

# FOUNDERS JOURNAL

FROM FOUNDERS MINISTRIES | WINTER 2017 | ISSUE 107

## CREATION AND THE FALL





# FOUNDERS

MINISTRIES

[wwwFOUNDERS.org](http://wwwFOUNDERS.org)

Founders Ministries is committed to encouraging the recovery of the gospel and the biblical reformation of local churches. We believe that the biblical faith is inherently doctrinal, and are therefore confessional in our approach. We recognize the time-tested *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689) as a faithful summary of important biblical teachings.

The *Founders Journal* is published quarterly (winter, spring, summer and fall). The journal and other resources are made available by the generous investment of our supporters.

You can support the work of Founders Ministries by giving online at:

[FOUNDERS.org/give/](http://FOUNDERS.org/give/)

Or by sending a donation by check to:

Founders Ministries  
PO Box 150931  
Cape Coral, FL 33915

All donations to Founders Ministries are tax-deductible.

Please send all inquiries and correspondence for the *Founders Journal* to:

[editor@FOUNDERS.org](mailto:editor@FOUNDERS.org)

Or contact us by phone at 239-772-1400.

[Visit our web site](#) for an online archive of past issues of the *Founders Journal*.

# Contents

## **Introduction: Creation and the Fall**

**Tom Nettles**

**Page 4**

## **Creation and the Decree**

God's decree includes "all things whatsoever come to pass" which embraces creation, providence, and redemption

**Patrick Tyler Stewart**

**Page 6**

## **The Sinning of a Pure Heart**

How did Eve and Adam, uncorrupted in nature, sin?

**Tom Nettles**

**Page 14**

## **The Fall Brought Condemnation and Corruption**

Both condemnation and corruption for the entire human race followed upon the sin of Adam.

**Steve Farish**

**Page 21**

## **The Depth of Depravity**

The Bible describes sinners as far more evil than they realize.

**Curt Daniel**

**Page 29**

## **Book Review**

*Searching for Adam: Genesis & the Truth About Man's Origin*  
edited by Terry Mortenson

**Reviewed by Mark Coppenger**

**Page 37**



Tom Nettles

# Introduction

## Creation and the Fall

This issue of the *Founders Journal* gives expression to the doctrine that is contained in chapters 4 and 6 of the *Second London Confession*, the important topics of Creation, Fall, Sin, and its Consequences. Pat Stewart has contributed an astute examination of the perennially intriguing, and controversial, biblical teaching on Creation. Topics with which he deals included the following:

- Creation as involved in God's decree and as a necessary pre-requisite to the implementation of the Covenant of Grace
- Affirmation of six-days creation with supporting biblical evidence
- A representative survey of the biblical contexts in which God is presented as creator
- How this work expresses the biblical teaching on the Trinity

A second article, written by Tom Nettles, looks at man in the unfallen state and seeks to explore how the first sin arose in Eden. In this we see the importance of a historical Adam and Eve for the entirety of biblical revelation, the character of unfallenness, which includes, but is not limited to, innocence. We see also that they were endowed with positive "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." Though expressed as a positive command not to eat, what was truly at stake was obedience to the law written on the heart ("the law of their creation"). How did the couple unfallen and thus unpre-disposed-to-sin find themselves adhering to the words of Satan and disobey the Living God?

Steve Farish explores the Confession's propositions on guilt, condemnation, and corruption. He looks at Adam as *covenantal* head of the race and our consequent guilt and condemnation through his sin as well as Adam as the *natural* head of the race and our consequent corruption. What is the relation between these two and what lessons of hope and gratitude do we derive from a proper construction of the relation between these biblical ideas?

Curt Daniel has contributed an article that gives a deeper exploration of the prevailing influence of corruption. In giving a striking view of the images and analogies of Scripture on that subject, supported by poignant observations from godly theologians through the years, he points to our corruption as an element of the punishment, the initial infliction of death, and thus, not the *source* of our original guilt but the *result* of it. Corruption also is the fountain from which all actual transgression flows, and constitutes indwelling sin that will not be removed until death.

Mark Coppenger has contributed a review of a book relevant to this subject, taking a look at the recently released *Searching for Adam: Genesis & the truth About Man's Origin* edited by Terry Mortenson (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Publishing Group, 2016).

—Tom J. Nettles

Patrick Tyler Stewart

# Creation and the Decree

In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,(1) for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,(2) to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.(3) [Second London Confession, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1]

1. John 1:2, 3; Hebrews 1:2; Job 26:13
2. Romans 1:20
3. Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:31

## Creation as Involved in God's Decree

God's decree, according to Chapter 3, includes "all things whatsoever come to pass" which embraces creation, providence, and redemption. Others of the reformed faith have made a more direct statement of this relationship between the decree of God and creation. Berkhof states, "The decree of God is His eternal plan or purpose, in which He has foreordained all things that come to pass. It is but natural that God, who controls all things, should have a definite plan according to which He works, not only in creation and providence, but also in the process of redemption. This plan includes many particulars, and therefore we often speak of the divine decrees in the plural, though there is but a single decree."<sup>1</sup> The reason for referencing the "decree" as "decrees" is for one's understanding of the successive events in addressing things such as creation and providence. "The decrees of God are *the eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens*. This doctrine is similar

to the doctrine of providence, but here we are thinking about God's decisions *before the world was created*, rather than his providential actions in time. His providential actions are the outworking of the eternal decrees that he made long ago."<sup>2</sup>

Berkhof and others make the clear connection of God's decree first with creation and then with providence. The order of chapters 3, 4, and 5 in the *Second London Confession* reflects this understanding. *The Baptist Catechism*, a valuable summary of the *Second London Confession*, gives its instructions in the same order.

*Q.11. What are the decrees of God?*

A. The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, He has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 11:36; Daniel 4:35)

*Q.12. How does God execute His decrees?*

A. God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence. (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 6:26; Acts 14:17)

*Q.13 What is the work of creation?*

A. The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good. (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3; Exodus 20:11; Genesis 1:31)<sup>3</sup>

The Scriptural statement of "the counsel of His will," so Berkhof argues from Ephesians 1:11, refers to the decree as being founded in immutable divine wisdom. This catechism, like the Confession, locates the execution God's decrees in the works of creation and providence. Both emphasize the orderly succession decree, creation, and providence.

### **Creation Involved God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

The Trinitarian participation in creation is noted throughout Scripture beginning with Genesis 1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "God" is *ELOHIM* and indicates God's majesty but also at least permits the concept of "Trinity" as other Scriptures reveal. This verse presupposes God's existence and reveals His being the source and power of Creation as the Creator. The creation, according to Psalm 8:1, testifies to the glory of God: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the

earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.” One of the most referenced Scriptures concerning God’s glory is Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Descriptively God is revealed to be unique when observing the testimony of His creation: “Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing” (Isaiah 40:26). The LORD, *YAHWEH*, the self-existing One, the everlasting God, *ELOHE*, the Creator, *BOWRE*, is identified and described: “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28).<sup>4</sup>

The Scriptures indicate that the LORD, *YAHWEH*, used His wisdom, understanding and knowledge in the act of creation: “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew” (Proverbs 3:19–20). God has made himself evident within every part of creation with such clear and orderly omnipotence that none of the fallen race can plead ignorance of God. Romans 1:19, 20 enforces this truth in this Pauline summary: “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So that they are without excuse.”

Seven times one observes in the days of creation in Genesis 1 the statement “and God said, Let,” emphasizing that God spoke things into existence “out of nothing,” *EX NIHILO*—they had no existence, and by his word they began to exist. This is documented in the New Testament, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

That creation is the product of an omnipotent, intelligent, and benevolent deity is a matter of general revelation observed in the natural order. That it is an accomplishment of inherently shared acts of a triune God is a matter of special revelation. God the Son is identified on several occasions as being an active agent in creation. The following texts are examples: John 1:1–3 states robustly, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” That his authority in creation and over it subserves his appointment as redeemer is seen in Paul’s argument in Colossians 1:15–18: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.”

The writer of Hebrews in 1:1–3 also emphasized the unbroken connection between Christ as Creator and Christ as Redeemer: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3He is the radiance of the glory God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Largely in the works of creation and redemption we find the substance of John’s affirmation, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . . No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:14, 18). The word for “He has made known” in Greek is *EXEGESATO*, meaning He, Jesus, has explained or expounded God. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.

God the Holy Spirit is also revealed to be involved in creation. His activity is initially noted at the very beginning of the creation statement in Genesis: “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). The translation in the Old Testament for the word “Spirit” is frequently “wind” or “breath.” “By the Word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap, he puts the deeps in storehouses” (Psalm 33:6–7). The use of “breath” in verse 6 may be a reference to the Holy Spirit. The supernatural activity of God the Holy Spirit is wonderful in the virgin conception of our Lord Jesus Christ: “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God (Luke 1:34–35).’ He was conceived by God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit took part in creation. Psalm 104:30, 31 reveals “When you send forth your Spirit, they were created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works.”

The previous Scriptures reveal that as Chapter 4 *Of Creation* states, “it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” to make creation. Also, the Scriptures reveal that “the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make

the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible” was included in God’s purpose in creation.

### **Creation Accomplished in Six Literal Days**

The writers of the *1689 Second London Baptist Confession* accepted the statement of Scripture that God created everything in six days and it was all very good. Stating that the creation was in the “space” of six days indicates the writers were persuaded that “days” indicated real twenty–four hour periods of time. When the confession was written theories of modern day evolution were not existing. Although there were some Christians over the preceding centuries who questioned the days of creation in Genesis 1. In “modern” times there are a plethora of views by Christians and non–Christians that deny the “days” of Genesis 1 are literal days as one normally understands a “day.” They opt rather for extreme periods of time. There are Secular Evolutionist, Theistic Evolutionist, Progressive Creationist, Day–Age Theorists, etc., to name a few. This writer believes Christians should reject the model of evolution and its various Christian forms. Evolution denies God as creator and non-six day creation views contradict the clear sense of Scripture.

When God created things, did He give them the appearance of age as with Adam? It appears He did so and the universe was fully functional when He spoke it into existence out of nothing. There were seedlings, saplings, and full grown trees of various stages of development. There were old stars and young stars; there was the light of stars seen from earth and light of stars at various distances to the earth that in time will be seen. The Secular Evolutionist does not believe in the Bible and his concept of God is too small, anti-supernatural or non–existent.

What are some reasons one should believe the Genesis creation account? Christians who generally believe in six literal days of creation normally believe the Bible is inspired or God–breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). They also believe the Bible is infallible. They believe the original autographs are inerrant. They don’t believe the Bible is to be understood according to one’s private interpretation. The Bible states that God “created” the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The language of Genesis 1 for each of the six days states, “God said” and literally spoke things into existence that did not previously exist in any manner, except in His plan. God created them out of nothing into a reality of existence in space and time. This is consistently described by literal creation adherents as God speaking his creation into existence out of nothing, *EX NIHILO*.

The structure of the language used in the Genesis 1 days of creation account persuades the reader to adhere to six literal days. The Genesis account states over and over that there was “evening” and “morning,” the numerical day such as first day and second day and the normal use of the word “day,” *YOM*. *YOM* can be used in the Bible to mean an extended period of time, such as, one today might say “back in the day” one did this or that thing. A context could demonstrate that the use of the word “day” was not a twenty-four hour period of time. However, the triple descriptive construction of the words first, second, etc., and the words “evening” with “morning” and the word “day” which normally means a day, is persuasive context of language to bring one to the conclusion that these days are literal days.

Multiple Scriptures indicate a six day creation. Exodus 20:9–11 is based on a univocal use of the word “day.”

Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Not only does one observe that the creation is stated to be in six days but the seventh day is a day set apart by the LORD. God instructed His people to rest on a literal seventh day in context patterned after His creation and rest in seven days. Exodus 31:17 reaffirms that creation was in six days: “It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” Jesus states that male and female were from the beginning of creation. Adam was created on day six. From this we surely infer there were not long periods of time nor the macro evolution of man: “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).

Evolution includes mankind through the evolutionary process and yet the Bible states mankind came from one man: “and HE made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). Since all sin and death came from one man, then the one who was created on the “sixth day” of Genesis 1 would be the head of the human race. Therefore all mankind descended from that one man, Adam. The following verse is senseless if evolution is true. “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned– (Romans

5:12).” There are many, many other passages that press the reader of Scripture to believe in a literal six day creation. This writer knows Christians who do not believe in a six day creation period. One must be gracious in this matter but also contend for what is clear in the Scriptures. Hermeneutics is paramount in this discussion. If one follows the hermeneutics of passages that are interpreted concerning miracles, the Trinity and Salvation, etc., in interpreting the six days of Genesis 1, this writer believes you will be a creationists holding to six literal days of creation.

### **Creation as a Necessary Pre-requisite to the Implementation of the Covenant of Grace**

Without the pre-requisite of creation to the implementation of the Covenant of Grace how would there be a Covenant of Grace? In the decree of God His plans are from eternity. Since Creation and Providence are the executions of God’s decree in eternity past they are unique in that God’s knowledge, plans, and counsel have causal priority. “In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible...”<sup>5</sup> When considering the Covenant of Grace it provides clarity to address the Covenant of Redemption. The Covenant of Redemption is to be considered in the context of the Decree of God. “The covenant of redemption may be defined as the agreement between *the Father, giving the Son as Head and Redeemer of the elect, and the Son, voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father had given Him.*”<sup>6</sup> This has causal priority to the execution of Creation and Providence exercised over that creation according to will, design, purposes, and “after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Creation of the world and all things including human beings is a requirement when one considers the plan of God concerning our redemption and the execution of the details for that redemption by His plan for sinfully fallen humanity. If there is no plan or power for creation in God’s decree then how can there be redemption, the means of it, or the Covenant of Grace? “The counsel of redemption is the firm and eternal foundation of the covenant of grace. If there had been no eternal counsel of peace between the Father and the Son, there could have been no agreement between the triune God and sinful men. The counsel of redemption makes the covenant of grace possible.”<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 3:7–11 draws a direct connection between the Gospel of redemption, the Covenant of Grace, and God’s act of creation:

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all saints, this grace was give, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Apostle demonstrates the Covenant of Grace in the context of his ministry of the gospel "to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things (Ephesians 3:9)." Paul ties the gospel, God's plan, God's eternal purpose, and Christ Jesus our Lord to the statement "God who created all things." God's decree and the Covenant of Redemption with creation are a pre-requisite to the Covenant of Works, and then the Covenant of Grace.

---

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, reprint), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1994), 332.

<sup>3</sup> *The Baptist Catechism*, Benjamin Keach Catechism, reformedreader.org, accessed December 3, 2016. [www.reformedreader.org/ccc/keachcat.htm](http://www.reformedreader.org/ccc/keachcat.htm)

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from Scripture are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

<sup>5</sup> *1689 Baptist Confession*, [www.arbca.com](http://www.arbca.com), Chapter 4: Of Creation, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, 271.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Pat Stewart has served as pastor of churches in Tennessee, Florida, Illinois, and Alabama, served as a police chaplain, and presently teaches several classes at Highlands Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, the church that ordained him to the gospel ministry in 1975. He and his wife Lori have four children and seven grandchildren.



Tom Nettles

# The Sinning of a Pure Heart

How did Eve and Adam, uncorrupted in nature, sin? *The Second London Confession* [2LC] takes care to recognize the singularity of this phenomenon. After one paragraph concerning the creation by the triune God of the world and all in it in six days and all to his glory, that chapter completely is devoted to the great advantages enjoyed by the man and the woman in their original state. God created man, male and female with “reasonable and immortal souls rendering them fit unto that life to God.” Their immortality was not a native and intrinsic property but a derived property from the fact that they were moral beings whose actions and attitudes concerning God’s nature, prerogatives, and commands necessarily had eternal implications. Their relation to the moral consequences of being image-bearers of the divine and under the necessity of perfect obedience to him and unstained love to him rendered their cessation of existence a moral impossibility, if not a natural impossibility. Their being “fit” for the life to God is expanded in defining their position as image-bearers consisting of “knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.” In addition to these several other positive encouragements tending toward obedience for the first man and woman, they had “the law of God written on their hearts, and power to fulfill it, and yet under the possibility of transgressing.” They were, therefore, not left only to the internal propensity of holiness, but were given a command to bring it to immutable perfection—“a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” They were not, therefore, *tabula rasa*, but had positive moral qualities of holiness and the operation of conscience that perceived the worthiness and moral beauty of God and held it as their primary duty, joyfully embraced, to know, love, and enjoy the presence of God above all other of the

many pleasures with which he had surrounded them. It would, in fact, have been grievous to them not to have had the exalted purpose of their very being to love God supremely, pervasively, unreservedly, and unremittingly and to have a command commensurate with the worthiness of God and the desires of their heart.

Several substantial ideas are added in the 2LC beyond the words of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* [WCF] in chapter 6, paragraph 1, that indicate their manly independence in engaging this issue. The sentence in chapter VI, paragraph 1, “Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honor” is all unique to this confession. The purpose of these phrases is to show the true advantages for obedience that Adam and Eve had and that both their internal disposition and external motivation were highly conducive to continued obedience.

In describing the fall of man, The *New Hampshire Confession* stated that man “by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state.” The 2LC says that they were “left to the liberty of their own will” (4.2) and used the phrase (from the Savoy Declaration) “did willfully transgress,” in noting their fall. What constitutes the “liberty of their own will” in the unfallen state? What does the confession imply when it says they “were left to” it? The question as to how Adam and Eve, in a holy and happy state, “did willfully transgress” points us to an observation of divine purpose and an analysis of the nature of human choice.

Augustine sought to reason through this particular phenomenon in several places, among them in book XIV of the *City of God*. After a full and provocative discussion of the bliss of unfallen man and woman in Eden and the sadness of the knowledge of good and evil that resulted from their fallenness, Augustine observed that neither human nor angelic sin impeded the “great works of the Lord which accomplish his will.” God’s providence and power distribute to every being his designed portion in God’s wise, but inscrutable, plan. He thus makes good use “not only of the good, but also of the wicked.” The confrontation between the fallen angel and the unfallen man provided the first instance of this. “And thus making a good use of the wicked angel, who, in punishment of his first wicked volition, was doomed to an obduracy that prevents him now from willing any good, why should not God have permitted him to tempt the first man, who had been created upright, that is to say, with a good will?” Man was so constituted that, had he looked to God’s revealed instruction and his present help, he “should defeat the angel’s wickedness.” If lured, however, into “proud self-pleasing,” he would be defeated in the conflict. “If his will

remained upright, through leaning on God's help, he should be rewarded; if it became wicked, by forsaking God, he should be punished." The will at this point was upright, and, only in forsaking God would it become wicked. We have the power to refuse help, and die; we do not have the power to live if we refuse that which sustains life. "it was not in man's power, even in Paradise, to live as he ought without God's help; but it was in his power to live wickedly, though thus he should cut short his happiness, and incur very just punishment." God was not ignorant that man was not up to the task of coping with Satan on his own. He was holy and had attained an increasing degree of righteousness, but was not immutably established in either moral quality. Apart from an irresistible operation of sustaining grace, man would be led to trust his own powers, sentiments, and reason. The bent of the natural powers granted him, those elements of the natural image of God, operating as entities independent of the moral oughtness reflecting the moral image of God, would be to achieve a desired end in a sovereign manner. Why, therefore, was the unfallen creature left to his own resources to deal with the more powerful fallen creature in a matter of eternal life or eternal death?

Augustine, always ready to press forward in presenting as coherent and complete a theological picture as possible, and even more ready to justify the ways of God with men, proposed and answer.

He foresaw that by the man's seed, aided by divine grace, this same devil himself should be conquered, to the greater glory of the saints. All was brought about in such a manner, that neither did any future event escape God's foreknowledge, nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin, and so as to demonstrate in the experience of the intelligent creation, human and angelic, how great a difference there is between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection. For who will dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to prevent both angels and men from sinning? But God preferred to leave this in their power, and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace.

We know that in the fallen state, people sin exercising their will in light of a prevailing moral disposition opposing God and his law. James reminds us, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (James 1:14). As Paul stated, "you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness," and "when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness" (Romans 6:19, 20). It also is clear that those under the immediate results of the fall and the consequent curse who are "dead in trespasses and sins" follow the "course of this world" and act according to their nature as "sons of disobedience" (those whose internal

disposition is bound up in disobedience). They follow the original tempter, the “prince of the power of the air.” Their manner of life is conducted in the “passions of [their] flesh” and under that prevailing influence carry out the “desires of the body and the mind” in accord with their nature as “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:1–3). As “sons of disobedience” pursue their disobedience as the outflow of their original proneness to rebellion, so “children of wrath” are subject to wrath from the first moment of their existence because of this perversity of moral disposition having received in themselves the threat given to Adam, “as in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

But in those who lived before the institution of the curse, Adam and Eve, who had no such internal moral disposition—how did they sin? We certainly are faced with the reality of this phenomenon; it happened. A completely satisfactory answer always seems to elude us. The New Testament, however, gives us a few hints into the dynamic of Eve’s, and then Adam’s, sin. Then a bit of theological reflection might reduce tension of what seems to be such an unlikely, or at least puzzling, event.

Genesis 3:1–4 presents us with a synopsis of a discussion between Satan and Eve about being like God, the goodness of the fruit, and gaining wisdom. Eve found his argument convincing and ate the fruit that she was forbidden to eat. The 2LC says, that Satan used “the subtlety of the serpent to seduce Eve.” When it happened, she knew she had been deceived (“The serpent deceived me, and I ate”—3:13). Her presentation seems actually to have been the truth. In 1 Timothy 2:14 Paul stated, “The woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” Even though the disobedience arose from her being the victim of deceit, unable to pierce through the stratagem of Satan, she, nevertheless, was charged with transgression. This event again comes to Paul’s mind in 2 Corinthians 11:2–4: “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” Paul is warning against false teachers and the danger of being led away from their pure devotion to Christ, and their true knowledge of who Christ is, by such teachers. He is contrasting the authority and purity of his teaching as an apostle with the false speculative teachings of these self-appointed apostles. They had believed the wholesome, inspired, and wholly sound doctrine Paul taught, but he feared that by deceit they could be led from a state of purity and sincere, or unalloyed, devotion to Christ, to a different and, thus, corrupted and destructive position. The philosophical musings of the false teachers about spirituality might appear plausible, attractive, and flattering, and so blur the reality that their ideas contradict revealed truth. So the case is that Eve, even as she stated, was deceived. Paul again warns against being duped, or taken captive, by the plausibility of false reasoners, or empty deception, who

want to lead believers from their sure footing in Christ through arguments that have “the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence” (Colossians 2:8, 23).

All human choices are *voluntary*—that is the actualization of a *preference* built on the last dictate of the understanding. The confluence of all the factors that establish understanding at any given moment cause the choice, or rather they are the constituent elements of the choice, thus the voluntary action. In that context, a process of consideration, reflection, evaluation, and resultant preference [most of the time, in light of the massive number of choices we make every day, this happens very quickly] constitutes the choice, or will. Thus all choices, by definition are voluntary, and the voluntariness of choice makes each choice a matter of self-determination, the “self” being the moral agent that so chooses. After Eve was deceived by Satan, he used her to seduce Adam “who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given to them” (2LC, VI.1). Though seduced himself by Eve’s own choice and her offer of the fruit to him, he transgressed “without compulsion.” Why is the concept of “without compulsion” important, both before and after the fall? The 2LC gives a good summary of the nature of the will: “God hath indued the Will of Man, with that natural liberty, and power of acting upon choice; that it is neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.” All choices, therefore, are free, none of them being under compulsion, that is, none of the faculties that constitute the development of choice in a moral agent, “by any necessity of nature” as originally constituted at creation, have in themselves, a determination to either good or evil.

The process of consideration, reflection and evaluation remains unimpaired as a natural faculty. One of the filters that aids in processing information is the state of the affections. In the unfallen state, man was upright in affections but not immutable. Satan, therefore, appealed to the understanding through a discourse. He did not find a perverse moral propensity dominating the affections, and, therefore, engaged Eve through plausible reasoning about the way to accomplish a desirable goal. God did not intervene to prohibit this interview and was under no obligation to do so, for he had granted them virtually unlimited freedom in their use of the garden and had given a clear and specific prohibition which they could have obeyed instead of listening to contradictory reasoning. As “sincere and pure” in affections, Eve had the way before her to enjoy God, through knowledge of the Son of God, supremely and without any rival, and to enjoy all other things as gifts from him. The triune God took pleasure in giving existence to all these things and gave permission for the man and the woman to enjoy them only in the manner in which he had prescribed.

Her understanding in this dialogue with the serpent was formed, therefore, not in the context of perverse affections but through the suspension of her own rational understanding of the positive command of God for a plausible way, more quickly attained, to enjoy all that God intended her to enjoy. Disobedience brought about the clearly threatened death, one of the immediate effects of which was perversity of affections.

Even though sin came into the race of holy bearers of the image of God through Eve (“Eve was deceived and became a transgressor”), sin descended to the race and transfused the world through Adam (Romans 5:12, 18), not through Eve. We desire, therefore, as much understanding as warranted from Scripture, as to how Adam joined her in this transgression. It is clear that he followed her immediately in this act of disobedience. When Paul wrote, “Adam was not deceived,” (1 Timothy 2:14), it seems he only wants to emphasize that Eve transgressed before Adam through being deceived. Perhaps he also intended to emphasize that when Adam sinned, the deceit that led Eve to transgress was not an element of his transgression. If so, this points to another way that one can form a judgment apart from perversity of heart or deceit of mind. The context renders it plausible, or maybe probable, that perfect sentiment with Eve at that point as “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” led Adam to take the fruit she offered. What she did, he was delighted also to do, thinking that a creature God gave specifically to him to be a help perfectly fit for him could not lead him astray. He says as much in his response to God, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 2:12). Augustine’s explanation of Adam’s sin in particular seems to fit this pattern. He surmised, “the first man did not yield to his wife in this transgression of God’s precept, as if he thought she spoke the truth, but only being compelled to it by his social love to her, being but one with one, and both of one nature and kind” (*City of God*, XIV.xi).

If another motive intervened, it would be highly difficult to reconstruct. In my opinion, the concept of perfect sentiment is a sufficient explanation, and, though not personally deceived by Satan as Eve was, he shared in the transgression that originated in deception. Even though the deception of Eve prompted the entire dynamic of sin and transgression in both of them, Adam responded, having never had reason to doubt or distrust Eve, having never had reasons to complain about her or feel threatened in any sense by her, by omitting any kind of rational investigation of the action she proposed to him and partook. The sin of both came from a source other than a perverse moral state, though our present perverse moral state always does in fact produce sin. That no perverse intent prompted the transgression does not diminish the guilt of it or make them less liable to punishment. As Augustine stated, “For the fact that the woman sinned on the serpent’s persuasion, and

the man at the woman's offer, did not make the transgression less, as if there were any one whom we ought rather to believe or yield to than God" (*City of God*. XIV.xiv).

Every decision and act of a moral being is a moral decision and act. Every thought and action prior to their transgression, arising from their holy and happy state, was moral in nature. They were indeed progressing in righteousness toward the state of final moral probation. Had they passed that stage of probation, it would have become, as Augustine stated, "impossible for them to sin and die." Their failure, however, made it "impossible not to sin and die." Corruption followed condemnation as an element of the death that descended on them. Perverse affections constitute the most obvious manifestation of corruption. Their lack of remorse and quickness to blame, though strictly true, shows that a spirit of self-justification, pride, and self-preservation had come into their souls. That they made clothes to cover their sexual organs shows that they were inflamed inwardly in a way that brought a sense of perversity and shame, the most obvious manifestation of the soul's being invaded and permeated with concupiscence. Those corruptions immediately accompanied the transgression but were not the cause of the transgression.

Perverse affections always produce a sinful intent and action, but perverse affections are not the only way in which one's final understanding could be formed. With Eve, the fall came through deceit in the context of a discussion with a wily adversary posing as a friendly seeker of her good. With Adam, his unwavering sympathy with the woman led him to capitulate to her. With us we are willingly deceived by Satan because of the raging self-centeredness of our desires. We follow "the prince of the power of the air" living in the "passions of the body and the mind," making us "by nature the children of wrath." Paul tells us, therefore, "to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires" (Ephesians 2:2, 3; 4:22). Corrupt desires now so dominate the process of consideration, reflection, and evaluation that our preference, our voluntary choices arising from the final understanding, are at the same time necessarily sinful. Adam and Eve in their pure hearts, were deceived; in our fallen state we do "not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12).

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Tom Nettles is retired but presently teaches as a Senior Professor at SBTS in Louisville. He is an active member at LaGrange Baptist Church in LaGrange, KY. He and his wife Margaret have three adult children and five grandchildren.

Steve Farrish

# The Fall Brought Condemnation and Corruption

## The Confessional Statement

Both condemnation and corruption for the entire human race followed upon the sin of Adam. These concepts are stated in these words in paragraphs 2 and 3 of chapter 6 of the *Second London Confession*. Many of the Scripture proofs accompanying this article will be used in the discussion below.

Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

## **A Key Biblical Passage**

How exactly does this sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden affect all the human beings of all times who have descended from him? The key text on this question is Romans 5:12, 18–19 (ESV):

[12] Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.... [18] Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness led to justification for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

In these verses Paul seems to suggest two effects the sin of Adam in the Garden has had on the first man's progeny. The apostle first explains in vv. 12 and 18 that because all human beings in some sense sinned when Adam sinned, that first sin has brought guilt and condemnation to all people. Second, Paul claims that "by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners," by which he means that Adam through the first sin has brought corruption to the human race.

## **A Theological Digestion of Paul's Discussion**

Protestant theology thus teaches that the affect Adam's first sin has on all his progeny is twofold: 1) it causes them from the moment of conception to be corrupt by nature; and 2) it causes them from the moment of conception to stand guilty before God as sinners. The first of these two effects means that from the moment of conception, every human being inherits from his or her parents a nature that is inherently inclined away from God and toward sin. This is precisely the understanding David seemed to have when he declared in Psalm 51:4 that, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." David did not mean that the sexual relations by which his parents conceived him were sinful; rather, he understood that even from conception his heart was corrupt. The prophet Jeremiah would in fact declare that the human heart by nature is so corrupt that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). All of us who have stood perplexed and shocked over our own capacity for sinfulness are able to relate to the words of David and Jeremiah.

The Apostle Paul calls this natural inclination of the human heart away from God and toward sin "the flesh" (e.g., Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:3; etc.), and many modern theologians employ the term "sin nature." The corruption of heart all human

beings inherit as an effect of the first sin in the Garden means that we lack the ability to do spiritual good, as the Apostle Paul makes so clear in his stinging indictment of humanity in Romans 3:10–18. Paul does not mean that a person living apart from Christ is unable to do any good in any sense at all, but what he does mean is that our human hearts by nature are so corrupt that we can never, apart from regeneration, willingly do any act at all for the *summum bonum* which is the glory of God. Those deeds that may appear good, and indeed are constructive for the well-being of human society at some inferior level, miss that pure measure of all true goodness, the conscious delight in and love for the infinitely glorious God. That has been smothered in the corruption of our hearts and manifests itself in none of our thoughts, affections, or actions prior to regeneration.

### **Fallen Humans are Corrupted in Heart**

Thus far we have seen that because of the first sin of Adam in the Garden, all human beings are conceived in their mother's wombs with a corruption of heart the Apostle Paul calls "the flesh." Reformed theologians agree with other evangelicals that human beings receive this corruption of heart from their parents at the moment of conception.

Adam began to manifest such corruption of heart in his hiding from God (Genesis 3:10), with whom he formerly enjoyed company (Genesis 1:28; 2:8, 19, 22), his embarrassment about himself (3:10), when formerly he was unashamed (2:25), and his propensity to self-justification (3:12), when formerly none of his actions or thoughts needed explanation, for they had not failed to match the revealed good. This was the manifestation of the immediate application of the just threat, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die" (2:17). Corruption had entered the experience of Adam and Eve. It had come to reside in the mind and affections of Adam and constituted the spiritual death that plagued David according to Psalm 51 and that has passed to all without exception, so that, as "dead in trespasses and sins," we are "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1, 3).

### **Fallen Humans are Under Condemnation**

This corruption, however, was the result of Adam's having entered into a state of condemnation by his disobedience. The condemnation brought on the corruption, not the corruption the condemnation, though it certainly is exacerbated by the flood of sins that flow from such soul-corruption. In arguing this precise point, Paul in Romans 5:12, 18 draws a connection between the first sin of Adam and the reality that all human beings

stand before God guilty of sin even from the moment of conception. Paul plainly avers that Adam's sin has "led to condemnation for all men." In fact, no fewer than six times in Romans 5:12–21 does Paul assert in different ways that the one sin of Adam in the Garden has resulted in death and condemnation for all human beings (Romans 5:12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). But how precisely is the sin of Adam in the Garden connected to all human beings? Put another way, how are we to understand the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 when he writes that when Adam sinned in the Garden, "*all* sinned"?

## **Realism and Representationalism**

### *Realism or Natural Headship*

Protestant theologians have suggested two theories to explain the apostolic assertion of Romans 5:12 that all human beings sinned in Adam. The Realistic View (also called the Natural Headship View) understands Paul in Romans 5:12 to mean that all human beings were physically present seminally in Adam at the time of his sin in the Garden of Eden, so that when Adam sinned, all human beings literally and physically sinned in him. Supporters of the Realistic View adduce Hebrews 7:9–10 in support. In that passage the Hebrews writer asserts that Levi paid tithes to the priest-king Melchizedek, even though Levi was not yet born, because "he was still in the loins of his ancestor [Abraham] when Melchizedek met him" (Hebrews 7:10, ESV).

This view is not entirely wrong. In light of the Hebrews 7 passage, the biblical synthesis that led the Confession's framers to say, "all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath," natural headship operates in a demonstrably "real" way among the fallen sons of Adam. It is not comprehensive enough, however, in itself, to provide a coherent foundation for other necessary parts of the doctrines of sin and redemption.

### *Representational or Federal Headship*

Many Reformed theologians have recognized validity in some aspects of the Realistic View, but have seen the Representational view as the lead idea on these issues. They have historically found far more persuasive the Representative View. At his creation, Adam stood as the whole human race and every human descending from him "by ordinary generation" had interest in his spiritual obedience or failure to obey. For his righteousness they would

have life; for his sin they would have death. In him, Adam, as representative head of the human race, God invested the spiritual status of the entire race in such a way that when Adam sinned the first sin, God counted that sin to be the sin of all human beings of all times. Put another way, we could say that as a function of Adam's representative headship, God has imputed Adam's first sin to all human beings, so that we are conceived in our mother's wombs guilty of sin before God. It is not just that human beings incur guilt before God for the actual sins we commit; it is also the case that we stand guilty of sin before God from conception, because the Lord imputes Adam's first sin to all of us his progeny.

In his commentary on Romans, B. H. Carroll articulates clearly this revealed truth. "Race responsibility rested on Adam alone," he deduced; "it could not possibly have rested on Eve, because she was a descendant of Adam, just as much as we are." Paul's assertion, given by divine revelation in harmony with exegetical deduction from the Genesis narrative, is this, according to Carroll: "God created just one man, and in that man was the whole human race, including Eve." That clearly involves the conclusion that Adam's sin and my sin, though both violations of divine law, are different in two ways. "Adam didn't have that inherited depravity. God made him upright. Whenever I commit a sin I don't commit that sin from the standpoint of Adam, but I commit it on account of an evil nature inherited from Adam, and that sin is not after the similitude of Adam's transgression." In light of that, a second distinction arises: "If I commit a sin, the race is not held responsible for my sin, because I am not the head of the race." Consequently, "the race does not stand or fall in me." (See Carroll on Romans 5:1–21.

Even some Christians object to this doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin by God to all of his progeny, likening it to the colonial American objection against "taxation without representation." "Why should it be," the objection goes, "that I should suffer because of the sin of Adam?" Theologians have generally offered at least the following three replies to this objection: First, everyone who objects to the doctrine of imputed sin has also committed actual sins for which he or she stands condemned by God (Romans 6:23). Second, God is a God of perfect justice, so when he created Adam as our representative head, Adam was our perfect representative, so that if we, as the perfect representative head, had been present in the Garden, we would have made the same choice to sin that Adam made. Third, if we object to God's imputation of Adam's sin to us, then should not Christians also object as unfair God's imputation of our sins to Jesus at the cross and God's imputation of Jesus' righteousness to us in justification (2 Corinthians 5:21)?

## Doctrinal and Experiential Advantages of Representationalism

Reformed theologians not only have sought to answer objections, but have offered strong arguments to support the Representative View, among which the most often mentioned are the following.

- 1) If the Realistic View were correct, then why does God condemn human beings for Adam's first sin alone? After all, human beings were in seminal union with their first parent when he sinned all the other sins of his life after eating the fruit in the Garden of Eden. The Representative View, on the other hand, understands the first sin as especially serious because it was the violation of the covenant of works between God and Adam as the representative head of the whole human race, and so that first sin brought condemnation for the whole human race that Adam's subsequent sins could not bring.
- 2) In 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49, the Apostle Paul sets up a contrast between Adam and Jesus Christ that indicates Jesus bears the same kind of relationship to the elect as Adam does to all humanity. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22, ESV). However, on this analogy the Realistic View founders, because the elect are of course not seminally present in Jesus. Jesus bears a representative headship relationship to Christians, in such a way that God imputes to believers the righteousness of Jesus in justification. If the Jesus-Adam analogy of 1 Corinthians 15 is to hold, then Adam must have borne a representative headship relationship to all humanity in such a way that God has imputed his first sin to all humanity.
- 3) Romans 5:12–21, as we have already seen, is much to the same effect as 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49. In Romans 5 Paul again sets forth Adam as a type of Christ, and just as sin, condemnation, and death come through the “one trespass” of Adam, so righteousness, justification, and life come through the “one act of righteousness” of Jesus (Romans 5:18). Adam was the representative head of all humanity in the covenant of works, and Christ was the representative head of the elect in the covenant of grace. This analogy again breaks down under the Realistic View, but it accords rightly on the Representative View.

James Petigru Boyce, A Southern Baptist theologian who studied under Charles Hodge at Princeton and was the founder of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary gave a strong defense of the Representative view and summarized it in a point by point comparison on

page 258 of his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. His presentation was in side by side columns; below his correlations are presented in a narrative form.

In Adam Sin is imputed and in Christ Righteousness is imputed.

In Adam we are treated as though sinners, and in Christ we are treated as though righteous.

Our federal union with Adam does not make us personally sinners and in our federal union with Christ we are not regarded as actually meritoriously possessed of Christ's righteousness

We are not regarded as actually guilty of Adam's sin but only sinners representatively, so we have not performed actually Christ's single course of perfect obedience but are righteous only representatively.

Though not personally sinners in Adam, yet born sinful, we naturally become actual sinners, and though not personally holy in Christ, yet we are born again unto holiness, and graciously become more and more holy until finally sanctified.

We are condemned to all the penalties of death because of Adam's sin; We are released from penalty, and attain to spiritual life and immortality, because of Christ's active and passive obedience.

We have voluntarily accepted the relation to Adam, and persevere in the life of sin inaugurated by him, and we voluntarily, though by God's effectual grace, accept the relation to Christ, and persevere in the holy life into which he has brought us.

How matchless is the wisdom and lovingkindness of God in this arrangement! The entire scheme of redemption falls out according to covenant. The first is the eternal covenant of grace and redemption undertaken in the internal counsels of the all-wise eternal God. It is manifest then by covenantal arrangement among the sons of men. The entire race flowing from Adam is connected with him as the first man, the whole race. As our fall and spiritual death are bound up in his work, so our restoration by justification and new spiritual life are bound up in the work of the second man, the Lord from heaven. Had we not had this arrangement by covenant, each person would be his own Adam; each person would be held accountable for his fall and could not look to any covenantal arrangement, no representative, for his restoration. "You fell of yourself; now restore yourself," would be the call. None could answer that call, for the verdict of death would hover over everyone who in fact did fall with only their own ability for restoration as a hope. That would be no hope at all, for the righteousness that merits eternal life would become an impossibility from the moment of the first sin. With no kinsman redeemer to justify and give us the Spirit, we also

would be left to our corruption without a means to cure. But, as it stands by God's wise arrangement, "For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

## **Selected Bibliography**

*Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ch. 6, para. 3–5.

Berkhof, Louis, "The Transmission of Sin," in *Man's Need and God's Gift*, Millard Ericsson ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976.

Boyce, J. P. *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. Cape Coral Fl: Founders Press, 2006 (originally published 1887).

Carroll, B. H. *An Interpretation of the English Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986.

Moo, Douglas, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996.

Murray, John, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965.



Curt Daniel

# The Depth of Depravity

In discussing what is commonly called total depravity, theologians usually concentrate on two aspects. The first is the totality of sin's influence. Sin affects and controls not only all men, but all parts of every man. The second is the bondage of the will. Fallen man is morally unable to do anything pleasing to God. He is unable to obey, believe or repent. He is both unable and unwilling.

There is a third aspect that is not discussed as often. It is what may be termed *the depth of depravity*. The Bible describes sinners as far more evil than they realize. Just as Calvinism portrays a higher view of the sovereignty of God than other theologies, so it presents a far lower view of the sinful state of fallen mankind. In sum, fallen man is corrupt through and through, rotten to the core, and in desperate need of salvation.

## The Depth of Depravity

The Bible speaks of some sins and sinners as worse than others (John 19:11; 1 Timothy 3:13. All quotations are from the NKJV.) But the “best” sinner is far worse than what we think the “worst” sinner is. He is not only totally sinful in all his thoughts all the time (Genesis 6:5), but nobody can plumb the depth of his depravity (Jeremiah 17:9). It is only because of God's restraints in common grace that we do not murder each other. When God removes the restraints, we sin (Romans 1:24–28). That itself is a punishment. Sin is a punishment for sin.

We are all born with original sin. We are all natural-born sinners. This is the root of all thoughts and acts of sin. When a person becomes a Christian, he is forgiven all sin both original and actual. But the root is still there, even though it is counteracted by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is why Christians still sin, sometimes committing even worse sins than before their conversion. It is only by the grace of the Spirit within us that we do not constantly sin as we used to do.

## **Spiritual Death**

Pelagianism says man is alive and well. Arminianism says man is sick. Calvinism says man is dead. The first two of these have more in common with each other than either has with the third, for a well man and a sick man are both still alive. Scripture repeatedly says that fallen man is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:2; 5:14; Colossians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:6; Romans 6:13; Revelation 3:1). Our bodies are still alive but our souls are dead. Jonathan Edwards preached a powerful sermon on Matthew 23:37 with the thesis: “Wicked men’s bodies are as it were the sepulchres of their souls.”<sup>1</sup> Abraham Kuyper compared fallen man to a mummy wrapped in self-righteousness concealing an ugly corpse.<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:13 says our mouths are like an open grave.

Christ raised people from the dead to show that lost sinners are spiritually dead and in need of spiritual resurrection. We are spiritual zombies parading to hell, as it were (Ephesians 2:1–3). A dead body can do nothing but rot and stink (John 11:39). So with a dead soul. As worms and maggots devour a cadaver in the grave (Job 19:26; 21:26; 24:20), so sin eats away at all parts of a lost soul.

Fallen men are dead trees (Jude 12) that deserve to be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matthew 3:10; 7:19). They are useful only as firewood for hell. The lifeless stump of fallen man is rotten (Job 13:28). Christopher Love the English Puritan said, “Man’s heart by nature is a slaughterhouse to holy motions.”<sup>3</sup> Man is not drowning, but already drowned dead and his skeleton has been picked clean by sharks, said Edwin Palmer.<sup>4</sup> Man is dead.

The sinner is spiritually stillborn and unable to give birth to any good. Spurgeon once said, “You will remember while the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive so far as any opposition to God may be concerned.”<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the Christian is alive to righteousness and should reckon himself dead to sin (Romans 6:4–13).

## Depravity and Death

We sin because we are sinners. “Wickedness flows from the wicked” (1 Samuel 24:13). Original sin is the polluted fountain from which all individual sins flow. Since sin brings forth death (James 1:15), we are born with spiritually dead souls and physically dying bodies. We are on a death march from womb to tomb.

Lost sinners dread death for unrighteous reasons. For one, they do not want an end to their life of sin. By contrast, Christians long to be free from “this body of death” (Romans 7:24). They long to be free from sin at last. Too many Christians, however, prefer to stay on earth and are only grudgingly willing to go to heaven, contrary to Paul’s attitude in Philippians 1:21–23. We should desire to be free of sin, not just of death, pain and tears (Revelation 21:4).

In His wisdom, God does not free His children immediately from physical death or the presence of sin inside or around them. We must pray for godly patience to wait and to strive for holiness.

Death is the product of sin (Romans 6:23). For the unbeliever, death is the punishment he has earned. But for the Christian, while death is still “the last enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:26), it has been transformed. On his deathbed, Thomas Goodwin the Puritan said, “Ah, is this dying? How I have dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend?”<sup>6</sup> Death becomes the friend to escort us to God and a sinless eternity.

## Some Earthy Illustrations

The Bible employs some earthy analogies to describe the depth of human depravity. Man is like snake venom (Job 20:14; Romans 3:13), putrefying sores oozing pus (Isaiah 1:5–6; Leviticus 15:2; 1 Kings 8:38), gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17), a menstrual cloth (Isaiah 3:22; 64:6; Lamentations 1:17), mud and dog’s vomit (2 Peter 2:22), and scum and filthiness in a boiling pot (Ezekiel 29:11–12).

Fallen man is a maggot that feeds on filth and dead bodies (Job 25:6). Even David confessed that he was a worm (Psalm 22:6). John Calvin said fallen man is a “five-foot worm.”<sup>7</sup> Liberals and even naïve evangelicals have sometimes substituted *sinner* for *worm* in Isaac Watts’ famous hymn, “Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?” Men are worms whose hunger is never satisfied, as Jonathan Edwards said, “They are

like a filthy worm that never feeds so sweetly as when feeding on carrion or never has its nature so suited as when crawling in the most abominable filth.”<sup>8</sup>

Philippians 3:8 uses the Greek word *skubalon* to describe the best, not the worst, of man’s pretended righteousness. It means refuse, garbage, something is that thrown out. It sometimes means excrement. Thomas Watson the Puritan observed, “Some think sin is an ornament; it is rather an excrement.”<sup>9</sup> Calvin often said we are “dung and stench.”<sup>10</sup> Man is not a beautiful angel but a filthy and disgusting sinner.

### **Worse Than Animals**

God created man lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5) and higher than the animals (Genesis 1:28; Leviticus 24:21). But because of sin, man is worse than any beast. Animals do not sin; we do. Isaiah 1:2–3 says oxen and donkeys are better than we are, for they know where to be fed by their masters but man does not. Chicks run to their mother hen, but sinners run from God (Matthew 23:37).

The Bible often compares man with hogs (e.g., 2 Peter 2:22). Thomas Watson said, “The sinner is a swine with a man’s head,”<sup>11</sup> a kind of half-man half-beast like a centaur.<sup>12</sup> George Whitefield popularized the analogy of man as half-beast and half-devil.<sup>13</sup> Spurgeon said that analogy is an insult to beasts and devils.<sup>14</sup> We are worse than both.<sup>15</sup>

Scripture also compares sinners with dogs (e.g., 2 Peter 2:22; Philippians 3:2). This does not refer to cute puppies, but as Calvin said, “mean, mangy dogs.” Sinners are mad dogs foaming at the mouth with spiritual rabies. They are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15; John 10:12) and wild dogs, bulls and lions (Psalm 22:12–16). Worse still, we are like disgusting vermin. Calvin said we are worse than “worms, flies, lice and vermin. For there is more worth in all the world’s vermin than there is in man.”<sup>16</sup> The worst, vilest animal is an angel compared with the best man.

Thomas Watson said man is worse than animals, for animals fear fire but sinners do not fear hellfire.<sup>17</sup> Unless we are transformed into Christ’s lambs, lost sinners are dogs who will be excluded from heaven (Revelation 22:15).

### **Children of the Devil**

What is more, sinners are called snakes (e.g., Matthew 12:34; 24:33), for they are sons and daughters of Satan the great Serpent. They are a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 3:7).

Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do” (John 8:44). Spurgeon aptly said that the pure image of God has been defaced and sinners now resemble Satan more than God.<sup>18</sup> If you want to know what Satan looks like, look in the mirror. Examine your heart. There is enough sin in even the best sinner to reproduce another Devil.

Not all sinners are demon-possessed as such, but all are possessed by Satan as his willing slaves. Thomas Watson said we are “devils in the shape of men”<sup>19</sup> and “devils covered over with flesh.”<sup>20</sup> Calvin said, “To hear us tell it, we are angels, but if someone looks closely, he will find we are worse than devils.”<sup>21</sup> Religion alone does not help, as Watson said: “A moralized man is but a tame devil.”<sup>22</sup>

Because we pass original sin on to our children, we beget further children of the Devil. This does not mean that Christians ought not to have children. But it serves as a wake-up call to Christian parents to pray for the salvation of their little ones and not assume they are Christians because their parents are. Parents should realize their children are born sinners and need to be born again as Christians.

### **Lovers of Sin, Haters of God**

Since the Fall, mankind has things upside down and backwards. Instead of loving God (Matthew 22:37) and hating sin (Romans 12:9), sinners love sin and hate God. They delight in abominations (Isaiah 66:3), drink sin like water (Job 15:16) and love pleasure rather than God (1 Timothy 3:4). Psalm 52:3 says, “You love evil more than good.” John 3:19 says, “Men loved darkness rather than light.”

Conversely, sinners hate God—precisely because God is God. They are “haters of God” (Psalm 81:15; Romans 1:30). Men would kill God if they could, but their arrows do not reach God’s heart. Their nails hit Him at Calvary. The great Robert Murray M’Cheyne commented: “If the heart of God were within the reach of men, it would be stabbed a million times in one moment.”<sup>23</sup> Men hate God with as obsessive a compulsion to murder Him as Captain Ahab had to kill Moby Dick.

Man is the inveterate enemy of God. Calvin once said that even if God broke the arms of rebellious sinners, they would still kick against Him with their legs.<sup>24</sup> Sinful man deserves divine wrath. Jonathan Edwards preached that there is a “mutual loathing” between God and man.<sup>25</sup> Calvin said we deserve to have the angels spit on us.<sup>26</sup> Sinners make God

nauseous. Christ will vomit lukewarm hypocrites out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). Man is bad—very bad. And God is mad—very mad.

### **Further Analysis**

In spite of God's sober warnings and loving invitations, sinners refuse to repent, for that is an abomination to them (Proverbs 13:19). Thomas Watson said that sinners dare God to punish them and they sin so greedily as if they were afraid that hell's gates would be shut before they got there.<sup>27</sup>

Ultra-environmentalists sometimes say that mankind is a disease on Mother Earth. They are more right than they realize. God cursed the cosmos because of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20). Earth does not sin; we do. Our sin moves creation to want to vomit us out (Leviticus 18:25, 28; 20:22).

Yet sinners delude themselves into thinking, "I'm not that bad." This is because, as Jeremiah 13:23 says, they are accustomed to their sins. Calvin said sinners do not detect their sin "just as a pig does not smell its own stink."<sup>28</sup> Pelagians and Arminians would do well to heed Anselm's response to Boso: "You have not yet considered the exceeding gravity of sin."<sup>29</sup>

If God removed the restraints, there is no end of the sin that even the best saint would commit. Remember David, Moses and Peter. Spurgeon wisely warned: "No man knoweth what villainy he is capable of; he only needs to be placed under certain circumstances and he will develop into a very fiend."<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Bible is a mirror that shows how evil we really are by nature (James 1:23–25). We must hold it up to lost sinners so they will be convinced and convicted. Believers also need to examine themselves. We dare not say, "I'm sinful, but there are some sins I would never do." Self-deception is a symptom of sin. Yet God is merciful in not letting us see the full depth of our depravity. We couldn't stand it.

Indwelling sin remains in all Christians. Scripture disproves the Wesleyan-Nazarene error of a second work of grace that removes the root of original sin and produces entire sanctification and sinless perfection (1 John 1:8; Philippians 3:12). The only experience that leads to sinless perfection is death (Hebrews 12:23).

We must humbly beseech God to protect us from ourselves (Genesis 20:6), and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13). The good news is that the Holy Spirit produces good fruit in us and one day will remove the root of original sin in us. One of the glories of heaven will not only be holiness but impeccability, like the elect angels and our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 19:806.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 280–281.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Love, *The Works of Christopher Love* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), 1:81.

<sup>4</sup> Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 5:131.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *Last Words of Saints and Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1969), 56.

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), I:v.4.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Blessing of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 282.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1999), 108.

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Psalm 119* (Audubon, NJ: Old Paths, 1996), 112, 184.

<sup>11</sup> Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Plea for the Ungodly* (Pittsburgh, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), 351.

<sup>13</sup> George Whitefield, *The Sermons of George Whitefield* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 1:249.

<sup>14</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981/87), 22:298, 47:337.

<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, *Songs on the Nativity* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 2008), 13.

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: The Banner of Truth, 1973), 133.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Watson, *Religion Our True Interest* (Edinburgh: Blue Banner Productions, 1992), 14, 202.

<sup>18</sup> Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*, 5:70.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (London: The Banner of Truth, 1971), 173.

<sup>20</sup> Watson, *The Beatitudes*, 181.

<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 1–7* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 2008), 580.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Watson, *Discourses on Important and Interesting Subjects* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), 1:353.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Bonar, ed., *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1978), 441.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1987), 1162.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Puritan Pulpit: The American Pulpit* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2004), 120–130

<sup>26</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 3:189.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Crown of Righteousness* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 54–55.

<sup>28</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Jeremiah* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 110.

<sup>29</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), 1:21, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Edmond Hez Swem, ed., *Spurgeon's Gold* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 142.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Curt Daniel has been pastor of Faith Bible Church, Springfield, IL since 1995. He received his BA from Central Bible College, his M Div from Fuller Theological Seminary and his PhD from The University of Edinburgh. He is currently writing several books in the field of Calvinism. His article is based on a chapter of his forthcoming book *The History and Theology of Calvinism*.



Mark Coppenger

## Book Review

# Searching for Adam: Genesis & the Truth About Man's Origin

*Searching for Adam: Genesis & the Truth About Man's Origin* edited by Terry Mortenson. Birmingham, Green Forest, Arkansas: New Leaf/Master, 2016.

Reviewed by Mark Coppenger

Answers in Genesis's Terry Mortenson (M.Div., TEDS; PhD in the history of geology, Coventry) has accomplished a *tour de force* in the form of a 500-page response to those who maintain that the notion of an historical Adam is fictional or, at best, negligible and inconvenient. For this cause, Mortenson has enlisted fourteen scholars to assist him in addressing the critics' concerns (or conceits), hoping to defeat them in detail. Not surprisingly, but no less troubling, a number of the Adam-marginalizers are typically identified as evangelicals, but the book does not shrink from naming names and faulting faults.

Though the volume is replete with biological and geological argument, particularly compelling is Tom Nettles' 40-page survey of "Adam's Place in the History of the Church's Theology." Following the Apostle Paul, a host of theologians have argued for the reality and momentous impact of the individual man, Adam. In this connection, Nettles enlists, with

telling quotes, a great cloud of witnesses, from Athanasius, to Augustine, to Witsius, to Edwards, to Spurgeon. Of course, the emergence of Darwinism in the 19th century meant defections from the orthodox position, and Colgate theology professor William Newton Clarke serves as Nettles' case in point. His *Sixty Years with the Bible*, written during his tenure at Colgate (1890-1911), was influential in devaluing Adam, but Nettles argues that the four-volume series, *The Fundamentals*, led the way in providing early and effective answers to such critics.

The AIG staff—Mortenson, Steve Ham (Ken's brother), Tim Chaffrey, and Nathaneal Jeanson (along with Institute for Creation Research staffer, Jeffrey Tompkins) – penned five of the sixteen articles. In one, Mortenson takes to task a range of theories that seek to accommodate Genesis 1 to the spans of time favored by geologists and evolutionists (e.g., “day-age,” “day-gap-day-gap,” “framework,” “revelatory day,” “analogical day”). He concludes that the young-earth account, argued at the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter, provides the only suitable narrative. And he expresses plain spoken concern for luminaries who've lost their way on this matter, whether Francis Schaeffer, Wayne Grudem, Millard Erickson, Norm Geisler, Walter Kaiser, or John Ankerberg. He doesn't excoriate them, but wishes they might reconsider their stances in line with best-practice hermeneutics. Then, in the book's closing chapter, he continues with words of dismay for the BioLogos project and the range of “it doesn't matter how God did it” evangelicals susceptible to its blandishments.

Steve Ham argues that John Walton's *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (co-written with N.T. Wright) is guilty of too much deference to other Ancient Near Eastern writings, and that the Christ they present is more “archetypal” than “representational.” The article by Jeanson (with a biology PhD from Harvard) and Tompkins (a veteran professor from Clemson) makes accessible the technical case that the science of genetics is no friend to evolutionary theory, but rather favors Young Earth Creationism. The Chaffrey piece picks up on the entirely predictable recurrence of giant, flood, and language-development stories among the ancient peoples of the earth, for if there had been a real Ark, Babel, and such, it would stand to reason that everyone would be talking about it one way or another.

The rest of the chapters are divided between those that major on biblical exegesis and theology and those that address the pertinent science. In the former group:

1. Retired Masters Seminary Old Testament professor William Barrick provides a variety of charts to show the logic of the creation days and the uses of the generic and specific terms for Adam.

2. Columbia International University professors David Croteau and Michael Naylor home in on the New Testament passages which establish the theological indispensability of an historical Adam (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5) and highlight some indirect but impressive references, such as Acts 17:26, where Paul says God “made from one man every nation of mankind.”
3. David Casas, a Georgia state legislator completing a degree in Old Testament at SBTS, surveys various takes on “the image of God,” and applies the biblical account to matters of human dignity, the sanctity of life, and the way of redemption.
4. Retired Dallas Theological Seminary Old Testament professor Eugene Merrill draws on the historical narratives and genealogies of both the Old and New Testaments to make out his case for a real Adam, and his judgment is tart regarding those who have been “wooned . . . by the alluring spell of academic recognition and post-modern humanism.” He concludes that “the implicit affirmation that one can have his cake of theological truth, conviction, and power, and, at the same time, relish the crumbs of a fractured historicism as though both were baked by the same heavenly Baker, have no good thing to offer the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Among the scientists, both professional and lay, we encounter:

1. David Menton (Ph.D. in cell biology, Harvard, and anatomy professor at Washington University medical school), who takes head on the claims that this or that set of discovered bones represents an “ape-man,” and discounts them one-by-one as he defends the Genesis account.
2. Marvin Lubenow, with a varied background in theology, science, and ministry, who argues that Neanderthals were actually human.
3. Jerry Bergman (teaching science at a community college in Ohio), who traces the directions in which Darwinism has generated and fostered racism.
4. Stuart Burgess, a professor of engineering design at Bristol (UK), who details the way in which mankind exhibits “purposeful overdesign,” including the capacity for upright balance, verbal eloquence, and subtle facial expression.
5. Pastor/educator Don Landis, who points to such accomplishments as Machu Picchu, the Minoan Palace at Knossos, and Stonehenge to show that ancient man was extraordinarily bright and artful, consistent with the Genesis account.

The book is a first-rate reference work, and often a page-turner. It would been a bit more accessible with the insertion of one-paragraph summaries at the head of each chapter, as well as the authors' names in the table of contents. And perhaps they could have weighed in at under 400 pages with tighter editing. But these are quibbles. What we get is a salutary, closely-argued, theologically-freighted, and counter-cultural case for the historical Adam. Unfortunately, much of the culture it must counter is found within the evangelical camp.

### **ABOUT THE REVIEWER:**

Mark Coppenger has served Southern Baptist life for decades. His service includes pastor, church planter, denominational executive at the state and national level, seminary president, and teacher of philosophy. Presently he is on the faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.