

## **Humanity: The Origin of Humanity, II; The Image of God, I**

It is evident to me that views one and three are incompatible with biblical religion. They are the first two evolutionist views—naturalistic evolution and deistic evolution—which I do not believe fit with the teaching of the Bible. Sincere Bible-believing Christians have held fiat creationism, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism. Some regard fiat creationism untenable on scientific and theological grounds. It seems not to take science seriously and, some would claim, it impugns the veracity of God by implying God says one thing to His world and another thing through His Word—on their understanding of it. Some would call that criticism unfair. I have serious problems with view four, theistic evolution, on biblical grounds. I do not see how we can take the Bible seriously and say we came from apes. That is just impossible in my estimation. I would cautiously favor the last view, but I emphasize most my plea for toleration, that we do not shoot each other. Fellow believers are not the enemy. In fact, we should even view unsaved people as those who are in need of the Gospel and not as enemies in that way.

It is fair for those who have been exposed only to fiat creationism to say, “I understand that scientists bring criticisms of that position, but I want to see a good treatment of the Bible with a good exposition of Genesis 1 and the creation from an older earth perspective.” Bruce Waltke wrote such an article, which was published in *Crux*, which is the journal of Regent College in Canada. It can be found in Volume 27.4, December of '91, pages 2 through 10 entitled “The Literary Genre of Genesis Chapter 1.” He argues that God never intended for us to count up the hours in the week. Instead, He thinks Genesis is structured to point to certain themes in opposition to ancient near-eastern false views of God. It is an article worth being familiar with it. Also worth noting are Newman’s presentation of the views in *Evangelical Affirmations*, as mentioned in the last lecture, and Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* in which he works very even-handedly with the data. Newman also has a book on the topic, entitled *Genesis 1 and the Origin of the Earth*. He has a Ph.D. in astrophysics from Cornell University and taught New Testament for 20 years at the seminary level. By the way, he is an inerrantist, believing in God’s Word in the wonderful evangelical way he should. He is very capable in both fields. The first part of the book deals with science, the second part with theology. There are two more things worth mentioning. There is a classic essay by William Henry Green of the old Princeton on the biblical genealogies, which is enlightening. He shows how the genealogies are abbreviated. There is also an appendix on non-radiometric data relevant to the question of the age of the Earth. The author, Dan Wonderly, puts aside carbon 14 dating and works with carbon deposits, sediments, oceanic sedimentation, dolomite formation, deposits of sandstone and shale, modern coral reefs developed at measurable rates, coral growth bands, stratigraphic columns, forest deposits, sea floors spreading, and others as well. It is worth your knowing about. He too argues for an old Earth.

What about the appearance of age? This is used by the fiat creationist to try to account for the scientific data and hold to their simplest reading of the Bible approach. Does it work? Well, it certainly works for Adam and Eve. They were not created as infants, but as adults. Let us say they were at least 20 or 25. They certainly were adults. They were made with apparent age and so the trees, likewise, were created as mature trees. So can we not just extrapolate and then say, “The five billion years that scientists estimate for the age of the universe is built in?” There are problems, in my estimation, in jumping from Adam and Eve in the Garden to billions of years. Newman is an astrophysicist, as I said. The light from stars is measurable and there is light from stars that if the speed of light has not changed (and we have no reason to think it has), those stars were made billions of years ago. Young Earth creationists have to say God made those stars 20,000 years ago or whenever else it is, with the light created on the way to the Earth from stars that did not previously exist. Did He do this to fool the atheistic scientists? That is

where the veracity problems come in. Newman in *Evangelical Affirmations* says the young Earth creationists are to be praised for taking the Bible very seriously. They try to construct the simplest model of origins possible using basically only the biblical data. The scientific data are then interpreted to conform with this model whether or not it is a straightforward way to understand it. The idea of creation with apparent age is frequently employed to handle difficulties. By the way, the notion of apparent age is a recent development that was not done before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the other end of the spectrum, Newman says, theistic evolutionists construct the simplest model of origins from the scientific data and then interpret the biblical material to conform. I agree with his conclusions. For evangelicals this may result in reading Genesis two and three as parabolic or allegorical and in denying that Genesis one was intended to answer any scientific questions about how God worked. Old Earth creationists, by contrast, use the data from both nature and Scripture in devising their models. They seek a construct that does justice to both. Naturally these models will be more complex than the minimum necessary to fit either set of data alone, but this does not mean we should force a harmonization. I am simply saying the issues being discussed are somewhat complicated. They do get into the whole notion of model making. Model-making scientists talk like that. Theologians in part should talk like that. How do we make models, in this case, doing justice to biblical data and scientific data? We have not arrived at the perfect answer—I will admit that. Grudem raises questions about research that still needs to be done. Again, I would plead for toleration and ongoing study. I would also plead that we do not make any of these views part of the essentials of the faith required for church membership or anything like that, but we permit scholars in both fields, hopefully working together, to keep working to try to reach more agreed-upon conclusions.

You may ask, “Of our list, is it only fiat creationism that would understand the days of Genesis 1 as literal 24-hour days?” A general answer is yes. Newman, however, holds to literal 24-hour days in his progressive creationist viewpoint. So normally the answer would be yes, fiat creationism has historically been that which alone has held to 24-hour days. Augustine, for example, around the year 400, held to the day-age theory. So it is not true that the church has always held to literal 24-hour days, but largely the church has and largely progressive creationists have not. Newman is an exception; he holds to literal 24-hour days that mark those *de novo* works of God that then issue into epics between the days. He admits that this is not the simplest reading of Genesis 1, but for the reasons that I just mentioned, he just cannot take the one set of data into account. As a scientist he is trying to do justice to both.

Mark Noll, a history professor at Wheaton College, in his award-winning book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, cites two things he thinks are scandalous. One is the way evangelical Christians have interpreted Middle Eastern history using the Bible and making outlandish predictions exemplified in the Gulf War and the spate of books that were produced with millions of copies sold in a month or two—books which you can now get for 25 cents. That is an embarrassment to the cause of Christ in Noll’s estimation, and I agree. The other example he cites is young Earth creationism, so it is not well received on every front. There are some real debates going on in the Lord’s vineyard.

I am going to the second subset under the “Origin of Humanity,” and that is the status of Adam and Eve. Erikson shows effectively that Emil Bruner, who along with Barth, who was the most famous neo-orthodox theologian of the middle half of this century, if you will, taught that Adam and Eve were symbolic rather than historical figures, thus the creation account of humanity is a kind of parable rather than a historical record of humanity’s beginnings. The question is does this do justice to the Bible’s witness? The matter is complicated, we have to admit, by the presence of symbolic elements of the creation account: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Do not get me wrong,

they are real trees, but they are more than real trees; Calvin said, “They are almost sacramental.” They are invested with tremendous significance beyond the other trees. Since there are symbolic elements, should we regard Adam and Eve as symbols too? I regard the witness of the New Testament as determinative in this matter. The genealogy of our Lord in Luke three begins this way: “He was the Son, so it was thought,”—an allusion to the virgin birth, interestingly—“of Joseph,” and it ends in verse 38 with the words, “[...] the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the Son of God.” There is no doubt that Luke regarded the people mentioned in this genealogy as historical persons. After all, he was demonstrating that Jesus of Nazareth is a genuine human being.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-15, the apostle Paul argues that women are excluded from teaching and ruling offices in the church. By the way, that is our school’s view. If you disagree it will not interfere with our fellowship in the Lord and it is not really our topic for right now. It comes under the doctrine of the church, but that is where we stand. Paul gives as a basis for his position the facts that (1) Adam was formed first by God and then Eve, and (2) Eve was deceived (my understanding now would add the word “first”) and not Adam. What force would this argument have if Paul were referring to Jewish fables? Let us put the women’s issue aside for right now. My whole point is to appeal to this text as a place where the apostle plainly regards Adam and Eve as historical persons. Paul condemns appealing to Jewish myths. Is he doing the very thing himself that he condemns elsewhere, including in the pastoral epistles? No. He regards Adam and Eve as historical persons and Genesis as giving a historical account of their creation. Most convincing is Paul’s uses of the Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. The apostle contends for the redemptive historical significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in those chapters. How foolish he would have been to ground his case on an unhistorical figure. Would not the effects of the work of Christ have been called into question if the premises of Paul’s arguments were false? Consider Romans 5:19: “For just as through this disobedience of the one man [obviously Adam], the many were made sinners so also through the obedience of the one man”—in context, no doubt Jesus Christ—“the many will be made righteous.” Would this be true if Adam were merely a symbol for mankind and not an historical individual? I think not. Because of the way in which the New Testament speaks of Adam and Eve, I am compelled to regard them as historical figures in Genesis 1 and 2. I applaud Anthony Hoekema’s treatment in *Created in God’s Image*, which you will be reading in preparation for the next lesson. He says the same thing but gives a little more information.

Let us go to our last topic under “The Origin of Humanity”: was humanity created from a previously existing creature or not? Of the three Christian options of the origin of human beings—fiat creationism, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism—the two creationist positions would answer this question negatively, while theistic evolution would answer in the affirmative. This question seems easily settled on the basis of Hebrew exegesis (which means detailed Bible study) of Genesis 2:7 and 3:19. Genesis 1 gives an overview of God’s creative work while Genesis 2 focuses on the creation of people in particular. Genesis 1:26 to 29 tells of God’s resolve to create human beings and give them dominion over the creatures. God followed through with His plan and created man and woman. God blessed the first pair, told them to have children and fill the earth, and gave them dominion over the rest of the creation.

Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in His own image and in the image of God, He created

Him, male and female, He created them. So God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 2 goes into more detail as to how God created our first parents. We proceed with a detailed study of Genesis 2:7. Let me read it in the English Bible. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the Lord God formed man.” The word “formed” is *yatsar* in Hebrew. It means to form or fashion. This word is used of human potters forming pots of clay. Here it is certainly used of God and suggests God as divine potter making mankind. This looks like a good suggestion to me when we consider the material from which God fashioned the first man. God used ‘*aphar*—dry earth or dust. A lexicon says this word is used “specifically as material of the human body” and lists the very verses that we are studying, Genesis 2:7 and 3:19. God the potter fashioned a man from the dry earth, or dust from the ground.

You may wonder how are we to understand God’s forming Adam. Is there detailed creation of Adam’s physical aspects after God breathed into him? I do not think so. I think God’s breathing into him caused him to come alive. I think He had fashioned his body in detail before that breathing.

Erikson shows how some theistic evolutionists have claimed that dust in Genesis 2:7 is symbolic. They argue on that basis that this text fits their conception of God’s using a previously existing animal in the creation of humanity. I find this unjustified from the plain sense of Genesis 2:7 and from the use of dust in Genesis 3:19. In that text, God brings curses because of the Fall and He says to Adam, “By the perspiration of your face, you will eat food until you return to the ground”—very literal translation—for from the ground you were taken, for you are dust and to dust you will return.” Dust here cannot mean a previously existing creature. We do not return to previously existing creatures when we die. Mankind was made from the dust of the earth and at death his body decays and returns to dust. Therefore, I conclude that Genesis 2:7 presents humanity as a special creation of God from the ground. There is not room for theistic evolution here.

Eve, too, is a special creation of God. Genesis 2 records this: “But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and brought her to the man.” The man said, praise the Lord, because she was like him—that was not in the original manuscript, but I am telling you he did say something to that effect. For one, he could not talk to the trees very well and he could not even talk to the other creatures. He could not have fellowship with them. He could have fellowship with God, but he was alone underneath God and here was one who, like him, was a human being and, in God’s wonderful creative work, was made to compliment him in terms of male and female and indeed it was a wonderful thing for both of them.

Theistic evolution also flounders on the rest of Genesis 2:7. We read, “And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a *nephesh chay*.” The dictionary says these words mean a living, breathing being. It notes that this expression is used of the animals also. By virtue of God’s creative acts, the animals are called living beings in a couple of different places in Genesis 1. In fact, Genesis 1:30 says, “Land, air, and sea creatures have the breath of life in them.” So God took the man He had formed from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into him and he became a living, breathing

being. The word “became” in Genesis 2:7 is important. The text will not allow the theistic evolutionary conception of a previously existent creature here either. Man became a living creature as a result of God’s breathing into him. It will not do to claim that God’s breathing was the impartation of a soul to a living primate. Man was not alive before God breathed into his nostrils. He became a living being precisely because of God’s action, even as the animals are also living beings by virtue of the breath of life from God. So I do not use this as a proof that we have a separable, immaterial part called a soul, or spirit. I do not want to claim that the animals have that. I do think we each have a soul, and I could show that from the New Testament, but showing that does not seem to be God’s interest here. He shows that God formed Adam’s body and made him alive with this picture of in-breathing.

Thus, I conclude that a careful study of Genesis 2:7 precludes a theistic evolutionary view of humanity’s beginnings. Humankind was a special creation of God made from only the loose earth of the ground. He did not create Adam out of nothing; *ex nihilo* is the Latin expression you often see in theology books. God did not make Adam out of nothing; He used dust. After shaping a body for Adam, God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. The result was that Adam became a living, breathing being, something he was not before. God also gave animals the breath of life, but God is not pictured as breathing directly, face to face, if you will, into them as He is with Adam. There is an intimacy present in God’s creation of His highest creature—humanity—that is lacking in the creation of the animals. This intimacy suggests an important difference between human beings and the rest of God’s creation. It is the topic of the image of God in humanity, which explains that difference, to which we now turn our attention.

One other point of significance concerning our being made from dust: it speaks to Adam’s humble beginnings. It points to his utter dependence and our utter dependence on God. It is no wonder when the prevalent view in the public schools is naturalistic evolution that children cannot believe they are dependent on God. They are encouraged in an independence that is at odds with reality because God is the most important being in the universe and we are but dust. Our being made from dust speaks to our humble origins and our utter dependence upon our creator for life and breath.

Let us move on to the “Image of God” section. First of all, we will look at the fact of human beings’ creation in the image of God in the Old Testament. It looks to me like the Old Testament mainly just gives us the fact and does not tell us what the image is. Although when we think from a New Testament perspective more about what the image is, we can look back (in fact we ought to look back) and test to make sure that our conclusions fit Genesis. For example, the Pauline doctrine of the restoration of the image of God in Christ is chiefly from the passages in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4 where Paul speaks of human beings being renewed in God’s image. It is chiefly in those renewal passages that we gain some insight into explicit statements as to what the image was in the first place because, presumably, if we are renewed in the image, there was a sense of the image that was lost and that we are being restored to.

Next, under “Image of God,” we look at the Pauline doctrine of Christ as the image of God. Is there not significance for an understanding of human beings made in the image of God from the fact that Christ Himself is called the image—the true and perfect image of God? The answer is yes. We want to see what that significance is. I value the work of Robert Newman on the image of God enough that I have incorporated his pamphlet here into my notes.

Genesis chiefly tells us the fact that human beings were originally made in the image of God, specifically in Genesis 1:26-28. The creation of man and woman by God is presented as the crowning act of God's creation. This thesis, that it is the crowning act, is substantiated by the following, though without equal weight. One, God made man after the other creatures. Viewed as narrative, the narrative builds up to this as the most important part of creation. Two, God pronounced "very good" after His creative work on the sixth day, in contrast to the assessment "good" after the previous days. Three, God gave human beings—and human beings alone of God's creatures—dominion over the rest of the creation. Of course, God has dominion, but He gives dominion to Adam and Eve as His vice regents. Four, humanity's creation is more personal; "let us make," the text says, rather than the previous acts of creation which are introduced by the expression "let there be." Fifth, and most important, man and woman alone were made in God's image and likeness. Then God said either "let us" or "we will make man in our image." The word "image" means image, resemblance or likeness. "According to our likeness," the word means likeness or similitude. God reveals His intention to create humanity. He does not create until the next verse. Notice that "image" and "likeness" are very close synonyms. The word "image" itself actually means likeness. So why do we not translate it as "likeness and likeness"? You would not do that; as they are very close Hebrew synonyms, you would use two close English synonyms such as image and likeness or likeness and similitude. I am not suggesting we change our traditional translations, but I am showing they are synonyms and we ought not to make them technical terms that suggest they are two different things. That has been done in the history of the interpretation of the Bible; as you will read in Hoekema's *Created in God's Image*, that was done with some bad results as Roman Catholic theology developed in the Middle Ages. With some hesitation, I take the first person plural pronouns "let us make," and so forth, to be an Old Testament anticipation of the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity. I thus disagree with the NIV Study Bible note on Genesis 1:26, which interprets the pronouns as God speaking to His heavenly court, presumably the angels. The "we" does the work of creation and makes humanity in their image. This seems to rule out a reference to angels. On the topic I will just say this: the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in the New Testament when God the Son becomes a human being and when the Father and the Son pour the Holy Spirit out on the Church. So in God's unfolding of His plan, the doctrine of the Trinity, as far as our understanding of it, is a subset of God's grace. In terms of God's being, He has always been a Trinity and when we put on New Testament lenses and look back at the Old Testament with improved understanding, we can see anticipations of the Trinity. I would not say the Old Testament teaches the doctrine of the Trinity.

"Image" and "likeness" are Hebrew parallels, which are to be taken synonymously. God made His highest creature, humanity, like Himself in some special sense or senses that remain to be understood.

The next expression in Hebrew could be rendered two ways: one would lead us to the translation "and let them rule" or "in order that they might rule." The differences are not crucial for our purposes. I am trying to demonstrate in these notes the importance of working carefully with Holy Scripture. The dictionary indicates that the word, "rule," usually takes the preposition (we would say "B," like the letter B in English) *bait* in Hebrew. So it is here. *Bait* marks out the different areas over which humanity is to rule over the sea animals, the birds, the land animals, which walk, and the creeping things, over all the earth. Genesis 1:27 tells us that God went ahead and executed His plan to create humans in His image: "So God created the man in His image, in the image of God He created him." An additional piece of information is given—"Male and female He created them." This tells us that God made mankind, male and female, from the beginning. You will read more about Carl Barth's understanding of the image in Hoekema, but I will simply say here that I reject Barth's idea that humanity's unity and diversity,

understood as male and female sexuality, constitutes the image. I would say it is a reflection of the image in terms of the most basic of human relationships.

This verse teaches the equality of man and woman before God as both made in His image. They are absolutely equal before God. This equality is not incompatible with male headship in the family, however, since Adam named Eve and she was made for him and given to him as a helper. However, this verse should rule out, if there are any such perverse interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11, any denial of the image of God in women. So there is equality before God and yet there is a head and a helper. Genesis 1:28 says, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the creatures.’” Adam and Eve were to have children to populate the earth. Sexuality and procreation were thus part of the blessing of God on their lives. How we need to emphasize this in the handling of our Word of God and our teaching of our children. I would argue for the normativeness of male/female sexual relations on the basis of this text as well as that of Genesis 2:24 and 25. I would also confine those relations to the marriage union. Homosexuality is contrary to the creation ordinance of God. I will say in passing that some evangelical Christians have had less than Godly attitudes toward homosexuals, and that is not called for. We need to love all sinners. But someone will say, “That specific sin is particularly repulsive to me.” That may be so, but you are still called upon to love sinners and homosexuals, who need the Gospel and the grace of God the way every other sinner does. Is such a thing as an evangelical homosexual, as in some of those so-called gay churches, acceptable? Absolutely not, but I know believers in Christ who were former homosexuals and who, all their lives, will fight those temptations—even as I know believers in Christ who were heterosexual adulterers and other types of sinners who will fight those temptations all their lives. We need more ministries to them. (I have some material if anybody is interested in a bibliography.) There are some Christians, though too few, reaching out in that area. We need to show compassion universally to unsaved people, including homosexuals. But again, my point here is to condemn homosexuality as a lifestyle, but not to condemn the persons. They need to hear the good news of salvation and if all they perceive from Christians is hatred, we are not fulfilling the Great Commission in the world.

In Genesis 1:28 we again encounter the concept of humanity’s dominion. We entitle this section of notes “The Fact of Human Beings’ Creation in the Image of God in the Old Testament” because it is the fact that is emphasized. We are told little or nothing about what the image is. Leonard Verduin argues that the image consists in our role of dominion-haver. Verduin emphasizes a good idea, which is a common failing of scholars. I would say that the image of God in Genesis 1 related to dominion-having. I would go so far as to say that our rule over the rest of creation is a result of our being made in the image of God, even that it is a part of the image of God, but it is not the whole thing. God made humans like Himself in giving Adam and Eve dominion over the rest of the created order. God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. God made people lord over the other creatures. Applications should be made to a high view of human justice and to our ecological responsibilities.