

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin,

Session 3, The Origin of Humanity, Five Views

© 2024 Robert Peterson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the doctrines of humanity and sin. This is session number three, The Origin of Humanity, Five Views.

We continue our lectures on the doctrine of humanity and sin.

Working with the former, having done some introductory work, we now move to the origin of humankind. Topics under that are views of humanity's origin, then secondly, the status of Adam and Eve. Thirdly, was Adam created from a previously existing creature? Those are our three subtopics under the origin of man.

I still use Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology* as my base. Origin of man, views of humanity's origin. Millard Erickson lists five views of our origin in his Christian theology.

A brief summary of the five views will launch us into an examination of the beginnings of humankind. The five views are naturalistic evolution and fiat creationism; these are Erickson's terms, deistic evolution, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism. As the names imply, two of the views are creationist views, and three are evolutionary views.

First of all, naturalistic evolution. Naturalistic evolution is an attempt to account for all forms of life, including humanity, by means of the imminent processes of nature. Supernaturalism is expressly excluded according to naturalistic evolution.

That is, naturalistic evolution is anti-supernaturalistic evolution. Fiat creationism, quoting Erickson, is the view that God, by a direct act, brought into being virtually instantaneously everything that is, close quote. 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. Another important name today is Ken Ham. Advocates claim that they do the best job of interpreting the biblical data concerning creation.

I'll do some evaluation of these in a bit, but fiat creationism is definitely a creationist view. Deistic evolution, like naturalistic evolution, is another evolutionary model. Deistic evolution is the view that God planned the creative process and that he used evolution to accomplish his ends.

After God created the first forms, he removed himself from the evolutionary process. With tongue-in-cheek, Erickson refers to God of this view as the creator emeritus, the retired creator. Deism, of course, said exactly that.

God created and then built into the world processes in order for the world to run on its own. The clock image is often used. God wound up the clock, and then it ran on its own.

Theistic evolution, like naturalistic and deistic evolution, is an evolutionary view. 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 at the very beginning of the creative process but also at key points thereafter.

God was directly and supernaturally responsible for man's creation. God used a previously existing creature when he made a human being. God created a human soul and infused it into a higher primate.

Theistic evolution involves God more than deistic evolution, which merely saw him as initiating the process, and certainly both of them more than naturalistic evolution, which, as we have said, is anti-supernaturalistic evolution. Nevertheless, theistic evolution is still an evolutionary view of our origins. Progressive creationism, like fiat creationism, is a creationist view.

I said before these tags are Erickson's tags. Some of my friends would rather call their view young earth creationism than fiat creationism, and I don't mean anything pejorative by these tags. I'm just using Erickson's labels.

Progressive creationism, quote, sees the creative work of God as a combination of a series of de novo, brand new, creative acts, and an imminent or processive operation, close quote. At various points in time, God created new creatures without using previously existing life. Between these special acts of creation, evolutionary development took place.

Progressive creationists hold 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 man. This view rejects macro-evolution, large-scale evolution that accounts for everything that is, but accepts micro-evolution, that is, evolution intra-kind, within a kind, but not inter-kind, not from one kind of creature to another different kind.

Like fiat or young earth creationism, progressive creationism is a creationist view. Obviously, I'm assuming that the difference between evolutionary views and creationist views is not the age of the earth since both fiat and progressive creationism disagree on that, but it is the special creation of our first parents that makes the difference between a creationist or an evolutionary view.

Evaluation: everybody's not going to be pleased with this, but I'll give you my own evaluation.

It is evident to me that views A and C are incompatible with biblical religion. Both naturalistic evolution and deistic evolution are incompatible with the scriptures. Naturalistic evolution is incompatible, for it denies God's being the creator of the heavens and the earth, as the first verse of holy scripture declares.

Deistic evolution doesn't deny God being the creator, but it denies his work of providence. The works of God are creation, providence, redemption, and consummation. Affirming one of those and denying others does not make one biblical in one's theology.

So, I'm ruling out both naturalistic evolution and deistic evolution. I'm not delighted with theistic evolution, but it's simply a fact. Sincere Bible-believing Christians have held to fiat creationism, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism.

You say, well, how do you define the sincere Bible-believing? Somebody who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior, all right? You will see that I disagree with theistic evolution in a little bit. You'll see that. But for now, some regard view B, young earth or fiat creationism, as untenable on scientific and theological grounds.

They claim that this does not take science seriously and impugns the veracity of God. What do you mean doesn't take science seriously? Daniel Wonderly was a professor at a Christian college, and he got himself fired because he studied the age of the earth using different scientific means, excluding carbon-14 radioactive dating, for example. And he kept coming up with a very old age of the earth, like five billion years, something like that.

He finally got fired because it wasn't acceptable at his institution, which very much included young earth or fiat creationism as part of its doctrinal standard. What about theological grounds? That doesn't sound right, all right? Young earth creationist. Bible-believing, yes, they are.

Isn't there an orthodox theology? Yes. This charge of questioning God's truthfulness comes from the way he speaks in his word, as interpreted by these young earth creationists, and the way he speaks in his world. It seems to them contradictory.

But isn't there a parent age? Yes, there is a parent age. There's no question, for example, of our first parents. They didn't look like they were minutes old when God created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from the side of Adam.

But a famous historian, whose name slips me, it'll probably come later, in his book, *The Closing of the Evangelical Mind*, gave two examples of that closing. He was being self-critical. He's an evangelical.

He was even humble when he mentioned great evangelical thinkers. He included Calvinist philosophers such as Nicholas Woltherstorff and Alvin Plantinga. He did not mention the evangelical historians.

He could have included himself, but he didn't. In any case, he cited two examples of not good scholarship among evangelicals. One is interpreting the prophetic interpretation with the Bible on one hand and the newspaper on the other by people who knew very little about the geography, history, and political situation over the years of the Holy Land.

The other was young earth creationism, and he showed the appearance of an age argument devised by a cultist. That doesn't mean the argument is wrong, per se, but most people don't know its origin. Yes, Adam and Eve were made as adults, but are we to believe that God created light on the way to the earth from stars that did not yet exist? In order to confuse atheist scientists who should have read the Bible and determined the age of the earth was 10 or 12,000 years, number one, the Bible doesn't give us an age, but number two, to some, that seems to be a contradiction in the truthfulness of God.

I have serious problems with view D on biblical grounds, theistic evolution, as we shall see. I cautiously favor progressive creationism while certainly extending the right hand of fellowship to young earth or fiat creationists. I would say let the debates continue, let the study continue, let us love each other while we continue to try to figure out some of these matters.

I would note that Millard Erickson affirms the old earth view. Even Wayne Grudem, a very conservative fellow, because of dinosaurs, favors that view. Robert C. Newman, a retired New Testament professor with a great interest in apologetics, has very good, fascinating information on his website as he argues for an old earth.

So, one more time, three evolutionary views: naturalistic, theistic, and theistic. They're evolutionary because they hold to an evolutionary view of humankind. They do differ.

Naturalistic evolution is anti-supernaturalistic and certainly not compatible with holy scripture. Likewise, theistic evolution, although it holds to God as creator, is incompatible with biblical teaching, for it denies the providence of God, a major biblical doctrine in both testaments. Theistic evolution is evolutionary and yet holds that God supernaturally endowed a higher primate with a soul, thereby creating Adam.

I disagree with that, but I am forced by knowing people who love the Lord to say some Christians hold that view. And both fiat and progressive creationism, or creationist views, how could it be? They disagree on the age of the earth. That's not the question to me.

What makes a creationist from an evolutionist is the special creation of our first parents. And both young Earth and old Earth, or progressive creationism, agree with the special creation of Adam and Eve. The status of Adam and Eve is our second topic.

Erickson shows that Emil Brunner, to name one, taught that Adam and Eve were symbolic rather than historical figures. Thus, the creation account of man is a kind of parable rather than a historical record of human beginnings. Brunner was a neo-Orthodox theologian.

He stood in the shadow of Karl Barth. They had a famous debate, and theology was so in the public eye that Karl Barth could name a book in German, Nein! No! An angry response to Emil Brunner. That concerned the revelation of God in creation, which Brunner affirmed, but he did so in less than adequate language.

Barth jumped on that and then erroneously denied God's revelation in creation. Ironically, Brunner had the better of it, but he lost because Barth just blasted him. They were on the outs for a while.

I think they reconciled later, but in an unveiled reference to Adolf Hitler, Brunner called Barth the theological dictator of Germany. Yikes! Anyway, they both denied a historical fall, which was bad news. They both believed in Jesus.

I have no doubt about it. Brunner was one of my doctoral figures. His epistemology is confused, so you could say he doesn't have a right to believe what he does but read his book, *The Mediator*.

It's a wonderful book on the work of Christ. So, there are inconsistencies, and Karl Barth's own, to speak of him, used the Bible better than his doctrine of the Bible, and his disciples did not use the Bible as he did. The church is loaded with exegesis, and much of it is good.

His theology did tend toward universalism, which he denied, but that tendency is definitely there. Brunner was more influenced by critical thought than Barth, so he regarded Barth as a vigorous defense of the virgin birth of our Lord, and Brunner, quote, regarded the virgin birth, quote, as on the mythological fringe of the New Testament. Barth and Brunner went at it again.

So, Brunner, Barth said of Brunner, Amal Brunner's denial of the virgin birth is a bad business that cast a questionable light on his whole Christology, because our Lord has given us two signposts, the virgin birth at the beginning of Jesus' life, the empty tomb at the end, and you dare not tamper with the signposts. Ah, I'll leave it alone, except to say their denial that Adam and Eve were historical figures is wrong. Their denial of a historical fall is wrong.

Nevertheless, they believed people were sinners in need of a savior. I'm glad about that inconsistency. And they believe Jesus is the only savior of the world, and you had to believe in him to be saved.

All that is good, but certainly, their theology is muddled. All that was from the fact that Brunner denied Adam and Eve were historical figures and that the creation count is sort of parabolic rather than historical. The question is, does this do justice to the Bible's teaching? My answer is no.

The matter is complicated, we admit, by the presence of symbolic elements in the creation story, the Tree of Life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Nevertheless, I take them to be actual trees that were invested with special meaning by God. The tree of Life seems to be sort of a sacrament, which will reappear in the last two chapters of the Bible in the new heavens and new earth, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the occasion for the test of our first parents, which they, especially Adam, failed to pass.

I regard the witness of the New Testament as determinative concerning the status of Adam and Eve. The genealogy of our Lord in Luke 3 begins like this. Luke 3, 23.

When he began his ministry, Jesus was about 30 years of age, being the son, as was supposed, of Joseph. That's an allusion to the virginal conception of Christ. The son of Heli, the son of Mathat, and so forth, down to verse 38, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

There's no doubt that Luke regards the people mentioned in this genealogy as historical persons. After all, he is demonstrating the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a genuine human being. So, it does not make sense to regard a figure in a parable, which is why Bruner, for example, and others regarded Adam as someone in Jesus' genealogy.

1 Timothy 1, 1 Timothy 2, pardon me, 11 to 15, is the most famous Pauline passage. There's a whole book written on this passage. And I would respect those who disagree with me and agree with the premise of that book, which limits church office, the office of elders, to males.

1 Timothy 2:11 to 15. I'm using the ESV. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Rather, she is to remain quiet, for Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she'll be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control. In this passage, the apostle Paul argues that women are excluded from teaching and ruling offices in the church.

He gives as a basis for his position the facts that, one, Adam was formed first by God and not Eve, and two, Eve was deceived and not Adam. What force would this argument have if Paul were referring to Jewish fables? By the way, it's sometimes argued, famously by Krister Stendahl, dean of Harvard, who's arguing for women's ordination, that just as the New Testament endorsed slavery, so it endorsed this patriarchal view of women being in submission to male headship in home and church. No doubt he is a brilliant scholar.

There's no doubt about that. No doubt, his book had great influence, but it misses an important theological point. It is true that Paul addressed slavery as it existed in the first century of the Roman Empire.

It's also true in a book like Philemon, he taught principles that ultimately Christians appeal to subvert slavery, but still, it did not tell slaves to run away from their masters or masters to free their slaves. But the difference between that and Paul's view in 1 Timothy 2 of women's role, in this case in the church, is that the slavery passages, I'll call them, are not grounded in creation and redemption. The passages about women's roles are very grounded in that way.

Here as we saw, Adam was formed first and then Eve, Eve was deceived and not Adam. In Ephesians 5, the male headship in the home passage it is redemption which is the theological point to which Paul appeals to affirm Christ, the man as the head of woman, as Christ is the head of his church, and wives being in submission to their husbands, even as the church is to Christ. It speaks of Christ, who loved the church and gave himself for it.

So, I'm saying the roles of slaves and women are not to be equated in the New Testament teachings, because the former is a social custom that the Bible didn't immediately address, although it gave principles that ultimately overturned it. But it did not ground slavery in creation and redemption, which the Bible does do for the role of women in home and church. The main point right now is, if Paul is referring to parables or fables, what strength would that have in his argument to Timothy in

chapter 2 of his first letter? Most convincing are Paul's uses of the Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Let us turn to those passages. As we will see later, the Bible's main passage on original sin is Romans 5:12 through 21. I'm just going to jump down to 18 and 19.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. He doesn't repeat the names of the two heads, but plainly it is Adam and Christ. I don't know how many commentaries on Romans I have, perhaps a dozen.

I don't know many. Everyone acknowledges that. Likewise, 19, for as by the one man's disobedience, plainly Adam's disobedience, the many were made sinners.

So also by the one man's obedience, plainly Christ, the many will be made righteous. Verse 14 says that Adam was the type of one who was to come. Again, I'm going to go through verse by verse in this very important original sin passage.

But for now, Adam and Christ Jesus are there. The grace of that one man, Christ Jesus, abounded for many, verse 15. There's no question Paul is talking about Adam and Christ.

Would his argument hold if Adam is merely an invented figure in a parable? So, for example, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus is not used outside of that as if he were a historical person because he's not. He's a parabolic person, to make a very important point. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 15:21 and 22 are classical verses concerning the two Adams.

Verse 20, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. In the preceding eight verses, Paul, very honestly, is one of the two things that brought me to the Lord as a 21-year-old reading the Bible. One was the doctrine of the Trinity.

Of course, I had heard of the Trinity before, having been a churchgoer. But now I saw it in Paul all over the place. And I thought nobody made that one up.

That'd be a very bad doctrine to invent because it's so mysterious. The other thing was the honesty of God in 1 Corinthians 15:12 to 19, to actually contemplate publicly, if you will, in this letter, what would have obtained if Christ had not risen. The Corinthians were confused.

As a matter of fact, they did believe in Jesus being crucified and risen, but they were having problems conceptualizing the resurrection of the body. Because what they were doing was, having seen decaying bodies, dead bodies, corpses, they extrapolated that and thought, oh, to use our language today, is God going to raise

up zombies? They just couldn't conceive of it. As Paul develops his thoughts here, the main idea is transformation.

Even as God takes flowers and so forth in his natural world and plants and transforms them, the seed you plant does not look like the flower that comes or the plant that grows. In a similar way, the body that's buried will be very different. It'll be the same body, this personal identification and continuity, but it'll be a glorious, he says, immortal, imperishable, powerful, glorious body, even spiritual, that is dominated by the Holy Spirit.

In any case, verse 20, but in fact, 1 Corinthians 15, after contemplating what would have happened if Jesus weren't raised, basically the Christian faith would collapse. We'd still be in our sins. The apostles would be liars because they testified that God did raise Christ and so forth.

Those who have died would have perished. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. There's his affirmation.

The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Jesus is our prototype. Even as he was raised, he will be raised.

Now, there's a big difference. The prototype is our Lord and Savior. He will help.

His resurrection is the cause of our resurrection. For as by a man came death, plainly Adam, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead, plainly Christ. Here, the names are used, 1 Corinthians 15:22.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. Adam brought death. Christ brings life.

The resurrection chapter is correctly named. Most convincing are 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.

How foolish would he 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 argument were false? For just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made righteous, so also through the obedience of the one man, the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19. Would this be true if Adam were merely a symbol for humankind and not an historical individual? I think not.

Because of the way in which the New Testament speaks of Adam and Eve, I'm compelled to regard them as historical figures in Genesis 1 and 2. This put me down as affirming the historicity of Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman. Back

to our different views of the origin of humankind, I said I would return to theistic evolution and, as a matter of fact, reject it. It is time to do that.

Was Adam created from a previously existing creature? Of the three Christian options, that is, options held by Christians, fiat or young earth creationism, theistic evolution, and progressive or old earth creationism. Only the two creationist positions would answer this question. No, Adam was not made from a previously existing primate.

While theistic evolution would answer in the affirmative, yes, he was. This question seems easily settled on the basis of the Hebrew exegesis 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 man in particular.

Genesis 1:26 to 29 tells of God's resolve to create human beings and to give them dominion over the other creatures. Genesis 1:26 through 29, then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. That's God's resolve.

So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them. And God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And so, the text goes on. God followed through with his plan and created man and woman, verse 27. God blessed the first pair, told them to have children and fill the earth, and gave them dominion over the rest of creation, verses 28 and 29.

Genesis 2 goes into more detail as to how God created our first parents. We proceed with an exegesis of Genesis 2:7, ESV. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Now the Lord God formed man. The word *yatsar* means to form or fashion. The BDB, Brown, Driver, Briggs *Dictionary, Lexicon* 427.

It is used by human potters to form pots of clay. Here it is certainly used of God. The lexicon suggests that a divine potter forms man.

This looks like a good suggestion when we consider the material from which he fashioned the first man. God used *afar*, which is dry earth or dust, lexicon 779. Lexicon goes on to say that this word is used, quote, specifically as the material of the human body, close quote, and this is Genesis 2, 7 and 319.

God, the divine potter, fashioned a man, a human being, from the dry earth or dust, quote, from the ground, close quote. Erickson shows how some theistic evolutionists have claimed that dust in Genesis 2:7 is symbolic. They argue on the basis that this text fits with their conception of God's using a previously existing animal in the creation of man.

I find this unjustified from the plain sense of dust in 2:7, from the plain sense of 2:7, and the use of dust in 3:19. In that text, God curses Adam for his sin, quote, by the perspiration of your face, nostrils stands for the face. We would say by the perspiration of your brow, you will eat food until you return, infinitive construct with a pronominal suffix, until you're returning to the ground, for from it, you were taken, pure and hence passive, for you are dust and to dust you will return a close quote.

Dust here cannot mean a previously existing creature. The man 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 man 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 2:20b to 22 NIV records, quote, but for Adam, no suitable helper was found.

So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a 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 he brought her to the man, close quote. Theistic evolution also relates to the rest of Genesis 2 and 7. We read, quote, and he, God, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a nephesh hayah.

BDB gives a living, living, breathing animal as the meaning of this expression, 6, 5, 9, and notes that it's used for animals as well. This is correct. By virtue of God's creative act, the animals are called living beings in 1:20 and 1:24.

In 1:30, the land, air, and sea creatures are said to have the breath of life in them. So, it will not do, as I think Birkhoff says, to say God's in-breathing to Adam was God's imparting a soul to him. That's not right.

Does Adam have a soul? Yes. Is that the focus of this narrative? No. It means God animated him.

He caused him to come alive. 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 too.

The text will not allow the theistic evolutionary conception of a previously existing creature here either. Man became a living creature as a result of God's breathing into him. It will not do to claim God's breathing was the impartation of a soul into a living primate.

The 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 living beings too, by virtue of the breath of life from God. I thus conclude that an exegesis of Genesis 2:7 precludes a theistic evolutionary view of man's beginnings.

Man was a special creation of God who used only loose earth from the ground as raw material for his creation. After shaping a body for Adam, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The result was that Adam became a living, breathing being, something he was not before.

God also gave the animals the breath of life, but God is not pictured as breathing directly face to face, so to speak, into them as he was as he is pictured with Adam. There is thus an intimacy present in God's creation of his highest creature, man, 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 that explains that difference to which we will turn our attention in the next lecture. Thank you very much.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the doctrines of humanity and sin. This is session number three, The Origin of Humanity, Five Views.