

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORICITY OF ADAM (PART I)

The obsessive fixation on Zombies appears to be more than a passing cultural fad. There are video games that have captured the market with these human-like mindless reanimated corpses who stalk the land looking for human flesh to devour. A growing list of movies (*The Night of the Living Dead*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *Zombie Land*, to mention only a few) also accents this theme. I recently saw a TV reality show that was designed around how to prepare for the coming zombie apocalypse as if it was a potential threat! But the notion that there are, in fact, some beings who look like humans but really are not fully or completely human is considered by many professing Evangelicals a historical reality. How so? Over the past few years a growing number of Christians have embraced the claims of Darwinian evolutionists that mankind evolved over millions of years from a common ape-like ancestor. A number of hypotheses have been proposed to try and harmonize Christianity with Darwinian evolution. We are told by some of these zealous advocates that man's early ancestors were *human-like* creatures, but were not fully human. They were *homo-sapiens*, broadly speaking, but not *homo-divinitas* (having the image of God). According to this line of thought, man evolved over millions of years. These brutes had the physical appearance of human beings, but lacked that all-important image of God. So about 10,000 years ago God selected a couple of these creatures and bestowed on them His image and thus Adam and Eve suddenly made their appearance. The BioLogos Foundation has been in the forefront of this movement. Here is their statement: "Genetic evidence shows that humans descended from a group of several thousand individuals who lived about 150,000 years ago. This conflicts with the traditional view that all humans descended from a single pair who lived about 10,000 years ago. While Genesis 2-3 speaks of the pair Adam and Eve, Genesis 4 refers to a larger population of humans interacting with Cain. One option is to view Adam and Eve as a historical pair living among many 10,000 years ago, chosen to represent the rest of humanity before God. Another option is to view Genesis 2-4 as an "everyman" story, a parable of each person's individual rejection of God. BioLogos does not take a particular view and encourages scholarly work on these questions."¹ That last statement needs some qualification. A number of high profile people associated with BioLogos have in the past explicitly repudiated *any* notion that Adam and Eve were in fact historical figures. The most bold is Peter Enns, who served as senior fellow of Biblical Studies for the BioLogos Foundation up until 2012. Enns recently published a book entitled *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins*. (Brazos Press, 2012). In it Enns declares outright that there was no historical Adam, especially in the way Christians have understood for over 2,000 years – and appeals to the Apostle Paul and his claims in Romans 5:12-21 and I Cor. 15:20-49 carry no weight with Enns at all. Why? Because Enns claims that Paul was wrong!²

I. THE FIRST MAN: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Q. 16: Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

Answer: The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Enns and the BioLogos crowd repeatedly declare that the denial of the historicity of Adam (and the events described in Genesis 2-3 has absolutely *NO* bearing whatsoever on the gospel.³ Robert Strimple astutely points out that the question "Was Adam a historical person?" is really the question "Was the Fall a real event in human history?" For if Adam is simply that which stands for the truth about every person who ever lived, from the very beginning of that person's life, what does that mean? That means that sin is simply a part of what it means to be human!⁴

II. SIN: PART OF MAN'S BEING?

If sin is simply one aspect of what it means to be human, how can we speak of the *guilt* of sin? If it is the case that "to err is (simply) human," there is nothing for which to be forgiven. Is God to "forgive" me for being what he created me to be – a human being? Strimple issues this solemn warning: These

Christians who actually deny the historicity of Adam and the Biblical account of his special, direct creation by God and his subsequent fall into sin, and yet continue to speak about a “Fall.” But because their evolutionary presuppositions make it impossible for them to believe that there was a first man created perfect morally by God and in fellowship with God, that historic Christian term, “Fall,” simply becomes for them a *symbol* of the fact that mankind is not morally perfect, and never was. But that is to deny that there was a real Fall in history at all.

III. NO FALL, NO REDEMPTION, NO GOSPEL?

The Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, teaches us that man was created “very good” (Gen. 1:31) – and that expression as applied to a rational, moral, religious being like man must mean very good rationally, morally, and religiously – and that’s exactly what Paul says by implication in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 in speaking of the new man in Christ: that man was originally created as the image of God, characterized by knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. If Adam never really lived as pure and perfect man, God’s unblemished image, then Ecclesiastes 7:29 is not true in teaching that God made man morally upright, but they have sought out many evil devices. But, mark it well, without a doctrine of the Fall, there is no hope of Redemption. There is no “Good News!” There is no Biblical Christianity! That’s what is at stake here; nothing less than that.

CONCLUSION: Another of my former professors at Westminster was Richard Gaffin, who recently wrote concerning Enns’ radical proposal. “If we ask, however, what for Enns the gospel confidently deemed not to be at stake is, the answer is anything but adequate. He says repeatedly that the gospel, especially for Paul, is about the death and resurrection of Christ. But he does not say what it is about these events that make them the core of the gospel, nor give any indication how they accomplish salvation from sin and its consequences. There is not even a brief explanation, which his readers might reasonably expect, why, for instance, it is “of first importance” in the gospel Paul preached that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,” and therefore, “that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4), or what it means that he “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25), to quote another New testament gospel summary. Enns is silent about how Christ’s death functions for the salvation of sinners – a silence to which he is hardly entitled, given his assertion that the cross is at the heart of the gospel that he is concerned to assure his readers is not put in jeopardy by his views on Adam and sin. Unsurprisingly, in light of what has already been noted about his view of sin, there is no mention of the death of Christ as God’s unparalleled display of his great love for guilty sinners. It does not enter the picture for him that the cross manifests the depths of God’s mercy in establishing permanent peace and reconciliation with sinners by propitiating his just and holy wrath against their sin and so removing the guilt that their sin incurs. It is difficult to see what place, if any, Enns sees for the penal substitutionary aspect of the atonement taught in Scripture. Beyond its exemplary aspect, Christ’s death appears to be no more than the necessary precondition for his resurrection as the event that overcomes the power of sin and death.”⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://biologos.org/questions/evolution-and-the-fall>

² Enns says that Paul (and even Jesus) were typical first century Jews. As such, the Apostle was hopelessly ignorant about a great many things. Enns declares, “We can safely add other examples: Paul’s world did not include the Western hemisphere the arctic poles; reproductive barrenness is solely the woman’s fault; the world was created by discreet acts of God in relatively recent history, not through an evolutionary process over millions and billions of years... Most important, this would also include Paul’s understanding of humanity as created by God in a discrete act, not by a lengthy process that involved common descent. We are fully warranted in concluding that Paul shared with his contemporaries certain assumptions about the nature of physical reality, assumptions that we now know are no longer accurate.” (p. 110) Enns hubris does not stop with Paul. Regarding Jesus, he writes, “Jesus seems to attribute authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses (e.g. John 5:46-47)... I do not think that Jesus’ status as the incarnate Son of God requires that statements such as John 5:46-47 be understood as binding historical judgments of authorship. Rather, Jesus here reflects the tradition that he himself inherited as a first-century Jew and that his hearers assumed to be the case.” (p. 168).

³ Enns, *The Evolution of Adam* p. XIX, 92, 95, 102, 123, 143.

⁴ Robert Strimple, *Was Adam Historical?* The following sections are taken from this excellent analysis by Strimple who was one of my professors at Westminster.

⁵ Richard Gaffin, Translator’s forward to J.P. Versteeg, *Is Adam a ‘Teaching Model’ in The New Testament?* (P & R, 2013 p. XVI, XVII).