

The Two Adams

by Johan D.Tangelder.

Who are we? What does it mean to be human in our uprooted world? The question “Who is a human being?” is debated today in ways that previous generations could never have imagined. For example, genetic engineering is the latest phase in medicine’s ongoing mission to treat disease and thereby alleviate human suffering. The rapid advance in the knowledge about human genetics, largely the result of an international initiative known as the Human Genome Project, offers early detection and treatment of fatal diseases, the development of effective, focused vaccines, and even the possibility of gene selection. These new biotechnologies have tremendous implications!

Dr. Scherer, a geneticist at Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children who is working on the chromosome that harbors the disease genes for diabetes and cystic fibrosis, says, “Because of the genome project, we are going to have many new genetic tests available.” And he asks, “Who is going to pay for them? Who will be tested for what conditions, and how will we decide?” These are no hypothetical concerns. *Christianity Today* (Febr.19, 2001) reports that after losing two children to a deadly disease and aborting a fetus that tested positive for the same disease, an unidentified French couple gave birth to France’s first genetically screened baby in November 2000.

Is genetic engineering an attempt to remake life in man’s own image? Do geneticists reduce us to programmed chemical compounds? Is their goal to say what sort of life will be allowed?

Consequent Evolutionism

Where do we come from? What is the purpose of life? What is man’s final destiny? Does it make any real difference what we believe about the origin of human beings? It certainly does!

Carl Sagan argued, “Each human being is a superbly constructed, astonishingly compact, self-

ambulatory *computer*.” Sagan was no friend of Christianity! Evolutionists are directly opposed to the Biblical understanding of what it means to be human. If a human being is no more than a thing, issues like abortion and euthanasia should hardly cause the evolutionists to bat an eyelid. An American University professor is quoted as saying, “Mental defectives do not have the right to life, and therefore might be killed for food - if we develop a taste for human flesh - or for the purpose of scientific experimentation. At the same conference another speaker endorsed a similar argument. “Humans without some minimum of intelligence or mental capacity are not persons...Idiots, that is to say, are not human.” And as far back as 1971, geneticist Bentley Glass promised: “No parents in the future have a right to burden society with a malformed or mentally incompetent child.” In his futurist novel *Winterflight*, theologian Joseph Bayly describes the twin concepts of the rise of technology and the loss of old values, which present a world more frightening than Orwell’s *1984*. A medical doctor says to a father who asks him to treat his son’s hemophilia, “The system, as you call it, is responsible for near-zero level of infant deaths. And childhood, teenage, adult ones, too. Perhaps even more important, the quality of life. No Down’s syndrome, no deformed people, no diabetic children, no cystic fibrosis. This is an improvement of historic importance. When I went to medical school - only twenty-five years ago - we still learned about these conditions and treated them. Yes, and hemophilia. Now, thank God, they’ve been wiped out; they’re just as much off the books as polio then. So we doctors can spend our time maintaining the health of whole persons, not treating handicapped people and chronically ill.” The father said, “Then you know how to treat hemophilia. Stephen is a hemophiliac, and he desperately needs your help. You can give it to him. We have nowhere else to turn.” The doctor answered, “He is ill because of an illegal act on your part. You and your wife were under obligation to observe the law, a law which says that the fetus must be analyzed *in utero* and aborted if defective. You not only disregarded the law, you also failed to have the newborn examined for defects. Had you done either of those things, you would not be faced with this problem today.” How chilling and utterly revolting! Yet these ideas are the logical outcome of a philosophy that maintains that man is no more than a thing.

Pre-Adamic Creatures

How unique is man? Some Christian thinkers advance the theory of theistic evolution. They attempt to make peace with Darwinism by leaving room for some kind of pre-Adamic creature, which - in the course of the evolutionary process - would become the unique creature called Adam. They believe that an evolutionary view of the origin of man does not undermine Biblical revelation. The Dutch zoologist Jan Lever takes this position in his book *Creation and Evolution*.

The First Adam

Who are we? The view that human beings evolved from the animal kingdom is totally incompatible with Biblical Christianity. The Bible insists that we are not simply hairless apes slightly more advanced than other primates, but are accorded an astonishing dignity. We are distinguished from all other creatures. We have been made in the image of God. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen.1:27). Human beings are His workmanship, the crown of His creation, and inconceivably sublime. We are, says the apostle Paul, “the image and the glory of God”(1 Cor.11:7). We believe, therefore, that human dignity is found in “the image of God” and that sets us at odds with the majority in the secular public arena. God has given great dignity to human beings, puny in this vast universe. Because we are created in His image we are more like Him than all the rest of creation. This truth should cause us to treat our fellow humans with the same dignity, worth, and significance God has extended to us. For instance, even the most physically fragile or mentally disabled persons deserve respect as they too share in God’s image by virtue of creation. Jesus said that human beings are of “more value than many sparrows”(Luke 12:7). If we believe the Biblical view of man, it should show in the way we treat people. The theologian Michael Wilkins was right when he said, “Kindness, courtesy, and respect are proper ways of treating persons who have the innate dignity of being created in the image of God.”

Since we are created in the image of God, we have in addition to human personhood, the capacity of personal relations with other human beings. The apostle Paul says that God from one man “made ever nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26). In our world plagued by racial and tribal conflicts, we do well to remember who we are. We are neighbors to other people

regardless of race, color, and social status. “The Lord has bound mankind together by a certain unity,” observed John Calvin, “hence each man ought to concern himself with the safety of all.” He also said, “We ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love, here there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy or unworthy, friend and enemy, since all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves.” In daily life, our solidarity with one another as God’s image bearers requires that we may we never treat anyone as a nonperson. To have a low regard for any people on the basis of color, race, or national origin contradicts the Biblical teaching of the dignity of man. Ethnic jokes, belittling people on the basis of race or culture, are not acceptable. We should have nothing to do with racial discrimination or anti-Semitism. Bigotry towards another race is an affront to God, whose image bearers we are.

The fact that we are created in the image of God gives dignity to work. Since God is a worker, we must work too. And this is precisely what Genesis says we must do. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground’” (Gen.1:26). Mankind’s ruling over other creatures, stewardly subduing the earth, and eating its produce all point to man as a worker. In fact, the Bible calls work a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 3:13). Hence God’s image bearers have the longing for creating things - not, of course, out of nothing, but in the arts, building, science, and technology.

The Fall

Why is the life of God’s image bearer but a span, and cruel death always near? Why has he been called a “frail thing?” Why can people be so brutish? What is the cause of all moral troubles and conflicts? Some evolutionists claim that the source of man’s trouble is not sin but moral deficiency. Others argue that genes govern behavior. In *The Moral Animal*, Robert Wright claims that, “all moral values” are “stratagems of genes.” Death is no more than an inevitable and natural conclusion to life. Life begins, develops, matures and then withers, decays and eventually dies. But according to the Bible, the dreadful truth about man is not a deficiency in his morals or his genes – he is in revolt against his Maker.

His rebellion had a profound impact. In Adam we have fallen. Centuries after Adam's rebellion in Eden, David reflected on the evil actions of human beings: "All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good" (Ps.14:3). The Fall distorted the image of God in human beings. Our sinful nature is one of the most well attested truths of Scripture. We have become sin sick. Our intellect has been distorted with falsehood and pride. Our relationships have been infected by selfishness. Man lives in a collision course with God because "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned"(Rom.5:12). Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones calls the latter "one of the most important verses in the whole Bible from the standpoint of theology." He is right. This verse clearly teaches the universality of sin and the universality of death as its consequence. "The wages of sin is death"(Rom. 6:23a). Therefore, death is not a natural conclusion to life. Death is abnormal. Man was created for life and not death (Gen.2:17; 3:19). If Adam had not sinned, he would not have died. Death is God's judgment. It is His "No" to Adam's rebellion. Obviously, the apostle Paul based his teaching on sin and death on the historicity of the first three chapters of Genesis. Hence Dr. Francis Schaeffer's warning in *Genesis in Space and Time*, "If we take away the historicity of Adam, we are left rather breathless! If we temper with this ordinary way of understanding what is written in the Bible, the structure of Christianity is reduced to only an existential leap."

The Second Adam

Talk about sin and judgment sounds like outdated bad news to modern ears. But the great good news is that our lives do not need to be determined by sin and death. The discovery of the latter is part of the good news of the Gospel when we believe that Jesus is the second Adam. If Adam was not a historical being and the fall not a historical event, then the typology of Christ as the last Adam becomes meaningless. Furthermore, the apostle Paul specifically related the historicity of Adam to the historicity of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-23). Hence the lynchpin of the gospel of hope (Christ's resurrection) is anchored in the historicity of Adam and the Fall.

How can human beings be restored and accepted by God? Obviously, evolutionism cannot

answer this question. “From the theological point of view, an evolutionary derivation of the human body is totally unacceptable,” says Dr. Arthur Custance in *Two Men Called Adam*. “For the plan of redemption hinges on the relationship of two human beings, the First Adam and the Last Adam, the Adam of Genesis and the Lord Jesus Christ of the Gospels whom Paul declares to have been the first Adam’s counterpart.” The restoration process has begun with our redemption in Christ. “The beginning of our recovery of salvation,” said John Calvin, “is in that restoration which we obtain through Christ who also is called the Second Adam for the reason that he restores us to true and complete integrity.” In Adam we are lost in sin, in Christ there is redemption for all who repent and turn to Him in faith. The apostle Paul says that believers in Christ have received a new nature that “is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col.3:10). And as we progress in our Christian faith and continue to grow in the likeness to Christ, we are “being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory”(2 Cor.3:18). Do we earnestly pursue practical holiness, the entire self-consecration to God? Or have personal conflicts, or controversy, or party-spirit, or worldliness hindered our walk with the Second Adam? All Christians, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or unknown, are called to pursue holiness, to model their lives around the second Adam. He is the divine model for true discipleship. To follow Him is to practice self-renunciation, self-surrender, and self-sacrifice.

Christians live with eternity in mind. We have no abiding city. We are hope-filled pilgrims traveling as strangers through this world. Here we have no abiding city. We are eagerly waiting for the return of the Second Adam and the complete restoration of the image of God to its glorified state. We “will become conformed to the likeness of his Son,” says the apostle Paul (Rom.8:29). Looking ahead to what we shall become at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of this age, the apostle John says, “Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Conclusion

Who are we? Do we have dignity or are we throw-aways? We are not junk. We are precious in the sight of God. We are His image bearers, created for His glory. From conception to natural death

each human being is precious in the sight of God. Treasure the wonder and the mystery of our humanity! When David asked the question, “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” he answered it in his own Psalm. And the answer turns out to be truly God honoring, clearly stating the purpose of our existence.

“You (O Lord) have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet; all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Ps.8:5-9).