

The Doctrine of Humanity: The Origin of Humanity, I

We welcome you to join us in our study of Humanity, Christ and Redemption. Please turn to the course syllabus and I will introduce our course. My custom is to open class with sharing and praising the Lord for what He has done for us, as well as praying for one another. Although we cannot pray for everything, we do consistently pray for burdens on people's hearts. The exciting thing is, we see the Lord answer prayer every semester, and that is a great blessing. So, next time we will begin with prayer.

Let us start by looking at the course description. This class is the study of creation and the nature of humanity (often called the doctrine of man), the doctrine of sin, the doctrines of Christ's person and His saving work, and the application of salvation. We will have five topics: human beings, sin, the person of Christ, His work, and the way God actually causes His grace to reach our lives ("the application of salvation").

Our standard textbook is Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. Dr. Jones affectionately refers to it as the "common coin of the realm" for the Reformed and Bible-believing seminary. It is somewhat dated now – it is over 50 years old – but it is solid. You will find that it reads like the encyclopedia, but friends, we need encyclopedias, and this is a very fine book. Of course, it needs to be updated, and that is why we have the other books. My goal is to have one other book, a more recent one, for each topic that we cover. Two of those topics are served by Anthony Hoekema's book *Created in God's Image*. It is the best seminary level treatment from a believing writer. He also happens to be a Reformed writer, which fits with the doctrinal orientation of this school. Hoekema taught at Calvin Seminary until he retired, then he produced three outstanding books, which we use regularly here at Covenant. In fact, you will get two of them in this course. *Created in God's Image* deals with humanity and humanity's sin in ways that we will find stimulating. I will help stimulate you by assigning quizzes. Hoekema's book *Saved by Grace* replaces John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. The "applied" part of that book is replaced, in my courses, by Hoekema's *Saved by Grace*, which deals with the application of salvation. What do I mean by that? Regeneration, calling, justification, sanctification, and adoption – all those biblical pictures of God actually touching us with His grace. Robert Newman wrote a little pamphlet called, "Some Perspectives on the Image of God" which provides a biblical-theological approach to the image; this will complement what we will be doing in class. My students have always liked this booklet – it has opened up doors and windows in their own teaching.

Alistair McGrath has written a book that is frankly not a seminary-level text, more of a college-level text. McGrath is an evangelical theologian in Great Britain capable of writing both scholarly pieces and semi-popular ones. The first half of his book *Understanding Jesus* is the best treatment I can find on the person of Christ that fits the purposes of this course. I have a better book—it is listed under "Additional Recommended Reading" in the syllabus. David Wells' *The Person of Christ* is the best, but it is too difficult a text and consists of too many pages for our purposes in this course. But I encourage you to read it after the class. McGrath's book is decent, though, and will prove satisfactory for the purposes of our course.

I am delighted with John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*. It is right on. He handles the Bible capably, including its biblical themes, and, as always, has his finger on the pulse of modern culture and makes wonderful application. You will be blessed in reading it. Perhaps it suffers from an omission or two, and as with every book except Holy Scripture, I hope you disagree with him at least some, otherwise you are not reading with both eyes open. Some have said it is his finest book. You might ask, "Am I not aware of John Stott's movement on the doctrine of hell?" I am aware of it and against him, but that does not lessen my overall respect for him and his ministry, and I would not hesitate using his good books.

The next item is my course syllabus. Years ago I went about putting my notes in print, because I remember what it was like to be a student myself. I, jovially, have to agree with the definition of a

lecture as “that which passes from the paper of the professor to the paper of the student without passing through the mind of either.” In the best courses I had in seminary I wrote my hand off and I could hardly engage my mind. Now, I give you a pretty full set of notes. But I risk erring on the side of giving you the whole thing, so the temptation for you is to sleep. You do need to bring it every time, as well as your Bible. At Covenant Seminary, we work with the Bible as our primary text. The Westminster Standards are the official standards of the seminary, but you will not find us heavy-handed with them. We do not simply teach them and proof-text them with the Bible. Rather, we work with the Scriptures. But I do find the Westminster Standards to be the finest summary of the Christian faith that I know of, and I use it in a summary fashion, which I will try to do when we conclude the various doctrines of the course. Your own evaluation of it and any aspect of my teaching or any other teacher at this school is between you and the Lord, and we will respect you in that regard. My philosophy is: where I think the Bible is clear, I teach to persuade. I just think God deserves that – we should teach with conviction. I teach to persuade based on the authority of the Bible, and if I cannot persuade you on that basis, then I do not want to, because I am going to answer to God just as you are as well.

Let us look at other recommended books. Cornelius Plantinga’s book, *Not the Way it’s Supposed to Be* – a short treatment of sin – was Christianity Today’s number one award winner this year. It is a wonderful book – especially in terms of showing us our sins as individuals, churches, denominations and even as whole cultures. It is a powerful treatment by a professor at Calvin Seminary. I believe he just left to go to Calvin College and help spur them on in their spiritual lives. He is well-qualified. Again, why do I not use it? I am already up against my limit with page numbers. But read it some other time. You will benefit from doing that.

The best book on the person of Christ, in terms of academics, is Bob Lathem’s book *The Person of Christ*. Stott’s book is also very, very good. Lathem is a little more academic and detailed; I would recommend it.

Course plan: the topics are listed on the left of the syllabus. Remember, each week’s class is a week’s work.

Homework assignments: due next class is to read pages 11-111 of Hoekema’s *Created in God’s Image* and bring to class a completed take-home quiz. These will be due next class. The quiz, as with all quizzes, is only over that particular reading, not on class lectures or other readings.

You also have another short reading in Hoekema and Newman’s pamphlet which will not be on the quiz. I would recommend highlighting. What is the nature of the quiz, you wonder? The quiz says, “Put away all books and notes when taking the quiz. You may try to grade it after you are done, but do not change your answers, which will be true or false *according to Hoekema*.” We try to attain objectivity by that prepositional phrase, “according to Hoekema.” You and I might disagree with him, but that is not the point. The quiz is totally true and false questions from Hoekema with one exception: you will be asked to list either the three relationships or the four redemptive-historical stages. I will ask you one of these two lists. The lists are represented on study guides 5 and 6. Page 5 B.5.c talks about redemptive-historical stages. I might ask you to give the four redemptive historical stages of the image, and so you might say something like, “At creation the image was intact, whole. After the fall, the image was perverted. In Christ it is restored. In the new heavens and the resurrection of the dead, it’s perfected.” Something like that – synonyms are acceptable, of course. The other possible list is on study guide 6, B.5.d. The image should include human beings in our three relationships: to God, to fellow human beings and to the Creation of God. I will tell you there are a total of 30 questions. So remember to read pretty carefully. One hundred pages and 30 questions is a question every few pages.

Let us make an introduction. I will say that if you keep turning, you will find a final examination study sheet. It is my goal to give out the matters that will be included on the final to help you see the whole

course in perspective. If you want to begin outlining now, obviously my syllabus has grown and is too big to test you on the whole thing. I could tell you horror stories about when I went to seminary, but you do not want to hear that. You know how that goes. I basically test on summaries – on concluding sections – so there is a final examination study sheet to which I am bound. It is included in those notes handed out today. It is found right after the assignments and before Kelly's, *Early Christian Doctrine: Chalcedonian Creed*. When we summarize the doctrine of Christ, I would like to look at that Chalcedonian Creed, and when we get to the application of salvation, there is a chart that I would like us to think about.

Let us turn to page 1 of the study guide for this lecture: "The Doctrine of Humanity." My timing is less than wonderful here because we immediately launch into a controversial matter. For years I taught this material after teaching the doctrine of God and that worked fine, but now we have shuffled the contents of our three Master of Arts theology courses. We had them out of order in terms of where we put the different topics, so we begin with humanity, and I begin with controversy. I do not like doing that, but it is unavoidable. Let me describe what I mean. We are going to be studying under the doctrine of humanity three major topics: our origin, the image of God (what does it mean when Genesis says "God made us in His image"?), and the constitutional nature of humanity. The doctrine of humanity is also called "theological anthropology" and "doctrine of man." Constitutional nature refers to the question of how many parts are we made up of. Modern philosophy says we are made up of one part. Modern philosophy is wrong – the Bible says we are made up of at least two parts. But evangelical Christians cannot agree as to whether we are made up of two or three parts. That is, are our soul and our spirit different entities? Are they different constituents of our makeup or are they different aspects of the same immaterial part of our makeup? Are we two parts or three? We will work with that, Lord willing, next class. Now our goals are to work with the origin of humanity and then the image of God.

On page 1: Origin of Man. Milliard Erikson, an outstanding evangelical (Baptist) theologian, lists five views. He has a wonderfully up-to-date book called *Christian Theology*. Erikson lists five views of humanity's origin. A brief summary will launch us into an examination of the beginnings of humanity. Under "the origin of humankind," there are three subset. First, views of humanity's origin (which we are discussing now. Second, the status of Adam and Eve. Can we read the account of Adam and Eve as a fable, as some would tell us? Or are they intended to be understood as historical persons? I am going to argue strongly for the latter view. Third, is man created from a previously existing creature? Unfortunately, in my estimation, there is disagreement here within evangelical Christianity as well. I am going to argue that to say "yes" is not compatible with an accurate reading of Genesis. So those are our three topics under the "origin of humankind."

Let me give names to the five views of our origin: (1) Naturalistic Evolution, (2) Fiat Creationism, (3) Deistic Evolution (4) Theistic Evolution, and (5) Progressive Creationism. You may say, "Well, it all sounds like a jumble to me." I will let you in on an inside secret which we rarely let go beyond the guild of theologians: we use this confusing terminology so you will *need* us! So we keep ourselves employed! No, seriously, you can see there are two basic positions – an evolutionary one and a creation position. Erikson then makes subsets, two creationist positions and three evolutionist positions. I agree with his classification.

First, naturalistic evolution, as the name implies, is an attempt to account for all forms of life by means of the imminent processes of nature. 'Imminent' means there is nothing outside, there is no transcendent God. Supernaturalism is expressly excluded according to naturalistic evolution – so the meaning is anti-supernaturalistic evolution. Obviously this is incompatible with theism and with a belief in God, the Bible or Christian theism, but it is a view and, as you know, not an unpopular one.

Second, fiat creationism. This is Erikson's term. I have friends who would call it "biblical creationism." So it depends where one comes out. Erikson comes out in favor of number 5, progressive creationism. I

do not think Erikson has an unkind bone in his body, so I do not think he was trying to create an advantage for his position. But, in fact that is what happens...“Lo and behold his view is number 5, the right one!” Are you with me? Note that the term “biblical creationism” is not really fair of my friends to use either, because the implication is that there are two views, the biblical one and the non-biblical one, and guess which one they think is right? So maybe you cannot achieve absolute objectivity of fairness in terms. Fiat creationism implies, “God said it and it was done” and that’s exactly what Erikson intends. Quoting Erikson: “This is the idea, that God by a direct act brought into being virtually instantaneously everything that is.”

Both a direct action of God and the shortness of the time span of creation are stressed in this view. John Whitcomb’s *The Early Earth* defends this position. Whitcomb and Morris’ *The Genesis Flood* represents the same outlook. Advocates claim that they do the best job of interpreting the biblical data concerning creation. I will give them credit for taking the Bible very seriously. They believe the Bible is God’s Word, it is inerrant, and that is right. I will also give them credit for interpreting Genesis in the simplest way possible – taking a very face value approach. Does that make it the best approach? No, but I will give them credit for that. I will fault them, even before I begin to evaluate these things officially, for not being tolerant of fellow believers who disagree with them. That does not foster fellowship or even the investigation of truth. I have friends who represent the progressive creationist’s view who have been disqualified from societies and even from getting their materials advertised in Christian magazines because of people who say fiat creationism is the only possible viewpoint for Christians to hold. It simply is not true, because, like it or not, sincere Bible-believing Christians have held and do hold the second position, the fourth position and the fifth position. We will revisit to evaluate shortly.

Third, deistic evolution. Notice, this differs from naturalistic evolution, by taking out the adjective naturalistic, which I said is equivalent to anti-supernaturalistic. Now we have evolution with God involved in some way, hence, deistic. Deistic and theistic are pretty close, but here they are used as technical terms to talk of two different things. Deistic is the view that God planned the creative process. This is certainly better than naturalistic evolution. You have God and that at least fits the beginning of Genesis 1. This is the view that God planned the creative process—good—and that He used evolution to accomplish His ends—not so good. After God created the first form—that is good—He removed Himself from the evolutionary process—that is not good. Jokingly, Erikson refers to God as a ‘creator emeritus,’ like professor emeritus, retired professor. God is creator emeritus. ‘Deistic’ looks like a good adjective since deism is the older viewpoint that God wound up the universe like a clock and left it to run on its own built-in principles. This is not a live option for Christians so I can strike out 1 and 3. The fact of the matter is sincere Christians have held 2, 4 and 5. I have real problems with 4, nevertheless.

Fourth, theistic evolution. This view is similar to deistic evolution and yet there are important differences between the two. According to theistic evolution, God is involved not only with the very beginning of the creative process but also at key points thereafter. This is an improvement, so when we move from naturalistic evolution to deistic evolution, we move in a good direction and now moving to theistic, it is getting better. God was directly and supernaturally responsible for humanity’s creation. We are making definite progress here. God used a previously existing creature when He made a human being—not good. God created a human soul and infused it into a higher primate—wrong. That does not work. But again, there are sincere Bible-believing Christians who have affirmed it.

Here is a book that did not get the press it deserved, *Evangelical Affirmations*. It came out of a conference which was held at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1989 or 1990. They invited good people and addressed different topics: what are evangelicals, some challenges to the traditional doctrine of salvation, biblical authority, ethics, social ethics, black evangelical theology (an often overlooked topic), and ecumenism in the church. Each topic has a presenter and at least one response. The articles

were written by good people such as D. A. Carson, the president of Moody Bible Institute. When they got to evangelicals in modern science, they chose Robert C. Newman. Newman, under “Evangelicals’ Responses to Modern Science,” lists three views: young earth creationists (fiat creationists), old earth creationists (progressive creationists), and then theistic evolutionists. He includes those three because in fact there are living breathing evangelical Christians who espouse all three of those today.

Fifth, progressive creationism, quoting Erikson, “sees the creative work of God as a combination of a series of *de novo*, that is brand new, creative acts and an imminent or processive operation.” So it combines immediate divine action of a supernatural variety with providence over long periods of time. At various points in time God created new creatures without using previously existing life. This can hold to the biological chart but it can account for the big gaps between the species as seeing God creating. God specially creates creatures, that correspond to the gaps in the fossil record, and in between these special acts of creation there are millions of years of development of those creatures. In other words, progressive creationism accepts microevolution but rejects macroevolution. Rather, God created horses and cows; neither evolved from the other. But many different types of horses came from the horse God created etc. You may not like that, but that is an approach that Erikson adopts. Between these special acts of creation evolutionary development took place. You ask, “Why not call it evolution?” Well, you could. But I will qualify in a moment. Progressive creationists hold that God in a special act created man from the dust of the earth. The real distinction between a creationist and an evolutionist is not how old the earth is but rather, whether or not God made human beings by a special direct act. A creationist also holds that God created the heavens and the earth, but the Bible does not tell us how old the earth is. It is not a fundamental element of our faith. You may try to point to how far we can trace the human genealogy, but there are some problems with this, and I would point you to a classic essay on those regards.

So, following Erikson, I say, if you believe God made the cosmos and that He made human beings, that He made Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from Adam’s side, you are a creationist. There are other ‘intramural’ debates between Christians and I want those to continue. But I am making a plea today for tolerance in light of the two different creationist views. I would, if I had to, cast my lot with progressive creationism rather than fiat creationism; but I would make a plea for toleration and for mutual respect since lots of work needs to be done. Progressive creationists are creationists in that they believe that God, in a special act, created man from the dust of the earth. He did not use a previously existing primate when He made the first human being. This view rejects macro (large scale) evolution. Fish did not evolve into some totally different type of creature. We did not come from fish and neither did horses. Are you with me? On the other hand, this view says God did not make every kind of fish that is in the world today or every kind of horse. The Bible does not use the technical language of species, but this view makes room for great ranges of development, over millions of years. This view rejects macroevolution but accepts microevolution. It accepts development within species but rejects movement from one species to a totally different species. I will reserve my evaluation until after our break.