150.
⁹⁵ Charles Wesley, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.” This is one of Wesley’s most published hymns; the vast majority of those publications only include the first three verses.
we might recover in Christ Jesus." Luther related the image of God to free will, and Calvin related it to goodness. In a number of Christian traditions, the image of God refers at least in part to humanity's unique ability to rightly relate to God. The pinnacle of such a relationship is our ability to worship God our Creator (Genesis 1–15 essentially embeds that narrative into the entire story of the Bible). Any teaching in churches about the image of God recalls the grand narrative of Adam's special creation, his sin, and the recovery in Jesus Christ of what Adam lost. This plays out in worship in multiple ways.

In most theological systems, worship itself is a function of the image of God having been renewed in us by the Holy Spirit. We worship rightly only because Jesus has recovered humanity. But the image of God appears in other ways in worship services. In the Orthodox traditions, it is in iconography. The very defense of the use of icons in worship came from this subject: “God himself had been the first to have images of himself. First was the eternal Son of God as ‘the image of the invisible God’; then came Adam, made in the image of God.” In other traditions, it is in their confessions, some of which have been abbreviated precisely for use in worship. For example, “In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God’s image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.” The most common appearance of the image of God in Protestant worship would be in prayers of thanksgiving as those in the previous section, such as, “For thy glory thou didst create us after thine image; thou madest us a little lower than the angels, and crownedst us with glory and honour, giving us dominion over the works

---

96 Cited in Pelikan, *Shape of Death*, 116. Not surprisingly, Harnack interpreted Irenaeus reductively. “Adam, however, is humanity; in other words, as all humanity is united and renewed through Christ so also it was already summarised in Adam. Accordingly ‘the sin of disobedience and the loss of salvation which Adam consequently suffered may now be viewed as belonging to all mankind summed up in him, in like manner as Christ’s obedience and possession of salvation are the property of all mankind united under him as their head.’ In the first Adam we offended God by not fulfilling his commandments; in Adam humanity became disobedient, wounded, sinful, bereft of life; through Eve mankind became forfeit to death; through its victory over the first man death descended upon us all, and the devil carried us away captive etc. Here Irenaeus always means that in Adam, who represents all mankind as their head, the latter became doomed to death. In this instance he did not think of a hereditary transmission, but of a mystic unity as in the case of Christ, viewed as the second Adam.” Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:273–74.

97 Luther said, “Through the fall we have all sinned in Adam and have lost the image and glory of God, and with it the freedom ‘to choose in spiritual matters.’” *Formula of Concord*, 847, cited in Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 4:145. Calvin said, “The image of God, in which Adam had been created, had made him ‘partaker of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God.’ But that image was now ‘extinguished’ and replaced by ‘guilt, unrighteousness, and unholiness.’” Calvin, *Soul Sleep* (*Corpus Reformatorum* 33:181), cited in Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 4:227.


99 *Book of Common Worship*, 95. Of course, some confessions of faith are not intended for use in worship, as for example Westminster, “He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image.” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 4:2.
of thy hands, and putting all things under our feet.” There is a range in which Adam can be understood for these prayers to maintain their integrity, but that range is finite.

C. THE CULT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

The veneration of Mary the mother of Jesus is one of the most profound phenomena of Christian history. For all of the negative connotation this carries among Protestants, it originated in conservative theology: “Out of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth arose the cult of the Blessed Virgin.” I introduced the virgin birth in the section on Christmas. In the theology of recapitulation, Mary is the new and better Eve, just as Jesus is the new and better Adam. Where Eve disobeyed God, Mary obeyed God (so Justin); where Eve believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel (so Tertullian); Irenaeus summarized, “As Eve, becoming disobedient, became the cause of death to herself and to all mankind, so Mary too, having the predestined Man, and yet a Virgin, being obedient, became cause of salvation both to herself and to all mankind.” Protestants become concerned when that parallel is pushed to agency, such as in the conclusion that Mary “not only had an office, but bore a part, and was a voluntary agent, in the actual process of redemption, as Eve had been instrumental and responsible in Adam’s fall.” That belief in agency ultimately led to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, hinted at by Radbertus and codified by Pius IX. Pelikan explained the true significance of the doctrine as that it held together “the universality of original sin through the fall of Adam and Eve, and the exceptional privilege of Mary.”

In the Catholic traditions, Mary obviously takes a much greater position in worship than in other traditions. The Hail Mary cannot be overstated as to its role in such worship. Mary’s is one of only three birthdays solemnized by Rome; her feast days also include the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Guadalupe; she has

101 Hedley, Symbol of the Faith, 47.
104 Pelikan summarized Radbertus, “For it was widely held that Christ had been the only one who was conceived without original sin. If, then, she had been ‘born and procreated of the flesh of sin’ and yet was hailed in the rule of prayer as ‘happy’ and ‘blessed,’ this had to mean that, though conceived in sin, she ‘was not subject to any transgressions when she was born and did not contract original sin in the sanctified womb.’” Radbertus, On the Parturition of Saint Mary, 1.16, cited in Pelikan, Christian Tradition, 3:71.
two months: the month of Mary and the month of the Rosary; she even has multiple religious orders. The founder of one such order wrote that one could not know and worship Jesus unless one was devoted to Mary.\textsuperscript{106} Newman contrasted her role in the liturgy to that of God the Father (severe and profound) and God the Son (loving and gracious): “On the other hand, towards St. Mary the language employed is affectionate and ardent, as towards a mere child of Adam; though subdued, as coming from her sinful kindred.”\textsuperscript{107} Mary’s relationship with Eve takes her to an uncomfortable level from a Protestant perspective, but as long as Protestants confess the virgin birth (i.e., recite the Apostles’ Creed or sing “Silent Night”), they will consider its significance. That significance cannot be easily severed from Adam.

\section*{D. Worship as Catechism}

\begin{quote}
God his Maker, sorely grieving that the first-made Adam fell,

\begin{flushright}
When he ate the fruit of sorrow, whose reward was death and hell.
\end{flushright}
\end{quote}

The reason that most Christians believe as they do is that they have been taught to do so, and worship is an extremely effective catechetical environment. Church leaders throughout history have injected Adam into their liturgical texts for the primary purpose of teaching about Adam. The Reformers and their followers certainly recognized the power of worship and sought to harness it for the truth they taught. Isaac Watts wrote multiple hymns about Adam: “Deceived by subtle snares of hell, Adam, our head, our father, fell; When Satan, in the serpent hid, Proposed the fruit that God forbid.”\textsuperscript{109} I included Charles Wesley’s powerful fourth verse of “Hark! the Herald” a few sections earlier. The Anglican Bishop Christopher Wordsworth wrote, “By tasting the forbidden tree Man fell in Paradise; Upon the tree Christ tasted death, And by His death we rise.”\textsuperscript{110} Pelikan mentioned the importance of hymnody in spreading Luther’s theology, “For as a well-known Reformation hymn taught, ‘through Adam’s fall the nature and substance of man is totally destroyed.’”\textsuperscript{111} Pastors in “non-liturgical” traditions often fail to appreciate how so-called “special music” still fills this

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Louis de Montfort, \textit{True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary}. He wrote in the Introduction, “Mary is the earthly paradise of Jesus Christ the new Adam.” <http://www.catholictreasury.info/books/true_devotion/td1.php> [last accessed September 3, 2017]
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 399.
  \item \textsuperscript{108} Venantius Fortunatus, “Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle,” trans., J. M. Neale <https://hymnary.org/text/sing_my_tongue_the_glorious_battle> [last accessed August 6, 2017]. Fortunatus was a prolific hymn writer of the early church; this is one of the best-known surviving hymns from the sixth century.
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Isaac Watts, “Deceived by Subtle Snares of Hell.”
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Christopher Wordsworth, “Upon the Sixth Day of the Week.” His biography on hymnary.org notes, “Dr. Wordsworth, like the Wesleys, looked upon hymns as a valuable means of stamping permanently upon the memory the great doctrines of the Christian Church.”
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Pelikan, \textit{Christian Tradition}, 4:143. Lazarus Spengler, a strong supporter of Luther, published this hymn in 1524 to teach the new Evangelical faith. The best-known English version is “All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall,” trans., Matthias Loy <https://hymnary.org/text/all_mankind_fell_in_adams_fall> [last accessed August 6, 2017] “All mankind fell in
role. There are songs such as those published by Sovereign Grace Ministries, “I am ashamed, conceived in sin; I’ve always been born in a world where Adam’s fall corrupts us.”112 There are major projects such as Haydn’s “The Creation” and the more recent Nichole Nordeman’s “Music Inspired by the Story” (and even Andrew Peterson’s “Behold the Lamb of God”), all of which are presented in octavos today. Beyond the musical elements listed here, there are the liturgical injections I have already mentioned. Richard Baxter included as one of his lessons, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”113 These and countless other examples illustrate Adam’s continuing presence in Christian worship that are designed specifically to instruct worshipers about Adam.

**E. Worship and Biblical Inspiration**

_I do not know how Adam’s sin lives on in you and me,  
Nor how it causes all the wrong and sorrow that we see.  
But I read it in God’s Word, and I believe it; Yes, I believe it, fully believe it!  
I read it in God’s Word, and I believe it, And that is all I need to do._114

In this final section of my main argument, I want to take pastors into the world of Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) and its roots in Gospel.115 Many pastors appreciate the power of CCM over their churches—worship teams want to lead songs they have heard on the radio; church members want to sing songs they have heard at a concert. But who decides which songs are played on the radio or which bands receive promotion? There is no easy answer, but the shadow of William Gaither looms large over CCM (even though not musically related to Southern Gospel) because he was so influential in building the industry. Don Cusic traced the roots of CCM to the Gospel circuits that emerged out of pre-Evangelical revivalism, a movement that was closely associated with what we now consider conservative Evangelicalism (even “Fundamentalism”). Today, many think of the priorities of Evangelicalism as both personal evangelism and defending the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.116 Not surprisingly, Cusic

---


114 Helen Lemmel, “I Do Not Know How.” Billy Sunday used this song in his revivals when he was at his apex of influence.


116 In _Deconstructing Evangelicalism_, Hart noted that the major definitions of Evangelicalism always focus on Scripture and evangelism (48–51). He explained that arguments over definitions of “inerrancy” have proven very destructive to Evangelical cohesion (150–51). He also observed that the leaders of this movement “shared an unmistakable liturgical outlook that relied heavily on the ability of music and song to create religious identity” (156), launching into a serious critique of the CCM organizers (156–74). D. G. Hart, _Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham_ (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).
found those themes to be “the central themes of gospel songs throughout the [twentieth] century.” He specifically mentioned the dogma of “an insistence of the Genesis account of creation; the acceptance of Adam and Eve as the parents of the race of man.” While Gospel music may have had its greatest influence on the Pentecostal and Holiness streams of American Christianity, pastors in churches of many traditions (particularly in the south) are extremely aware of the popularity of Gospel music among its members—including anywhere Billy Graham made an appearance. In an offhand remark of profound importance, Cusic said, “[I]t may be argued that most of the major Christian revivals in this country since the Great Awakening have been fundamental in nature.” I wonder how many members in your church can trace their family’s church involvement to the outcome of a revival?

What does that have to do with historical Adam? In short, there are many biblically conservative churches whose hymnody reinforces their high view of Scripture. There are popular hymns about the Bible including “Break Thou the Bread of Life,” “Holy Bible, Book Divine,” “Thy Word,” and others. There are popular hymns rooted in a literal interpretation of Scripture including “I Sing the Mighty Power of God,” “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” “Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel?” and so on. There are all of the sung confessions of sinfulness that I mentioned earlier. Importantly, that characteristic is not limited to older, so-called traditional churches. Cusic, who spent a long time in the industry, noted that modern CCM still judges the “effectiveness” of a song by three criteria: “(1) that the Bible is the unerring word of God; (2) belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ; and (3) the belief in Jesus and his resurrection as the salvation of a person’s soul.” This can be seen particularly in the promotion and popularity of the Passion circles, which not only write conservative songs but also modernize older hymns and even promote the old folk gospel tradition. The inerrancy viewpoint has deep roots in the most dominant producers of popular Christian music today, and that will continue to influence the next generation of evangelical church members for all of the reasons noted about the formative power of worship. If you serve in an evangelical congregation, it is very likely that historical Adam is a part of your church’s consciousness.

IV. LITURGICAL ADAM: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the introduction, I noted that theology does not exist in a vacuum, and I noted that many church liturgies are not agnostic when it comes to historical Adam. Worship shapes a person’s understanding of truth. Of...

117 Cusic, Sound of Light, 122–23.
118 Unintentionally illustrating the hidden power of worship, Lewis Drummond’s seminal analysis of Billy Graham’s techniques essentially ignored the music. But when Drummond actually described a crusade, almost the entire description had to do with the music preceding Graham’s message—including CeCe Winans, the Gaither Vocal Band, the Charlie Daniels Band, DC Talk, and more. Lewis A. Drummond, The Canvas Cathedral (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 509–13.
119 Cusic, Sound of Light, 119.
120 Cusic, Sound of Light, 388.
course, personal understandings do not change the objective existence of historical Adam. So what could I have possibly accomplished in the previous 13,000 words (including footnotes)? Well, that depends on your perspective. If you reject historical Adam, you realize you have a harder fight on your hands. If you accept historical Adam, you feel rather emboldened in your position. But let us take a deeper look at Christian worship and where things seem to be going.

If you are like me, you recognized the value of every illustration mentioned above to those worshiping traditions, even the ones with which you disagreed. But you also subconsciously noted ways that you could “work around” Adam’s presence in those liturgical actions if necessary. You may have even thought to yourself how liturgies in which you have recently participated seemed to downplay or ignore some of those connections noted. I have been to church weddings that were entirely about the vows made by the couple with minimal biblical input. I have been to church funerals that were entirely about the eulogy with minimal biblical input. Remove Adam from worship for a generation, and all of the influences described in this essay simply disappear. Many baptismal liturgies already give freedom for Adam to be central or be ignored. Many wedding liturgies have already begun downplaying the Adam and Eve image for that of Christ and the church. Modern confessional services already tend to emphasize sin rather than sinfulness. Add to this the trend to choose music that “sounds good” rather than serves an integral theological purpose, and the ingredients are already in place for Adam to be marginalized in the consciousness of Christians. (And this does not even begin to study the theological trends in CCM.) If a pastor does not want to “give up” historical Adam, then he should pay close attention to his church’s liturgies. The clear presence of Adam in worship will make it far easier for church members to want to pay attention to the debate.

But here is the real crux of the matter. I was impressed—surprised even—by the depth and breadth of Adam’s role in traditional Christian worship, so much so that I must conclude that the traditional liturgical forms of worship cannot exist without him. The solution some have proposed (who appreciate the old forms of worship but reject historical Adam) to reinterpret Adam figuratively is surely disingenuous because the Christians who worship according to those forms will understand Adam to be the historical figure portrayed within (as described above). Based on what this journal has previously published with respect to the relationship between worship and belief, I must pose a very serious question to every pastor: if Christian liturgy cannot exist in traditional form without Adam, can Christian orthodoxy? Liturgical changes have already begun; they cannot be ignored. But to what end will they lead? Pastors and church leaders must realize that the debate over historical Adam is not confined to a lecture hall; it is integral to Christian worship, and that means it is integral to the Christian faith.

Anselm held the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1109, during which he wrote *Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became a Man)*. In this two-part scholastic dialogue between Anselm and Boso, who serves as Anselm’s foil in the dialogue, the topic posed by the title gets addressed: “for what cause or necessity...God became man, and by his own death, as we believe and affirm, restored life to the world” (1.1). For Anselm, the goal of working through this question is not to prove the doctrine of the atonement in order to bring non-Christians to faith. Rather, Anselm seeks to demonstrate that the atonement is truly rational, so that believers may love God more and understand Him better (1.1).

The logic of Anselm’s argument begins with the relationship between God and humanity. As a creature, humanity’s chief duty is to “render to God his due,” but humanity sinned and ultimately dishonored God (1.11). Since human sin tarnished God’s honor, it must be restored, resulting in a burdensome debt for mankind. According to Anselm, God could not forgive this debt out of mercy, because this would violate God’s character (1.6, 1.10–13). At the same time, God could not punish Satan for the fall or destroy humanity, because this would defeat the purpose of his creation (1.7, 2.4–5). The only way God’s honor could be restored is through “satisfaction.” Accordingly, satisfaction is accomplished when man gives to God both the original honor due to him and makes reparation for the insult to God’s honor (1.11, 1.19). Yet, it is impossible for man to provide satisfaction on his own because of the effects of sin (1.20–23).

On the basis of absolute necessity, Anselm concludes that the only solution is the “God-man.” The God-man is Anselm’s technical term for Christ, highlighting his two natures in the incarnation (1.25, 2.4–8). For Anselm, the two natures in a single individual is critical. The substitute must be both God, in order to provide a perfect sacrifice, and human, in order to pay man’s debt and restore humanity (2.6–7). Therefore, as the God-man, Christ came to pay the debt of humanity’s sin as a substitute and restore God’s honor by offering a gift which he did not personally owe or was not required to pay. As a sinless being, Christ was not obligated to suffer and die, and yet he voluntarily gave up His life as satisfaction for
the sins of humanity. He was, therefore, the perfect sacrifice, and Christ’s death restored God’s honor (2.6–7). Furthermore, justice requires Christ’s free gift be rewarded. Since there is nothing the Father can give the Son, the reward is transferred to humanity in the form of forgiveness of sins to those who believe (2.14–15, 2.19).

Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* is an important work in several ways. First, it plays a significant role in the historical development of the doctrine of the atonement. For example, Anselm was the first to understand most clearly that Christ redeemed humanity not merely from the effects of sin or Satan but from sin itself, and that redemption is primarily the reconciliation between God and humanity (cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:344). Second, *Cur Deus Homo* makes important contributions even for contemporary Christian thought. For example, Anselm’s treatment on the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son in relation to the atonement underlines its significant intra-Trinitarian dynamics. Furthermore, Anselm’s view of sin as a disruption of the perfect created order highlights the damaging effects of sin to both God’s honor and the world. Ultimately, Anselm serves to remind contemporary Christians that God’s justice was on display at the cross, ultimately combating the overemphasis of God’s love and mercy, and highlighting the offensive nature of sin.

As much as Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* is significant in the history of doctrine and still relevant for today, it is not without problems. In short, Anselm’s handling of the atonement tends to overemphasize certain features while neglecting others. For example, Anselm’s depiction of the atonement overemphasizes Christ’s death as the basis of redemption while neglecting the atoning significance of Christ’s life on earth. At the same time, Anselm’s emphasis on the divine characteristics of the atonement tends to disregard its important human aspects, as in a believer’s reception of its benefits. As much as the work of Christ is a transaction between the Father and the Son, it also involves a mystical union between Christ and the believer.

Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* is certainly not familiar terrain for modern readers, especially those with limited categories in systematic and historical theology. Anselm’s digression on the relationship between the number of fallen angels and holy men in heaven will seem alien to contemporary issues debated in Scripture. Relatedly, Anselm rarely cites scripture, which may bother those looking for clear and tangible support directly from scripture. Yet this book is a worthy read for pastor-theologians, not only because of its significance in the history of theology, but also because it will assist them as they think through and preach the doctrine of the atonement.

Edward W. Klink III and Olle T. Larson II
Hope Evangelical Free Church
Roscoe, Illinois

One of the more complex and potentially divisive topics in the church today is creation. Modern advancements in science and the universal commitment to “literal” methods of biblical interpretation has led to tension between common grace empirical discovery and special grace biblical revelation. This pressure is felt most by pastors, as a wide-spectrum of beliefs concerning creation are represented in pews on any given Sunday. Interestingly enough, the way forward might be in stepping out of the current situation and revisiting a theological giant from the past.

Augustine’s *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, completed in 415, is a masterful demonstration of premodern exegesis. There are many ways in which this type of work can help guide modern discussions on the topic of creation. Tasked with discerning the intended meaning of the author (how Augustine defines “literal”), this work stretches over 12 books and a multitude of topics — though primarily related to creation, since Augustine’s commentary only covers Genesis 1–3. Concerning Genesis 1, Augustine concludes that the days of creation happened in a single fiat (Books 1–4). Therefore, Genesis 2 is not a recapitulation, but a second iteration of creation still beyond our normal senses and experiences (Books 5–6). Books 6–11 discuss the creation and fall of Adam and Eve while Book 12 is a detour to Paul’s paradise vision in 2 Corinthians 12. For the average reader, one startling observation is how theoretical the work is in places, including a lot of philosophical speculation concerning the creation and nature of the soul, the intentionality and perfection of the number six, knowledge of the devil, etc.

Outside the scope of this review is an analysis of how Augustine’s philosophical presuppositions shape his literal interpretation of Genesis. This reality is clear throughout the entire work. Likewise, it is unfair to critique the usefulness of this commentary based on agreeability. The modern exegete will disagree with whole sections of Augustine’s interpretation. One personal example comes with Augustine’s handling of the physicality of Creation. Augustine’s “carnal” view of sex and the theoretical spiritual transformation of Paradise leaves the reader thinking of Gnosticism (2:80).

Two brief shortcomings need to be mentioned at this point. While Augustine employs several different disciplines of science working through his interpretive questions, it is clearly a fifth century work. These sections, while fascinating at times, are tedious and not very useful. Saturn is not the “coldest star” in the sky and does not take thirty years to orbit the heavens (1:52). Diligence is needed in working through some of these outdated arguments. One final critique is connected to the task Augustine aimed to complete. In focusing on the “literal meaning” of Genesis, Augustine lays out a comprehensive explanation of what he thought the author meant. Therefore, Augustine avoids interpretation that he would qualify as allegorical or figural. This leaves some sections incomplete. A great example of this is Book 11 concerning Genesis 3 and humanity’s rebellion. Charging the

Regardless of these concerns, there is great benefit in working through pre-critical exegesis like this. Modern students of the Bible often fail to acknowledge their own hermeneutical presuppositions. Nothing will quicken this realization than working through a theologian with different rules and goals of interpretation. Even as soon as Genesis 1:1, Augustine sees “in the beginning” as being a reference to Wisdom and the Word of God, therefore the full Trinity is present in verses 1 and 2 (1:25). Experiencing such radical difference in method is a wonderful tool towards Christian charity and conversation.

The main takeaway from The Literal Meaning of Genesis might not be a clearer understanding of creation, but a clearer picture of the identity of God. Augustine’s commentary is robustly theological. God’s nature and character are beautifully on display. One example especially worth noting comes in Book 4. Augustine comments on the doctrine of divine aseity: “He is not represented as taking delight in any work in such a way as to imply that He needed to make it, or that He would have lacked something if He had not made it, or that He was happier after He had made it. For whatever comes from God is so dependent upon Him that it owes its existence to Him, but He does not owe His happiness to any creature He had made” (1:120–121).

Modern attempts to navigate the morass of Genesis 1-3 would benefit from this theological focus. Pastors prepared to work diligently through these chapters should follow Augustine in asking the question, “What does the text teach theologically?” Debates on scientific details of the story become secondary when God himself becomes the focal point of exegesis. This is not to deny the need for clear historical-grammatical hermeneutics, but simply a reminder that Genesis is fundamentally Christian scripture.

Finally, and in the form of the conclusion, Augustine’s character gives the church an archetypal example to follow in discussing creation. Much of the text is in the form of question-asking. Augustine’s questions are complex, comprehensive, and sometimes comical. After a while, these questions tend to eat away at any “dogmatic hubris” that one may have concerning a position. As a result, it becomes possible for Christians to have differing interpretations without abandoning the faith (1:41). This is the type of contagious humility that is needed in many evangelical circles today. Augustine himself is quick to note the shortcomings of some of his arguments, while encouraging correction and future hermeneutical advancement. Pastors can learn a lot from the tone and character of Augustine and it is for this reason that The Literal Meaning of Genesis becomes most beneficial for a church wrestling with issues of creation.

Edward W. Klink III and Casey Ehlers
Hope Evangelical Free Church
Roscoe, Illinois

Playing off of the title of Albert Schweitzer’s controversial book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, William VanDoodewaard of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary flies over at 30,000 feet to survey a vast historiography of views not on the last Adam, but the first. In this no less controversial book, VanDoodewaard nevertheless sets for a very different course than Schweitzer: Rather than challenging traditional interpretation, the author wishes to recover a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2. Here he is not a mere cool, objective observer of the past and present landscape. He throws down the gauntlet on trending “alternative hermeneutics” of nonliteral readings among evangelical scholars, warning that they are driven by conclusions of the scientific community and sliding down the slippery slope towards liberalism. Albert Mohler adds in the foreword that the stakes are high: “a false start to the story produces a false grasp of the gospel” (p. viii).

The flyover takes off with brief summaries of what he believed were key passages in the Old and New Testaments. VanDoodewaard then reflects in the end that there is nothing in Scripture that seems to suggest any other kind of origin than a “special, temporally immediate creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans on the sixth day of creation” (p. 18). In Chapters 2 and 3, VanDoodewaard then surveys various important thinkers from the Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, and Post-Reformation eras. Although there are some divergent views, the author is intent to show that the prevailing view was a literal reading. So then why are there significant differences among interpreters today? He moves onto Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to explore the rising challenge to young earth creationist views during the Enlightenment period to the present. His narrative points to the rise of science, and in some cases naturalism, as the main culprits as to why many scholars began to second-guess or abandon altogether a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2 and to move into conceiving wholly different possibilities for the origins of the universe and humanity. But never to let them have the last word, he weaves in and out voices of the same era, who opposed these new propositions and defended the claimed mainstream literal view. Finally, VanDoodewaard devotes the final chapter to asking what difference does it make? In this he evaluates three varying models of theistic evolution and compares their consequences versus literal origins. His conclusion is that making attempts to synthesize Genesis 1 and 2 with biological evolution results in multiple versions of Adam, none of which resembles the Adam of the Bible; thus he exhorts readers to maintain the literalist tradition.

What readers ought not miss is the historiographical reason why the author emphasizes the history of literal interpretations, admittedly *ad nauseam*. This is unveiled in the latter part of the book when he begins to interact with Ronald L. Numbers’ *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism*. Among many books that have covered the history of the evolution debate in the church, this one stands out as the most devastating to the narrative of young earth creationism. Numbers identifies
John Whitcomb and Henry Morris’ *The Genesis Flood* as the main catalyst for the resurgence of young earth creationism. Prior to their book, the two men were previously sympathizers of old-earth theories, which Numbers claims was common among evangelicals and fundamentalists in the early twentieth century. It all changed for the two men when they ran across the works of Seventh-Day Adventist George McCready Price. Thus young earth creationism today enjoys resurgence ultimately from an Adventist and questionable science. For VanDoodeward, who quickly dismisses science of any stripes if it’s conclusion contradicts his interpretation, this offense is too much for VanDoodewaard to let slide. Shots were fired across the bow. Numbers is said to lack “thorough scholarship” (p. 157) and showed “weak historiography” (p. 236), but if one quickly glances over the dozens and dozens of manuscripts collections Numbers combed through, as well as the herculean endnotes, one would just as quickly see that those passing comments were cheap shots. This is unfortunate and unfitting to the excellent call to humility and doxology VanDoodewaard makes in the epilogue. Another problem, very briefly, includes VanDoodewaard making a habit of declaring sweeping statements throughout the book without backing them up with evidence. For example, he acknowledged that openness increased among PCA and the OPC members to figurative interpretation compatible with theistic evolution. However he quickly added that they would remain in the minority (p. 226). He is probably right, because those are conservative denominations, but real figures or numbers would strengthen his claim. This is lacking throughout.

This book has already received praise and will no doubt receive more from those who hold to the literalist view. The list of endorsements in front of the book testifies to that. Because the stream of literalist intellectual history flows down to a narrow circle of certain Protestants, one gets the sense that he is not just writing a polemic. But he is also writing pastorally, encouraging literalists—who might be discouraged with recent trends in scholarship—that they are in a long line of tradition. Readers who hold to a nonliteral interpretation will not be impressed. They will no doubt wonder what would key thinkers in the past conclude had they access to modern science? They will be disappointed that there is very little analysis of hermeneutics despite its subtitle, especially since the author curiously says nothing about the fallibility of humans interpreting scripture, but makes much in the fallibility of interpreting the book of nature. They will complain significant thinkers have been left out. Whether one agrees with the book or not, the author is still to be commended for undertaking this neglected task of examining the history of interpreting Genesis 1 and 2.

Nathan W. Chang  
Chinese Evangelical Church  
Portland, Oregon

The question of the historical Adam carries implications for how we understand the nature and purpose of God’s creation, and ultimately, plan for salvation. In my former church, a number of parishioners regularly debated whether or not Adam was a historical person. Some suggested that Adam was a fictional figure that gives us a framework for understanding human history, while others insisted that the historical Adam was essential to Christian doctrine. While we all remained committed to the truth of the gospel, we nonetheless had our disagreements. *Four Views on the Historical Adam* brings these disagreements to the fore and offers believers across the theological spectrum a showcase of viewpoints.

Denis Lamoureux argues for the “No Historical Adam” view. Lamoureux is firm in his commitment to this view, suggesting that the historical Adam has “no impact whatsoever on the foundational beliefs of Christianity” (p. 38). He grounds his view on three hermeneutical tenets: “scientific concordism,” the “message-incident” principle, and “accommodation.” Scientific concordism asserts that God imbued the Scriptures with scientific knowledge, and scientific discoveries will affirm biblical accounts. The “message-incident” principle suggests that “Holy Scripture makes statements about how God created living organisms that in fact never happened” (p. 56). Accommodation charges that God accommodated the scientific understandings of textual recipients such as when Jesus and Paul refer to a historical Adam to their primarily Jewish audiences. For Lamoureux, while a historical Adam is a “falsified” historiography, the first chapters of Genesis assert timeless spiritual truths about the nature of God.

In contrast, John Walton asserts that Adam existed, taking numerous biblical passages at face value (Genesis 5, Luke 3). Arguing for the “Archetypal Creation View,” Walton believes that while Adam and Eve were historical figures, their existence served archetypal rather than scientific purposes. Walton creatively asserts that Adam and Eve may not have been the first humans, but rather the next in a long line of hominids. Walton believes that “God undertook a special act of creation that gives the entire human population the image of God” through the unique creation of Adam and Eve (p. 114). Walton also puts forth an account that seeks to reconcile theistic evolution with a literal fall, a point of contention other contributors charge against him.

C. John Collins presents the Old-earth creation view, asserting that Adam and Eve were historical figures. Collins opts for reading Genesis 1–11 as “true history...because it gives us the true story of how the world began, how evil and suffering came into the world, and how God is still committed to the world he made (p. 167).” For Collins, the biblical account of creation does not demand a literal interpretation; it is perfectly acceptable for this history to include mythical or figurative elements since other biblical passages embrace this practice (such as Psalm 105). Collins argues that the
Creation-Fall-Redemption story of Scripture leaves room for non-literal interpretations of creation accounts.

Walter Barrick argues for the Young Earth view, affirming a literal reading of Genesis 1–11. He begins with several assumptions about Genesis that influence his position. The book is supernatural revelation handed to Moses, historically accurate, universal in scope, and the rest of Scripture embraces a literal reading of the text. Barrick exposits Genesis 1–5 in order to demonstrate that a literal interpretation of the text is superior to figurative interpretations.

Interspersed between the chapters are reactions from the other contributors, which gives the book a conversational feel. While these responses are generous and take seriously the contributions of each scholar, Lamoreux’s position takes the most criticism since he ultimately rejects a historical Adam. Nonetheless, these responses allow readers to understand the primary objections to each argument, leaving the audience to come to their conclusions on their own.

A unique feature of the volume is the inclusion of “pastoral perspectives” by Gregory Boyd and Philip Ryken. Boyd holds that a historical Adam existed, yet is inconsequential to Christian theology; Christian doctrine does not rise or fall on the question of the historical Adam. Ryken’s view is the opposite, asserting that the historical Adam is a lynchpin for understanding creation, the purpose and nature of the gospel, and the nature of Christ. Both chapters are strong, well-argued, and helpful for understanding the ecclesial implications of each position.

Four Views on the Historical Adam provides pastor theologians, laypeople, and skeptics alike a snapshot of the current debate and demonstrates the diversity of viewpoints that Christians hold on the matter. Hypothetically, a pastor theologian could use this book as the foundation for a Bible study or sermon series on Genesis. I highly recommend this volume for the libraries of pastor theologians, laypeople, and churches.

Benjamin D. Espinoza
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan


The conversation between science and Christianity is complex and at times contentious. This ongoing discourse has nevertheless attracted many prominent scientists, theologians, and philosophers of our time. In this light, the recently released Dictionary of Christianity and Science is a welcoming and useful resource for those who seek to understand the important and controversial issues on science and faith.
With over 140 contributors writing on over 450 articles of various lengths, the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* serves as an excellent starting point to study and research on the ongoing discourse between science and Christianity. What distinguishes this volume from other works in the field is that it has a narrower aim. This work provides a focused analysis on the complex interaction between modern science and Christianity rather than on science and religion in general. The editors make their purpose explicitly clear from the Introduction that all entries are written by contributors who are “evangelical Christians who are experts in their respective fields of study.” (p.11); the editors also acknowledge that these contributors represent a spectrum of theological and historical backgrounds within evangelical Christianity.

What makes this volume unique is that the entries are categorized into three types (Introduction, Essay, and Multiple-View Discussion). The Introductions are short summaries of a particular topic that give a concise overview of the subject matter. The Essays are longer entries which give greater depth and scope in discussion and analysis, often citing important figures and works for further reference. Most significantly, the Multiple-View Discussion entries go into much greater detail is providing the historical background, ongoing disagreements, and the latest developments that “have bearing on the broader relationship between Christian and scientific thought” (p. 11). As one comes to expect in volumes such as this, it is unlikely that the diversity of voices on such wide-ranging topics would share the same perspective on every issue. However, opposing views are being heard and are being critiqued fairly. The goal of the Multiple-View Discussion entry is to present different viewpoints so that readers can be equipped “to come to their own well-informed conclusions” (p.11). Topics are wide-ranging. Several of the most controversial issues and salient features of discussion (i.e. Adam and Eve, age of the universe and earth, climate change, and evolution) are written by major thinkers as well as specialists across their respective fields. With lucid presentations of vital topics, each entry provides extremely important overview and background (along with valuable reference) for deeper discussions on both science and Christianity.

The result is a fascinating, rich collection of over 450 entries with diverse and wide-ranging topics. The essays are written by young and established scholars who are currently engaged within the science and Christian faith discourse. This dictionary has proved itself to be an indispensable companion and tool for readers new to science and Christianity as well as to those proficient in the discipline.

But for all its strengths, there are inevitably some areas of weaknesses in a volume like this, which aims to cover a vast amount of thought and issues. You will find that the book neither provides a table of contents in the beginning nor subject/author index at the end. All the entries are categorized in alphabetical order. To be fair, it is challenging to cover all major areas of science and Christianity in a single-volume work; each section can only treat the issues briefly. Those in the field are fully aware that the interdisciplinary relationship between science and theology is complex and multifaceted; an encyclopedic treatment of this matter is beyond the
scope of this project. This book, however, serves as a good introduction to the current discourse on the intersection of science and the Christian faith.

Kiem Le
Living Word Community Church, San Jose, California


Can Christian theology survive the loss of an historical Adam? Does Christian doctrine—and particularly the Gospel of a Savior who came to die for sinners—require an original fall? Questions like these have been explored in recent works by growing list of scholars. Increasingly, they are coming onto the radar of pastors and theologically-minded laypersons. In this edited collection of essays that range from the biblical to the historical, theological and even pastoral, editors Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves have assembled an interdisciplinary chorus of voices to make the case that an historical Adam and original sin “are essential, irremovable, relevant, and credible elements” of the Christian faith (p. 323).

Many evangelicals today are losing faith in such classic doctrines and accommodating too quickly. Yet these authors remind us that Adam and the fall “do not float free in Scripture like rootless, atomistic, independent ideas” (p. ix). They liken Adam and original sin to “threads” which run throughout the “cloth of faith,” and warn that there will be repercussions if we remove them. Pull on one “and the others follow” (p. 210).

This is a well-written book that consists of four sections and fifteen different chapters. C. John Collins kicks things off by arguing that we should read Genesis 1–11 as a collective unity. The whole OT presupposes the historical significance of Adam and Eve “as the fountainhead of humanity and as the doorway by which sin came into the world” (p. 5). Even though Genesis utilizes figurative elements and literary conventions—which should make us wary of being too literalistic—Collins is nevertheless convinced that Genesis aims to tell us the true story of origins. He argues that biblical authors will often communicate their point of view by “indirect and laconic means,” emphasizing what Collins describes as “showing” (displaying the heart by action and speech) over “telling” (explicitly evaluating the characters and actions) (pp. 18–19).

Robert Yarbrough follows with a chapter that serves up an excellent analysis of all of the explicit references to Adam in the NT. He gives special attention to Romans 5, which he sees as a climactic passage in this epistle that “stands at the theological crossroads of the entire New Testament” (p. 43). Yarbrough points out that Paul refers to Adam no less than a dozen times (either by name or indirect reference). Furthermore, Paul’s soteriology, Christology, theological anthropology and hamartiology all come
together in these verses—and none of these are intelligible without Adam in historical existence (p. 43).

Chapter 3 offers another interesting discussion penned by an academic paleontologist under the pseudonym, “William Stone.” Stone accepts the evidence put forth by modern paleoanthropology, which is often regarded as a sort of “smoking gun” against Adam’s historicity (p. 54). Yet he also affirms that humankind is connected by a line of ancestry to a single pair of specially created humans. After analyzing data from the fossil record, Stone suggests that Adam could be placed at the root of the *Homo erectus/ergaster* to *Homo Sapiens* lineage around 1.8 million years ago (p. 78).

The five essays in Part 2, “Original Sin in History,” survey this doctrine in the Patristic era and in several later theological traditions. Peter Sanlon argues against the notion that Augustine could have invented such a major doctrine like original sin (p. 95). Instead, Sanlon demonstrates how Augustine took care to show, and later councils agreed, that he simply stood in line with earlier interpreters (p. 107). The doctrine of original sin did undergo some minor changes with Luther (p. 111), but both Lutheran and Reformed traditions have been “unanimous” in their belief that depravity must be rooted in a fall and not in creation. All human beings are born with a propensity to sin, and they will inevitably act upon it (pp. 145–46).

Readers may find Thomas McCall’s chapter on Wesleyan Theology particularly enlightening. Despite widespread confusion, McCall reminds readers that Wesley himself actually did defend the federal headship view (p. 148), and along with other early Methodists he also held strictly to Adam and Eve as real historical persons. McCall traces how later Wesleyans, though, progressively distanced themselves from belief in original guilt. In McCall’s thinking, this leaves Wesleyans who want to retain the notion of original guilt with a couple of options. One would require the adoption of a Molinist account of providence, while the other is McCall’s own intriguing proposal. He suggests that we could say that when people sin individually, they essentially ratify what Adam did originally. This renders them guilty for both their own actions and for their inherited corruption. In other words, by ratifying Adam’s sin, “we accept our corruption and are guilty for our state (pp. 164–65).

Carl Trueman closes this section with an outstanding essay that traces progressive moves away from original sin in modern theology. He surveys six major mainline theologians: Schleiermacher, Rauschenbusch, Barth, Bultmann, Niebuhr and Pannenberg. All of these influential thinkers repudiated any notion that humanity stands guilty because of an imputed alien guilt. As for the historicity of Adam and the fall, they are either indifferent or unconvinced about it. Yet Trueman picks up the inevitable conclusion of such a loss and poses an excellent question: “What does it mean to say we are responsible as individuals for our sinful state when sin is actually a structural part of creation?” (p. 185).

The third section of the book may be the strongest, and this is where the siren voices of Madueme and Reeves are at their loudest. They insist that we need an historical, originating sin, and go on to highlight several doctrinal areas that will “invariably suffer theological fallout” without it. These include soteriology (Does sin gets trivialized as only a functional
problem?), the incarnation (Why did the Son have to take on every aspect of our humanity?), the atonement (Did Christ actually defeat sin’s power in his own death and remake humanity in his resurrection?), and theodicy (Should we believe that God has created an inherently fallen world?) (p. 210).

In his stand-alone essay, Madueme is both stirring and thought-provoking. On what grounds, he asks, can extrabiblical, natural science change or overturn a doctrine that is authorized by God’s Word? As emerging scientific developments continue to create conflicts with the doctrine of original sin—should Adam and the fall be held “hostage to the fortunes of science” (p. 237)? Madueme warns that theologians often end up creating more problems when they try to navigate this conflict by making accommodations to the current scientific consensus. What happens, he wisely asks, when the science moves on? “Theology married to science in one generation will be widowed in the next” (p. 240). In response, Madueme proposes that we protect particular major doctrines that are “theologically certain,” and he then suggests several criteria for when we might raise a doctrinal conviction to such a level. Is it clearly attested in Scripture? Is it central rather than peripheral to the redemptive-historical narrative? Has it been taught universally in the church and confirmed supernaturally by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (p. 244)? Based on such criteria, Madueme classifies the doctrine of the fall as a theologically certain doctrine. It is like “an essential thread” that ties together key doctrines in a seamless garment of systematic theology. “Pull it loose,” he warns, “and the whole thing unravels” (p. 246).

As with any edited volume, the essays here vary widely in style, depth, and even scholarly expertise. Some are more interesting than others. From a sheer organizational standpoint, it might have been better to group the biblical scholars together, then the theologians, the historians, etc. But the work is still quite readable and most of the essays are highly engaging. Who will benefit most from this book? Certainly scholars will want to familiarize themselves with its arguments. But there is also substantial theological value here for theology students, seminarians, pastors, and even theologically-inclined laypersons. If nothing more, Madueme and Reeves have done a service to the church by encouraging all of us to pause and carefully consider the ramifications before jettisoning or accommodating any doctrine too quickly.

Jason A. Nicholls
Redeemer Missionary Church
South Bend, Indiana

Scientific theories are not set in stone. Scientists continually discover new evidence, shift paradigms, and propose new theories. Nevertheless, the broad scientific consensus about the origin of human beings points toward the gradual evolution of human beings from primates, not an instantaneous, special creation of two human beings from whom the entire human race descended. On the surface, this scientific consensus seems to undermine the biblical accounts of human origins and the fall of the human race into sin. Christians react to this apparent contradiction in a number of ways. Some adopt a “warfare” mentality that sees science and faith as enemies and make no attempt to reconcile them. Others adopt concordist models that either reinterpret scientific theories to fit Scripture, or reinterpret Scripture to fit scientific theories. Still others understand science and faith as non-overlapping magisteria, believing both subjects speak to truth differently and should be pursued separately.

In contrast to these approaches, Evolution and the Fall explores human origins by retaining the core convictions of Christianity and taking seriously the modern scientific consensus about human origins. In other words, these essays assume that the traditional Christian understanding of an original good creation that fell into sin is true, that the scientific consensus about human beings evolving from primates is true as well, and that these two truths should and can fit with one another. These ten essays arose from a three-year project sponsored by the Colossian Forum on Faith, Science, and Culture, which gathered an ecumenical and multidisciplinary team of scholars to pursue a communal research program on how to understand the relationship between evolution, the Fall, and original sin. This group included those in the fields of biology, theology, history, Scripture, philosophy, and politics. Meeting for a week each year, these scholars not only shared the fruit of their research, but worshipped and prayed together, seeking to produce a book that would purposely arise from this embodied, Christian collaboration.

Evolution and the Fall is divided into four parts. Part I introduces the questions present in this discussion. Biologist Darrell Falk provides a comprehensive overview of the current archeological and genetic evidence for evolution. He then emphasizes why Christians need to take this evidence seriously and pushes back against the rush to understand this information from an anti-theist perspective. Catholic theologian Celia Deane-Drummond brings together evolutionary biology and the doctrine of original sin, demonstrating how each impacts the other, and proposing some new ways to move the conversation surrounding these issues forward. Reformed philosopher James K. A. Smith then explains what is at stake in the doctrine of the Fall and proposes a way to understand the Fall that he believes is consistent with evolution.

Part II of the book focuses on Scripture. It begins with an essay from Old Testament scholar Richard Middleton on the how to read Genesis...
in light of evolutionary theory. Middleton is careful not to read evolution back into the text, but instead explores how a faithful understanding of Genesis could be consistent with evolution. New Testament scholar Joel Green then examines the New Testament’s contribution to the doctrine of original sin, suggesting that both Paul and James are compatible with evolutionary theory. Catholic theologian Aaron Riches closes this section by arguing that Adam must be a concrete person, but that he should primarily be understood in light of the new Adam, Jesus Christ.

Parts III and IV consider some cultural implications of this discussion and then propose some possible ways forward. Ethicist Brent Waters reflects on the Fall as a sense that human life is not as it should be, and as a critique on attempts to improve life through our own efforts. Theologian Norman Wirzba demonstrates how a Christian understanding of creation challenges competing secular understandings, and why Christians must be careful not to reduce the conversation to a debate about scientific theories. Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh proposes that the decline of the Fall narrative happened in our culture for political reasons, not scientific ones, and explores the implications of this for the rapprochement of faith and science. Historian Peter Harrison closes the book with some suggestions on how to think through apparent conflicts between Christian faith and science, drawing primarily on Augustine.

With such an eclectic collection of essays, Evolution and the Fall should appeal to a wide audience of Christians who are struggling to understand their faith in light of evolution, whether they are seeking insight theologically, biblically, scientifically, or culturally. As I read, I thought of people in my congregation who would benefit from one essay or another, although I can think of very few people who would want or need to read the entire book. The intended audience is also important to consider with a book like this. While some essays defend the truth of evolution more than others, for the most part the authors assume it to be true, and therefore this book would not be helpful for those who reject evolution as a possibility. These essays certainly advance the conversation, however, and demonstrate the possibility of bringing together evolution with the doctrine of original sin. The authors typically offer tentative conclusions, seeking to spark conversation and reflection more than provide definitive answers. No one will agree with every proposal, but all who read will understand what’s at stake in the discussion, and how important it is to work toward understanding.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church
Fulton, Missouri

Peter Boutenoff is an Orthodox ecumenical theologian who teaches at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. His volume, *Beginnings*, explored how significant ante-Nicene writers read the Hexaemeron (i.e. Genesis 1 “six-day” creation), the paradise narrative in Genesis 2 and 3, and the use of Adam. He traced how what was largely an oral Jewish tradition evolved into the written papyrus, transmitted widely by codices, with the Hebrew Scriptures being translated as the as early Septuagint texts in the 1st and 2nd century BCE, and then further disseminated and referred to by New Testament writers and the patristic writers covering the first four centuries of the Common Era. Through this evolution of translation, transmission, and teaching, the communities of faith appropriated and understood Genesis 1-3 in different ways. For instance, the 2nd century BCE texts did not refer much to the paradise nor Hexaemeron narratives not until well into the 1st century BCE texts. The name “Adam” in this period also had a multivalent usage depending on contexts and situations: “adam” referred generally to “humanity” or to the first physical human being.

Key features of the 1st through 4th century CE writers in their use of the biblical creation narratives included: seeing Christ as the new, renewed Adam such as Irenaeus’ approach of reading Scripture through “recapitulation” or summing up all things in Christ; Adam as the first among sinful humanity and not as the cause of sin; regarding a typological reading of the Scriptures (e.g. Christ as the fulfillment of the antitype Adam) as indicative of the triune God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge; limited use of allegory particularly in the Cappadocian Fathers selective use of and critique of Origen’s use of allegory; seeing the Hexaemeron as not a scientific account of the “how” of creation but rather as a positive affirmation that God is the creative Creator; that the Hexaemeron and the paradise narratives all lead to Christ and that both narratives, particularly the Paradise narration of sin, have a paraenetic, ethical thrust which prompts readers and hearers to worship and serve God. Additionally, some writers, like 2nd century apologists Theophilus of Antioch and Melito of Sardis see in the phrase “In the beginning” in the Hexaemeron not a reference to time, but to the person of Jesus Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega and who is the agent through whom God created all things. Other writers like Origen of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa saw that the biblical narratives contained a so-called “rule of faith,” foundational principles and teachings about the triune God, Jesus Christ, and sin as essential for faith formation and as a proactive polemic and apologist contra the proliferation of heresies.

This volume is a helpful summary of the first four centuries CE in reading the creation narratives and taking readers on a survey tour of key writers of the patristic period, helping us to understand the contexts and the connection of writers of one century to another, or comparing contemporaries like Gregory of Naziansus to Gregory of Nyssa. Boutenonff did
say at the outset that Augustine would not be a part of his examination. The presence of the great bishop of Hippo would have been a helpful point of contrast, particularly as the seminal theologian with respect to the doctrine of original sin.

Interestingly, Boutenoff unearthed for us modern readers patristic discussions of human sexuality, gender roles and gender equality, as for instance Nazianzen’s reflection on the equal deception of Adam and Eve by the serpent and the equal redemption men and women receive through Christ. (p. 143)

While my own scholarship is in liturgical studies and not so much in patristics, early church liturgies express many areas addressed in this book with respect to the biblical creation narratives. Boutenoff, an Orthodox theologian, is familiar with the early liturgies as for instance in the third century CE The Apostolic Tradition or The Apostolic Constitutions. More recently, Paul Bradshaw’s seminal work The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship was conspicuously missing from the bibliography. The patristic writers were not just systematic theologians; they were committed to the worship life of the church and regularly engaged in liturgies, texts which ritually embodied early church communities’ exegesis of the creation narratives in their celebrations of baptism and the Eucharist.

Nevertheless, I very much appreciate Boutenoff’s work. His work helpfully reminds us modern readers that the patristic writers and early Christian communities regarded Genesis 1-3 as less than the mechanics of what God was doing and more about that God did create, that human agency did and continues to sin, and that God’s re-creation occurs finally and fully in Christ. Any attempt to read into the Hexaemeron and the paradise narratives 21st century questions or to extrapolate clearly defined positions to justify modernist impulses, would all do well to pause to consider these early writers for what they saw as the Christ-directed thrust of the creation narratives.

Neal D. Presa
The Village Community Presbyterian Church
Rancho Santa Fe, California