

# Adam and Evolution

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This is a series of posts that I originally published on my blog on November 28, 2014 – December 8, 2014.<sup>1</sup> I have combined all the posts into a single document for ease of reference.

## Introduction

The question of “Adam and Evolution” has become a hot topic lately among those who hold a high view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Three years ago, C. John Collins wrote *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, in which he argued that they did, but opened the door a bit to allow for the permissibility of a form of evolution in which Adam could have non-human ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Two years ago, Peter Enns published *The Evolution of Adam*, in which he argued against the traditional understanding of Adam as a real, historical person.<sup>3</sup> He acknowledged that Paul thought Adam was a real, historical individual. But just as Paul believed in a three-tiered universe (Phil 2:10) without making that belief normative for us, so his view of Adam was part of his cultural context but not part of the authoritative Word of God for us. Last year, Zondervan came out with *Four Views of the Historical Adam*, featuring a young earth creationist (William D. Barrick), an old earth creationist (the aforementioned C. John Collins), an advocate of an archetypal but still historical Adam (John Walton), and an evolutionary creationist who rejects a historical Adam, a view similar to that of Enns (Denis Lamoureux).<sup>4</sup> And now hot off the press this month, comes the multi-author volume, *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*, edited by Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves.<sup>5</sup> This last volume looks like it will be a very helpful one in terms of addressing the potential repercussions of evolutionary views for the doctrines of the Fall and original sin.

The immediate event that prompted me to write this series of posts was hearing the four authors of the Zondervan book interact on a panel at the ETS Annual Meeting in San Diego on November 20, 2014. This piqued my interest, and so I’ve decided to delve a bit more into this topic. My aim in this series of posts is not to argue for a certain position, but to accomplish three things.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://upper-register.typepad.com/blog/2014/11/adam-and-evolution-part-1-introduction.html>

<sup>2</sup> C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Barnett and Ardel B. Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Counterpoints: Bible & Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, eds., *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

First, I want to clarify what the questions are. It is not simply one question, "Did Adam and Eve really exist?" As I mulled over this issue, it became clear to me that this is a very complex question with a whole raft of questions that are all entangled and involved with one another. In my third post, I will list all the questions I can think of and group them into five clusters. I may not cover every single conceivable question, but I hope I will have gotten most of them on the table so that we can see just how tangled and complex this issue is.

Second, I want to show that there is a spectrum of views on these questions. It is not a binary option of historical Adam versus a denial of the same, or of an evolutionary scenario for the origin of man versus a literal interpretation of Genesis 2:7, 21-23. From what I can tell, based on the four books mentioned above, there are at least seven different views out there on the question of how to integrate the Genesis account of the creation of Adam and Eve with the modern theory of evolution, understood as including an evolutionary model in which *homo sapiens* evolved from hominids. Two of the seven views (young earth creationism and old earth creationism) reject any evolutionary scenario for man since they deny that Adam had living ancestors. The other five views are a spectrum of different types of evolutionary creationism, four of which affirm a historical Adam. That in itself is interesting. It proves that holding to evolution does not necessarily entail a denial of a historical Adam. I am sure that there are other options within the broad label "evolutionary creationism" than the ones I will list here. These are just the ones I know about that are currently live options being discussed in the evangelical world. The conception that this is a binary debate must be let go!

Third, I want to try to figure out, if possible, where the line should be drawn on the spectrum of these views if we want to uphold traditional Augustinian and Reformed theology of the federal headship of Adam, the Fall, and original sin. To me this is the key issue – the theological issue. Evangelicals may have different ways of handling the Genesis account of the creation of Adam and Eve, and we may have different ways of trying to integrate the Genesis account with the theory of evolution, but at the end of the day what those of us who are Reformed in our theology want to know is which of these interpretations/integrations are consistent, minimally, with an Augustinian understanding of original sin, but more particularly, with a Reformed understanding of Adam's federal headship. I will argue that of the five views that integrate the biblical account of Adam and Eve with an evolutionary scenario for the origin of man, only three stand "above the line" as within the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy and that the other two fall "below the line" and should not be adopted by those who consider themselves Reformed, that is, who hold to the two-Adams construction of federal theology based on Paul's teaching in Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15. But I am getting ahead of myself.

## **My Attitudinal Approach**

The question of Adam and evolution is just one example of a bigger set of similar problems that we as Christians living in the modern scientific age have to deal with. My approach to these sorts of issues is the same. Whether we are talking about the heliocentric model of the solar system, the age of the earth, biological evolution, the modern view of homosexuality as a fixed orientation – you name it – I think we should strive as much as possible to reduce or eliminate

the apparent conflict between the Bible and science or empirical evidence or experience or whatever it is that is coming into conflict with traditional understandings of the Bible. I don't believe it does any good to adopt a rigid, militant, literalistic reading of the Bible that is inherently anti-science and anti-evidence, stopping our ears and closing our eyes to extra-biblical sources of information. All truth is God's truth. I am convinced that general revelation cannot in principle contradict special revelation. God is the author of both and God cannot contradict himself.

On the other hand, both modes of revelation require interpretation. Divine revelation in Scripture has priority over scientifically interpreted general revelation. The human mind is darkened by sin and is prone to misunderstanding and misinterpreting the world due to the noetic effects of sin. But empirical evidence and scientific reasoning based thereon can also cause us to go back and reexamine our traditional readings of Scripture. That was certainly the case in the 17th century when the church began to realize that the heliocentric model of the solar system was confirmed by observational evidence and that it did not contradict the Bible if interpreted less literally. Even more importantly, the church eventually realized that there were no sea-walls of theological principle blocking such a shift in interpretation. It's a hermeneutical spiral. We have to keep wrestling with the text and with the science, but ultimately our allegiance is to what God has revealed about himself, about man, and about the world in his inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word.

Christians who do not want to check their brains at the door of the church need some freedom to explore and think these things through. Don't forget that many Christians are scientists, engineers, university professors, and highly educated people. I'm not a scientist, but I love science because it is one way of thinking God's thoughts after him and showing how all creation is the theater of his glory. I think all Christians should love science. We should not fear it. We should not keep our covenant kids away from it and try to fill their brains with pseudo-science out of fear that they will lose their faith by taking a geology or biology class at a secular university. Our attitude should be open-minded and fearless. I say to the secular scientist, "You say you've got evidence that challenges my biblical worldview? Bring it on. Let's hash it out. I'm not afraid of the truth. My God is the author of all truth." Trusting in our sovereign God, we can handle the truth. We as Christians have for too long adopted a posture of fear, defensiveness and retreat. I believe we need to develop a science-positive attitude. We need to encourage the body of Christ to assume that science is on the side of truth, that we have nothing to be afraid of by bringing out everything into the light and hearing all sides, arguments, evidence, and interpretations of evidence.

We as Reformed Christians believe that God is the sovereign creator and sustainer of all things, so we have the most reason to be absolutely fearless as we seek to understand the harmony that already exists between God's revelation in nature and his revelation in Scripture, even if we can't perfectly see that harmony at present.

Of course, there are also those "sea walls," that is, limits and boundaries of large-scale theological convictions derived from a holistic reading of Scripture and developed over centuries of theological reflection. In the present case, the standard evolutionary scenario of the origins of man seems to run up against some pretty big theological principles like original sin and the two-

Adams structure of covenant (federal) theology. We have to take those principles into account, and we would be fools to tear down in a day such walls and bulwarks that have been built up over centuries of theological reflection going back at least to Augustine.

My goal in this series of posts is not to come up with “the solution” to the problem, but to explore the problem, lay it out, wrestle with it, and try to get a feel for where the boundaries are. This is just the beginning of a conversation, not the end of it. I welcome your feedback.

## What’s Driving Adam Revisionism?

By “Adam revisionism” I mean reinterpretations of the biblical account of Adam and Eve. This revisionism can take different forms. The most extreme form would be denying that Adam and Eve were real, historical individuals. In this case, the biblical references to Adam and Eve, not only in Genesis but in the New Testament, must be reinterpreted so that Adam and Eve become archetypes or symbols – either of all mankind or of Israel. Less extreme forms of revisionism want to retain the historicity of Adam and Eve, but take the formation of Adam out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7) and the formation of Eve out of Adam’s rib or side (Gen 2:21-23) non-literally, thereby allowing for the possibility that Adam and Eve had hominid ancestors.

What is the scientific reasoning that is driving Adam revisionism? At this point, I want to summarize the scientific reasoning for human evolution as simply and accurately as I can. In doing so, I am not saying that I agree with all of the scientific reasoning here. I simply want to understand what it is. Much of it stems from the burgeoning field of genomics, a field that the Christian geneticist Dr. Francis Collins (Director of the National Institutes of Health since 2009) pioneered when he was the director of the Human Genome Project from 1993 to 2008. I am relying on the work of Dr. Collins and his organization, BioLogos. I hope my summary is accurate, but since I’m not trained in genetics and biology, I may oversimplify things at points. I hope my scientifically literate readers will alert me where I have erred or oversimplified.

First, there is the fact that we share approximately 96% of our DNA with chimpanzees and gorillas. Similarities include not only having many genes in common but having many genes in the same sequence. Biologists have long known this, but in the past decade, this has been strikingly confirmed, since the human genome was sequenced in 2003, the chimpanzee genome was sequenced in 2005, and the gorilla genome was sequenced in 2012. As a result, biologists think that gorillas split off from a common ancestor shared by humans and chimpanzees about 10 million years ago, and then chimpanzees and humans split from each other later, about 6 million years ago.

Second, there is the fact that chimpanzees and gorillas have 24 pairs of chromosomes, but humans have 23. At first this may seem to be an argument for discontinuity between humans and primates. But on closer inspection, it seems to support common ancestry. Geneticists think the reason humans have 23 chromosome pairs is that chromosome 2 in humans looks for all the world like a combination of what were two separate chromosomes in primates, thus explaining the reduction from 24 to 23. To understand this argument, you have to get into the weeds a bit and study “centromeres” (the central X-part of the chromosome) and “telomeres” (the tips of the

chromosomes). Go to the link below and watch the video by Kelsey Luoma which has nice images that will help you to visualize what is going on with chromosome 2 in humans. It is truly fascinating.<sup>6</sup>

Third, the fact that we share unusual genetic material such as pseudogenes, endogenous retroviral elements (ERVs), and junk DNA. Pseudogenes are genes that have been damaged in some way and no longer function as genes.<sup>7</sup> Not only do we share such genes with primates, the location and sequence of the DNA is in many cases the same. We also share genes with primates that are no longer functional for us but that remain functional in primates. With regard to endogenous retroviral elements (ERVs), these are bits of foreign DNA that have gotten into our genetic code by means of viral infections.<sup>8</sup> Humans share many of these bits of retroviral DNA with chimpanzees and gorillas. Junk DNA refers to DNA that exists between genes and which does not serve any known function in the RNA transcription process by which DNA is used to encode and create proteins. Again, humans and primates have many stretches of identical junk DNA in common. I am aware that recent studies have shown that so-called junk DNA may in some cases actually serve a purpose. However, these studies have only shown functionality in a small percentage of cases.

These facts aren't open to dispute. The dispute arises when we begin making scientific inferences about human origins on the basis of these facts. How do we explain the fact that we share so much of our DNA with chimpanzees and gorillas, including the strange coincidences and anomalies? It could be that God reused the same genetic template multiple times to create different species. But why? Why would he repeat unnecessary pseudogenes, ERVs, and junk DNA? Another plausible explanation is that humans, chimpanzees, and gorillas descend from a distant common ancestral population. To be sure, this is not the only possible explanation for the evidence, but it is a reasonable explanation, even a compelling one to many.

Many Christians are impressed by this genetic evidence and the scientific reasoning based upon it. This is what is driving Adam revisionism among some evangelicals. As a result, traditional beliefs about Adam have been subject to questioning. Does the Bible really claim, as part of its affirmative teaching, that Adam's body was formed directly by God, apart from hominid ancestry?

The above evidence suggests common ancestry. But there is another issue, and that is the question whether all humans descend from a single male-female pair. Studies in population genetics seem to rule that out. According to one scientific study by Francisco Ayala et al, "human ancestral populations could never have been smaller than two or three thousand individuals at any time over the last several million years."<sup>9</sup>

This leads many Christians to ask further questions. Does the Bible really claim, as part of its affirmative teaching, that Adam and Eve were the only humans before being expelled from the garden and that all humans descend by ordinary generation from Adam and Eve? You can see

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<sup>6</sup> <http://biologos.org/blog/where-is-the-genetic-evidence-for-evolution>

<sup>7</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudogene>

<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endogenous\\_retrovirus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endogenous_retrovirus)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/91/15/6787.full.pdf>

how it leads some to go even further and give up on the concept of Adam and Eve as real historical individuals altogether. I don’t think it is necessary, but it is important to at least understand why some feel driven to go that far.

## Five Clusters of Questions

Now that we have a sense of the genomic evidence for human evolution that is pushing some evangelicals to revise the traditional understanding of Adam (“Adam revisionism”), we now need to get our bearings on the questions that must be asked as we attempt to navigate these troubled waters. There are many questions, but it seems to me that they can be conveniently grouped into five clusters. As you will see, these five clusters of questions are inter-related and overlapping.

### First Cluster: Questions Concerning the Historicity of Adam

1. Are we to understand the Genesis narratives about Adam and Eve as making a referential claim that these were real, historical individuals?
2. Can the opening chapters Genesis be read as claiming that Adam is symbolic of Everyman, or of Israel, or is archetypal, or some combination of these?
3. Is the Hebrew word *adam* in some of its occurrences a designation for “mankind” inclusive of male and female? Most scholars would say that a generic/archetypal meaning obtains in at least some instances (e.g., Gen 1:26-27; 5:2), clearly not in others (e.g., Gen 5:3-5), but what about Gen 2:7?
4. When does the Hebrew word *adam* function as a proper name (“Adam”)?
5. Do all of the instances of *adam* with the definite article in Gen 2-3 where it is typically translated “the man” necessarily refer to the individual named Adam or can some of these instances be archetypal?
6. Did the other Old Testament authors believe in the historicity of an individual named Adam (1 Chron 1:1; Job 31:33; Hos 6:7)?
7. Did Jesus (Matt 19:4-6), Paul (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 11:8-9, 12; 15:22, 45-49; 1 Tim 2:13-14), and other New Testament writers (Luke 3:38; Jude 14), believe in the historicity of an individual named Adam?
8. Is their belief part of the Bible’s affirmative, authoritative teaching, or merely an incidental feature deriving from the human authors’ cultural context?
9. If we say it is not incidental but authoritative, how do we deal with Phil 2:10 where Paul refers to a three-tiered cosmos (“in heaven and on earth and under the earth”) in an incidental manner?

### Second Cluster: Questions Concerning the Interpretation of the Formation Account

The formation account is Gen 2:7, 21-23:

“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 ... So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to

fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" (ESV)

1. How literally must we interpret this account? What are the exegetical and biblical-theological criteria that should guide us in making that determination?
2. Did God literally form Adam's body out of the dust of the ground and then breathe life into him per a literal interpretation of Gen 2:7? Or does "and the man became a living creature" imply that he was not alive prior to God's inbreathing a soul into him?
3. Could Gen 2:7 be interpreted less literally to mean that man's body is made out of the common elements of the earth while allowing for intervening biological steps?
4. Or could the forming of man "of dust from the ground" merely be affirming man's mortality (Gen 3:19; Ps 90:3; 103:14; Eccl 12:7)?
5. Is it permissible to interpret Gen 2:7 in a way that envisions Adam having living ancestors?
6. Did God literally put Adam to sleep and form Eve out of Adam's "rib/side" per a literal interpretation of Gen 2:21-23?
7. Or could God's action of "making/building" Adam's "rib/side" into a woman be interpreted less literally, e.g., as some sort of DNA transfer or cloning, or as a symbolic "division" of the archetypal "man" of Gen 1:26-27 into complementary "halves" of male and female?

#### Third Cluster: Questions Concerning Providentially Guided Natural Processes

1. Does the Bible leave room for the idea that God providentially guided and used evolutionary processes to create the human body, which would require that Adam had biological ancestors?
2. If Adam did have biological ancestors, should we view them as image-bearing humans having souls, or as pre-human hominids having human-like bodies but lacking souls?
3. If we say that God could have used evolutionary processes to form man, were these providentially-guided natural processes sufficient to make human persons who bear the divine image and have souls?
4. Or would these natural processes have had to be supplemented by supernatural divine intervention to make human persons who bear the divine image and have souls?

#### Fourth Cluster: Questions Concerning the Fall and Original Sin

1. Are the Augustinian doctrines of the Fall and original sin biblical and crucial to maintain?
2. Are the Reformed doctrines of the federal headship of Adam, the covenant of works, the breaking of the covenant of works, and the imputation of Adam's sin biblical and crucial to maintain?
3. Do these doctrine require that Adam and Eve existed alone in the pre-Fall situation, or can these doctrines be reformulated in reference to a population of pre-Fall humans?

4. Was there a historical moment when all mankind moved from a state of innocence to a state of condemnation (the Fall)?
5. Is it theologically permissible to affirm that humans "sinned" in some sense (without guilt being reckoned to their account) before Adam broke the covenant?
6. Is it theologically permissible to affirm that humans died before Adam broke the covenant?
7. Did original sin and guilt come upon the human race at one time because of Adam's one transgression (Augustine)?
8. Or is becoming a sinner something that people experience individually and independently throughout history (Pelagius)?

#### Fifth Cluster: Questions Concerning the Unity of the Human Race

1. What is the theological rationale behind the genetic unity of the human race and the notion that all humans descend from Adam and Eve by ordinary generation?
2. Does Acts 17:26 ("he made from one man every nation of mankind") teach that all humans are the biological offspring of Adam? Or is the "one man" in this verse Noah?
3. Can genetic unity be maintained in some form without affirming that all humans descend from the original male-female pair?
4. Was there a population of image-bearing humans alongside Adam and Eve, or must all image-bearing humans be their biological offspring?
5. Were the origins of man monogenic (one primal population in one geographic location) or polygenic (multiple populations in various locations that later merged)?
6. Does Adam's federal headship and the doctrine of original sin and guilt require that all humans descend from Adam and Eve by ordinary generation?
7. Or could Adam have been appointed as federal head over humans not descending from him by ordinary generation?

These are all of the questions I could think of. I am sure there are more. My main purpose in this post is not to give answers, but to analyze the problem by breaking it down into sub-questions. As you can see, it is a much more complex problem than simply asking, "Was Adam a historical person?" The Zondervan book summarizes the debate as "Four Views on the Historical Adam," but when you read the book and start to unpack the problem, many other important questions come into view and demand our attention. We should not think that we have resolved the problem by answering only one of the questions. We must wrestle with all of the questions if we want to do justice to all of the exegetical, biblical-theological, and systematic implications of the "Adam and Evolution" issue.

## **Seven Options**

As you can see from my previous post, the question is more complex than the binary one, "Was Adam a historical person? Yes or No." There are five clusters of questions and these can be answered in a variety of ways and combinations. In this section, I want to set out a typology of



the seven main options, which are essentially different combinations of answers to the five clusters of question packaged together into a coherent position. In this post, I begin with the first two options, the most traditional ones, both of which deem human evolution to be incompatible with the formation account of Gen 2:7, 21-23.

### 1. Young Earth Creationism

- Historical Adam
- Adam had no living ancestors
- Small-scale adaptation can occur within non-human "kinds"
- Special creation of Adam and Eve per literal interpretation of Gen 2
- Entire human race descends biologically from Adam and Eve
- Adam's headship & historical Fall affirmed
- No animal or human death before the Fall

Since this view envisions a young earth (no older than 10,000 years), there is not enough time to accommodate full-scale evolution, whether of non-human life forms or of humans. However, it should be noted that this view does allow for small-scale adaptive variations within the biblical "kinds." This was formerly called "microevolution," but many young earth creationists seem to have abandoned that term. Young earth creationists certainly do not accept common ancestry, the belief that all living organisms descend from a primordial common ancestor. Young earth creationism rejects all evolutionary scenarios for the origins of man.

### 2. Old Earth Creationism

- Historical Adam
- Adam had no living ancestors
- Some providentially-guided evolution permitted in non-human realm
- Special creation of Adam and Eve per Gen 2 interpreted more or less literally
- Entire human race descends biologically from Adam and Eve
- Adam's headship & historical Fall affirmed
- Animal death before the Fall affirmed

Old earth creationism differs from young earth creationism at two major points: (1) it accepts the age of the earth at around 4.5 billion years, and (2) it accepts animal (but not human) death before the Fall. Like young earth creationism, common ancestry is not affirmed; however, old earth creationism is more open to the notion that God providentially guided evolutionary processes to form new species, as long as this is punctuated by supernatural divine activity along the way to infuse new genetic information into the evolutionary process. With regard to Adam, old earth creationism tends to interpret the Gen 2 formation account more or less literally, although perhaps not as literally as young earth creationists would, yet still in such a way that it would rule out the possibility of Adam having biological ancestors.

This is the view that I have held for the past 20 years and continue to hold today. As a conservative by temperament, I'd like to stay comfortably ensconced in my old earth creationist

cubby hole, even as I peek out from my cubby hole to take a long, hard look at the genomic evidence for human evolution and survey other potential options.

After old earth creationism and young earth creationism, we now transition to views that allow for Adam having ancestors and some sort of evolutionary scenario for the origin of man. The term "evolutionary creationism" is preferred over "theistic evolution," since these Christian thinkers believe that God created life and all living organisms but see evolution as the mechanism God used to do so.

Most of the options that allow for human evolution include a specific scenario or proposed story that allows us to envision the origin of man. Typically, these scenarios or stories take something from science and something from Scripture and then seek to integrate them to provide a plausible account. The only view that doesn't do this is the seventh, most symbolic/non-historical option.

It goes without saying that there are more than five types of evolutionary creationism. Because so many people have applied their creativity to attempt a resolution to the "Adam and Evolution" problem, there are many idiosyncratic scenarios out there. I've only listed the ones I know about and which seem to be live options being discussed today.

### 3. Evolutionary Creationism Type 1

- Historical Adam
- Adam had pre-human hominid ancestors
- Providentially-guided evolution affirmed (common ancestry)
- God used evolution to form Adam's body but not Eve's
- Entire human race descends biologically from Adam and Eve
- Adam's headship & historical Fall affirmed
- Animal death before the Fall affirmed

Evolutionary creationism type 1 accepts living ancestors for Adam. God providentially guided evolution to create a population of non-human hominids with human-like bodies but lacking souls. God chose one pre-human hominid from this population, implanted a soul by supernatural divine intervention, making this creature a bearer of the divine image, and called him Adam. However, Eve was formed apart from animal ancestry out of Adam. There is some ambiguity at this point, but there is a desire to maintain that God formed Eve out of Adam's "side," whether taking this literally, or less literally as some sort of DNA transfer or cloning process. This was the position defended in 1994 by Terry Gray during his trial in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.<sup>10</sup> It is the most conservative and traditional of the evolutionary creationist views. It not only maintains a historical Adam and Eve, the headship of Adam and a historical Fall, it also tries to maintain some notion that Eve was formed out of Adam's "side," although not insisting on a maximally literal reading of Gen 2:21-23.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.asa3.org/gray/evolution\\_trial/response\\_to\\_PMWcharges.html](http://www.asa3.org/gray/evolution_trial/response_to_PMWcharges.html)

#### 4. Evolutionary Creationism Type 2

- Historical Adam
- Adam had pre-human hominid ancestors
- Providentially-guided evolution affirmed (common ancestry)
- God used evolution to create Adam and Eve
- Entire human race descends biologically from Adam and Eve
- Adam's headship & historical Fall affirmed
- Animal death before the Fall affirmed

In this scenario, God used evolution to create a population of pre-human primates or hominids. From that population, he selected a male and a female and gave them souls, calling them Adam and Eve. God appointed Adam to be the federal head of the human race descending from him by ordinary generation.

The main difference with the previous view is that this view has God using evolution to create both Adam and Eve. It takes the formation account of Eve (Gen 2:21-23) in a figurative or symbolic sense, e.g., as referring to the notion that the man and the woman form two "halves" of generic humanity. This may seem like a small difference from the previous view, but it is worth setting apart as a distinct view because it is a bigger step to say that Eve is not genetically "from" Adam in any sense (as Gen 2:21-23; 1 Cor 11:8, 12 seem to teach) and to deny that Adam was literally created "before" Eve (as 1 Tim 2:13 seems to teach). Taking these verses, particularly the ones in Paul, less literally seems to have some theological repercussions with regard to the issue of gender complementarity that may need to be explored further.

There are different variants of this view, mainly depending on how far back in time one pushes the original human pair. They could be pushed back millions of years, at the very beginning of the evolutionary branch where hominids split off from primates like chimpanzees, or they could be seen at the tail end of hominid evolution in more recent history, say 100,000 BC, where we start to see hominins, that is, anatomically human-like creatures, or perhaps even more recently, say 40,000 BC where we see evidence of cultural activity (art, burial, etc.).

#### 5. Evolutionary Creationism Type 3

- Historical Adam
- Adam had pre-human hominid ancestors
- Providentially-guided evolution affirmed (common ancestry)
- Adam as chieftain of a tribe
- Modified monogenic origins
- Adam's headship & historical Fall affirmed
- Animal death before the Fall affirmed

In this scenario, God used evolution to create a population of several thousand pre-human hominins. At some point, God gave them all souls and formed them into a close-knit tribe, and appointed Adam to be the chieftain of the tribe and federal head of the human race. However, this view differs from evolutionary creation types 1 and 2 in holding that not all humans descend

biologically from Adam and Eve. Monogenic origins are nevertheless upheld in a modified form, since all humans are viewed as descending from the initial tribe. Jack Collins writes:

“Even if someone is persuaded that humans had ‘ancestors,’ and that the human population has always been more than two, he does not *necessarily* have to ditch all traditional views of Adam and Eve ... If someone were to decide that there were, in fact, more human beings than just Adam and Eve at the beginning of mankind, then, in order to maintain good sense, he should envision these humans as a single tribe. Adam would then be the chieftain of this tribe (preferably produced before the others), and Eve would be his wife. This tribe ‘fell’ under the leadership of Adam and Eve. This follows from the notion of solidarity in a representative.”<sup>11</sup>

In describing this view, Collins uses an interesting phrase. He says that we must affirm, minimally, that Adam was “at the headwaters of the human race.”<sup>12</sup> If that sounds like a creative phrase intended to buy some wiggle-room, I think you’re right!

I’m not sure Collins himself holds this type of evolutionary creationism. I read him as putting this view on the table for consideration as one that is permissible for Christians of “good sense” to hold if they are convinced by the genetic necessity of a population of humans from the beginning. According to Collins, Derek Kidner put this scenario forward for consideration in his 1967 Tyndale commentary on Genesis.<sup>13</sup>

We have surveyed the first three types of evolutionary creationism. All three of them affirm a historical Adam. All three make an effort to hold on to the notion of the unity of the human race with Adam at the head in some sense. All three maintain the historic Augustinian view of a historical Fall in which Adam’s sin has brought the human race into a state of sin and death. Now, as we approach the last two types of evolutionary creationism, we cross a Rubicon into new territory where these traditional understandings of Adam and the Fall are either revised or rejected.

#### 6. Evolutionary Creationism Type 4

- Historical Adam
- Adam had fully human ancestors
- Providentially-guided evolution affirmed (common ancestry)
- God used evolution to create a population of image-bearing humans; God selected two of them and appointed them to be the head of the human race
- Not all humans descend from Adam and Eve biologically; polygenic origins are permitted
- Adam’s headship & historical Fall affirmed; however, there was sin before the Fall
- Both animal and human death before the Fall affirmed

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<sup>11</sup> C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 120-21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 117, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967), 26-31.

The fourth variety of evolutionary creationism is defended by John Walton. It is based on his programmatic distinction between "material" and "functional" ontology, a distinction he explains more fully in his book, *The Lost World of Genesis One*,<sup>14</sup> that I reviewed on my blog a couple of years ago.<sup>15</sup>

As applied to the creation of Adam and Eve, Walton makes the claim that the formation account (Gen 2:7, 21-23) is not an account of the "material" origins of Adam and Eve as biological specimens but an account of their "functional" role as archetypes for all humanity. Walton is careful to affirm the historicity of the two individuals, Adam and Eve, as well as the historical event of the Fall, but since he does not see a "material" dimension in the formation account, this frees him from having to affirm either that Adam and Eve were the first humans or that they are the biological parents of all other humans.

Walton interprets the statement that God formed Adam "of dust from the ground" (Gen 2:7) non-literally to mean that Adam is mortal. This is supported by the language of the curse, when God said, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19; cp. Ps 90:3; 103:14; Eccl 12:7). The formation of Eve from Adam's "rib/side" (Gen 2:21-23) is likewise interpreted non-literally as showing that male and female represent the two halves of humanity. The account of the formation of both Adam and Eve is thus taken, not as describing their material or biological formation, but as God's establishment of Adam and Eve as of archetypes for all men and women – yet without denying their historicity.<sup>16</sup>

Another feature of Walton's interpretation is that he completely separates the natural headship of Adam from his federal headship, affirming the latter but denying the former. He can find no clear assertion in Scripture that all people descend from Adam by ordinary generation.<sup>17</sup> Walton affirms that God established Adam as the federal or representative head over all humanity, but since this is not rooted in biological paternity, Adam can be head even over those humans who are not his offspring. Walton also affirms that there was a historical moment when Adam disobeyed God and brought disorder into the world and the loss of the prospect of immortality (symbolized by the tree of life).

Further complicating matters, Walton thinks that people (fully image-bearing humans) were dying prior to the existence of Adam and prior to the Fall. They were also engaging in activities that we would now consider "sinful" but were not held accountable for their sins (citing Rom 5:13). So although Walton affirms a historical Adam and a historical Fall, his understanding of the "Fall" is very different from the traditional one. Adam's disobedience as the federal head of the human race caused mankind to become accountable for their sins, but it did not introduce sin into the human race and many generations of humans were already experiencing death before the Fall. Human death before the Fall follows from his interpretation of Gen 2:7 as affirming that man is inherently mortal (made "of dust").

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<sup>14</sup> John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> <http://upper-register.typepad.com/blog/2012/05/review-of-john-h-walton-the-lost-world-of-genesis.html>

<sup>16</sup> See John H. Walton, "A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, 89-118.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

Although Walton himself does not affirm evolution (common ancestry), he acknowledges that his interpretation leaves wide berth for it. Should one be so inclined to adopt it, he puts forward the following hypothetical scenario.<sup>18</sup> God used evolutionary processes to create a population of hominids. At some point, God bestowed the image of God upon this population by a special act. This fully human population was inherently mortal and sinful, but not yet morally accountable. Sometime later, God selected a real human couple, Adam and Eve, and made them the representatives of all humanity. When they disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree, they gained accountability for themselves and for the human race that they represented. As a result, all humans lost the hope of becoming immortal and were doomed to their inherent mortality.

### 7. Evolutionary Creationism Type 5

- No historical Adam
- Because Adam never existed, it makes no sense to ask if he had ancestors
- Providentially-guided evolution affirmed (common ancestry)
- God used evolution to create population(s) of image-bearing humans
- Polygenic origins are permitted
- No headship; no historical Fall; each individual becomes a sinner independently
- Animal and human death have always occurred

If the fourth type of evolutionary creationism takes the formation account archetypally, sublimating the bulk of the account while leaving a minimum residue of historicity, the fifth type evaporates that last remaining bit of historical residue. This view sees the formation account, including the very existence of Adam and Eve, as an incidental, non-revelatory feature of the text with no historical referentiality whatsoever. Denis Lamoureux argues that Gen 1-11 is not to be taken as historically referential narrative, which does not begin until Gen 12. He writes:

“Adam’s existence is based ultimately on an ancient conceptualization of human origins: *de novo* creation ... Since ancient science does not align with physical reality, it follows that Adam never existed.”<sup>19</sup>

If asked whether Paul believed that Adam really existed, advocates of this position would admit that Paul clearly did. But since he was a child of his age, his opinion is not part of the authoritative teaching of Scripture, any more than his incidental use of a three-tiered universe is (“in heaven and on earth and under the earth,” Phil 2:10). Both Lamoureux and Peter Enns appeal to Phil 2:10 as a key part of their hermeneutical strategy.

The denial of the historicity of Adam has major repercussions for the Augustinian concept of original sin. Enns flatly states: “The notion of ‘original sin,’ where Adam’s disobedience is the cause of a universal state of sin, does not find clear – if any – biblical support.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 114-15.

<sup>19</sup> Denis O. Lamoureux, “No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Enns, *The Evolution of Adam*, 125.

Instead of being born sinful because of Adam’s sin, each person becomes a sinner independently. Lamoureux writes: “The nonhistorical first Adam is you and me.”<sup>21</sup> Lamoureux and Enns do acknowledge that sin is a universal fact of the human condition, but cannot explain why everyone inevitably sins.

Here is a table of the seven options so you can compare the views at a glance:

	<b>Historical Adam?</b>	<b>Did Adam have Living Ancestors?</b>	<b>How Were First Humans Created?</b>	<b>All Humans Descend from Adam?</b>	<b>Was There a Historical Fall?</b>	<b>Animal/Human Death Before the Fall?</b>
YEC	Yes	No	Literal interpretation of Gen 2: 7, 21-23	Yes, strict monogenesis	Yes	Animal death – no Human death – no
OEC	Yes	No	Literal interpretation of Gen 2:7, 21-23	Yes, strict monogenesis	Yes	Animal death – yes Human death – no
EC-1	Yes	Yes, hominids	God used evolution to form Adam’s body; God formed Eve out of Adam’s side	Yes, strict monogenesis	Yes	Animal death – yes Human death – no
EC-2	Yes	Yes, hominids	God used evolution to create hominids; selected Adam and Eve	Yes, strict monogenesis	Yes	Animal death – yes Human death – no
EC-3	Yes	Yes, hominids	God used evolution to create a tribe; Adam as chieftain	Modified monogenesis	Yes	Animal death – yes Human death – no
EC-4	Yes	Yes, humans	God used evolution to create humans; later appointed Adam as head	No, polygenesis permitted	Yes, but humans “sinned” before the Fall	Animal death – yes Human death – yes
EC-5	No	N/A	God used evolution to create humans	No, polygenesis permitted	No, each individual becomes a sinner	Animal death – yes Human death – yes*

\* Since this view (EC-5) does not affirm the Augustinian concept of the Fall, there is no such thing as a time before the Fall; in this view, then, it would be more accurate to say that animals and humans have always experienced death.

Key:

YEC = Young Earth Creationism

OEC = Old Earth Creationism

EC = Evolutionary Creationism

<sup>21</sup> Lamoureux, *Four Views*, 65.

## Where's the Sea Wall?

We have looked at the entangled clusters of questions surrounding the whole "Adam and Evolution" question. I've laid out seven options (recognizing that there are more options not listed here) for attempting to reconcile the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve with science, either by rejecting or accepting an evolutionary creationist model. In surveying the seven options, it becomes evident that there are two lines which demarcate important conceptual divisions. The first line separates views that say Adam did not have living ancestors (young earth creationism and old earth creationism) from views that say he did (evolutionary creationism types 1–5). The second line separates evolutionary creationist views that place Adam at the headwaters of the human race and that say humans died only after the Fall (types 1–3) from evolutionary creationist views that do not place Adam at the headwaters of the human race and that say humans have always sinned and died (types 4–5). In my view, this is where the line of orthodoxy should be drawn. This is the sea wall.

I include Walton's version of evolutionary creationism (EC-4) on the wrong side of the sea wall, even though he affirms a historical Adam and Eve, because of his view that humans sinned and died before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. In other words, while he affirms a historical "Fall," his understanding of it is significantly different from what is traditionally meant. It does not matter that he holds to a historical Adam, because the reason a historical Adam is so important is because of the historical Fall properly understood as the movement of Adam, representing the human race, from a state of integrity and uprightness, to a state of sin, guilt, condemnation, and death.

When we look at the most radical version of evolutionary creationism (EC-5) we see a more consistent view that denies the historicity of Adam and Eve and thus doesn't just revise but totally denies the concept of a historical Fall of Adam as the representative of the human race. Lamoureux and Enns are both explicit on this point. What is so interesting to me is to observe how it is not really science that is driving these Christian thinkers, since, as I have shown, it is possible to formulate any number of evolutionary scenarios for the origin of man as a biological organism while maintaining a historical Fall (see EC-1, EC-2, EC-3).

If not science, then what is driving them to cross the sea-wall? It would take a longer post to show this, but in my view, it is ultimately their view of Scripture that takes them there. For example, in *The Evolution of Adam* (see Chapter 3), Enns argues that we must interpret Genesis 1–11 by means of what he calls "genre calibration" by comparing Genesis with the Ancient Near Eastern myths such as the Enuma Elish and the Gilgamesh Epic. Since these myths were understood by the ancients as totally ahistorical, fanciful myths (a questionable assumption, as Professor Jack Collins has shown<sup>22</sup>), and since Genesis 1–11 shows evidence of being written in the same conceptual milieu and derived from the same shared culture, it follows that Genesis 1–11 is also ahistorical and ought not to be interpreted as providing us with any historical information about origins. Walton is also very much interested in interpreting Genesis in light of

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 1, "Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Genesis 1–11," pp. 137-60 in Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* This is an excellent treatment of the issues, and though relegated to an appendix, this section of the book should not be overlooked.



the ANE context and comes very close to the same position as Enns, although he still retains a tiny residue of historicity at seemingly arbitrary points. They share the same view of Scripture. They share the same view that Genesis 1–11 is not fundamentally to be read as telling “what actually happened” in referentially historical terms but as giving us something more theological, whether “functional ontology” (Walton) or “Israel’s stories of self-definition” (Enns). They share the same hermeneutic that gives priority to the ANE myths. Enns is just more consistent.

Enns is even aware of positions like EC-1, EC-2, and EC-3, but he dismisses such attempts at reconciling evolution with the Bible as “driven by a perceived theological need to preserve some sort of a first pair in order to preserve Paul’s theology” (as if that were a bad thing!).<sup>23</sup> He says that once we understand what type of literature Genesis 1–11 is (by comparing it with ANE myths) we realize that “these early chapters ... are not history in any normally accepted sense of the word ... They speak another language altogether.”<sup>24</sup> He adds, “The biblical view cannot in any way be joined to modern scientific models” (as EC-1, EC-2, and EC-3 try to do).<sup>25</sup>

I do not think the EC-5 view represented by Enns is within the bounds of orthodoxy – not just because of its reading of Genesis as ahistorical myth, but also because it denies the historical Fall of Adam as the head of the human race. Too many theological issues are at stake. If there is no historical transition of the human race from a state of integrity to a state of condemnation, caused by Adam’s primal covenant-breaking in his role as the natural and federal head of the race, then how do we explain (a) the fact that everyone without exception is a sinner, and (b) the fact that all humans die, even the unborn and infants, before they have had a chance to commit actual sin? And if we deny the historical covenant-transgression of Adam as the federal head of the human race, then wouldn’t it be inconsistent to insist on the historical covenant-obedience of Christ as the second Adam and the federal head of the new humanity, the elect? Paul places the entire scheme of salvation history on the shoulders of these two Adams. To deny the historicity of the first Adam is to undermine the need for the historicity of the second Adam. Why do we even need the incarnation of the Son of God anyway? Couldn’t we just be Unitarians and say that all humans need to try to be good and work on improving their relationship with God?

I am not yet prepared to move from my old earth creationist position in order to adopt any version of evolutionary creationism. However, should any of my old earth creationist friends feel the need to do so, I would encourage them to stay on the right side of the sea wall of a historical Adam and a historical Fall by adopting either EC-1 or EC-2, or if necessary EC-3. I am at this point in tentative agreement with Jack Collins that at least EC-1 and EC-2, and possibly EC-3, are within the bounds of orthodoxy.

It might perhaps be questioned whether EC-3 is within the bounds of orthodoxy, since in contrast with EC-1 and EC-2 it does not insist on strict monogenesis and the traditional “face value” reading of Genesis 5:1ff that all humans are the offspring of Adam and Eve. This is one area that needs more investigation. In the past it has just always been assumed without question that Adam’s federal headship is grounded in his role as the biological ancestor of all mankind. For example, the Westminster Confession says:

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<sup>23</sup> Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, xvii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

“They [= our first parents] being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation” (WCF VI.3).

But is this strict connection between genetics and federal headship biblical? There are two additional verses that can be taken as supporting the notion that all humans are the offspring of the first pair: the fact that the woman is named “Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20 NIV) and the statement of Paul that God “made from one man every nation of mankind” (Acts 17:26 ESV). But both verses are capable of other interpretations. Aside from these verses, there is no logical obstacle (that I can think of) to postulating that God could have ordained Adam to be the federal head of all humanity, all those descending from the original tribe, even of those not genetically Adam’s offspring. I don’t have definitive answers to these questions at this point. It is something that needs to be explored further. If good exegetical and theological arguments can be made for grounding Adam’s federal headship in his natural role as the biological father of humanity, then I will yield and agree that EC-1 and EC-2 are the best evolutionary options for those wanting to uphold a Reformed understanding of Adam’s federal headship and of the Fall.

Although I side with Jack Collins in allowing that it is possible for someone to hold common ancestry without jettisoning historic orthodoxy, I still remain convinced that old earth creationism is the best overall approach. I would like to conclude by quoting something Jack Collins said that puts everything in proper perspective as we wrestle with Scripture in light of science:

“The biologists and paleontologists may explore their own fields of study, and may God bless them in it; at the same time, when they wish to integrate their conclusions into the larger story of human life, they do not automatically speak with expert authority.”<sup>26</sup>

I think that is an important point that needs to be made in order to put this discussion in its proper perspective. Science has legitimate authority, but only within its own sphere. When it seeks to move beyond that sphere to draw conclusions concerning the nature and origin of humanity, it speaks with no more authority than anyone else, for here we are entering into deep questions of metaphysics that cannot be decided by merely empirical means.

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<sup>26</sup> Collins, in *Four Views*, 133.