

# DOCTRINE OF MAN

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## Lecture 01: Different Approaches to Anthropology

Today we begin a new locus in our survey of Christian doctrine. For the past many months – it seems like well over a year now – we have been studying the doctrine of creation. When you think that the doctrine of creation includes within its scope *everything* in existence apart from God himself, then it is no surprise that it would be a subject that would merit such a lengthy and in-depth discussion. But having completed that locus now, we turn to a brand new section of the course devoted to the doctrine of man.

Psalm 8 raises the question, “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” There are different approaches to answering this fundamental question about the nature of man. Let’s compare and contrast these approaches to anthropology.

First, *empirical anthropology*. Empirical anthropology can be defined as a collection for a whole series of sciences which respectively investigate different aspects of man through the observation of analyzable phenomena, through experimentation, and through the consequences of the data investigated. So, for example, empirical anthropology would include studies on the biological origins of man – where did the human species come from? It asks what, if anything, makes humans unique? What serves to differentiate humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom? It studies the relationship of the brain and states of consciousness – the famous mind-body problem. Psychoanalysis and psychology would be included in empirical anthropology as would be social studies. All of these provide partial answers, at least, to the question “What is man?”

*Philosophical anthropology*, by contrast, tries to answer the question “Who is man?” If the empirical anthropologist tries to answer the question “What is man?” the philosophical anthropologist explores the question “Who is man?” That is to say, philosophical anthropology seeks a self-understanding of man in light of the analysis of what it is to be a human being. This will usually be bound up with ethical considerations – what our moral obligations and prohibitions are – and the intrinsic worth of human beings and fundamental human rights.

As you might well imagine, there are various approaches to philosophical anthropology. For example, one of these would be materialism or physicalism or naturalism. This viewpoint has a very long pedigree. Particularly influential in the modern notion of materialism would be conceptions of man like that of Julien Offray de La Mettrie<sup>1</sup>. His

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<sup>1</sup> Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709 - 1751) was a physician and philosopher. He published *L'Homme machine* (“Man a Machine”) in 1747 which was a materialistic, atheistic work in which he argued that consciousness is related to physical causes. Hence, he denied dualism (that is, he denied that man was comprised of a soul separate from the body).

dates are 1709 to 1751. This French thinker characterized man as *L'homme machine* – “man the machine.” This is very similar to the characterization of humanity by Richard Dawkins in our own day – that we are basically machines for propagating DNA.

*L'homme machine* is the notion of man as just a mechanistic device – a “moist robot” in the words of one contemporary naturalist. The German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach<sup>2</sup> whose dates are 1804 to 1872 had a very catchy way of expressing this materialistic view of man. Feuerbach’s aphorism was “*der mensch ist, was er isst*” – that is to say, “man is what he eats” – in German, at least, a very nice pun. On this view, man is just a purely material organism.

In contrast to this view of philosophical anthropology would be a quite different perspective known as idealism. This is represented in German philosophy by G. W. F. Hegel<sup>3</sup> whose dates are 1770 to 1831. For Hegel, it is the mind, or spirit, which is constitutive for man. What it means to be human is to be mind as opposed to the material.

Yet a third philosophical approach to anthropology would be existentialism. Existentialism emphasizes individual authentic existence achieved by a free choice through which a person realizes his uniqueness. So the emphasis in existentialism is on individual authenticity which is achieved through radical freedom. A good example of an existentialist would be the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre whose dates are 1905 to 1980. Sartre was an atheistic existentialist.<sup>4</sup> He held that man is condemned to be free because there is no essence of man which precedes his existence and defines who he is. Rather, man is condemned to freely define his own existence since he does not have an essence that is established by God in advance. Man determines his own meaning and value. So existentialism tends to lead to a sort of radical relativism about the meaning and value of human life.

Finally, one might mention Marxism or Marxism-Leninism. According to Marxism, society is constitutive for what it is to be a human being – not the individual but rather society. It postulates a kind of economic determinism and class struggle between oppressors and the oppressed. This view of man entails a view of human beings which implies the perfectibility of human existence. If the state can be made to respect and to work for the interests of the masses then the masses can achieve a sort of perfect society – a perfect humanity if you will – so that there is no innate, sinful, fallenness of man which would prevent having a perfect society in which human beings live.

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<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804 - 1872) was a German materialist, atheist philosopher whose work later influenced Karl Marx.

<sup>3</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 - 1831) was a German philosopher with liberal, unorthodox Christian ideas.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) was one of the main philosophical thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialism.

All of these examples are various philosophical approaches to the subject of anthropology seeking to answer the question, “Who is man?”

In contrast to both empirical and philosophical anthropology, *theological anthropology* approaches these questions with respect to man’s relationship to God. Like philosophical anthropology, it also seeks to answer the question, “Who is man?” What is the meaning and nature of human existence? But in contrast to empirical and philosophical anthropology, it sees the answer to the psalmist’s question to be found fundamentally in our relationship with God. This usually involves two aspects: man as created in God’s image and then man as a fallen human being – a sinner – before God.

So theological anthropology – or the doctrine of man – typically includes within it two subsections. First would be man as created in the image of God. What is man by nature? Then secondly would be man as sinner – man in his fallen state of alienation from God.

A third state, namely man justified in Christ and restored to his relationship with God, will typically come in the doctrine of salvation or soteriology, which we will look at later. So there tend to be two subsections in the doctrine of man – man in the image of God and then man as sinner. Man insofar as he is redeemed and restored to relationship with God (though it could be included here) is generally classed under the doctrine of salvation.

So man is created by nature to be in God’s image though he now stands in rebellion to God. There is a sort of paradox in Christian anthropology, if you will; namely, the so-called “natural man” is not really the natural man! That is to say, man as he was created to be, by nature, is in the image of God; he is innocent and not fallen – that is the way that Adam is presented in Genesis prior to the Fall. But what Paul calls the “natural man” is fallen humanity. So Paul’s natural man is not really the natural man. Sin doesn’t belong to man by nature; it is rather a perversion of human nature. Human nature in its uncorrupted form as it was created to be is in the image of God.

What is the inter-relationship between these different approaches to the doctrine of man? Well, some persons think that theological anthropology has no role to play whatsoever and should be excluded. Obviously, if you are a materialist or a naturalist then there simply is no room for answering these questions with respect to our relationship to God. For many people on the modern scene who are influenced by secular philosophical approaches, theological anthropology is simply out of the question.

Among those who do take a theological approach, it will be very frequently said that there is no relationship between theological anthropology and empirical anthropology. These thinkers try to separate empirical studies of man from theological approaches to this question in order that there might not be any conflict between the two. If these are utterly non-intersecting domains of study then there can be no conflict arising for theological anthropology from the various empirical anthropological disciplines.

This, however, seems to me to be an abdication of responsibility on the part of theologians. It involves a retreat of theology into unverifiable and hence irrelevant sanctuaries. It achieves security and safety from the studies of empirical anthropology only at the expense of becoming irrelevant to the real world in which we live. It seems to me that theological anthropology does have empirical consequences. For example, consequences about the origin of humanity – was there an original human pair from whom we are all descended? Or, consequences about materialism and the mind-body relationship – are we simply chemical machines or is there an immaterial part of our nature? Or, consequences concerning freedom versus determinism – is everything that we think and do determined by the input of our five senses and our genetic makeup, or do we have genuine freedom of the will? In all of these ways, I think, empirical anthropology and theological anthropology have the potential of coming into conflict with each other and to either verification or falsification of theological positions.

Moreover, I think it is obvious that theological anthropology can come into conflict with philosophical anthropology. The philosopher seeks to answer the same question as the theologian, namely “Who is man?” – but he does so totally from the human side without taking any account of what God has to say about the matter or what difference God would make to the question “Who is man?” Whereas the theologian seeks God’s viewpoint on human nature and on who we are. So obviously conflict can arise between theological and philosophical approaches to anthropology.

So it seems to me that what we want to find is an integrative approach to these questions – a synoptic approach – which will take into account all of the insights of empirical, philosophical, and theological anthropology. The Christian worldview is properly a synoptic worldview that integrates all of our various sources of knowledge that we have in order to answer life’s deepest questions.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* In the last two categories of the theological, the fallen man – I think that would more closely align with the first part of Psalm 8, *what is humanity that thou are mindful of him*. The second part, *what is the son of Adam that thou visited him*, would be the redeemed part. As far as integrating them, it seems like Hegel would be more closely studying what is humanity prior to the Christian because it's talking about a spiritual nature of humanity before coming here. The integrative approach – what Sartre says is that we are given total libertarian stuff and we are affected but his thing about the spirit is all wrong. But what we do, we reap in our spirit, too. I think that an integrative approach is the only way to approach it.

*Dr. Craig:* OK, good.

*Student:* I just wanted clarification about the difference between Hegel and Sartre – idealism and existentialism. I know that existentialism is complicated and diverse.

*Dr. Craig:* Obviously we're making very broad strokes here. But the point I wanted to emphasize about Hegel was the commitment to idealism in contrast to the materialistic point of view of La Mettrie and Feuerbach. For Hegel, what is constitutive human existence is spirit or mind, and I think that's an element that is one with which we would resonate from a theological point of view in contrast to pure materialism. Now, we have to be careful, however, not to lapse into Gnosticism where we think it's all about spirit because clearly a Jewish view of humanity includes the worthwhileness of the physical body. It's not just spirit. But that would be the emphasis that I'm trying to point out here. In contrast to materialism is the importance of mind or spirit. What I see different about existentialism that I wanted to focus on was its emphasis on the individual, that it's very, very individualistic. And that this emphasis is very much connected with, in Sartre's view, the fact that we have no defined essence from God. What we are is what we freely make of ourselves. We choose our own meaning, value, and destiny through this radical freedom that we have, and we're not defined as to what we are by God because there is no God on this view. So it's that emphasis that you don't have in Hegel – this emphasis upon the lack of an essence prior to your existence and therefore, as he says, being condemned to define your own existence in light of your radical freedom.

*Student:* Given Sartre's view, it seems like that's a very popular concept today and actually mushrooming because the focus in so much of what I see in theater and entertainment and whatnot is letting yourself be free, discover who you are, it's okay. You don't have to be judged by any sort of authority or culture. You're certainly free to express yourself as you see fit. It's a sense of reaching your self-awareness. I just see that is a very popular theme that's being promoted so much today because there is no God so you don't have to worry about boundaries of moralism and whatnot. It's within yourself. Am I correct in that understanding?

*Dr. Craig:* I hadn't made that connection but I can see why you would say that. I would suggest that probably all of these views have currents within contemporary culture. These philosophical viewpoints just don't disappear without a trace. They leave currents in popular culture. I mentioned, for example, Dawkins' approach which I find to be still very influential culturally – this idea of “man the machine.” But the other existentialist viewpoint I wouldn't be at all surprised if you're not right about that.

*Student:* I would agree sort of, especially since I spent the last six months in a secular university. I've got this different perspective. Yes and no individuals determine their meaning for humanity. Yes, in the sense that we have choice, but no in the sense that our only choice is making sure that we agree with everybody else, too. Because the



celebration of the individual stops when you're not celebrating all of the others around. So the Christian worldview, because it is very narrow (because we do go through the narrow gate) is not something that is accepted in the culture at large. In the culture at large very much is this idea that we can create a perfect society.

*Dr. Craig:* Thank you. I think what you just highlighted is that Marxism is also still very much alive in the West. Not in the old bourgeois versus the proletariat, but in the social justice movement. The same sort of stratification of society between the oppressed and the oppressors in terms of gender, race, sexuality, and so forth, all of these kind of themes are current in the contemporary university in a kind of neo-Marxist emphasis that is, as you say, not at all individualistic. It's communal.

*Student:* Paulo Freire is super-popular right now – the Brazilian philosopher and teacher who talked about if the oppressed are going to break free from their oppression the oppressors have to join them. So it's very much a “we're all the same, and it's wonderful.” But you can't lift people out of oppression unless you become one of them. It's a very strange philosophy but it is definitely – there are the oppressors and then there are the oppressed and the only way to break free from that and create that perfect society is to get down in the mud and bring everybody up because a rising tide raises all boats.

*Dr. Craig:* OK, thank you. These are very interesting comments.

*Student:* This trying to get an integrative view – aren't some of these mutually exclusive? How do you get an integrative view with mutually exclusive ideas?

*Dr. Craig:* When I say a synoptic point of view, I don't mean you make a kind of kaleidoscopic collage or something because obviously things like existentialism as Sartre expressed it is incompatible with Christianity because we believe that there is a God who does define for us what humanity is and our moral worth and obligations. But what I meant by that was that we will approach an issue not in sort of pristine isolation from these other schools of thought but we will interact with them and take account of what they say and to refute them where necessary or show where their critiques fail. But we won't have a kind of naive isolationism where we just retreat into our own circles and don't interact with these wider points of view. We want to be interacting with these kinds of things that someone just described at the university and so forth.

*Student:* I read about Rousseau but I heard Rousseau was a Christian existentialist. I don't know anything about that. You're saying that it was incompatible but I've heard that there are Christian existentialists.

*Dr. Craig:* Rousseau, if I can dig into my memory files, was a deist. He was a French deist. That is to say he did believe in God, that's right, and therefore thought that we have a moral duty to God to approximate. But he wasn't a Christian. He would not be an



atheist like Sartre was. He lived a couple of centuries earlier during the heyday of French and German deism. So he has the idea of a Creator to whom we are morally responsible, but he would not have adopted a Christian point of view. He is called, as those of you who study philosophy of education know, the father of modern education and had a tremendous influence on philosophy of education subsequently and how children are to be raised.<sup>5</sup>

## Lecture 2: Biblical Data Concerning Man as the Image of God

Last week we began a new locus, or topic, in our survey of Christian doctrine, namely the doctrine of man. We differentiated empirical, philosophical, and theological approaches to anthropology. Today we want to turn to our first topic in theological anthropology which is man as created in the image of God.

Let's look first at the biblical data concerning man as the image of God. The classical theological term for this in Latin is the *imago dei* – the image of God. Man is created in God's image. The *imago dei*. Let's look at the biblical data that's pertinent to the doctrine of man as the image of God. The classical biblical text on this subject is Genesis 1:26-27. There we read:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Notice here that there are two words used to express the resemblance of man to his creator. The first word is the Hebrew word *tselem* or "image" which connotes a resemblance or a literal image of something. The second word is *demut* which is translated "likeness." *Tselem* and *demut* – image and likeness. Man is said to be created in God's image after, or according to, his likeness. In Hebrew (or at least in this Hebrew text) there's probably no difference between these two. It's not as though these represent two different aspects of man's nature – image and likeness. It's rather a sort of parallelism to describe the resemblance or relation of man to God. The image of God is also referred to in Genesis 5:1 where it says, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness [*demut*] of God." Finally, Genesis 9:6 is God's command concerning capital punishment for murder. Genesis 9:6 reads, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image [*tselem*]." These are the passages in Genesis that describe man as made in the image and likeness of God.

But we might also want to compare with these texts Genesis 5:3. This verse speaks of Adam's begetting his son, Seth. Genesis 5:3 says that Adam, "became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." Here the offspring of Adam is also said to be created in Adam's image – *tselem* – and also his likeness – *demut* – in the same way that Adam was created in the image and according to the likeness of God. So

just as Adam was created in the image and after the likeness of God, so Adam's offspring were created in his (Adam's) image and likeness.

Genesis is certainly the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the image of God in Scripture, but there are also a couple of passages in the New Testament that speak of this concept as well. For example, 1 Corinthians 11:7. Here Paul says, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image [the Greek word here is *eikon*] and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man." Here we have a reference in the New Testament to man as created in God's image. Notice the asymmetry here. Paul does not say that woman is the image and glory of man. Paul knows that, according to Genesis, woman is created in the image of God just as much as man is. When you go back to Genesis and look at the *locus classicus* for this notion (namely, Genesis 1:26-27) it uses the plural pronoun "them" – "let us make man in our image after our likeness. Let them [plural] have dominion over the fish of the sea . . ." Then verse 27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Clearly in Hebrew thinking man and woman alike are created in God's image. So mankind is created in the image of God, and mankind comprises both male and female. They are equally in the image of God. That's why Paul says woman is the glory of man. He doesn't say she is the image of man. The woman is the glory of man, but he understands that she is just as much in the image of God as her husband is.

Finally, in James 3:9, speaking about controlling our tongue, James says the following, "With it [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God." The word in the Greek here for "likeness" is *homoiosis*.

So in both the Old Testament and the New Testament we have this notion of human beings as being special, singled out in being created in God's image and likeness, unlike all of the rest of the creatures in the biosphere.

As I reviewed this material, I wondered if there weren't some aspect of it that might be pertinent to this Christmas time of the year that I could share, and to my surprise there was an aspect of this doctrine that did strike me in this way. Because the New Testament not only speaks of man as being the image and likeness of God, it also uses language which is the very reversal of this expression to say something very radical – that God himself was made to be in the image or likeness of man. Philippians 2:6-7:

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men [*homoiosis*].

Though Christ was God himself, Christ humbly came to be born in the likeness of man.

Similarly in Hebrews 2:17 we read that since we share in flesh and blood, Christ, “had to be made like [*homoioo*, same root] his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make expiation for the sins of the people.”

So at this time of year as we think about man as being made in the image and likeness of God, let's not forget as well that in Christ God was actually made in the image and likeness of man for the sake of our salvation, and that's what we celebrate at Christmas.<sup>6</sup>

## Lecture 3: Systematizing the Biblical Data

We are in our new section of the Defenders class studying the doctrine of man. We've been looking at the notion of man as created in the image of God, and we looked last time at a number of verses primarily in Genesis that indicate that man is made in God's image and likeness.

You'll notice that there's no indication in the biblical text that this image or likeness is lost through the fall of man into sin. In fact, in the command in Genesis 9:6 where the rationale for capital punishment is given it says that man is created in the image of God even in his fallen state. So even fallen man retains the divine image in which he was created. So there isn't any indication in the biblical text that this image or likeness to God is something that is lost through the human fall into sin.

Let's talk briefly about Christ as the image of God. There's another use of the word "image" with respect to God's image; that is to say, Christ is the image of God. In Colossians 1:15 it says that Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." This is quite a different use of the expression "image of God." Here Christ is said to be the visible representation of the invisible God in a special sense that is not true of Adam and Eve. Christ is God's image.

Finally, let's say a word about man in Christ as the image of God. Man in Christ is said to be conformed to Christ's image. Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image [*eikon*] of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Here we as Christians are said to be destined toward conformity with Christ's image. Similarly in 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness [*eikon*] from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Here we are said to be sanctified as we are brought into the image of Christ the Lord. There is a kind of image of Christ toward which believers are destined and progressing.

Such are the biblical data with respect to the image of God. Man is created in God's image. Christ is God's image. Man in Christ is brought into conformity with the image of Christ.

### START DISCUSSION

*Student:* That's a different word for "image" or the same word?

*Dr. Craig:* The same word in these last passages – *eikon* – is the same one that is used for "image." Of course, in Hebrew, as I explained, it's different in the Old Testament. But it is this word "*eikon*" from which we get our word "icon."

I haven't looked at the Septuagint for Genesis 1:26-27. I think so, but I shouldn't commit myself.

## **END DISCUSSION**

Having looked at the biblical data on the image of God, we now want to look at various attempts to systematize this data.

Let's talk first about the Roman Catholic view. The traditional Roman Catholic view differentiates between the image and the likeness of God. You'll remember that Genesis says that man was created in God's image according to his likeness. For Roman Catholics these are two different things in man. In man's original state of righteousness in which man was created, man had the likeness of God. So the likeness of God consists in man's original righteousness that he had prior to the Fall. But man in that original state was also in God's image as well. This is usually understood in terms of man's having a rational soul. But then comes the Fall, and with the Fall that original righteousness is lost. Therefore, man in his fallen condition no longer stands in the likeness of God. The image of God, however, though impaired and disrupted by the Fall, still exists even in the fallen state and so is not entirely lost. Finally, in the state of grace insofar as we are in Christ the likeness of God is restored because we now have Christ's righteousness, and the image of God is also healed and restored from the disruption that it experienced.

We can illustrate this difference by drawing two lines concerning the image and likeness of God. In the state of original righteousness man exists in God's image. Then with the Fall this image is distorted and impaired. But then as one is in Christ in a state of grace the image is healed and restored. The likeness of God which is man's original righteousness is however just lost in the Fall. Man no longer has it but then insofar as one is in Christ the original righteousness that Adam and Eve had is restored. On the traditional Roman Catholic view there's a distinction drawn between the image and the likeness of God in man. The image is distorted by the Fall into sin and then repaired in the state of grace, but the likeness of man to God (that original righteousness that he possessed) is lost in the fallen state and then restored in Christ.

By contrast to the traditional Roman Catholic view, the Protestant Reformation theologians did not distinguish between the image of God and the likeness of God. They held that the image of God just is the likeness of God. These are not two different aspects of man. So in that original state of righteousness man was in the image or likeness of God. It means the same thing.

The key difference between the Protestant Reformers and the Catholic view emerges with respect to the question whether fallen man is still in the image of God. The Reformers' view implied that fallen man is no longer in God's image. They identified the image of God with the likeness of God which was man's original righteousness, and since that

original righteousness was lost so was the image of God. Nevertheless, they did try to affirm some sense in which fallen sinful human beings are still in God's image by differentiating between a general image and a special image of God. They said that only the special image of God is lost and that in a sort of general sense even fallen man would still be in God's image. Luther, for example, said that man almost lost the image of God in the Fall. Calvin says that a relic of the image of God remains in this fallen condition. He says, "we can trace some remains of the divine image distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures." The question, I think, here is whether the Reformers are consistent in seeing the image of God as lost because of the identity of that image with the likeness of God (man's original righteousness) and yet they're still wanting to preserve some vestige of God's image in man.

You'll notice that the Reformers and the Catholic theologians are united in seeing God's image as rooted in ontology or in man's constitution. Sometimes this is called a substantial view of the *imago dei*. Man is structurally different than other animals. Only he has or is a rational soul. God is the supremely rational being. He is the *Logos* of John 1: "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God." Similarly, our being in God's image means that we, too, are rational creatures. This view is in line with Aristotle's view of the nature of humanity which is that human nature is to be a rational animal. Our physical bodies are shared with the animals. We have bodies that are very similar to the great apes and other primates. But our soul or our mind makes us godlike. It is our reason that distinguishes us from mere animals. So on both the Catholic view and the Reformation view the image of God is something that is constitutional in humanity. It is a substantial aspect of human being.

Others, as we've seen, have suggested differently – that the image of God is simply the original righteousness in which Adam and Eve were created. They were created innocent and unfallen, and it was that original righteousness that they had that made them in God's image. On that view the image of God would be lost in the Fall if it is identical simply with this original righteousness.

Some modern theologians on the other hand have interpreted the image of God relationally. We stand in I-thou relationships, or to use contemporary parlance, I-you relationships. First-person relationships with one another – both with other persons (other human beings) and also with God. We stand in an I-thou relationship with God as well as with other human persons. So man is in God's image not in being structurally different from the beasts but by his standing in personal relationships.

Again, it has been suggested that the image of God consists in our relative freedom. We have freedom of the will. We're not like animals which are guided by instinct. Rather, we



have the ability to make morally significant choices, and it is our freedom that constitutes the image of God in us.

Another possible interpretation would be our answerability to God. This would again seem to be a relational interpretation where it is our responsibility in relationship to God that constitutes being in God's image. We have moral duties to fulfill, and we are answerable and accountable to God. So the image of God would consist in our answerability to God.

Yet a different view of the image of God in man is the so-called functional interpretation. Rather than God's image being due to an ontological component in man's being or man standing in relationships, the image of God is thought of functionally. It's a way in which humanity functions or exists. So, for example, some have suggested that the image of God consists in man's having lordship over the Earth and its creatures. To be in God's image means to have the God-given duty and role of governing the Earth and its creatures. We are functioning on the Earth as God's royal representatives. This is a functional understanding of God's image rather than an ontological one.

As you can see, there are quite a wide variety of interpretations of what it means to say that man is created in the image of God and according to his likeness.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* I'm just following up on the question earlier about the Septuagint's use of the word "image." It's *eikona* in Genesis 1:26 and 27.

*Dr. Craig:* Good. Thank you.

*Student:* I've heard other people teach on image of God in man as being some sort of a trinity of man. There are loads and loads of verses about where heart and spirit and soul are all mentioned. It seems to me those are kind of literary devices of expounding on the same thing – it's being restated. So when Jesus says to love the Lord your God with all your mind and soul and heart, I don't know that those are different things. But then you get to the verse in Hebrews 4 where it talks about the power of the word to be able to separate soul from spirit. I wonder: is soul and spirit a different thing? Or is that part of our image of God? I even heard people go so far as to explain that this trinity of man is like the body is more like Jesus and the soul is more like the Holy Spirit and spirit is more like it's God the Father. That seems like that's really reaching to me.

*Dr. Craig:* I think so as well. I think the question would be whether or not two discussions are being run together here that need to be kept distinct. It seems to me that what you are talking about are whether or not there are reflections or vestiges or traces of the Trinity in humanity. This would be a Trinitarian discussion – whether or not Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit finds some sort of analogy or reflection in humans. But I don't

see that that is connected with this question of man created in God's image. I suppose somebody could push it that way, but I think he would have a hard time justifying that biblically. Let's simply point out that on that view that would be a substantial view. There it would be an attempt to understand the image of God in terms of ontology, the structure of human being. So it would fit in with the view that I described as a substantial or ontological view of the image of God, but instead of rooting it perhaps in the rational soul it might appeal to this tripartite division. I think that there's a functional difference in that the soul describes the mind's workings normally in this world but insofar as the mind relates to God in its spiritual function it could be called "spirit." So I would see it not as an ontological composition in man – that man is made of soul and spirit – but I would see this more as a functional differentiation. The soul insofar as it relates to God can be referred to as spirit. I think we're going to talk about that later in the class when we come to these different constituents in human being.

*Student:* My question is about the image – how it is damaged in the Fall and then how both the Catholic and the Protestants agree that it gets restored to its original form. Do they discuss anything other than the fact that the power of sin revives and keeps us alienated, and once we're born again in Christ we can live his desire. So it's only the lordship that is different in the image, or is there something else they allude to being damaged by the Fall?

*Dr. Craig:* This is a great question. I wonder exactly what is meant by saying the image of God is damaged or hurt, and I could imagine that one might say that, for example, the different faculties would be disrupted. That the will would no longer naturally incline toward God but would be bent in upon itself and will other things than God. Perhaps reason is twisted and distorted by the Fall so that fallen man doesn't reason properly. One could imagine that these different faculties would still be possessed by fallen man but that they wouldn't be functioning properly.

*Student:* We'd be using them to hide because of the guilt.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. Right. The Scripture talks a lot about the darkened intellect and as a result they suppress the truth in unrighteousness – Romans 1.

*Student:* What is the Eastern Orthodox traditional view of the *imago dei*?

*Dr. Craig:* I didn't have that as part of my notes, so I would have to look at that. I would suspect that it would be very similar to the Roman Catholic view that would distinguish original righteousness from the rational soul that makes us different from the beasts. That was a very, very widespread view among the early church fathers.

*Student:* Of all the lists that you provided, I attempted to put them together and want to run it through you and see if you agree with this integration. First, God created man for

there is a design and there is a purpose. So ontological is the design. And the function is his purpose, and his purpose is for man to rule his creation according to his will. And so ontologically he designed us with our soul which is comprised of our emotion, our intellect, and our will. And so the fallen state is that our conscience (which is actually the conscience before the Fall) is in agreement with God. And the devotion is the I-thou relationship dominates, but after the Fall it's I-you because Satan comes in and basically deceives us and broke that I-thou relationship. So our conscience is distorted to a point that we lost the purpose of God's design, and so we try to live out the image without God's will, without his purpose, and basically lost.

*Dr. Craig:* I think you're quite right in seeing that these are not mutually exclusive alternatives but can be integrated into a sort of synoptic view. I like very much the way you put it. I wouldn't say that the purpose was lost because it does remain God's purpose. He has placed us here for the purpose of serving as his royal representatives on this planet, but we have failed to discharge that purpose. That's what you meant. Similarly I think you'd want to say that there's something about the design that makes man capable of functioning in this way. I'll say something more about that as well, but apart from those comments I think you expressed it very nicely.

*Student:* I know it's probably not prominent of a belief, but my initial reaction to anything looking like the image of something I would think that it almost physically looks like it. Therefore, is there any view out there that's like God has a corporeal face and looks like a human being?

*Dr. Craig:* There are theologians who are exegetes who would say this just means that human beings are physically like God – that God looks like a man in the sky (the sort of popular misconception of God). They would say that was the sort of crude understanding that some people had at that time. So the image of God should just be straightforwardly interpreted in that way – that God looks like us. The difficulty with that, I think, is that whatever the background or oral traditions there might be behind Genesis 1, by the time it gets to Genesis 1 and the author of the Pentateuch he clearly doesn't think of God that way because he says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God is portrayed as a transcendent being beyond the physical world who creates the entire universe. So for the final author I don't think he could have understood the image of God in that physicalistic, anthropomorphic way because the concept of God in Genesis 1 is so transcendent.

*Student:* Trying to synthesize a trichotomous view, I would agree with what was earlier said. That with the Fall we have the image of God, but after the Fall the influence of the body on the soul is much more dominant and minimizes the effect of the spirit on the soul. So when you're a believer, that's restored. You can push back. The spirit could push

back through the soul and then to the body rather than the other way around. The other direction is more dominant after the Fall, and that's the loss of the image. So it's what affects our volition, cognition, and emotion.

*Dr. Craig:* In a case like this, what is the image? It seems to me that, as I said earlier, we're conflating two different discussions here. What is the image of God?

*Student:* I think the image is a three-part being. As you know, God is Trinitarian. I think we are.

## **END DISCUSSION**

We're out of time so we'll close now and then we'll turn to an evaluation of these different interpretations the next time we meet.<sup>7</sup>

## Lecture 4: Evaluating Construals of the Image of God

In our study of the doctrine of man we now come to evaluation. Let's talk first about man in the image and likeness of God. What might we say about these alternative construals of the image of God by way of evaluation?

I think, first of all, that we have to agree with the Protestant Reformers that there is no difference between the image and likeness of God. I already indicated that when we looked at the biblical material from Genesis that these words are used in parallel and synonymously. To say that man is created in God's image and according to his likeness is just an example of Hebrew parallelism. The terms have virtually the same meaning. So they are not meant to indicate two different aspects of human being. Rather, these are synonymous ways of designating man as in some way reflecting God in a special way that sets him apart from the rest of creation.

But then I think we have to say, contrary to the Reformers, that the image is not lost in the Fall because fallen man clearly is in the image of God as we saw. In Genesis 9:6 fallen man is referred to as being in God's image. Therefore the image of God is not the original righteousness or something of that sort which could be lost in the Fall. We shouldn't think of the image of God as something that is given up or lost as a result of man's fall into sin. So the first point is that the image and likeness of God are identical. They refer to the same thing. And they are not lost in the Fall.

When it is said that Christ is the image of God, here I think we are dealing with a totally different concern. The word may be the same – “image” – but it isn't in the same sphere of discussion as when we talk about man created in God's image. In Colossians, Paul is saying that Christ is the visible exemplification of the invisible God. When you look at Christ, you're looking at God. He is God in the flesh. He is God incarnate. This just isn't the same sphere of discussion as when we talk about what it means for man to be in God's image.

Similarly when the Scriptures talk about Christians being in Christ – being conformed to the image of Christ – that is again just a separate discussion. It's not relevant to the question of what it means for man to be created in God's image. With respect to being conformed to the image of Christ, the concern there is ethical or spiritual. Man is being conformed to the character of Christ through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. This is about the sanctification of believers. So, again, even though the vocabulary may be the same (using the word “image”), it's not the same discussion as what it means to say that man is in God's image.

Man, then, is in the image of God even as a sinner. His relationship with God may be broken because of sin. He finds himself estranged from God, spiritually alienated from

God, condemned by God's justice, and under God's wrath, but nevertheless he still is in God's image. What does this mean then? This is a question which comes down to whether you take the image of God to be an ontological term or a relational term or a functional term. Is it specifying some aspect of human being that resembles God's nature or is it merely a way in which we relate or function? This is going to depend on how you interpret a couple of Hebrew prepositions – *ba* and *ka*. According to Genesis, man is created *in* God's image – the Hebrew word there is *ba* – not *as* God's image. It says further that man is created *according to* God's likeness, and the Hebrew word there (the preposition) is *ka*. Not *as* God's likeness, he is *in* or *according to* God's image and likeness. But it doesn't say he *is* God's image and likeness. The text doesn't say that, *prima facie* at least, man is God's image or likeness; rather, it says he's created *in* his image and *according to* his likeness. Scholars agree that these two prepositions basically mean the same thing. However, the first of these prepositions (*ba*) can be taken in the sense of identity. It could be taken or interpreted to mean that man *is* God's image; that he is created *as* God's image, rather than *in* God's image. But the second – *ka* – cannot be taken to mean “as” or to indicate an identity relationship. Still, in Genesis 5:1-3 these prepositions are reversed with regard to Adam’s son Seth whom it says is created “in his likeness and according to his image.” You have the prepositions switched in Genesis 5:1-3 – in his likeness and according to his image. Even though *ka* does not mean “as” – doesn't indicate identity – nevertheless the word “likeness” could also be used with *ba* in which case one could interpret it to mean identity, that we are God's likeness and we are his image. So these Hebrew prepositions are not decisive in guiding our interpretation of what it means to be created in God's image and likeness, though an interpretation taking man to just *be* God's image and likeness does involve interpreting these prepositions differently than their normal meanings of “in” and “according to.”

In his highly acclaimed book, *The Liberating Image of God* (subtitled *The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*), Richard Middleton distinguishes between what he calls a substantialistic, a relational, and a functional interpretation of the image of God. Middleton plumps for a functional rather than either a substantial or relational interpretation of the *imago dei*. In fact, he reports that today there is virtual unanimity among Old Testament scholars concerning the meaning of the image of God. The context in Genesis 1, he says, has a predominantly royal flavor beginning with the close linkage of the image of God with a mandate to rule and subdue the Earth in Genesis 1:26 and 1:28 where God commands man to have dominion over the Earth and its creatures and to rule. Moreover, the God in whose image and likeness human beings are created is depicted as the king or the sovereign over the cosmos. He rules by royal decree – “let there be” and something ensues, and even addresses the divine council of the heavenly court of angelic beings in saying, “Let us make man in our image.” So the writer portrays God as a king presiding

over the heaven and Earth. Humanity is created like this God with the special role of representing or imaging God's rule in the world.

Certainly Old Testament scholars are correct in seeing man as having this royal duty and role on the Earth. It's clearly assigned in Genesis 1:26 and 27. But that itself does not imply that the image of God just is that function. Man's royal duty may be the role that God has given to man. But Middleton says the royal function or purpose of humanity in 1:26 is not a mere add-on, separable in some way from man's essence or nature.

Middleton says that while rule may be grammatically only the purpose and not the definition of the image in 1:26, an initial look at the overall rhetorical world of the text suggests that it is a necessary and inseparable purpose, and therefore virtually constitutive of the image. But again I think Middleton's conclusion is overdrawn. A thing's having an essential function is just not the same thing as a thing's definition. Rather, what is key to Middleton's case is his second reason for the consensus among Old Testament scholars, and that is the Ancient Near Eastern ideology of kings in Mesopotamia and Egypt that describe their function as the images of the gods. Many would draw our attention to the fact that these ancient kings would often set up statues or images of themselves in distant lands under their control. Middleton recognizes that the kings did often have this practice of setting up statues of themselves in distant lands. This is well-attested. But he says the meaning of this practice is contested. The images could just be monuments to the kings and their accomplishments. Many of these images are votive objects which are dedicated to the gods. But he says the Egyptian pharaohs did set up images of themselves as symbols of their authority in distant lands. The statue represents the absent king in some way. Middleton thinks that since this representative notion is intrinsic to the understanding of images in the Ancient Near East, it seems quite plausible to regard the kings' practice of setting up images of themselves as a legitimate parallel to the creation of humans in the image of God. We – man – is God's image and represents God and his authority on the Earth.

While this kingly practice is interesting, it's not clear to me at least that it is a legitimate parallel to man's being created in God's image and likeness. Genesis does not portray the Earth as being like a distant land from which God is absent. Rather, God is himself active in the world. He doesn't need some surrogate to stand in his place. Moreover, notice that the king's statue in a distant land doesn't really function in the king's place. It doesn't do anything. It just represents his authority over the land. The king's statue is rather like the pictures of the President on the walls of police stations and post offices. They represent his authority. But humans are living images of God. They are not images of God in this Ancient Near Eastern sense of a statue. Middleton says, however, that the best Ancient Near Eastern parallels are texts that describe the various kings and priests as themselves images of a god. Not that they set up images of themselves in a distant land, but rather



there are many Ancient Near Eastern texts that described the king himself as an image of a god. This is the most widely cited set of parallels for Genesis 1. Let me read you a sample of these texts. To give just a couple examples.

Pharaoh Ahmose I is described as “a prince like Re, the child of Qeb, his heir, the image of Re, whom he created, the avenger (or the representative), for whom he has set himself on earth.” Queen Hatshepsut, is described as “superb image of Amon; the image of Amon on earth; the image of Amon-Re to eternity, his living monument on earth.” Amenhotep II is described variously as “image of Re,” “image of Horus,” “image of Atum,” “holy image of the lord of the gods,” “foremost image of Re,” “holy image of Re,” “holy image of Amon,” “image of Amon like Re,” . . .<sup>8</sup>

Middleton comments on these texts,

To understand the meaning and function of this idea, we need to grasp something of the wider ideology of kingship in Egypt. Central to this ideology was the divinity of the pharaoh, by which he was set apart from all other human beings. . . . The notion of the pharaoh as an image of a god must be understood in this context. In one sense, the notion of image is but one among many other ways of expressing the pharaoh’s divine origin and kinship to the gods. . . . The pharaoh was thought, in a fairly strong sense, to be a physical, local incarnation of deity, analogous to that of a cult statue or image of a god, which is also such an incarnation. . . . “The king as the living image of god was . . . like the cult statue, a place where the god manifested himself and was a primary means by which the deity worked on earth.”<sup>9</sup>

These texts are said to support a functional interpretation of the image of God. Middleton says,

On this reading, the *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God's representatives and agents in the world, granted authorized power to share in God's rule or administration of the earth's resources and creatures.<sup>10</sup>

There are however two major flaws which undermine Middleton's case. First, Middleton admits that a functional interpretation does not preclude, and even presupposes, a substantial interpretation. Listen to what he says in a footnote on page 27:

Both functional and . . . relational interpretations of the image are, like substantialistic interpretations, strictly speaking metaphysical, in that they also

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<sup>8</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Publishing Group, 2005), p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

make ontological assumptions about human nature. . . . a functional interpretation might be seen as consonant with some version of action theory. . . . focus is on persons as agents who act responsibly (or irresponsibly). Action, on this model, includes all that an agent does, including thinking, as an integral unity.<sup>11</sup>

This admission completely undermines Middleton's case for a purely functional interpretation for he recognizes that the function is rooted in ontology. More than that, it is rooted in personal agency, and personal agency is not a function. It's a property of personal agents; that is to say, personal, causally effective beings. Notice as well that the relation between ontology and function is asymmetric. Functions are grounded in ontology, not vice-versa. The substantialist is quite happy to recognize that human persons have been created by God to carry out a function. They can carry out that function, however, because of what they *are*, namely personal agents. So the first point is that the functional interpretation actually presupposes the substantial interpretation in grounding function in the ontology of human beings as personal agents.

The second point is that the Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts cited do not support a functional interpretation but rather a different fourth interpretation. As Middleton convincingly shows, when the Ancient Near Eastern texts speak of an idol or of the pharaoh as a God's image, what they mean is that the idol or the pharaoh embodies or incarnates the god. The deity is present in and lives through the idol or the king. The problem is this is not a functional interpretation. It is a metaphysical view of the relation between the idol or king and the god. It is better therefore to call it, I think, an incarnational interpretation. The king is the incarnation of the god; the idol is the embodiment of the god. But then this interpretation is irrelevant for the interpretation of the Genesis texts for those texts do not think of human beings as incarnations of God through which he lives and acts in the world. An anti-iconic religion like Judaism that prohibited images of God would have recoiled at the idea that human beings are embodiments of God.

So it seems to me that a substantialist interpretation is practically unavoidable. In order to function as God's co-regent on this planet, man must have certain faculties like rationality, self-consciousness, freedom of the will, and so forth. So in fact we shouldn't be playing off functional versus substantial understandings of God's image. The reason that we can function as God has commanded us to is because we are created in God's image, that is to say we have some ontological similarity to God which enables us to serve as his representative and co-regent.

In Genesis 5:1-3, Seth is said to be born in Adam's image and likeness. That, I think, is decisive for a substantialist interpretation for Seth was not Adam's representative or co-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

regent. The functionalist might say but being in “the image of” is a transitive relation (like less than) so that Seth is in God's image not just in Adam's image. The problem is that the resemblance relation is not transitive. A daughter may resemble her mother, and the mother may resemble her mother, but the granddaughter may not resemble the grandmother. Seth is said to be born not in God's image and likeness (as Adam was created) but rather in Adam's image and likeness. In other words, Adam brought forth another human being like himself.

Think back to our discussion of the attributes of God. Remember we saw that God is an infinite, personal being. Insofar as man is finite there is a great chasm that separates man from God. Man is like the rest of creation in his finitude. So how is man like God? He is like God in that he is personal. Then the chasm separates man and God from the rest of creation in that the rest of creation are not persons. On this view, the reason that man can serve as God's co-regent and representative on this planet and to govern the Earth is because he is in the image of God. That is to say, he is a person in the same way that God is personal and thus has the attributes of personhood.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* I'm hearing that image to mean . . . can it also mean it's a God-given responsibility . . . there's certain responsibilities not only in the sense that you just illustrated but to carry it a bit further, is the expectation that he (man) will carry out God's plan?

*Dr. Craig:* I don't see that as part of the image. As I said, someone can have a function, that function can even be essential to that thing, but that's not a definition of the thing. I think that the image of God is man's ontological resemblance to God, but that God has then given man this responsibility to rule the Earth and to steward it and to manifest God's reign upon this planet. So there is an essential function that man is given to carry out and is responsible for. I just don't want to conflate that with the image.

*Student:* And there's nothing there embedded into it that would say that God has chosen to use man to implement, if you will, his will?

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. I would even say it stronger. Not just use but that he created man in order that man might represent God's reign upon the Earth and subdue it and take care of it.

*Student:* And implement his plan.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. Of course. Then there's the broader plan, of course. God's intention, I think, was not the Fall but rather to bless Adam and his progeny. But once the Fall occurred then God has Plan B which involves the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 and the election of the nation of Israel through which he would bring a savior of the world. In the

end, as he says to Abraham, all the nations of the world will be blessed. That original blessing intended for Adam and Eve and their progeny will be fulfilled in Christ.

*Student:* Two questions. One is: are you familiar with . . . I haven't been familiar with Middleton . . . what about John Walton's work? Because I know he proposes something similar about a temple creation . . .

*Dr. Craig:* I thought of Walton as I was offering this critique of the Ancient Near Eastern parallels of setting up a statue in a distant land to represent your authority in your absence. But on somebody like John Walton's view, far from being absent, the world is God's temple in which he resides! So he doesn't need a cult statue or image in his temple. He's there himself. Now, I'm not persuaded by Walton's interpretation, but nevertheless that popular interpretation is completely at odds with this construal of the image of God as being on the parallel of a statue of a king in a distant land from which he is absent.

*Student:* I guess my question would be: Do they acknowledge or concede that it's not a perfect parallel, but they put it out there anyway to say that initial account in Genesis is a polemic against those . . .

*Dr. Craig:* I couldn't speak for what Walton thinks on this. Middleton isn't really very persuaded by this analogy or parallel of the king setting up his statue in a distant land. Rather, he puts his money on the second argument – that the king or pharaoh himself (like a cult statue) is an embodiment or incarnation of the god. That's what he thinks is the true parallel. Notice these two interpretations are incompatible with each other. In the one, the statue incorporates or embodies the deity. He is present in the statue. In the other interpretation, the king is absent and the statue is there in his place to kind of represent him. It's so funny that you've got these two sets of Ancient Near Eastern texts that are appealed to by scholars when in fact they support contradictory interpretations of the image. I think, as we saw from the very text I read, that the second stream of texts supports what I call an incarnational interpretation of God's image.

*Student:* I wouldn't call it incarnational. But just like talking about the two images of God in Christ's image – the more you change to be like him, you see him as he is, you start attaining his authority. So you rule with him, like he says. And so that's not an incarnation but you are ruling with him and you have authority. In the same way a pagan, when they're doing the will of the intermediate sin, then he has authority from that deity. So they are both very similar.

*Dr. Craig:* Well, I'm not persuaded that's right. One of the strange things is how in the world could these ancient Egyptians regard the pharaoh as divine when they know he was born. They know he's going to get sick and die. They prepared his body for burial with a mummy and embalming and built the tombs of the pharaohs. How could they regard them as divine when they're so obviously mortal? The answer is, I think as Middleton

shows, that they incarnate the deity. Incarnation comes from Latin – “in” plus “carnas” – in the flesh. So they literally incarnate god. Now, a cult statue doesn't incarnate god because it's not made of flesh, but it does embody god. So the cult statue embodies the deity, and therefore that's why the idol is divine even though it's made out of stone. The pharaoh, even though he's made out of flesh, he embodies or incarnates the god. So I do think the language is appropriate.

**END DISCUSSION**<sup>12</sup>

## Lecture 5: Man as a Personal Being

Last time we talked about man's being in the image of God and what this means. I suggested that those who see some sort of a fundamental dichotomy between an ontological or substantial image of God and a functional image of God are guilty of making a false dichotomy. In fact, the reason that man can function in the image of God is precisely because of certain properties that he has ontologically. So it is the ontology that grounds, or is the basis for, the function.

Let's talk a bit more about man as a personal being. We saw that God is the personal, infinite God; that is to say, on the one hand God is personal (actually tri-personal), but on the other hand God is infinite, necessary, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, perfectly good, and so forth. Insofar as God is infinite, a great chasm separates God from the rest of creation. Man stands on the side of the chasm that belongs to creatures. Man is himself a finite, created thing, and in that respect is like animals, plants, and inorganic substances. He has a hominid body akin to that of the great apes. But insofar as God is personal, man is like God and unlike the rest of the created order. To say that man is in the image of God ontologically, I think, is to say that man is personal. He is a person in the same way that God is personal, and he has the essential attributes of personhood (though, of course, since he's not infinite he has these attributes to a finite degree), and therefore he can function in certain ways – he can be related to God as God's co-regent on this planet in stewarding the Earth and its resources.

What then are the attributes sufficient for personhood? Reflection on ourselves as persons suggests that such properties as self-consciousness, rationality, and freedom of the will are sufficient for personhood. While higher primates like chimpanzees, for example, may have a rudimentary consciousness of themselves (they seem to be able to recognize themselves in a mirror, for example, although even this is disputed), nevertheless they do not have what philosophers call a transcendental ego, that is to say the ability to reflect upon one's own mental states, to be aware of oneself as a self, to say “I think that” before anything they believe. Similarly, even though chimps exhibit considerable intelligence, they cannot think abstractly as is evident from their inability to learn a language despite endless hours of instruction by primatologists. Even if they have souls they do not have rational souls. Finally, as a consequence, they lack freedom of the will but rather are causally determined to do what they do. On a Christian view of man, however, we have self-consciousness, rationality, and free will, and therefore are persons in the fullest sense of that word. We are as a result responsible moral agents able to relate to God. What an exalted view of man this is compared to the naturalistic view promulgated by people like La Mettrie and Dawkins!

**START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* Could you just clarify something you said about the primates – they have a soul, just not a rational soul? The way I've always understood it when I studied that is that's what a soul is – to have rationality.

*Dr. Craig:* That's not the traditional view. For someone like Aristotle and the tradition that followed him, the medieval theologians, they thought that sentient beings like horses and dogs and cats have souls but they're not endowed with rationality. They are poorer souls – less richly endowed souls than our human souls which are uniquely rational. I'm not taking a position on this. Philosophy of mind is not my area of expertise. But there are contemporary thinkers who would say the same. For example, I heard the great Nobel prize-winning neurologist Sir John Eccles (who is a dualist-interactionist) once say that although he doubted that frogs have souls he thinks that the higher animals do have minds or souls even if they don't have rationality. Similarly, my colleague J. P. Moreland, who does specialize in philosophy of mind, would say that animals have souls though they don't have rational souls. So that's why I said even if you want to say that chimps do have souls, they don't have rational souls as is evident from their inability to think symbolically or abstractly because they cannot learn a language.

*Student:* I was thinking this discussion kind of reminds me of the philosopher Boethius and his definition. I think he says a person is an individual substance with a rational nature. Is that similar to what you're talking about?

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, that would be the sort of classical Aristotelian concept of a soul or a person. Does Boethius actually use the word “person?”

*Student:* I'd have to double-check but I believe so. I don't remember the exact words but I know when other people talk about his view that's how they usually summarize it.

*Dr. Craig:* OK. Good. That's in line with what I'm suggesting. This is traditional.

*Student:* When it comes to the issue of abortion obviously because people try to say “but a fetus isn't rational or anything” but once you understand how these categories work you'd say “even though a fetus isn't currently functioning rationally, it's still a rational substance by nature even if it can't yet actually think at that moment.”

*Dr. Craig:* Very good. Thank you. That's a wonderful clarification. I think you're absolutely right. One of my pro-life friends put it this way: The fetus is not a potential person; the fetus is a person with potential.

*Student:* [off mic, suggesting Frank Beckwith was the one who said that]

*Dr. Craig:* Is that who said that? Frank Beckwith? I don't recall. He's a Christian philosopher at Baylor University. I think that captures it quite rightly.



*Student:* Is there a difference between, say, the secular view of the soul versus the biblical view which to me entails more of an afterlife.

*Dr. Craig:* That's unclear. The question you're raising is the immortality of the soul. Is the soul naturally immortal? Does it naturally survive the death of the body? Now, certainly that's what Plato thought. The Greek tradition was that because the soul is immaterial it isn't affected, in fact, it's liberated when the body dies. The body is like a prison house of the soul that drags it down by its passions and physicality. The soul is set free by the death of the body. But it's not entirely clear that that is the biblical view. A good many people would think that immortality is something that has to be bestowed by God even on the soul much less on the body. That it doesn't have a natural propensity to survive the death of the body, but it can survive the death of the body by the gift of God – that God sustains it in being. I don't have a position on that because I've not studied it. I certainly do believe that the soul does survive the body. In fact, I'm going to say something about that in a few minutes, God willing. But whether it does that by a natural propensity or a supernatural gift of God, I don't have a dog in that fight.

*Student:* You mentioned something about that primates or chimps can't be able to use language in order to talk.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes.

*Student:* I remember going back to college and hearing from an anthropologist and seeing a video of a bonobo trying to communicate through sign language. Have you heard of this?

*Dr. Craig:* Oh, yes. In my study of the historical Adam I have been reading a lot about human origins and the differences between animals and man so as to try to discern where in history human consciousness first emerged. One of the striking things that has come out of these experiments trying to teach chimps language – whether a spoken language or sign language because, after all, they may not have the vocal cords for enunciating words but you could teach them sign language which is a language just as much as oral language is – is they can't master it because they can't learn syntax. They cannot learn how to put signs and words together so as to form coherent sentences. So it's generally agreed now among these primatologists that even if chimps can learn, for example, if they press this yellow button they'll get a banana, or if they press this orange button they'll get an orange, they cannot discourse in language about bananas and oranges.

*Student:* Tacking on to the last thing you mentioned, there were some studies done with humans that if the developing person gets exposed to a certain language they have a propensity to learn it even if they get raised in a place where it's a different language. So there's something happening that's supernatural.

*Dr. Craig:* Or a God-given endowment. We don't need to say it's a miracle, I think.

*Student:* It's that proclivity; that capacity. The second point, the connection with the soul is I think you have to be careful of identifying the soul only with rationality or the brain. If you get brain damage, you don't lose your soul. The mind informs the soul but gives expression to the heart.

*Dr. Craig:* But I haven't identified the soul with the brain. Certainly I would agree with you that someone can suffer terrible brain damage so that they're no longer able to think rationally or maybe they suffer a terrible personality change and so forth, but that's not to say that they are no longer a rational substance, a rational soul. They've just been incapacitated because the apparatus they use to think has now been seriously damaged. I mentioned Sir John Eccles a moment ago. In this same talk that Eccles gave that I heard he compared the brain to a piano. He said just as the pianist uses the piano to play music, the soul or the mind uses the brain as an instrument for thought. And if the instrument is damaged you will not be able to produce beautiful music. It will be discordant. Similarly, if the brain is damaged, there will not be coherent thought because the instrument that the soul uses for thought is impaired. So you're quite right in drawing our attention to the distinction between the brain (which is this glob of fat in your skull) and your soul (which survives the death of your body). There was one other point that you made right at the beginning that I wanted to comment on. What was your first remark? Do you remember? Oh, yes, learning language. This is another intriguing thing. I mentioned that despite thousands of hours by these primatologists to teach chimps language of some sort, they can't learn it. And yet you can take the most primitive savage, the most uncivilized aboriginal, put him in a cultured situation and, as you said, he'll learn the language. He'll even learn Polish, as difficult grammatically as that might be. In fact, my colleague Josh Swamidass has pointed out to me the remarkable fact that you can take primitive man and put him in a modern environment and modern culture and he'll get along just fine. He'll learn how to learn the language. He'll learn how to adapt. A great example of that would be the Indian, Squanto, who met the pilgrims when they came to Massachusetts. Squanto was, in effect, a Stone Age person. The Indians never got beyond Stone Age tools. They didn't even have a wheel. And yet Squanto was able to learn the language. He was able to go to England and work as a servant and butler, and then eventually finally did go back to his native people. But despite his primitive origins, he had these innate capacities that we talked about for language and for culture. It's quite extraordinary when you think about it, and very, very different than animals.

*Student:* Would you agree that one implication of the image of God doctrine is that creatures that bear that image are more valuable than objects that do not have the image of God?

*Dr. Craig:* Absolutely.

*Student:* A Spanish philosopher named Miguel de Unamuno (you may know the name) a hundred years ago said a human soul is worth all the universe. So one person is worth more than the entire non-human universe.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. I had not heard that Unamuno said that, but Frederick Copleston, the famous historian of philosophy, said exactly the same thing. And it really struck me when he said it: one human being is worth more than the entire material universe taken together. That's extraordinary. And the source of that moral value – that intrinsic value – of human beings is the image of God.

*Student:* Where are you getting the attributes of personhood from? Are they coming from Scripture or is it from observing how humans are different from the rest of creation?

*Dr. Craig:* This is a good question. It's the latter, not the former. I'm not turning to Scripture to try to see attributes of personhood. The Scripture isn't a philosophy book. One of the striking things about Genesis 1:26-27 that is generally agreed upon by commentators is that the image of God is never defined in the text. It just says we're created in God's image and according to his likeness and no attempt by the author is made at all to explain what this means. So if we want to understand what it means, it seems to me we have to turn to philosophical theology. What I said was reflection on ourselves as persons reveals that properties like self-consciousness, rationality, and freedom of the will are sufficient for personhood. You and I are persons. We know that. We can begin what that as a given – that I am a person. And then I can ask myself in virtue of what am I a person? And it would seem to me that these properties would be among those that are what make us persons and are sufficient for personhood. And this is then consistent with Scripture, though I wouldn't pretend that this is the result of proof-texting.

*Student:* Not a question; just a verse that comes to mind. This is Ecclesiastes 3:11 which says, *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has put eternity in man's heart. Yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.*" I think about that. It's a pretty big difference between us and animals. God put eternity in our heart, and even though animals are alive I don't think they have any comprehension of eternity.

*Dr. Craig:* No, and it's hard to know exactly what is all comprised in that phrase that "He's put eternity in man's heart." What does that involve? I'm not sure, but clearly you're right – it's meant to set us apart from the rest of the animal creation.

*Student:* Two Scriptures. It says, *an honorable man without knowledge of the Holy One (Christ) is as the beasts of the field*, and then the other one is, while we're defining

personhood, we don't . . . by ourselves . . . introspection and what we know of persons. The Bible says, *Now we see through a glass darkly. But then we'll see clearly, and we'll know ourselves as we're known.* So we can't really see our image so we really don't know.

*Dr. Craig:* Well, you've got to read the verse in context. I think Paul is not addressing the question of what it is to be a person when he says we see through a glass darkly or in a dim mirror. I think that this method of analysis is quite legitimate. It's called phenomenology. You reflect on the phenomena of what it is to be a person, and I think that's perfectly legitimate. Of course, it's open to debate, but it seems to me that that's something that's acceptable.

*Student:* I agree it is good. I was just saying you can't go too far into conclusions. You can't do a second deduction from . . .

*Dr. Craig:* I'm not claiming some sort of certainty for these conclusions.

## **END DISCUSSION**

Let's go on to talk a bit about man as sinner. In relationship to God, of course, man is separated from God in virtue of his sin. But that's not destructive of man's being in the image of God. Man is still a personal being, still in the image of God, even though his relationship with God is ruptured because of the fall into sin. In his state of original righteousness, or perhaps better put, in his original state of innocence, there is an open and free-flowing relationship between God and man that is unobstructed by sin. But then in man's fallen state as a sinner the relationship between God and man is severed. There's an obstacle now, namely man's guilt and evil that prevents him from being related to God in the way that he was created to be. He now finds himself alienated from God and estranged from God in this fallen condition.

But then finally, in the state of grace, man finds his relationship with God restored through Jesus Christ. Now in the state of grace, man is able to experience the relationship with God that he was created to have, albeit a relationship of a flawed and fallen creature but nonetheless still forgiven and redeemed and regenerated in Christ. When the New Testament speaks of being conformed to the image of Christ, this is a different category from the image of God. This has to do with our sanctification. Insofar as we are in Christ and are being sanctified by his indwelling Holy Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit (such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and so forth) then we become like Christ and so we come to bear his character ourselves.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* I've been wondering as you were talking. I have a three-and-a-half year old son. I've wondered when is the first sin as an individual? So, for example, the idea of sin being missing the mark, falling short – is missing the mark the difference between intentionally

missing the mark and unintentionally missing the mark? If children are to die, for example, when do they have the capacity so to speak to say, *I'm actually a sinner and I'm condemned or in need of grace*. Does that question makes sense?

*Dr. Craig:* Oh, that's a great question! It's obvious that little children often miss the mark. We don't talk about the terrible-twos for nothing! You know how badly little two-year-olds can miss the mark. But the question you're raising is: are they culpable for missing the mark in that way and therefore judged by God for these sins, if you call them sins? I'm inclined to say, based upon Jesus' attitude toward little children, that they are not culpable when they miss the mark as youngsters who haven't yet arrived at a mature consciousness of a moral agent. When you look at the way Jesus regarded children, the disciples tried to brush them off and dismiss them and Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me for such is the kingdom of God." He said if you do not receive the kingdom of heaven like one of these little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven, and then he talked about how their angels constantly stand before God regarding his face. Jesus had a very positive attitude toward these little children and thought of them as exemplifying the sort of faith and trust that is necessary in order to be a member of God's eternal kingdom. So I think that these little children, when they do wrong, are not held culpable for this wrongdoing. That will not come until they arrive at what's often called "the age of accountability." That's a popular phrase; it's not a scriptural one but I think the concept is scriptural. They will reach a point of moral maturity where now they will be held responsible by God for the wrongs that they do.

*Student:* Would you say that that age of accountability is different for every individual?

*Dr. Craig:* Surely it is. When you think of the differences among children, at the rate at which they mature, surely you can't say it's when they reach age six or age seven. It will be different with different children according to the rate at which they mature.

*Student:* This question leads me to wonder about the presentation of the Gospel with kids. If they aren't a sinner or accountable yet, what do you think about that in terms of if you were to say this person has become a sinner now, for example, and if this is their age of accountability, and now the appropriateness of the presentation of the Gospel to an individual.

*Dr. Craig:* That's a great question. I would say Christ died for their sins. He died on the cross to cover the sins of all mankind including those who would come after him including these little children should they grow up and begin to commit sins for which they're culpable. So he is their savior, at least potentially if they will place their trust in him. So I think if the child has arrived at a point that he can genuinely understand right and wrong and that he's done wrong and that he needs to be forgiven for that wrong, it's

entirely appropriate to share with him the Gospel – that God will forgive him based upon Jesus’ death on the cross.

*Student:* Thanks for explaining that because I was also curious: I wonder about this about people with disabilities, for example.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, exactly. I was thinking of the same thing as you described – the different rates at which people mature. Some never mature. Some are severely retarded mentally and never will reach more than a kind of childlike or infantile status. I think that God loves and has compassion upon those who are severely mentally impaired in that way.

## **END DISCUSSION**

I think this is a good point at which to close our class. Next time we will turn to the question of the nature of man. We'll look fairly closely at anthropological terms that are used first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament to describe the nature of man – terms such as body, soul, and spirit.<sup>13</sup>

## Lecture 6: The Nature of Man – Biblical Data

Today we want to turn to the nature of man. We want to begin by looking at the biblical data pertinent to man's nature.

Let's start with the Old Testament. The Old Testament includes a number of anthropological terms referring to man's nature. For example, the word *nephesh* is the word for "soul." The word *ruach* is the Hebrew word for "spirit." The word *besar* is the word for "flesh." Even though these are the primary meanings of these Hebrew words, nevertheless these anthropological terms in the Old Testament do not serve to draw hard and fast distinctions between different aspects of man. Indeed, sometimes the word *nephesh* or "soul" is actually used to refer to dead corpses. For example, look at Leviticus 21:11. It gives instructions for the priest and says, "He shall not go in to any dead body and defile himself." The word for "body" there is not *besar* (flesh) but *nephesh* or "soul." Similarly Numbers 6:6, "All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body." The word again is *nephesh*. So *nephesh*, though the word for "soul," can actually be used to refer to the physical body. In English, this same usage has been adopted. For example, we've all heard the nursery rhyme "Old King Cole was a merry old soul." Nobody thought that Old King Cole was therefore a disembodied, unextended, immaterial entity. So when we say that Old King Cole was a merry old soul, we are not necessarily referring to that immaterial part of human being.

Turn now to the New Testament. In the New Testament we confront in Paul's letters a number of anthropological terms that are significant for the nature of man. First and foremost among these would be the word *soma* which is the word for "body" in contrast to the Greek word *psuche* which is the word for "soul."

Unfortunately, under the influence of modern materialism and existentialism mid-twentieth century theologians came to reject the distinction between the body and the soul. For example, for an anthropological materialist like Nancy Murphy of Fuller Theological Seminary, because she equates the self with the body, the self cannot survive death apart from the body. Therefore one is forced to deny the intermediate state of the soul after death between death and resurrection. For the Christian materialist like Murphy, when we die we are extinguished. We cease to exist. Then at the end of the world when God raises the dead he re-constitutes the physical body and so the self comes back into existence again. But this view implies that those who have so to speak fallen asleep in Christ have indeed perished as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. There is no intermediate state for the materialist.

By contrast, existentialist theologians like the German New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann equated the soul or the self with the physical body. Bultmann held that the



word *soma* doesn't really refer to the body in Paul's usage, but rather it refers to the whole person in abstraction from the body – the self or the “I” of the person. Under the influence of existentialist philosophy, Bultmann took the *soma* to mean simply the self – the person, the individual – but not his body. This is extremely important because if it's correct then Paul's affirmation of the resurrection of the body doesn't necessarily mean the resurrection of this physical substance, this organism. Rather it would simply mean that the self lives on, the resurrection of the “I” so to speak – me. To say “I will be raised bodily from the dead” would simply mean “I will continue to exist.” Thus a theologian like Bultmann can affirm paradoxically the bodily resurrection of Jesus while affirming that Jesus' tomb still contained the corpse of Jesus which in time rotted away. Moreover on Bultmann's view nobody else will ever be raised physically from the dead either. I think you can see how important it is that we understand what the proper referent of *soma* is. Is *soma* the body or is it simply the whole person in abstraction from the body?

Robert Gundry, who is a very fine New Testament scholar, has written a book entitled *Soma in Biblical Theology* in which he gives a withering critique of Bultmann's view. Gundry argues that *soma* is never used in the New Testament to denote the whole person in abstraction from the physical body. Rather, *soma* is used much more to denote the physical body itself or the person with special emphasis upon his physical body. Let's look more closely at how Paul uses the word *soma* in his various letters.

First, critics like Bultmann will often allege that because Paul uses the word *soma* and personal pronouns like “you,” “I,” and “we” interchangeably, that proves that *soma* actually refers to the person. If I were to say to you something like this, “You should present your body as a living sacrifice to God,” I could just as well have said, “You should present yourself as a living sacrifice to God.” This would allegedly show that the word “body” really just refers to you, the person, but not your physical body. Because the personal pronouns can be used interchangeably with the word *soma* then *soma* simply refers to the person. But Gundry points out that the presupposition of this argument is that the pronoun, when used instead of *soma*, expands the meaning of the word *soma* rather than that *soma* restricts the meaning of the pronoun. He says this is simply unjustified. The word *soma*, rather than being expanded in its meaning by the use of the pronoun, can actually serve to restrict the reference of the pronoun. Gundry gives the following example. Suppose you say, “She slapped his face.” You might also have said, “She slapped him.” Obviously, the fact that you can use the pronoun “him” instead of “his face” doesn't mean that a person's face is identical to the whole person in abstraction from the body. Rather, the expression “his face” limits the meaning of the pronoun to that part of him that she slapped. So “She slapped his face” restricts the meaning of the phrase “She slapped him” so as to specify the physical face. When you look at all of the places that Paul uses *soma* interchangeably with personal pronouns you find that they are all

exactly like this. In every case the emphasis is on the physical aspect of the human being. Let's look at some examples.

Romans 6:12-14,16a. Paul writes,

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. . . . Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey . . .

This is a passage where Paul uses the word *soma* interchangeably with second person personal pronouns “you.” But it's obvious from the context that the emphasis is on the physical body because Paul talks about your mortal bodies – using that adjective “mortal” – because he talks about obeying the passions that are in the body, and he also uses the word “members” to designate the members of the physical body (“Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness.”) So the emphasis in the passage is on bringing the physical body into submission to Christ. The passage in no way proves that *soma* can refer to a person in abstraction from his body. Rather, here the emphasis is physical and on bringing our bodies into submission to God.

Similarly, look at 2 Corinthians 4:10-12. Paul says,

always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Again you see how the word “body” is used interchangeably with pronouns like “us” and “you.” But again the emphasis in the context is clearly on the physical body. Notice that in the context Paul is addressing the physical persecution that they have to endure. He goes on to talk about the difference between the outer man and the inner man. He talks about having this treasure in earthen vessels. Clearly the emphasis in the passage is on the physical body and not on the person in abstraction from his body.

Look at Ephesians 5:28-30. Paul says,

Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

Again, I think that the physical orientation of the passage is very evident from the use of the word “flesh” as a synonym for “body.” No man ever hates his own flesh, but rather he

takes care of it. Again, the interchange of pronouns with *soma* by no means implies that *soma* refers to the person in abstraction from his body. Rather, in every case where these personal pronouns are used interchangeably with *soma* the emphasis is on the physical life and the body of the person involved.

I find Gundry's critique compelling. It seems to me that when you read those passages in which you have pronouns and *soma* used interchangeably, the emphasis is clearly on the physical aspects of human being, even the sexual aspects of the human person, and therefore these passages do not in any way sustain Bultmann's claim that the *soma* refers to the self or the "I".

Secondly, Paul's uses of the word *soma* elsewhere are equally physical. Not only the passages where *soma* is used interchangeably with personal pronouns, but Paul's uses of the word *soma* elsewhere are equally physical. Let's look at some of these.

In 1 Corinthians 7:4, Paul writes,

For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does.

Clearly, the word "body" is being used here in reference to the physical body because the emphasis is on sexual relations between man and wife and how these are to be conducted in the marriage relationship.

Similarly, in Romans 1:24 we have a similar emphasis upon sexuality and hence physicality. Paul says,

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves . . .

Then he describes the aberrant sexual practices that these persons engaged in.

The same is true in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Paul says,

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that

your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?  
You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Here the emphasis upon sexual purity and the union of two persons in sexual intercourse into one body makes it quite clear that Paul is talking about the physical body when he uses the word *soma*.

Also in Romans 12:1-2, Paul says:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here Paul envisions the presentation to God of our physical bodies as living sacrifices and then the transformation of our minds. So both the physical life and the mental life are to be consecrated to God. This is a passage that is dualistic in nature – mind and body wholly dedicated to God.

1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul says, “I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” Here he's thinking of that physical aspect of his life and keeping that physical aspect in check and under discipline. The context, using athletic metaphors like boxing and running, I think serve to show that the physical part of human life is what Paul has in mind here.

1 Corinthians 13:3, Paul says, “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” Here he seems to contemplate martyrdom or giving his physical body up to be destroyed. Certainly the self or the “I” is not something that can be burned up. So Paul is here talking about his physical body once again.

Philippians 1:20, Paul says,

as it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Here again Paul seems to be contemplating martyrdom – whether he will live or die, whether the body will be physically killed or whether he will live on in the body. That seems to be the thing that Paul is concerned with. So Paul is talking about remaining in this physical life versus dying. So when he says in verse 1:24, “but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account,” here he's using the word “flesh” in a morally neutral sense to indicate his physical presence via the body in this world.

Finally in Romans 8:11, Paul says,

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

The use of the adjective “mortal” shows that he is here speaking of our physical bodies. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, so God will give life to our mortal bodies when we are raised from the dead.

I think that it's very evident that when you look at how Paul uses the term *soma* he is talking about the physical body or about the person with an emphasis upon his physical life. Let me quote from Gundry's conclusion. Gundry says,

The *soma* denotes the physical body, roughly synonymous with ‘flesh’ in the neutral sense. It forms that part of man in and through which he lives and acts in the world. It becomes the base of operations for sin in the unbeliever, for the Holy Spirit in the believer. Barring prior occurrence of the Parousia [the second coming of Christ], the *soma* will die. That is the lingering effect of sin even in the believer. But it will also be resurrected. That is its ultimate end, a major proof of its worth and necessity to wholeness of human being, and the reason for its sanctification now.<sup>14</sup>

I think that the importance of Gundry's conclusion cannot be overemphasized. For far too long twentieth century theology has been told that when Paul uses the word *soma* he is not referring to the body but is referring to the self, the ego, the “I” of a human person. But Gundry's study, like a dash of cold water, brings us back to the authentic consciousness of a first century Jewish person. The notion of the *soma* as the “I” or the self in abstraction from the body is a perversion of its biblical meaning into virtually the opposite, namely a symbol for the immaterial aspect of human being. Robert Jewett, who is another prominent New Testament scholar, has thus said, “Bultmann has turned *soma* into its virtual opposite: a symbol for that structure of individual existence which is essentially non-physical.”<sup>15</sup> Gundry thinks that existentialist treatments of *soma*, like Bultmann's, have actually been a positive impediment to a correct exegesis of Paul's thought, particularly 1 Corinthians 15 on the resurrection of the body. It has sacrificed New Testament theology for a philosophical fashion, namely existentialism, that is already passé.

## START DISCUSSION

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<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGAJY 10; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p. 211.

*Student:* About Nancy Murphy . . . how do people like her explain verses where Paul says things like “absent from the body is to be present with the Lord?” It really sounds like when you're dead that means you're still conscious and in the intermediate state. How do they explain things like that?

*Dr. Craig:* I don't know. I've never talked to her personally about these particular passages. But I think you're quite right. 2 Corinthians 5 where Paul is talking about this intermediate state, and it seems to be a conscious blissful state of being with the Lord and being absent from the body. What these Christian materialists have to say is that there is no such state literally.

*Student:* The other thing that occurred to me is, what's their view on the incarnation? They believe presumably Jesus was truly human, but they don't believe humans have souls, so do they take an Apollonian type view where he's a physical body with a divine soul?

*Dr. Craig:* You're raising really good questions. If we do not have immaterial souls but we just are bodies, then wouldn't that make the doctrine of the incarnation imply that somehow God turned himself into a human being? Because that's all Jesus is – just the physical body. And of course I suppose they could still claim to the divine nature, but how it's unified with that physical body is really difficult to see, I think. So these are pressing concerns for the Christian materialist. I agree.

*Student:* The last comment I think about that. I noticed that in van Inwagen's interview, he kind of kept bringing up, how do you put it, the idea of a soul interacting with the physical body seems to violate the law of conservation of energy or something like that. And I'm thinking, but wouldn't that seem to apply if he believes that there's an immaterial aspect of Jesus? It would seem to imply to that.

*Dr. Craig:* That's right, because there is a divine person there. The second person of the Trinity who is somehow united with this physical body. I have not seen materialistic accounts of the incarnation. I'm not sure how that would work.

*Student:* I may be taking you totally off track, but can we go back to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20? You talked about the two shall become one flesh, and how that is talking about sexual intercourse and that being physical. My question to you was: what does it mean then to become one flesh? I thought of that as a spiritual sort?

*Dr. Craig:* Well, in the context here, I think he's talking about the man and the prostitute joined in coitus. They are one flesh because they're united in sexual intercourse. Now, you will probably want to interpret Genesis theologically with a deeper understanding of what it truly means for the man and his wife to be one flesh, but at least here in 1 Corinthians 15 he's talking about making your bodies members of a prostitute and



becoming one body with her which would be, I think, the idea of being joined in sexual intercourse with her.

*Student:* It's not the argument that when you have sexual intercourse you become one flesh like the Genesis account, and that's why we're not supposed to do it? Do you see what I'm saying?

*Dr. Craig:* I do. I do. And this is a good ethical question I once asked one of my New Testament professors. What she is saying is, if you join yourself to a prostitute so that you become one flesh with her, are you married to her? Does that mean that therefore you can never marry again even if you repent because you have already become one flesh with this person? Paul doesn't draw that inference explicitly. My professor that I asked the question of said he thought that that was the consequence and just underlined the seriousness of sexual sin. That's a very hard line to take, and I can't say anything more beyond that because I haven't reflected on it further. But at least for every person it ought to make us redouble our efforts to avoid these sorts of sexual sins because the consequences are serious and could be utterly disastrous. Good question.

*Student:* I'd like to ask the difference between *soma* and *sarx*, especially as used by Paul. For example, because he seems to be very specific in choosing one word over the other sometimes in the same passage. So for example in 1 Corinthians 15:44 he's talking about *it's sown a natural body; it's raised a spiritual body* but then a few verses later in verse 50 he says, *I tell you this brother's flesh [sarx] and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. So they seem to be more than synonyms. What do you think about that?

*Dr. Craig:* OK, what you are drawing our attention to is the New Testament or Greek equivalent of the word “flesh” which is *sarx*. I haven't mentioned that, but we'll have to talk about that more. Is *sarx* (flesh) simply synonymous with *soma* (body)? Well, in some passages it does seem to be that way. In fact, the passages we read many times he would talk about your mortal bodies or your mortal flesh – flesh in the neutral sense, as Gundry calls it, is the body. But what that expression by Gundry conceals is that there is a non-neutral sense of the word “flesh” in Paul's letters. There is a sense of the word “flesh” which is a moral use, and in that case “flesh” designates this sinful quality, of sinful passions, that lodge in the body but are not simply equivalent to biological processes. For example, jealousy, envy, rage, and other sorts of sins will be manifestations of the flesh in this moral sense. So it's important to understand this distinction lest we think when Paul condemns these sins of the flesh that we think Christianity has a negative attitude toward the physical body, which it doesn't. It affirms the goodness of the physical body – the *soma* or flesh in this neutral sense – but there is this moral sense in which the same word “flesh” is used that is condemned and is antithetical to the spiritual. We'll talk more about

that later, but yes, you put your finger on an important issue in New Testament vocabulary for anthropology.

*Student:* As I'm listening to this, I was just wondering if this conversation could relate at all to the Greek *telos* – how that might possibly fit into this conversation? *Telos* – the idea of personhood being defined by our fulfillment of virtues.

*Dr. Craig:* OK. *Telos* means the end or the goal or the purpose of something. I'm not sure how you want to relate that idea of the goal or the end of something to this. What is the connection?

*Student:* I was just thinking about the physical – the purpose of a human being being defined by their sense of fulfillment in their purpose. When I was thinking about what you're mentioning about the physical body and how we act, how we purpose our physical actions for God or for God's will, it just made me think of that same sort of relationship between our physical body acting out virtues. I didn't know if they were related at all.

*Dr. Craig:* I think that you're raising a good point in that our ultimate *telos* is conformity to the image of Christ – sanctification. This includes the physical body. We shouldn't overreact to the materialists like Murphy by denying the importance of the physical body and its essentiality to full human being. It is an integral and essential part of what it means to be a human being. So whatever *telos* we have, it will include a physical component.<sup>16</sup>



## Lecture 7: Paul's Use of the Anthropological Terms *Sarx* and *Psuche*

Last time we looked at one of the most important of Paul's anthropological terms, namely *soma* or body. Today we want to turn to a second important anthropological term used by Paul in his letters, and this is the word *sarx*. I've already briefly mentioned this word *sarx* which means "flesh." Theologians who are familiar with the word *sarx* know that in the New Testament the flesh is often used metaphorically as a term for the evil proclivity which is in human beings. This use of the term therefore is not referring to the physical stuff of our body. The scripture does not teach that our bodies are evil because they are material. But "the flesh" will often be used by Paul to represent fallen human nature.

This usage touches a very sensitive chord in theology because in Germany, where I studied at least, the Apostles Creed affirms "I believe in the resurrection of the *fleisch*" that is to say "the flesh." In English we say "I believe in the resurrection of the body" but in German it affirms "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh (*fleisch*).” Theologians are quite rightly nervous about any sort of affirmation that the flesh in the sense of this evil fallen nature is going to be the object of the resurrection. Because of this they're prone to overlook the fact that Paul often uses the word *sarx* in a morally neutral sense to mean basically organic stuff – the material out of which an animal's body is made, the physical flesh, essentially "meat" if you will. In this morally neutral sense, to affirm the resurrection of the flesh is unobjectionable. It is equivalent to believing in the resurrection of the physical body. Let's look for example at 1 Corinthians 15:35-41 for Paul's disposition upon the nature of the resurrection body. Paul, imagining some Corinthian opponent of his doctrine, says,

But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

In this passage Paul uses three analogies to illustrate the notion of the resurrection of the body. The first analogy is that it is like a seed and the plant which springs from that seed. The body is planted in the ground as it is buried, and then just as a plant that is quite different will come from the seed so the resurrection body that comes from the earthly

body that is sown will be vastly different from the earthly body. It will be a supernatural body endowed with powers and properties that this earthly body does not have.

To skip ahead, Paul's third analogy is from celestial and terrestrial bodies. The stars and the sun and the moon all have a different luminosity which is what the word "glory" refers to here. Just as these different bodies have different luminosities so the resurrection body will differ from the earthly body in being more honourable and more glorious than the body that is sown.

It is the second analogy that we want to focus on. It appeals to different kinds of flesh. Paul is clearly using the word *sarx* here in a morally neutral sense – biological flesh, if you will. He says there's one kind of flesh in man. There is another one in animals, and another one in birds, and another one in fish. Here he's using the word "flesh" in a morally neutral sense to mean basically meat or the organic stuff of which animals are made. Robert Jewett, in his book *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, draws attention to the fact in this passage of a striking departure from the technical flesh category and an appropriation of traditional Judaic use of *sarx* as interchangeable with *soma*. Here Paul is not using the word *sarx* in this moral sense but rather in a non-moral sense which is interchangeable with *soma* – the physical body. So in this passage Paul is not using the word *sarx* in the theological sense of fallen human nature, rather he basically uses it as akin to the body – the sort of bodies that exist in the biological realm. It's in this physical sense that the resurrection of the flesh is quite unobjectionable theologically. The resurrection body will be a physical body vastly different from this corruptible, mortal, dishonourable, and weak body that we presently possess, but a body nevertheless.

## START DISCUSSION

*Student:* I know this may not be exactly Paul's usage but I just wanted to comment though that in John 1:14 where it says "and the *Logos* became *sarx*" that seems to be enough. That's also another instance in the New Testament where it seems where flesh is used to mean a physical body. Obviously John is not saying that Jesus became evil, corrupt, human nature. That was the first thing I thought of when he mentioned the controversy . . .

*Dr. Craig:* Right. The word "incarnation" means literally "in the flesh." That's a good passage to draw on.

*Student:* I agree with you about the morally neutral, but couldn't it also be like the dominion of different . . . a state? You know, the angels didn't keep their first state? So it'd be like a limitation. You could have the same physical flesh as an animal – man without knowing the Holy One is like a beast of the field. But he's given different dominion, I'm talking about in the pre-Fall state, than a regular animal. And then when Christ crowns him he has another state.

*Dr. Craig:* If I understand the question correctly, it would seem to me that man in his pre-Fall state had flesh in the morally neutral sense that we're talking about. He was a physical, biological creature. But the flesh in the theological sense didn't exist at that point because man wasn't yet fallen. The flesh in the sense of this evil proclivity within human nature that we wrestle against comes into existence through the Fall and through sin. So I would say in one sense the flesh already exists in a neutral sense but not in the theological sense.

## **END DISCUSSION**

Paul's third anthropological term that we want to draw attention to is *psuche* from which we get our word "psychology" and "psychic." It means "soul." *Psuche* is "soul." Paul teaches a dualism of body and soul with respect to human being. Look, for example, at 2 Corinthians 4:16 to 5:10. Paul writes,

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

In this passage Paul speaks of our outer nature – the body. He uses the metaphor of a tent which connotes frailty and transitoriness. A tent is not a permanent dwelling. It's going to be struck. The earthly tent represents our earthly body. He speaks then of the resurrection body that we shall receive as a house not made with hands. The contrast between the transitory, frail tent and this substantial building from God shows the immortality and incorruptibility of the resurrection body in contrast to the earthly body in which we live. In between our death and our eventual resurrection comes this intermediate state where

we are without a body. Paul talks about being away from the body and at home with the Lord. He speaks of this state as a state of nakedness. In Greek literature this is a description of the soul existing without its body. Paul says it's not that we want to be in that kind of state. He says we'd really prefer not to be unclothed (that is to say, to have the body stripped away in death and to be naked). Rather, we would prefer to be further clothed. The verb here has the idea of pulling on top clothing like a sweater over a shirt without the necessity of undressing in order to put on that clothing. So Paul is saying here that we'd rather live until the return of Christ so that we receive our resurrection bodies immediately without having to go through the intermediate state of nakedness existing as a disembodied soul. But if we do go to be with the Lord by dying prior to Christ's return and so enter into that intermediate state, Paul says we still are of good cheer because to be away from the body is to be present with the Lord, and that is better than this earthly existence.

I think that you can see the importance of this body-soul dualism in Christian theology. As I said a couple of weeks ago, the Christian materialist who denies that there is any soul distinct from the body has to believe that when a person dies that person is simply extinguished. He literally ceases to exist. There is no intermediate state of the dead as the soul awaits the resurrection because there are no such things as souls. It seems to me that such a view is very difficult to reconcile with the teaching of a passage like this which I think clearly contemplates the existence of the soul in a disembodied state.

Paul does not always employ a uniform terminology of *soma* and *psuche* (body and soul). In the passage just quoted, for example, neither term appears until the very end when Paul finally uses the word "body." Rather, metaphors are used to express the concept. Similarly, sometimes Paul will mix his terms. Look, for example, at 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Paul says, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here Paul uses three terms: the *soma*, the *psuche*, and the *pneuma* (or "spirit" – the Greek word from which we get our word "pneumatic" as in a pneumatic drill). Paul is here expressing the thoroughgoing nature of our sanctification. Every aspect of human being is to be sanctified. Nothing is exempted. But we should not infer therefore that for Paul there is a third immaterial component of a human being, namely a spirit. If the soul or mind is the self-conscious "self" (the "I") then it's bewildering what a distinct spirit could be. It's more plausible to take "spirit" as a function or aspect of the soul. In any case, what's important is that we are not, in Paul's view, simply material entities. Rather, we have an immaterial component to our being called the "soul" or "spirit" which will continue to exist after the death of the physical body until its reunion with the resurrection body at the return of Christ.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* It seems to me that clearly Paul is talking to Christians, to believers, which raises the question of what about the non-believers? What sort of a state do they enter into? That will be kind of an acid test in terms of the point that you're trying to make.

*Dr. Craig:* I think you're right that would be important, and the closest thing off the top of my head that comes to mind here would be the notion of Hades, or in the Hebrew Bible *Sheol*. Hades is not the same as Hell which is *Gehenna*. *Gehenna*, or Hell, is the final state into which the damned are cast. But Hades (or *Sheol*) is that intermediate state between death and resurrection. You have, for example, Jesus in his parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man speaking about how Lazarus dying wakes up in Abraham's bosom in Paradise. But the Rich Man, when he dies, is in Hades and is in torment in the flame. He begs Lazarus to bring some water to quench his thirst, and the Lord says, *No, there's a great gulf fixed between him and you and none can cross over even if they wanted to*. We have to be very careful, I recognize, about using parables to teach Christian doctrine because parables are meant to illustrate a central point. You have to be careful not to push them too far. But this parable would seem to show that Jesus believed that unbelievers would exist in this intermediate state of being separated from God as they await the final resurrection. So that's a passage that comes to mind immediately, but you're right, our concern here is primarily with believers in Christ.

*Student:* When we witness or share the Gospel, our purpose is to bring a person from their fallen state to saved, or sanctified, state. This process basically involves three things. One is the anchor of the spirit. The second is the projection of that spirit. The third is the manifestation of the spirit. I thought these three things.... Maybe the *pneuma* ... maybe it's the person's anchor. The spiritual anchor like we talk about alignment like with God's Word, that we understand what God wanted us to be, or what he revealed himself to be. We align ourselves with him. So it's the core of our faith or the connection between us and God. The *psuche* may be the projection. We want to anchor from the deceiver, Satan that deceives us with all kind . . . from the Garden of Eden all the way with all kinds of deception. We want to move that anchor back into with God. And *psuche* is our projection. It's like we want to go there but we are, like Paul says, I want to do good but I couldn't. I'm bound and I'm hopeless. So maybe that part is that projection. And then as we mature in Christ that projection gets materialized or manifested more and more in *soma*. I wonder whether the resurrection they are talking about – the fallen flesh becomes saved and lives eternally with God – that process goes through this what I talked about this anchor, this projection, and this manifestation process. It is a wonder.

*Dr. Craig:* This is a very elaborate scheme that you've just laid out, and I guess I just don't see any New Testament basis for this elaborate scheme. I would certainly resist any suggestion that the flesh, as it's understood theologically to be this evil proclivity within human beings, will be in any way resurrected. I'd say on the contrary it will be destroyed.

Flesh in this sense (in the theological sense) is not a thing. It's not a constituent of human being in the way that *psuche* or the physical flesh or physical body is. It just represents the fallenness, the evil, the God-opposed nature of human beings apart from him. That's something that I would say, thank God, will be completely done away with.

*Student:* Could you tell me when Hell was created? Is that why we have Hades and *Sheol*? That after the resurrection then Hell is created?

*Dr. Craig:* This is a good question, and I would say that in a sense Hell doesn't exist yet.

*Student:* You mean now?

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. It doesn't exist now. What exists now would be *Sheol* or Hades – this realm of the disembodied dead, of souls without their bodies. These souls can either be in Paradise (like Lazarus) or at home with the Lord (as Paul says). Paul says he wanted to die and to go to be with Christ for that is far better. So even in this disembodied state it brings a closer fellowship and relationship to Christ. In that sense it is better than this present state. But it's not as good as the final state which will be the resurrection of the body and the complete integration of soul and body in a redeemed humanity. That's the best state. That's what Paul wanted but, you see, he was in a catch-22 situation because in order to get to the best state he had to go on living in the worst state! In order to improve the present state he would have to die and go to be with Christ even though that's not optimal. It's at least better than this. He found himself in a real catch-22 situation where in order to have the best state you have to go on living in the worst, which is not very desirable.

*Student:* It is very interesting because the Bible says that Hell is created for the devil and his angels. And the devil is still roaming around on the Earth here.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, it does. And this will be the final state that will be brought about after the resurrection of the body. By the same token, this also implies that in a sense Heaven doesn't exist yet either. That will be the final state for resurrected believers – the new heavens and the new Earth. What exists now is this intermediate state of disembodied existence prior to the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

*Student:* On the Luke verse, I'm a believer in Hades for the departed until the end time – the resurrection and the judgment. But I don't think it's a parable. Jesus doesn't describe it as a parable, and a name is mentioned (of Lazarus) where names are not mentioned in the other parables. So I think it's a correct rendition. But also you could link with it Jesus went and preached (and also this is a plug for trichotomy) to the spirits in prison.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, there are other passages that speak of the intermediate state that one could appeal to. That was one that came to my mind, but there is a passage at, I think it's in 2 Peter, where it says that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison who formerly

did not obey during the times of Noah. That's a very difficult passage to understand. Is he talking there about angels who fell in Genesis 6:1-4, or is he talking about human beings and their spirits (which is what I think maybe you're suggesting)? It's an open and controversial question.<sup>17</sup>



## Lecture 8: Systematizing the Biblical Data Concerning the Nature of Man

We have surveyed briefly the biblical data concerning the nature of man. Now let's talk about different attempts to systematize these biblical data.

Some people take human beings to be trichotomous in nature, that is to say, human beings have three parts that go to make them up: the body, the soul, and the spirit. This is the view of human beings that prevailed among the early Greek-speaking church fathers and represents the heritage of Platonism. On Platonic doctrine, the soul is that which animates the body. It makes the body alive. So animals, being animate, have souls as well as human beings. But the spirit is a higher faculty that is distinct from the soul. The spirit would be what seems to make us self-conscious, rational persons, not just alive. It seems to be roughly equivalent to the mind.

By contrast, the dichotomous view holds to dualism of the body and the soul (or spirit). It doesn't really matter which word you use to refer to the immaterial part of man, the point is that we're made up of two parts: the material part and the immaterial part. This is the view that prevailed among the Latin-speaking Western church fathers.

Today many theologians eschew any sort of differentiation between material and immaterial constituents in man. They would espouse a unitary view of human nature, what we might call anthropological monism. That is to say, human beings are made up just of a single constituent which is physical in nature. We just are physical bodies. You are your body. There is no immaterial constituent to your being. These thinkers will often ridicule those who believe in a mind distinct from the body as believing in a “ghost in the machine” (to quote the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle<sup>18</sup>). Our bodies are like a machine supposedly inhabited by this ghost (that is to say, the soul) which animates it and moves it about. Ryle rejected any such dualistic view of the mind and body as absurd.

Similarly in the early 20th century, in theology many theologians tried to play off the doctrine of the resurrection of the body against dualistic views of human nature. It became a sort of watchword among these theologians that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul but rather the resurrection of the body. To believe in the immortality of the soul is supposedly to reject the Jewish view of immortality which is the resurrection of the physical body and to subscribe instead to a Greek view of immortality according to which the body being material is something evil and is sloughed off in death. In death the soul is freed from the prison house of the body that drags it

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<sup>18</sup> “Such in outline is the official theory [dualism]. I shall often speak of it, with deliberate abusiveness, as ‘the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine.’ I hope to prove that it is entirely false, and false not in detail but in principle.” Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 5.



down, and it will fly away to heavenly realms. These theologians said that this Greek view of the soul and the body which depreciates the body in favor of the soul is fundamentally un-Jewish and therefore unacceptable. The Jewish view of immortality is the resurrection of the physical body and therefore we should reject dualistic views in favor of some sort of anthropological monism. We just are our bodies, and these will be raised from the dead to new life.

So we've got three alternatives to evaluate: the trichotomous, the dichotomous, and unitary views of human beings. Which of these represents the most biblically faithful view? I would argue that some form of dualism-interactionism best represents the biblical view. By that I mean that a human being is made up of two components: a body and a soul (or spirit) and that these interact with each other in order for that human being to function as a human person in this life. You'll recall from our previous discussion that in the Old Testament we don't have clear terminological distinctions drawn between the soul and the body. Nevertheless, the Hebrew idea of a shade in *Sheol* seems to be the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek idea of a disembodied soul. The people who go down to *Sheol* are regarded as wraiths – having a kind of shadowy existence in the nether realms of the dead. It's not that they are extinguished at death. Rather, they still seem to exist as what the Greeks would call a disembodied soul – not really fully human but nevertheless still existing.

During the intertestamental period dualism became the standard Jewish belief. In order to illustrate Jewish beliefs during the intertestamental period, permit me to cite a few passages from the very interesting Jewish pseudepigrapha which are pseudonymous works written in Jewish culture during this intertestamental period. For example, in the book of 2 Baruch 30:1-5, the end of the world is described as follows:

And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and He returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of Him will rise. And it will happen at that time that those treasuries will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out and the multitudes of the souls will appear together, in One assemblage, of one mind. And the first ones will enjoy themselves and the last ones will not be sad. For they know that the time has come of which it is said that it is the end of times. But the souls of the wicked will the more waste away when they shall see all these things. For they know that their torment has come and that their perditions have arrived.

So in 2 Baruch the author envisions the souls of the righteous dead as kept by God in treasuries – some sort of treasure box. When the day of the resurrection comes, the bodies of the deceased will be raised. Then the souls of the righteous dead will be taken from

these treasures and united with their bodies, and they will then go into the immortal state. But the souls of the wicked will face torment. The text contemplates an intermediate state of the dead, both righteous and unrighteous alike, prior to the resurrection of the body.

Similarly, in the book of 4 Ezra 7:26-44 we have a vivid description of the Last Judgment. The author writes:

For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass, that the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And every one who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, . . . and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn; but only judgment shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. And recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep. Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight. . . . Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, ‘Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised! . . . Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!’ . . . This is my judgment and its prescribed order; and to you alone have I shown these things.”

Here the prophet is given a vision of the resurrection of the dead, and we find the same thing that we saw in 2 Baruch, namely, the Earth gives up those who are sleeping in it – the bodies of the dead are raised – and then the chambers in which the souls of the dead are preserved are opened, and the souls are reunited with the body. This is the typical Jewish view of the resurrection which combines the immortality of the soul with the resurrection of the body.

Just one more passage from the Jewish pseudepigrapha to indicate this. This is from the book of 1 Enoch 22:1-5. The author writes:

Then I went to another place, and he showed me on the west side a great and high mountain of hard rock and inside it four beautiful corners; it had in it a deep, wide, and smooth thing which was rolling over; and it the place was deep, and dark to look at. At that moment, Rufael, one of the holy angels, who was with me, responded to me; and he said to me, "These beautiful corners are here in order that the spirits of the souls . . . of the children of the people should gather here. They prepared these places in order to put them, that is the souls of the people, there until the day of their judgment and the appointed time of the great judgment upon them." I saw the spirits of the children of the people who were dead, and their voices were reaching unto heaven until this very moment.

Here the spirits of the souls of the dead are safely sequestered until the eschatological resurrection.

So the view of anthropological dualism is abundantly attested in the Jewish intertestamental literature. The standard view in Judaism came to be that when a person dies his body (and in particular the bones) rest in the ground until the day of judgment, and his soul goes to be with God where it is safely kept until the Judgment Day. Then the soul and the body will be reunited, and the person will be judged.

When we come to the New Testament, the language of the New Testament is indisputably dualistic throughout. It consistently differentiates the soul and the body. That this distinction is meant to be literal rather than just figurative or metaphorical is clearest when we consider the intermediate state between death and resurrection. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 which we have already examined. I think in that passage you recognize that Paul is expounding the typical Jewish belief about the intermediate state in anticipation of the resurrection. As we'll see in a moment, Paul believed that for those who are still alive at the time of the return of Christ they will be immediately transformed into their resurrection bodies without the need of passing through that state of nakedness in which the body is stripped away from the soul first. That is what Paul himself really wants. His real desire (if he had his way) is to live until the return of Christ and not have to go through that intermediate state. This powerfully suggests that soul-body dualism is not just a metaphor or a figure of speech, rather it is ontological. There really is a soul which survives the death of the body and which will eventually be reunited with the body at the return of Christ. Compare in this regard what Paul has to say in Philippians 1:21-23. Here Paul is contemplating his own possible execution and martyrdom and he writes,

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

So for Paul, even though the death of the body would mean a state of disembodiment which is a less than fully desirable state, nevertheless it brings him closer to Christ and therefore it is actually better to die and go to be with Christ.

For Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the body, look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. Paul says,

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

What Paul is describing is the second coming of Christ – the return of Christ – bringing with him those who have died (those who have fallen asleep). He brings the souls of the departed dead with him to receive their resurrection bodies. Then the Christians who are still alive at that time are immediately transformed into their resurrection bodies. So on Paul's view, the immortality of the soul does not imply that our ultimate state is to go into some sort of ethereal disembodied heaven. Paul's view is not the Platonic idea of the escape from the prison house of the body, but neither is it the annihilation of the soul during that intermediate state. Rather, the soul upon death goes into a conscious, blissful communion with Christ to await the date of Christ's return and the resurrection of the body and its reunion with the body – the reunion of the soul with its body.

In summary of Paul's view, when a Christian dies the soul goes to be with Christ until the second coming. When Christ returns, the remains of the body (if any) will be transformed into a resurrection body which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15 as incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and spirit-filled. The soul will be simultaneously united with that resurrection body. Then those who are still alive will be similarly transformed into their resurrection bodies. I think you can see that Paul's view is essentially the same view as the traditional Jewish view of the judgment and resurrection except that now Christ is the agent who will conduct the judgment on that day. It is at the return of Christ that the dead will be judged and raised. So although Paul changes the Jewish view by adding this Christological element to it, he basically affirms the same dualistic view that was traditional in Judaism at that time.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* Are there any Old Testament addresses to this? I can only think of Job when he says, *Those worms destroy.*

*Dr. Craig:* There are only three references in the Old Testament to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. One is Isaiah 26:12, I believe, where it predicts that the dead will be raised. Daniel 12:2 describes the resurrection of the good and the evil alike. And then you have this vision of Ezekiel of the valley of dry bones where the resurrection is so vividly described in terms of the bones (which is the principal object of the resurrection in Jewish thinking, as I said) are raised and then clothed with muscle and sinew and flesh, and they live again. So it's only very, very sketchily mentioned in the Old Testament. But as I indicated, during the intertestamental period this belief in the resurrection flowered and became the standard view in what's called Second Temple Judaism – the Judaism of the New Testament era – being defended, for example, by the Pharisees, though it was denied by the sect of the Sadducees who held to the view of the Pentateuch where you don't have the resurrection mentioned.

*Student:* It seems kind of unusual that we have a whole history of the Old Testament and questions like that weren't raised or addressed it seems. After a certain period of time suddenly there was this awareness of what happens.

*Dr. Craig:* It's not really sudden. It's gradual as you can see from what I've just said.

*Student:* But it hadn't been addressed in . . .

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. This is what is typically called progressive revelation. The supreme example of this would be Jesus himself. Jesus himself reveals the nature of God in a way that was not disclosed to the Old Testament saints. Paul talks about the mystery hidden for ages in God but now made known to the apostles and Christian prophets through Christ that the Gentiles and the Jews are in fact one and will be united as the people of God. This would be another example of progressive revelation. So the doctrine of the resurrection would be similar in that it's hinted at in three places in the Old Testament. It's not unknown, but it's not prominent. But then it emerges during this intertestamental period, and then is affirmed not only by the Pharisees but by Jesus himself – remember in his disputes with the Sadducees who tried to trick him by giving him a brainteaser about a woman who has been married seven times and whose wife is she going to be in the resurrection? The Sadducees thought they had him on that one, but Jesus clearly affirmed the resurrection of the dead in talking with them.

*Student:* Is there anything in the Jewish writings about the nature of the resurrected body being glorified?

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, definitely. When you read 2 Baruch, for example, it talks almost in language like Daniel about how the righteous will shine like the stars in heaven. So this is not just the resurrection of a corruptible, mortal body. These are going to be glorious bodies that will be immortal. Definitely in these pseudepigraphal writings you have descriptions of glorified bodies.

*Student:* I'm going to throw some idea to chew on and see if it's out of the box. When I was working in Boeing, because the new technology came out they were trying to implement the computer and the graphics and the database into their existing airplane building process. Basically, it's put away (the existing system) and to resurrect a new airplane-building process with all the technology at hand. That process involved new documents that exist in system. Then you logicalize it and then you optimize the logical system and then you implement physical technology to it. I was thinking about this resurrection. The problem with our body is our sin. That is like . . . if we basically . . . our physical system, and then we spiritualize it. That spirit if it's aligned by the deceiver it brings destruction, so we realign that spiritual system with Christ, and then we physicalize that aligned spiritual life. To me, could we think of resurrection in that term?

*Dr. Craig:* It seems to me that what you've said is unobjectionable if that's helpful to you. Paul does describe the transformation of the physical body from being dishonorable, corruptible, mortal, and weak to a glorious, powerful, incorruptible, and imperishable body. You could think of it in terms of, as you say, realigning this body so that it will be appropriate for a regenerate spirit or soul that will live forever. So if that's a helpful analogy to you, I don't see a problem with it as long as you don't think that the soul is like a software program or something. The soul here is a self-conscious person, not some sort of an abstract computer program. But I think as an analogy it seems like that might be helpful.

*Student:* With this dichotomous view, where would be what I'm going to call “the mind” – that is, our ability to think as we might share with animals, and to function? Because it's with the body and the soul. Where does that part of the human rest – body or soul? And also with animals – where does it rest?

*Dr. Craig:* On the dualist view, the mind is another word for the soul. As I say, the vocabulary isn't so important here. Whether you call this mind, soul, spirit – all of these words refer to that immaterial component of human being which is a self-conscious, rational person endowed with freedom of the will. With animals, if they have souls, they would be souls that are less richly endowed in terms of their faculties and capacities. They wouldn't have a capacity for self-consciousness. But they would still have sentience, for example, in many cases. They would be aware of what's going on around them. They could experience emotions and communicate. So there would be souls there on this view, but they would be more primitive souls, less endowed in their capacities.

*Student:* So all dogs do go to heaven, right?

*Dr. Craig:* Well, now, let's be careful here. When I talk about the immortality of the soul, I'm not saying that the soul has the intrinsic property of immortality. I haven't taken a stand on that. Maybe the reason the soul survives the body is because God preserves it in



existence beyond the body, and maybe he declines to do so with the souls of dogs and other animals. But maybe not! I think Jan would very much like there to be cats in heaven! And I hope they're going to be rhinoceroses! So, yeah, there could be. Why not?

*Student:* On that note, J. P. Moreland says the same thing about animal souls – that they have souls, but they're simple souls. He uses that phrase. I found that helpful.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes. My colleague J. P. Moreland specializes in this area and has written a number of books like *Body and Soul* or the chapters on philosophy of mind in the book *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. He's my go-to guy on these issues as well.

*Student:* This is a more practical or maybe pastoral question. The thing you said – the phrase you mentioned – about that the dead in Christ will raise. Their remains, if they have any, will be transformed in the resurrection. The pastoral question would be the tradition or maybe trend of Christians cremating remains of loved ones. Is that practical? Is that biblical? Is that appropriate? Versus the more historically Jewish and Christian process of burial?

*Dr. Craig:* In Second Temple Judaism, the standard procedure for funerary practices was to bury the body or put it in a sarcophagus for a year for the flesh to decay away and rot away. Then the bones would be collected, and the bones would be placed in bone boxes called ossuaries. These ossuaries would then be stacked in the tombs, and they would lie there to await the eventual resurrection of the dead on the Judgment Day. This seems to be the view that's presupposed in the New Testament as well. Therefore, I think that it's best to err on the side of caution and not destroy the remains of the dead through cremation where the bones are ground up into some sort of powder and then scattered. It seems to me that we should err on the side of caution and inter the bones in some way with a view toward the return of Christ and the resurrection. Now, Jews were aware in the case of Jewish martyrs that sometimes even the bones were destroyed. When the rabbis discussed this question they believed that in these exceptional cases God is perfectly able, being omnipotent, to create *ex nihilo* new bodies for the Jewish martyrs. So it's not as though they would be denied the resurrection. In the case of Christians who have been cremated and their remains scattered, it's not as though God can't and won't raise them from the dead. But I'm just saying why go against the pattern that God has laid down for no good reason? I think that one ought to adhere to the standard Jewish funerary pattern.

*Student:* I was always told that the bones represented the law, the truth, you held in yourself. When you become a Christian you let Christ change you. The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin. He becomes the plumb line within you. Therefore the bones represent what's going to be raised at the truth you were living. That's why bones have unique properties – they heal completely if you live long enough and use them even after they

were broken. As you said it's not those who say Lord, Lord but if you are born again a new hope, you follow Christ, and you let his truth become closer and closer, and then the bone left in you is the plumb line of Christ.

*Dr. Craig:* It just seems to me that that is a product of pious imagination. I don't see any grounds for that sort of interpretation in the biblical text which I think is much more down to earth in the way I've described.

*Student:* You spoke earlier about the materialist view and kind of the view of the body being a thing on its own, and you speak of the mind being separate – kind of like a ghostly quality rather than a dualistic nature. My question is how would a Christian materialist reconcile the idea of a spirit like the Spirit of God acting on behalf of the visible world?

*Dr. Craig:* You really, I think, pulled a thread here that is important. I remember meeting Nancy Murphy, who is a Christian materialist from Fuller Seminary, at a conference at the University of Notre Dame. I forget how we got to talking about this, but she said to me, *Oh, I'm a materialist.* I said, *You're a materialist?* And she said, *Yes. I don't think that there are any immaterial minds.* I said, *Well, what about God?* And she said, *Oh, well, I make an exception in his case.* To me this just seems completely ad-hoc. If your ontology already includes an unembodied mind who is God and has created the universe then what grounds remain for thinking that finite minds connected with bodies and active in this universe are impossible? It seemed to me to be completely ad-hoc. The serious point here would be is that once you start going the route of anthropological monism and materialism it does seem to me you've greased the skids toward atheism and naturalism because that view would naturally exclude there being this unembodied mind that is physically active in the universe.<sup>19</sup>



## Lecture 09: Refuting Materialism / Monism

We've been looking at the apostle Paul's doctrine of the body and soul particularly with respect to the intermediate state of the soul between bodily death and bodily resurrection. We saw that in Paul's letters we have evidence that Paul thought of the soul as a free-standing ontological constituent of human beings that can survive the death of the body and be with Christ until the time of the eschatological resurrection. But this is not a doctrine that is peculiar to the apostle Paul. In addition to Paul's letters, let's look at a couple of other New Testament passages that suggest that we are in fact dealing with an ontological dualism of body and soul.

For example, in the teachings of Jesus himself found in Luke 16:19ff we have Jesus' parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus. Jesus said,

There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

Now, it's always risky, I grant, to try to draw doctrine out of a parable because a parable is meant to teach a central point, and you can't press the circumstantial details of the parable for doctrinal precision. Nevertheless, it does seem clear here that Jesus is assuming the traditional Jewish view of the intermediate state – that when a person dies that person doesn't simply cease to exist; rather, after bodily death, the souls of the evil and the souls of the righteous are separated from one another and there is a continued conscious existence in that intermediate state. So Jesus' parable would support a dualism of soul and body.

Next, 1 Peter 3:18-20. Peter says,

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey,

when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark . .

Here Peter is talking about that state between Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection on Sunday morning, and he says that even though Christ was dead in the flesh nevertheless he was alive in the spirit, and in this state he went and preached to the spirits in prison. Who are these spirits in prison? On the basis of texts like 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, 7 one might plausibly take them to be the so-called sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 who took as wives the daughters of men and sired the Nephilim. Let me read 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 for this.

For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment; . . .

Then in Jude we have verse 6 refer to the same thing:

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day;

In Jude and 2 Peter we find the sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 equated with angels along with additional information concerning the angels' fate which is not inferable from Genesis 6, specifically their being bound by God with chains in the underworld. So it might be plausibly thought that these spirits in prison that 1 Peter 3 refers to just are these angelic spirits bound in chains in eternal darkness. But are the spirits in prison in fact angels, or are they just as plausibly the wicked human contemporaries of Noah now deceased? I think the modifying clause in 1 Peter 3 – “who formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark” – is a much more apt description for Noah's contemporaries than for the angels of Genesis 6:1-4 who are not said to have disobeyed God, tried God's patience, or sinned during the building of the ark as Noah's contemporaries are implied to have done. In the Jewish pseudepigraphal book that we looked at last time, 1 Enoch, the expression “spirits” is variously used to refer to human beings, to the Nephilim, and also to angels. You can find references of the word “spirits” to human beings, the Nephilim, and to angels in 1 Enoch. As we saw last time, in 1 Enoch deceased persons now disembodied and awaiting the eschatological resurrection and judgment are frequently referred to as “spirits” – the “spirits of the righteous” are separated from “the spirits of men who were not righteous but sinners” as each awaits their respective fate. Indeed, in the context of the intermediate state the referents of the word “spirits” is virtually always to human beings in 1 Enoch, not to angels. So if we take the spirits in prison to be the wicked deceased of Noah's day who did not heed his preaching then this means that Christ visited not the fallen angels of Genesis 6:1-4 but rather the disembodied spirits of people who once lived and were then

disembodied. Not only are they alive during this intermediate state, but Christ himself exists in this intermediate state between the death and resurrection. So once again the assumption, I think, is that this is a real state. This state of the disembodied dead prior to the resurrection is not simply a metaphor but an actual state in which Christ himself once existed and in which he went and visited these so-called spirits in prison.

Finally, look at Hebrews 12:22-23. The author says,

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, . . .

Here he is talking about the saints who have gone to be with Christ and are awaiting the final return of Christ, the resurrection, and the Judgment Day. It refers to these glorified saints as “the spirits of just men made perfect.” So here again we have the notion of a disembodied soul in communion with Christ in a blessed state waiting until the time of the eschatological resurrection.

In summary, it seems to me that we have ample biblical grounds in the teaching about the intermediate state of the soul for believing that the soul-body dualistic language in the Scriptures is to be taken seriously, and that we are, in fact, composite entities made up of a soul and a body that are capable of existing independently of each other and therefore are ontologically distinct from each other.

In addition to that, I want to point out that the denial of the reality of the soul is not only unbiblical but I think that it has theological consequences that are extremely serious and indeed undermine all of Christian theology. Let me mention four such consequences.

1. Notice that God is an unembodied mind. God just is an unembodied soul in the same way that we will become disembodied souls when we die. *If you do not believe that unembodied souls are possible, it's very difficult to see how you can believe in the existence of God because that's exactly what God is.* You'll recall I shared that the first time I met Nancy Murphy (who is a professor of theology at Fuller Theological Seminary) at a conference at the University of Notre Dame, she said to me, *I'm a materialist*, and I was stunned. I said, *Well, what about God?* And she replied, *Oh, well, I make an exception in God's case.* Well, I'm glad that she did make such an exception, but I think that seems a rather ad hoc move on her part. Don't you? If God can be an unembodied soul then why can't there be created souls who are in his image?

2. *Free will seems to be impossible without the reality of the soul.* If we are just physical electrochemical machines then there isn't any room for free agency to enter in. Everything we do is going to be determined by our physical makeup and the inputs of our

five senses, what the American philosopher W. V. O. Quine called *the irritation of your surfaces* by the various influences impinging on your nerve endings. These will determine everything that you think and do. Without freedom of the will, we are just machines; we are not moral agents who can do good or evil or who can be held responsible by God or who can respond freely to God's love. We would just be automata. So free will, I think, is essential to a Christian view of man, and yet that is undermined if we are just purely physical entities. Peter van Inwagen, who is another Christian philosopher who is a materialist, recognizes that he has no understanding of how on his materialism we can have libertarian freedom. But van Inwagen simply says, *I know that we do have libertarian freedom and so I simply affirm it even though I don't know how to reconcile it with my materialism*. Well, again, I'm glad that he affirms the freedom of the will and hence moral responsibility, but if you can't make sense of free will on a materialist anthropology then perhaps this ought to lead us to question physicalism or materialism in favor of a body-soul dualism.

3. *The resurrection of the body threatens to reduce to God's creating a replica of you rather than actually raising you from the dead.* If you just are your body and you cease to exist when your body dies and your body is destroyed (say vaporized in an atomic explosion) then when God raises the dead on the Judgment Day why is that you rather than just a duplicate of you? What makes that you rather than a replica of you with all of your memories and other things restored? To illustrate, typically materialists would say that what makes this podium the same podium that was here last Sunday is its material continuity. There is material continuity between the podium last week and the podium today. But suppose that we were to create out of nothing an exactly similar podium – a duplicate of it – not in the future but right now here on the platform next to it. Just being in a perfectly similar state wouldn't make them the same podium, would it? So say that the podium were destroyed and God in the future were to make a podium that looks exactly like it (it's in exactly the same state), why would it be this podium rather than a duplicate of this podium? Similarly, maybe it's not really you that is raised from the dead. You died and ceased to exist when your body died. But then at the resurrection God produces a duplicate of you. That is certainly not the biblical doctrine of the resurrection – that God is going to make clones of all of us on the Judgment Day. On the materialistic view, one has really got some explaining to do as to why God's production of the similar person on the resurrection day is really you rather than just a duplicate of you. By contrast, on dualism the soul persists through the death of the body and the intermediate state and thus ensures personal identity with the person who died and the person who then is raised on the Judgment Day.

4. *The incarnation becomes very difficult if not impossible on this view.* If human beings are purely material entities then how could the second person of the Trinity become a

man? The doctrine of the incarnation, as we have seen in our section on Christology, is not the doctrine that the second person of the Trinity – the *Logos* – turned himself into a human being. It is not like the ancient mythological stories of Zeus transforming himself into a bull or a swan. I proposed a model of the incarnation that presupposes that man has an immaterial constituent of his nature which the *Logos* can stand in for, and so man has this immaterial part. But how the *Logos* could become flesh or have a human nature is very difficult to understand, I think, on a materialist anthropology.

In sum, it seems to me that we not only have good biblical grounds for affirming the reality of the soul and the body as distinct, but also that the denial of the soul's reality has some very serious theological consequences which should make anyone reluctant to embrace such a monistic, materialistic anthropology.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* I haven't read everything by van Inwagen, obviously, but my understanding of why he thinks free will is a mystery . . . I haven't really seen him comment on the materialist aspect of his view. He thinks it's more of a mystery because he says he doesn't understand agent causation or how free will doesn't devolve into randomness. He even said in an interview that even if you posit God then after you're still faced with the mystery of free will. I take from reading all that that even if he did believe in a soul he would still say free will is a mystery.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, yes. I think you're right about that, and that would hinge on not regarding this immaterial substance as a free moral agent that can make decisions for reasons rather than just random acts of chance. So I think that's a good point.

*Student:* I'm glad you pointed out all these good trichotomous verses, but I went through my exhaustive concordance – not being a detail person but just glancing through – but there's many references to soul and spirit being separate. I think they work in tandem, but I think it enhances the dualistic nature of man by saying the spirit is a separate entity, much the same argument you used against a materialist that says God is spirit. We are made in the image of God. It makes sense that we also have a distinct spirit even though it's in tandem with our soul. Hebrews 4:4 says the word divides us under even the soul and the spirit. If you link the spirit with the breath in the Old Testament, there's many, many verses that relate to this. But if you take the idea that like in Proverbs it says that a man's spirit is God's lamp. This doesn't relate anything to activities of the soul – cognition, volition, emotion on our part. It has a presence and a significance apart from soulish activities. So I can only find one verse that mentions God having a soul and that's Isaiah 1:14. I would say along those lines we have a stronger argument for the dualistic outline that you made here if we take a trichotomous point of view rather than just a straight dualistic point of view.

*Dr. Craig:* Obviously the burden of the lesson is to refute the monistic, materialistic view of human beings that is popular today. I see the distinction between dichotomy and trichotomy as very much a secondary issue that is less fundamental, and I'll say something about it more later on. But notice that one of the things that I tried to emphasize was that the appeal of the argument I've given is not just to the fact that the Scriptures use body-soul language because even though it uses body-soul language that could be figurative speech or relational speech and not really ontological. But it's when you come to the intermediate state that it seems to become clear that we are dealing here with real ontological differences, and that's not what I find with regard to spirit. I think that although the Scripture often speaks about – as we saw, the spirits of just men made perfect or the spirits in prison – there isn't any attempt to differentiate between spirit and soul in those kinds of cases. That just seems to be the disembodied person that might variously be referred to as spirit or soul or even “the spirits of the souls.” So the trichotomous defender, I think, is going to need to give us some reason to take this language in a weighty, ontological way rather than as relational or figurative or some such way. If he has nothing better than just the linguistic evidence then you're going to wind up being committed to things like a mind and a heart as well because we're also commanded to love the Lord with all our heart or with all our mind. You begin to proliferate entities in the human person or human nature. For that reason I'm not persuaded that we should multiply entities in that way. I think it's better to just say there is an immaterial part of human beings that can be variously referred to as soul, spirit, mind, heart, things of that sort. I think that I will say something more about that, but that would be my response at this point.

*Student:* I might be misunderstanding the materialist's point of view but they would believe that everything that exists has some interaction of matter. Right? There's not something that exists other than material things made of atoms. But they would believe that our thoughts would be the result of some sort of interaction of matter. Right? So why would being a materialist preclude the idea of free will?

*Dr. Craig:* Well, just because that. It seems to me what you just said explains why. Because your mental life is the product of various brain states – firings of various neurons in your brain. And those are explicable in terms of prior physical brain states. So the mental states, as we'll see next time, have no causal effect upon anything. They just sort of float along on these brain states which are fully explicable on a physical basis. So it seems to preclude any freedom of the will on our part.

*Student:* I was thinking about your thoughts on van Inwagen's view, and I was starting to think that maybe with respect to free will it's worth noting that the phrase “free will” is kind of like the word “evolution” – it can be expanded and contracted upon. I was thinking of John Martin Fischer's view of free will. He is what's called a semi-



compatibilist where he thinks maybe free will and determinism are compatible but maybe moral responsibility and determinism are not. I might have that backwards. But on his view all you need to do is be responsive and receptive to reasons in a way. I don't think that there's anything about materialism that would include that sort of reason responsiveness or reason receptiveness that Fischer includes.

*Dr. Craig:* Could I just jump in there? So, on this view, if someone gives you reasons for doing something and you're persuaded by that, that would count as a free decision on your part even if physical causes are what produced your assent to those arguments that were offered you. You would be entirely determined and caused by purely physical states.

*Student:* I'm going to give a tentative "yes" but he gives these very nuanced criteria for what counts reason responsiveness, reason receptiveness, and possible world semantics and stuff like that. But then the second thing that I wanted to note was that maybe you could get around this by adopting a certain view of moral responsibility. There are a few ways to think about moral responsibility. For example, there's an accountability view which says you're morally responsible if it's fitting that you give an account for that action or omission. Then there are ledger views that think of moral responsibility on the analogy of a moral ledger. So if you do something bad or something good, it's to say this person got a good grade, a good mark, and this person got a bad mark. I'm thinking maybe if you adopt a sort of ledger view of moral responsibility with saying this person received a good mark, this person received a bad mark, you can circumvent these accountability views that it's fitting that I give an account for something or that I'm the appropriate subject of moral praise or blame.

*Dr. Craig:* Of course one can always redefine terms and especially weaken them so as to make them compatible with determinism and no free will, but then the question will be the adequacy of those new concepts. It seems to me that what you've described as a sort of moral ledger view just isn't adequate to what we would talk about when we mean moral responsibility. I'm thinking here particularly liability to punishment or worthiness of moral praise. That's got to be more, I think, than just a kind of ledger as you explained it.

*Student:* Theoretically, if you were a convinced atheist, would you be a firm hard determinist, and if so how could you live that way?

*Dr. Craig:* Now, you are asking me, right? I think that the plausibility of body-soul dualism is so strong, even apart from biblical teaching, that it would be better for the atheist to be a dualist even though he's an atheist and just say that there is this mysterious mental substance that is connected somehow with my body that is free and therefore morally accountable, but just deny that it's the result of some sort of transcendent mind that has created us. But I think to embrace determinism and deny moral accountability



would just be, as you say, an impossible way to live. I remember talking to one philosopher at a conference in Slovenia and he said to me over the dinner table, *Well, I kind of come to the conclusion that I think that determinism is true.* I looked at him with horror, and I said, *That's awful!* And he kind of looked surprised at me, like why would I react in this way? I said, *You know, if that's true, what are we even doing philosophy for? Let's just quit and become farmers and live off the land or something, but I just don't see any reason to engage in anything.* It's an unlivable view. Of course, if you're determined to do it, you don't have much choice! I guess my advice to the atheist would be: be a dualist even though you're an atheist.<sup>20</sup>

## Lecture 10: Refuting Reductive and Non-Reductive Physicalism

In our last session we completed a look at the biblical data supporting a dualistic view of anthropology. Today I want to say something by way of a philosophical defense of dualism-interactionism. Rob Koons and George Bealer in their book *The Waning of Materialism* have pointed out that the physicalist view of the mind has been waning in recent years among professional philosophers. They're beginning to realize the many problems with a materialistic anthropology and are starting to move away from it. In order to appreciate the problems that materialism faces it will be helpful to draw some basic distinctions in the philosophy of mind.

Beginning with the mind, there are two fundamentally different accounts of the mind. One would be physicalism (or materialism) and the other will be dualism. Physicalism holds that there is no immaterial constituent of human being – that human beings are simply material organisms. Physicalism comes in two versions. One would be reductive physicalism and the other is non-reductive physicalism. Reductive physicalism holds that mental states are identical to physical brain states. So far as the mind is concerned, there is just the brain and its physical states. All of our supposed mental states are reducible to brain states. By contrast, non-reductive physicalism holds that while the soul or our mental states are not reducible to the brain or to physical brain states nevertheless the soul is not a real thing. Mental states are mental properties that supervene on the brain states and are ontologically dependent upon them. We can distinguish two types of properties in this regard. On the one hand there are the physical base properties that are ontologically the ground of these higher supervenient mental properties. Once all the physical properties are in place, the claim is that the supervenient properties just automatically come along as part of the package. A good illustration of this sort of supervenience is the wetness of water. Water, as you know, is H<sub>2</sub>O – just hydrogen and oxygen. But neither hydrogen nor oxygen is wet, right? So when hydrogen and oxygen are combined as H<sub>2</sub>O the property of wetness supervenes on the hydrogen and the oxygen. The view of non-reductive physicalism is that all that really exists is the brain but mental states or properties supervene on the material brain somewhat in the way that wetness supervenes on H<sub>2</sub>O. Any causal powers of the water are not due to the supervenient properties. The causal powers are due to the underlying base properties of the oxygen and the hydrogen to cause and bring about certain things. Similarly, the causal properties of the brain are its physical properties, not its mental properties.

What might be said about these two forms of physicalism? Philosophy of mind is not my area of specialization, so let me draw upon the work of a very fine philosopher of mind

Angus Menuge and his paper, “Why Not Physicalism?”<sup>21</sup> Menuge lists several problems confronting a materialist or physicalist philosophy of mind. Menuge says,

Reductive or eliminative forms of physicalism fail to account for our mental lives. But . . . the varieties of non-reductive physicalism also fail to account for mental causation. If these [non-reductive] theories are faithful to physicalism, then supervening or emergent mental properties cannot add anything new that was not going to happen anyway, as a result of their physical base properties. If we want to account for consciousness, mental causation and reasoning, we need some entity over and above the body. This entity must be simple, have thoughts as inseparable parts, persist as a unity over time, and have active power. That sounds like a soul . . .

Let's break this paragraph down a bit. Here Menuge distinguishes between two types of physicalism. First is reductive or eliminative physicalism. Reductive or eliminative versions of physicalism are increasingly unpopular. They just don't seem to account, as Menuge says, for our mental lives because the brain on this view as a physical substance has only physical properties such as a certain volume, a certain mass, a certain density, a certain location, a certain shape, and so on. But the brain on this view doesn't have any mental properties. The brain isn't jubilant or sad. The brain isn't in pain. When your back hurts and you are in pain, it's not the brain that is in pain even though the brain is involved in the neural circuitry that gives you the experience of pain. Reductive physicalism therefore cannot account for our mental lives. Take the phenomenon of fear, for example. When you have fear, undoubtedly there is brain activity that is correlated with the experience of fear. The dualist-interactionist agrees with that. It's not as though the soul operates independently of the brain. Rather, there is an interaction with the brain in the experience of fear. But the brain itself isn't afraid. You can't reduce fear to a physical brain state even though it is correlated with neural activity in the brain. So reductive physicalism is obviously untenable. It cannot be reconciled with our mental experience.

This has led many thinkers to affirm some sort of non-reductive physicalism. The brain gives rise to supervenient or sometimes called epiphenomenal states of awareness like jubilation or sadness or pain. But there isn't any thing – there isn't any soul or mind – that has these properties. Rather the brain is the only thing that really exists and these mental states are grounded in the brain. Menuge identifies a number of problems with this view.

First of all, he points out that it's incompatible with self-identity over time. Think about it. The brain endures from one moment of time to another; the brain thus has identity

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<sup>21</sup> This was a paper delivered at the Evangelical Philosophical Society panel for the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, CA, November, 2011.

through time. But its states of awareness don't endure from one moment to the next. There is no enduring self – no “I” (capital-I) that endures from one moment to the next. This view of the self or the “I” is rather like the Buddhist view of the self. The Buddhist says that the soul or the self is something like the flame of a candle. The candle and the wick endure from one moment to the next, but the flame doesn't endure. There is a different flame at each moment of the candle's burning. The flame exhibits a sort of continuity in that the candle doesn't go out while it's burning, but there isn't really any identity of the flame from one moment to another over time. The situation is similar on non-reductive physicalism with states of awareness. Every state of the brain at different times has a different state of awareness associated with it, but there isn't any enduring self or “I” from one moment to the next. This leads a naturalistic philosopher like Alex Rosenberg to affirm the radical position that there is no enduring self on atheism. The existence of the self, he says, is an illusion. In his book *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*, Rosenberg affirms “I do not exist.” Similarly, it's an illusion that you are the same person who walked into class this morning. In fact, you are not the same person because there is no personal identity over time. If you do believe that you exist and that you are the same person who came into class this morning then you ought to reject a non-reductive physicalist view of the self.

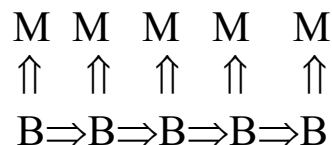
Secondly, intentional states of consciousness don't seem to make sense on non-reductive physicalism. The property of intentionality is the property of being *about* something or *of* something. For example, I can think *about* my summer vacation or *of* my wife. Physical objects don't have these sorts of intentional properties. The brain is not about something any more than a chair or this podium is *about* something or *of* something. It is only thoughts which are *of* something and so have aboutness or intentionality. But on non-reductive physicalism there is no self which has states of intentionality. So intentionality is, in effect, an illusion. Again, Rosenberg bites the bullet and he says we never really think about anything. It's just an illusion that we have intentional states. He acknowledges that without intentionality sentences aren't about anything because a sentence is just a bunch of ink marks on a piece of paper and therefore not about anything. They are just meaningless marks. So he says that every sentence in his book is meaningless including that sentence! He says what good does a book like this do? Why even write it? His answer is that if looking at these ink marks on paper causes certain neural firings to take place in your brain such that your activity is altered then the book will have achieved something. But of course that achievement can't be Rosenberg's purpose in writing the book because on his view no one has any purposes for anything. I think at best he could say that he was determined to write it, and you are determined to react to it in the way that you do, but it's difficult to see here any sort of overarching purpose or significance to it. In any case, the denial of intentional states is not only contrary to experience – I mean,

after all we are thinking about Rosenberg's argument, aren't we? – but this is actually self-refuting. For what is an illusion? An illusion is always an illusion *of* something. So an illusion is itself an intentional state. An illusion of intentionality is an intentional state. You are having any illusion *of* something. The view that intentionality is merely an illusion is literally self-refuting and incoherent. Again, if you think that you ever have thoughts about anything or of something then you ought to believe in the reality of the soul and to reject non-reductive physicalism.

Thirdly, free will seems impossible to reconcile with either reductive or non-reductive physicalism. On these views there is no causal connection between the sequential states of awareness. Mental states are not causally connected. The only causality is purely on the physical level and that is completely determined by the laws of nature and the initial physical conditions. There just isn't any room for freedom of the will. On this view, again, free will is an illusion. You never really do anything freely. And that flies in the face of our experience of ourselves as free agents. I can freely choose to think about certain things or to freely do certain things. I'm not simply determined by my brain states. So if you believe that you ever do anything freely then you have good reason to believe in the reality of the soul and to reject these reductive and non-reductive views of physicalism.

Menuge also points out that if we want to provide an account of reasoning we need a soul. If there is no self who reasons from premises to conclusions then we are just like a pocket calculator which is such that when you press the buttons 2, +, and 2 and then hit the equal sign button, the calculator reads 4. But the calculator doesn't reason to arrive at that conclusion. There's no reasoning going on there at all. It's just electronic circuitry firing. Again, if you think that you ever reason to arrive at a conclusion then you ought to think that you are more than just a moist robot; that in fact you are a self who does this reasoning.

Finally, fourthly, the last phenomenon that Menuge points to is mental causation. Notice that on these non-reductive physicalist views, the only arrow of causation is from brain states to brain states (represented by B and the causal connection by the arrow) and from brain states to correlated mental states (represented by the letter M).



The only causation that exists among these states is from brain state to brain state and from brain states to the correlated mental states. But the epiphenomenal mental states themselves don't cause anything. There are no causal connections between the mental states nor do they have a sort of reverse causation on the brain states. They are utterly,

causally impotent. So there is no return causality from states of awareness to the brain. Why? Because there is nothing there. There is no soul. There is no mind that can exert a causal influence on the brain. On this view the arrow of causality goes only in one direction – from the brain to these epiphenomenal states as well as from physical brain state to brain state. This is incompatible with my introspective grasp of my ability to cause things. I can cause my arm to go up. I can raise my arm by thinking about it. I can do other things through thinking and therefore bring about causal effects. Menuge also discusses the fact of what's called neuroplasticity according to which thinking can actually affect the brain. If you think in certain ways it produces brain effects. There is even a kind of cognitive therapy that in some cases is more useful than drugs in changing people's behavior. If you can alter the way that the patient thinks about something, this will affect the patient physiologically. It will actually bring about different brain states through thinking. This seems to me highly significant because in his book Rosenberg says that if you find all of this depressing (that there is no self, there is no identity over time, there is no intentionality, there is no free will) he says, well, there's always Prozac. He's serious! I mean, what else would a materialist say? He says take drugs. If you take brain-altering drugs then you'll feel better. Just how sinister that advice is, I think, is shown by Menuge's point that we don't always need to resort to drugs. Sometimes there are cognitive therapies whereby changing your thinking you can actually alter the brain and get better.

In all of these ways it seems to me that Menuge is right – that we ought to reject these physicalist views in favor of some sort of dualism-interactionism; that is to say, we are composites of soul and body, and the soul and the body together (in particular, the brain) work together to think.

## **START DISCUSSION**

*Student:* It seems interesting that the discovery of things like neuroplasticity would seem to lend more evidence to something like the soul, the causal impact of the soul, and yet you see simultaneously a pull in the direction of physicalism.

*Dr. Craig:* Yes, though, as I say, physicalism is not as popular as it used to be. The point of Coons and Bealer is that a good many thinkers today are challenging physicalism, and this neuroplasticity would be just one piece of the evidence.

*Student:* Speaking broadly about this and about the nature of man, it certainly seems that (and I'm generalizing) to define man we have to find out what separates us from the other animals or creatures or other things – this part or definition in philosophy. Where I come from is that man has a mind and a rational faculty that is the ability to reason. There's another view, what I would call the biblical view, that he was the only one inspired or God-breathed – that God breathed life into him. I don't know how that translates into our

having a mind and the ability to do math or chemistry. Why is there such a concerted effort to turn that off and come up with ridiculous statements? I mean, it seems like Rosenberg went out of his way to be ridiculous and it's because he's abandoned reason. Why is that? Why have they not said that we can look at logic and reason and embrace it?

*Dr. Craig:* That's a great question. I think that probably dualism is typically associated with theism. A dualistic view of human beings as composed of body and soul fits much more comfortably in a theistic worldview than in a naturalistic worldview, and so that's why Rosenberg says that his book is a guide to reality from the atheist view. He wants to show what reality looks like from atheist presuppositions. If he were to change his view of the mind, he might be obliged to adopt theism, and that is something that he's probably not willing to do.

As I said the other day when someone asked me whether or not if I were an atheist I would reject dualism, and I said I don't see how I could. It seems to me that these sorts of arguments are so powerful and the alternatives are so incoherent and contrary to our experience that it would be more plausible to be an atheist and a dualist even though that is a very uncomfortable fit. I think that view is becoming more popular, as I said, but nevertheless the alliance between theism and the reality of the soul is such that admitting the reality and existence of an immaterial soul seems to open the door a crack for theism.

*Student:* Just anecdotally, he could be asked – does he have a watch? Rosenberg. Does he have a watch? A calendar? Is he going to an event where he's going to debate you, does he buy a plane ticket? It sounds very much like the argument that Krauss had when you debated him that had the shirt that says “two plus two equals five for very large values of two.” I was wondering if Arizona State paid him 80% if he would consider that equal.

*Dr. Craig:* I think what several of you are underlining is the unlivability of this naturalistic worldview. Even if you come to the belief that we have no free will, that I never think about anything, indeed that I do not exist, you can't live that way. So everyday you give the lie to your worldview. And I do think you're quite right about that. It's really unlivable.

*Student:* Where does that leave them? I know you can say if you're truly an atheist and you totally embrace that, you're committed to that, you're a card-carrying atheist, and you realize that this is the materialistic viewpoint – that's part of it, I guess – and the only thing that exists is physical, where do they go with the realization of the mind? You're saying it's becoming more popular to not be a materialist, that means then they have to have an alternative of recognizing the brain or the mind and yet not lead that to the assumption of a spiritual realm that could . . .

*Dr. Craig:* That's sort of the compromise position of non-reductive physicalism. They want to admit there are these mental states of awareness and so forth, but they don't want



to go all the way to say that there is therefore an immaterial substance or soul that has these. Then they have all of the difficulties that attend that kind of halfway house. I think it would be better, as I say, for the atheist to just give up on physicalism and become a dualist, but then that opens the crack to theism because if there can be these finite immaterial substances – mental substances, minds – connected with these bodies then why couldn't there be an unembodied mind who is the creator and designer of the universe?

*Student:* So the atheist you debate basically just leave it as we don't know? I know you debate a lot of atheists; I'm just curious because they have a following that is extensive and it seems to me questions would arise that they need to have some sort of answer for.

*Dr. Craig:* I usually don't debate these subjects because, as I say, this isn't my area of specialization, but it did come up in the Rosenberg debate that I had at Purdue University. I faithfully represented his positions here this morning, and if you go on YouTube you can see that debate and his floundering, I think, to try to defend his naturalism as well as to offer any good critique of theism. Someone mentioned Krauss – in our dialogues in Australia, what Krauss affirmed was that there is no free will, that we're just determined to do everything by physical causes, but he said those physical causes are so complex that we have to act as though we have free will because I could never predict what you're going to do tomorrow based upon physical causes. They're too complex. As I pointed out to Krauss, that doesn't affirm that we really have free will; that's just to say we can't predict the outcome of these physical causes. But nevertheless everything really is determined. And he agrees with that.

*Student:* What would the materialists do with non-material things like rules of logic or mathematics that seem to exist outside of any material basis?

*Dr. Craig:* That's a tough one. It's very interesting that the leading naturalist and physicalist philosopher of the 20th century, Willard Quine at Harvard University, believed in the reality of abstract objects. He said that modern science and the success of our scientific theory commits us to the reality of mathematical objects and similarly things like the truth of the rules of logic and other things of that sort. Even though Quine was a naturalist, he was a Platonist and believed that there are these non-physical, transcendent, abstract objects that are essential to the truth of modern science. But how he could account for this sort of bifurcated view of reality, I don't know he never did. Certain theists like my colleague J. P. Moreland have severely criticized Platonists who want to be atheists because it's just as difficult to admit into your ontology these abstract objects which are immaterial transcendent things as it would be to admit finite immaterial substances called souls.

*Student:* So this is just one of those uncomfortable positions?

*Dr. Craig:* Yeah, another one of these uncomfortable positions.

*Student:* Why can't you just be a deflationist and a nominalist about abstract objects then?

*Dr. Craig:* That's what I would say you should do. That's my own view – I'm an anti-realist about abstract objects. He was asking about, I think, whether or not you could have a naturalistic view of reality and yet also affirm the reality of these immaterial things like souls. I was just pointing out there's some precedents for that in these Platonists. But by no means is my suggestion that the atheist is committed to Platonism. Quite the contrary.

*Student:* But do you think they can be committed to things like logic, as he mentioned for example?

*Dr. Craig:* Yeah, I think that they could probably offer, as you say, an anti-realist view and a deflationary view of truth. I think that that's defensible.<sup>22</sup>

## **Lecture 11: A Challenge to Dualism-Interactionism – The Libet Experiments**

Good morning, and welcome to Defenders class. As you can see, we are meeting under rather unusual circumstances this morning. Because of the coronavirus epidemic, we can no longer meet together as a class. The church where we normally film the class is also closed so we can't even record. But we are not going to be overcome by this virus. We are going to find a way around it. I am recording today in the safety of my home office. We will be broadcasting this worldwide to our Defenders audience that follows us every Sunday morning.

In our most recent lesson, we discussed philosophical arguments in support of dualism-interactionism with regard to the soul. Today I want to consider a challenge to dualism-interactionism arising from some fascinating experiments performed by a brain scientist named Benjamin Libet. He conducted a series of experiments in which people were instructed to press a button with their finger when he monitored their brain activity. What Libet discovered was that prior to a person's awareness of his decision to press the button, a brain signal had already occurred which later resulted in his finger's moving to press the button. So the sequence of events goes like this:

1. There is a brain signal about 550 milliseconds prior to the finger's moving.
2. There is an awareness of the decision in consciousness which occurs about 200 milliseconds prior to the finger's moving.
3. The finger moves and presses the button.

So the brain signal actually occurs prior to the act of consciousness in which one is aware of the decision to press the button.

There is no consensus concerning the interpretation or the significance of Libet's experiments. But as you can imagine, some people have taken this to be proof of determinism or even materialism because before the awareness to press the button even occurs, a brain signal has already been sent to make the finger move.

But such an inference would be overdrawn. In a second run of experiments, Libet discovered that even after the awareness of the decision to press the button had occurred, people still retained the ability to veto the decision and not to press the button. So they still retained the ability to refrain from the decision that had earlier been made. Some interpreters therefore take this brain signal to press the button to indicate merely a readiness potential which the patient may either then go along with or may veto. So the bottom line is the person still has control over his decision. Libet himself considered his experimental results to be fully compatible with the existence of free will.

The more fundamental point, though, to be made about these experiments, which struck me very forcefully as I reflected on these results, is that this is exactly what the dualist-interactionist should expect to happen. For the dualist-interactionist, the soul or the mind doesn't act independently of the brain. Rather, as Sir John Eccles, the Nobel Prize-winning neurologist whom I mentioned earlier in this course, has pointed out, on a dualist-interactionist view the soul uses the brain to think as an instrument for thought, just as a pianist uses a piano as an instrument to produce music. So of course the soul's decisions are not simultaneous with the soul's awareness of those decisions – how could they be? Given the brain's reliance upon finite velocity neural signals in order to think, the soul could not have a simultaneous awareness of its decisions. Rather, given the soul's reliance upon the brain and the finite velocity of neural signals, there has to be a time lag between the soul's decision and the soul's conscious awareness of that decision. In Libet's experiments, since the relevant neural signals travel at finite velocities, of course it takes a little time for the soul's decision to come to conscious awareness. This is exactly what we should expect on a dualist-interactionist view of the soul and the body.

The German philosopher Uwe Meixner, who is a dualist-interactionist, has this to say about Libet's experiments,

For making an informed decision, the self needs to be conscious of the facts relevant to the decision prior to making the decision; but . . . the self certainly does not need to be conscious of making the decision at the very same time it makes it. . . . the consciousness of a state of affairs P being (presently) the case is always somewhat later than the actual fact of P's being the case. . .<sup>23</sup>

For example, when you are talking to another person, because of the finite velocity of light signals and the finite velocity of sound waves and the finite velocity of your nerve signals, what you are experiencing as present is always a little bit in the past. You never have an actual present awareness of what is happening around you. There is a tiny time lag due to the finite velocity of these various signals that is imperceptible to us because it is so short. So Meixner goes on to say, “it is hardly surprising that the consciousness of making a decision is no exception to this general rule, which is due to the dependence of consciousness on neurophysiology.”

I want to emphasize that on this understanding the soul's decision is not unconscious – it is conscious – but it just takes a little while for that decision to become conscious, due to the finite velocity of neural signals. Just as we never see anything that is actually presently there because of the finite velocity of light but see events as they are just

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<sup>23</sup> Uwe Meixner, “New Perspectives for a Dualistic Conception of Mental Causation,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15/1 (2008): p. 25

slightly in the past, in the same way we don't have a consciousness of our own decisions simultaneously with our making them but we have it unnoticeably afterwards.

If therefore the soul has the ability to think without being causally determined, then, as Meixner says, all it needs to do in order to make responsible, informed, free decisions is consciousness of the relevant facts prior to its making a decision. And it has that. But the soul doesn't need to be aware or conscious of the decision itself simultaneously with its making that decision in order for the decision to be responsible, informed, and free.

So in response to Libet's experiments, it seems to me that they are exactly what we ought to expect if dualism-interactionism is true. The soul uses the brain as an instrument for thinking.

We now come to our second topic of discussion which is trichotomy versus dichotomy with respect to human being.

Let me say just a brief word about the debate over whether human beings are dichotomous or trichotomous in their composition. That is to say, are we as human beings composites of body and soul or are we composites of some other entity as well, for example, body, soul, and spirit, as some verses in the New Testament seem to suggest? This question is somewhat academic, since the fundamental question is whether in contrast to anthropological monism we hold that there is an immaterial constituent in man in addition to the body.

As for dichotomy/trichotomy, it seems to me that there isn't any sort of strong and consistent distinction in Scripture or philosophy that can be drawn between the soul and the spirit. If you press this kind of language to give you a different ontological reality – a substance “the spirit” which is different from the soul –, then I think you are going to proliferate entities unnecessarily because the Scripture also talks about things like “the heart” and “the mind” and “the inner man.” If you press the language in Scripture about “spirit” then what about these other entities as well? You are going to get human beings as composites of all sorts of things.

Rather, I think it is best to see the difference between soul and spirit as a functional difference. The soul insofar as it functions in relation to God can be called “the spirit,” and the soul in its everyday functions as a rational agent in the world can be referred to as “the soul.” So we do have a spiritual dimension to our lives in which we relate to God, in which we know God, in a way that mere animals don't, but I don't think that needs to be cashed out in terms of saying there is an additional thing of which we are composed. Rather, this would represent merely a different function of that immaterial part of our being in relation to God.

So it seems to me that a basic dualism-interactionism – soul and body – is adequate both philosophically and biblically.

Thank you for being with us this morning. The next time we meet, we will move on to the topic of the origin of the soul. Meanwhile, stay safe!<sup>24</sup>

## Lecture 12: The Origin of the Soul

Welcome to Defenders. If you weren't with us last Sunday, let me explain that because of the coronavirus we are unable to meet together as a class or even video record the class at the church where we normally convene. So we are instead video recording the Defenders lesson from the sanctuary of my home office and podcasting it to you worldwide. We are all of us in this together. This is a global pandemic that we face, and so I am glad that as you join our Defenders podcast all around the world you are tuning in with us to keep the continuity of our class going and to not allow it to be interrupted because of the threat of this virus.

The last time we talked about the nature of the soul. Today we want to turn to the subject of the origin of the soul.

There are classically three, but now really four, views that present themselves as possibilities with respect to this question.

First is the pre-existence of the soul. This was the view held by the early church father Origen. It is essentially a Platonic doctrine; Origen held that souls exist with God prior to His creation of the physical body and even of the physical world. Then once God creates the world He sends these souls into the world – He incarnates them in particular bodies. This view brought upon Origen the condemnation of the early church. He was condemned as a heretic because, among other things, of his view of the pre-existence of the soul.

A second view is the Creationist view. This is the view that God creates each individual soul *ex nihilo*. Clement of Alexandria would be an example of a church father who espoused this view. So, on this view when the sperm and the egg unite to form the body of a new human being, at some point in the process God creates a soul and incarnates it in the organism that has been conceived.

Third is the Traducian view. The North African church father Tertullian is a representative of this position. According to Traducianism, just as the physical body is the causal product of the parents through the union of the sperm and the egg, so the child's soul is produced by the souls of the parents. Since the souls of the parents engender the soul of the offspring, the new soul doesn't require an immediate, miraculous creative act of God or intervention of God. Rather just as the body of the child is produced by the parents, so the soul is produced by the souls of the parents.

Finally, fourth, I should mention another view which is not a classical view but is very recently coming on the scene. It is what we might call Emergentism. This is the view that is propounded, for example, by the contemporary Christian philosopher William Hasker. Emergentism is often associated with non-reductive physicalism – that is to say, the view



that the mind is an epiphenomenon of the brain. You will remember that we saw that non-reductive materialists say that the brain is the only thing there really is but that it has these sorts of mental states or mental properties associated with it. But on this view the mind is not an actual thing; rather, there isn't really a soul. Hasker, however, wants to push Emergentism further to say that when the central nervous system attains a certain sort of complexity, then the soul will naturally emerge, and then there will be a new thing – a new mental substance – that will come into existence at that point. So this is a dualistic view, but it regards the mental substance as something that emerges from a physical system when that physical system reaches a certain level of complexity that is sufficient to serve as an instrument of the soul to think.

Which of these four views is the best? Well, that is difficult to say! I don't have a brief to carry on behalf of any of them. Origen's pre-creationist view seems to be biblically excluded because the Scripture never contemplates that human beings somehow preexist as souls before their bodies exist. Creationism, on the other hand, seems to be a view that is both biblical and plausible. It raises the question however, "When does God create the soul in the body?" We cannot be sure; but it would seem natural to say that this would occur at the moment of conception. When the sperm and the egg unite and a new organism comes into being, then God simultaneously creates the soul.

This question has obvious ethical implications for the practice of abortion. If the soul is placed in the body at some later point, then the destruction of the embryo or fetus would not be killing a human being. Given our uncertainty, it is surely prudent to err on the side of caution by taking conception to be the moment at which the soul is created. One misgiving that does arise with respect to the Creationist scenario concerns the practice of biologists or fertility doctors of mass-fertilizing eggs and producing embryos in the laboratory or even splitting cells after conception. Are we to think that by so doing, they force God's hand, so to speak, to start creating souls and attaching them to all of these embryos? In a sense God seems to become trapped by the medical proliferation of these cells and gets stuck creating all these souls. Somehow that just doesn't seem right. Now, perhaps one might say, "God doesn't create souls just because doctors proliferate fertilized eggs; He will only provide a soul to one that He knows will actually grow up and become a more mature human being." But such a response might look a little bit *ad hoc*. I am not sharing here a decisive objection to the Creationist view but just a sense of discomfort that one might well feel about it.

Traducianism seems, however, even more implausible to me because it seems inconceivable how all of the millions and millions of sperm could be carrying the soul of the father to the egg, where it would somehow, with the soul of the mother, produce the soul of the offspring. The egg and the sperm after all are not human beings – they don't have souls. They are not complete human beings. Since the sperm and the egg don't have

souls, how is it that they are the vehicle that would carry the souls of the parents along so that somehow when they unite, another soul is produced as a result? Perhaps the Traducianist might say that the sperm and egg do not carry the souls of the parents but rather bear certain properties which when united form a new soul. The souls of the parents do not immediately cause the soul of the offspring; rather they are the remote cause – they are the source – of the soulish properties which, when combined, are sufficient for the coming into being of a new soul at conception.

Finally, as to Emergentism, I think the fear here is that one would lapse back into some kind of non-reductive materialism rather than a real dualism. I think we need to hear more from thinkers like Hasker exactly how it is that the complexity of a biological system would produce an immaterial substance like the soul.

So all of these views have their difficulties. As I confessed earlier, philosophy of mind is not my area of specialization, and so I have not delved into any of these sorts of questions in a deep way. So I have no strong opinions as to any of these options but retain an open mind. I find Creationism or Emergentism to be the most attractive of the four views, and I hope that the feelings of discomfort that one has about these views can be resolved.

One issue that all of these views raise that I want to return to is, when does the soul attach to the body? Until the soul is present, you don't really have a human being – you just have a body, an organism, but not a full human being. This was the question, you will remember, that Rick Warren put to candidate Barack Obama with respect to abortion – when does the fertilized embryo or fetus become a human being? And Obama said, “That is above my theological pay grade.” Well, if that is correct, then it seems to me that caution would counsel you consider the embryo or fetus to be human right from the moment of conception. So for safety's sake, one would not allow abortion to take place without overriding moral justification, such as saving the mother's life. Someone once gave the following illustration: Suppose you were sitting at your desk and your little son came up behind you and said, “Hey Dad, can I kill it?” You would obviously need to ask what it was that he was talking about – was it the cockroach on the floor or was it his little sister? If you don't know the answer, you would caution, “No!” You would always go with the safe answer. So similarly here, even if we don't know on some of these views exactly when the soul attaches to the body, caution would advise that in cases of uncertainty you should assume that it is present. We know that already at 43 days after conception there is brain wave activity, so even at that point the soul is present and so abortion would be killing a human person. So on that basis I would say that one ought to err on the side of caution when it comes to the ethics of aborting fertilized embryos.

The next time we meet we are going to move to the second section of our course on the doctrine of man which is man as a sinner. We talked about man in the image of God, but

of course we are now fallen humanity. So the next portion of our study of the doctrine of man will deal with that subject: man as sinner. I hope you'll be able to join me then. Until then, stay safe.<sup>25</sup>

## Lecture 13: The Question of the Historicity of Adam and Eve

Welcome to Defenders. Happy Palm Sunday! I have to confess, I can get pretty used to teaching Defenders this way – from the safety of my home office. This is pretty comfortable. Of course the big disadvantage is we don't have the benefit of class discussion. But I encourage you to leave your comments and questions on our Reasonable Faith Facebook page.

Before we talk about man as sinner there is one more facet of man as created in God's image that we cannot avoid. Indeed, it is a matter of great controversy today among Christians, and has been the focus of my study for the last two years. That is the question of the historical Adam and Eve, which for convenience's sake I'll refer to simply as the question of the historical Adam. We've already dealt with this question extensively under the Doctrine of Creation, so I'll be able to simply summarize a great deal here. If I had it to do over again, I would move much of the material dealing with the creation of man from the Doctrine of Creation to this locus. As a result of my studies, this section of the Defenders course is significantly revised from the lessons I gave in Defenders series 2.

The first question we need to deal with is whether the Bible commits us to a historical Adam. Traditionally, the church has understood Adam and Eve to be historical people from whom the entire human population is descended. By contrast the modern view of Adam is that the stories of Adam and Eve and their Fall into sin are purely mythological or symbolic; a story told in figurative language to describe the universal plight of mankind. Adam is Everyman, not someone who lived and died in the prehistoric past. We are all image bearers of God, and in the course of our lives, we all fall into sin. Adam's sin is a symbol of man's fallenness and corruption before God.

Today we want to come to some evaluation of these competing views.

Now, on the one hand, there is a good deal of truth in the modern view. Adam and Eve, as their very names indicate, do have a symbolic significance in the story. *Adam* is just the Hebrew word for "man." So Genesis 1 is speaking in universal terms: in the beginning God created man – *adam*. This, I think, shows that Adam is a sort of symbol of mankind. Similarly, Eve is referred to as "the mother of all living persons." So, again, she has a wider significance than just a historical woman. Moreover, as we have seen, the narrative of the Fall is full of all sorts of symbolic or figurative elements like the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent in the Garden who deceives the woman, an anthropomorphic deity who is physically walking in the Garden, and so forth.

Nevertheless, in spite of the figurative language and the obvious symbolic function of the narrative, we also have good biblical grounds for thinking that Adam was an actual historical person. Let me review four such factors.

1. There is no break in the narrative between Adam and indisputably historical figures. The primeval history of Genesis 1-11 goes right on from Adam through Abraham and his descendants, who are indisputably intended to be historical persons. There is no suggestion that the first part of the story is purely symbolic and then the later parts are historical.

2. Adam is included in the genealogies that tell of the descent of historical persons. This is true both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament where the genealogy of Jesus given in the Gospels begins with Adam. At least part of the function of genealogies was to list actual historical ancestors. Adam is included in the genealogies with the other historical figures just like a historical person.

3. Paul treats Adam as a historical figure in a number of places in the New Testament. For example, in his address on Mars Hill in Athens that is recorded in Acts 17:26 Paul says this, “. . . from one man he made every nation of men to inhabit the face of the whole earth, and he determined the exact times and places that they should live.” So here Paul, at least according to Luke’s account, says that all of the nations of men that inhabit the Earth today are descended from one human ancestor – from one man. Paul refers to this man as Adam in various places in his epistles. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:45 we read, “Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” Here Paul refers to Adam as the first man, and he contrasts him with Christ who is the second Adam. Paul consistently treats Adam as a historical individual; someone who really lived, not simply as a symbolic figure. We saw previously however, that this point alone is not decisive, for many of these passages could be construed as referring not to the historical Adam, but merely the literary Adam, that is to say, the character in the story of Genesis 2-3 who says and does the things recorded there. The next point therefore becomes more important.

4. Paul draws parallels between Adam and Jesus as historical individuals, not merely as literary figures. Paul not only believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a historical person but that Adam was as well. He parallels Christ with Adam as the second Adam. Remember our discussion of Romans 5:12-21. Paul says that through Adam – the first man – sin came into the world and spread to all men. Similarly, through Christ life and forgiveness and redemption are made available to all men. Adam’s sin had consequences outside the story which were then rectified by Jesus. So there is a parallel between Adam and Jesus as historical persons.

It seems to me, therefore, that, despite their symbolic function in the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve are regarded by the biblical writers as genuine historical persons. I think what we can say is that the creation and Fall of man are historical events that actually happened though they are told in a dramatic literary form involving figurative speech. The story of Adam and Eve has been called a historical drama. It is a dramatized, or figurative, story telling of an actual historical event. I've argued previously that a more sensitive genre analysis of Genesis 1-11 would classify the stories of the primeval history as mytho-history. Affirming the historicity of Adam and Eve as I've done implies that the human race is descended from a single ancestral couple. It commits us to the monogenesis of the human race, not merely in the sense that the human race originated in one time and place as opposed to multiple times and places, but monogenesis in a very peculiar sense, namely that there was an original ancestral human pair from which all of humanity is descended.

If the biblical Adam was a historical person who actually lived, then the obvious question arises, when did he live? For the answer to that question, we need to turn to modern science. So next time we'll take up the issue of when we can locate the historical Adam.<sup>26</sup>

## Lecture 14: When Did Adam Live?

Good morning! Welcome to Defenders! We are coming to you today from the safety of my hermetically sealed home office, and I am glad that you could join us.

The last time I argued that the historical Adam and Eve actually existed even though their stories are cloaked in the language of figuralism and mythology. This raises an obvious question. If the biblical Adam was a historical person who actually lived, then the obvious question arises, *when* did he live? We can turn to modern science in the attempt to answer this question. For scientists are vitally interested in a question which is empirically equivalent to our question, namely, when did human beings first appear on Earth? The historical Adam may then be located around that time.

First of all, however, we need to clarify some terminology. A hominid is the class of animals that includes orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas, and humans. They are all hominids. A hominin is the class that includes only members of the human lineage since its divergence from the last common ancestor with chimpanzees. The class of hominins includes not only modern man, *Homo sapiens*, but also archaic species of the genus *Homo*. It includes as well Australopithecines, which were bi-pedal African apes. Ian Tattersall of the American Museum of Natural History points out that early individuals classed as *Homo*, such as *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo rudolfensis*, and so on, all have in common remarkably small brains, hardly larger than those of the Australopithecines. This is in conspicuous contrast to *Homo sapiens*, which has a brain more than twice the volume. So we must not assume that organisms classed as *Homo* are therefore human beings. Rather we need to specify certain conditions which are jointly sufficient for humanity. There is, in fact, a noteworthy consensus among scientists as to what these conditions are. We are, after all, familiar with ourselves as human beings and therefore know what a paradigmatic human being is.

We know, for example, that any putative human being must be anatomically similar to ourselves. While a self-conscious, rational extra-terrestrial (or even chimpanzee) would be a person, he would not be a *human* person. This necessary condition of humanness need not involve an exact anatomical match. There is a range of anatomical differences even between modern and archaic *Homo sapiens* that do not count against the humanity of the latter forms. By contrast, no one thinks that given their significant anatomical differences to modern man, Australopithecines, for example, were human beings, despite their having some shared features with man (such as bipedalism). They were simply bipedal apes of various sorts with tiny brains (somewhere around 460 cm<sup>3</sup>) that could not have supported modern human behavior.



On the basis of our paradigmatic examples of humans we can delineate certain features which, given anatomical similarity, are sufficient (if not necessary) for human personhood. What are some of these features? Anthropologists Sally McBrearty and Alison Brooks list four characteristics of modern human behavior:

1. Abstract thinking, the ability to act with reference to abstract concepts not limited in time or space;
2. Planning depth, the ability to formulate strategies based on past experience and to act upon them in a group context;
3. Behavioral, economic, and technological innovations;
4. Symbolic behavior, the ability to represent objects, people, and abstract concepts with arbitrary symbols, whether vocal or visual, and to reify such symbols in cultural practice.<sup>27</sup>

McBrearty and Brooks observe that the standards for behavioral modernity that they apply “are universally recognized and are frequently repeated in the literature.”<sup>28</sup> To deny the humanity of past individuals who were anatomically similar to modern humans and who exhibited such behaviors would be very problematic because (i) it is implausible to think that such behaviors did not require the cognitive capacities of human beings and (ii) to deny the humanity of past individuals exhibiting such behavior would permit one similarly to deny the humanity of people living today who share such behavior, which is not only implausible but morally unconscionable.

The more difficult question is whether we can discern when such behaviors first appear in the prehistorical record. We can set boundaries of our quest for human origins by establishing *an earliest possible point* and *a latest possible point* for the first appearance of human beings. How far back can the first appearance of humans be extended?

Paleontological evidence continues to push *Homo sapiens* further and further into the past. The hominin fossils of Jebel Irhoud in Morocco, with an age of over 300,000 years, are the earliest fossils of *Homo sapiens* discovered to date. The brain volume of these individuals was large, between 1300-1400 cm<sup>3</sup>, which is comparable to that of modern man (1100-1500 cm<sup>3</sup>). Although there are differences in the cranial shape of these archaic humans compared to modern humans, the archaeologists at Jebel Irhoud emphasize that already 300,000 years ago “their facial morphology is almost indistinguishable from that

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<sup>27</sup> Sally McBrearty and Alison S. Brooks, “The Revolution that wasn’t: a new interpretation of the origin of modern human behavior,” *Journal of Human Evolution* 39 (2000): p. 492.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 534.

of R[ecent] M[odern] H[umans].”<sup>29</sup> While such skeletal remains alone may not prove the humanity of such individuals, they make it at least possible that human beings date back to over 300,000 years ago.

But what shall we say about earlier forms of *Homo*? Despite being classified as *Homo*, so-called *Homo habilis* was, as I mentioned, almost certainly not human, given its brain size of 550-687 cm<sup>3</sup>. Many paleoanthropologists would like it to be renamed *Australopithecus habilis*. When we come to *Homo erectus*, the picture becomes less clear, especially given the lengthy history and geographical spread of this particular hominin. Specimens have been found throughout Asia and Africa over a span of nearly one and a half million years from around 2,000,000 years ago, thus permitting an abundance of identifiable sub-species. It is possible that some late-developing member of *Homo erectus* might be arguably human, even if more primitive members were not. For example, the very early fossils of *Homo erectus* from Dmanisi, Georgia, have a brain volume of only about 600 cm<sup>3</sup>, whereas later specimens from Java reach 1100 cm<sup>3</sup>, which touches the lower bound of modern *Homo sapiens* (which, you will remember, is 1100-1500 cm<sup>3</sup>). By the time we get to *Homo heidelbergensis* and *Homo neanderthalensis* brain sizes are large enough to support human personhood. For *Homo heidelbergensis*, the brain case measured 1100-1400 cm<sup>3</sup>, and for *Homo neanderthalensis*, 1200-1750 cm<sup>3</sup>. The brain volume of Neanderthals was, in fact, larger than that of *Homo sapiens*, whose brain size has actually been shrinking over the last ten thousand years. So *Homo erectus* provides us the earliest possible point for the origin of human beings.

As for a latest point of human origins, the beautiful cave art at Lascaux (170,000 years ago) and Chauvet (30,000 years ago) in France, was undoubtedly created by human beings.

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-Jacques Hublin *et al.*, “New fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco and the pan-African origin of *Homo sapiens*,” *Nature* 546 (8 June 2017), pp. 289ff, doi:10.1038/nature22336.



CAVE ART AT LASCAUX, FRANCE (17 KYA)



CAVE ART AT CHAUVET, FRANCE (30 KYA)

Just look at this picture of the beautiful horses painted on the walls of the cave in Lascaux. This was truly a sensitive and brilliant artist. And the paintings at Chauvet are



even more stunning. Here is a clip of the lions that were drawn on the cave wall by the artist at Chauvet. The magnificence of these paintings can be appreciated when you ask yourself, if you were called upon to draw a picture of a pride of lions on the wall, what would it look like? Truly we have here a primeval Michelangelo at work.

Viewing these paintings, we sense ourselves standing in the presence of someone who is one of us. The hand stencils, which are among the oldest forms of cave art yet discovered, seem almost to be reaching out across the millennia to touch us.



For example, we have hand stencils from Sulawesi, Indonesia which date back to 35,000 to 40,000 years ago. These are the actual hand imprints of real people who actually lived.

It is universally recognized that the people who produced such art possessed symbolic thought so as to be able to represent real animals and scenes via painted images. Any attempt therefore to [date] the origin of human persons later than the earliest time of such cave art is excluded, thus giving us *a latest point* for the possible origin of humanity.

Human beings, in the full sense of the word, therefore originated on this planet sometime between one million years ago at the earliest and 50,000 years ago at the latest. By pushing these boundaries inward, if we can, we now want to try to determine more closely the point of this origin. That is the subject we shall explore next week. Until then, stay safe.<sup>30</sup>

## Lecture 15: Were Neanderthals Humans?

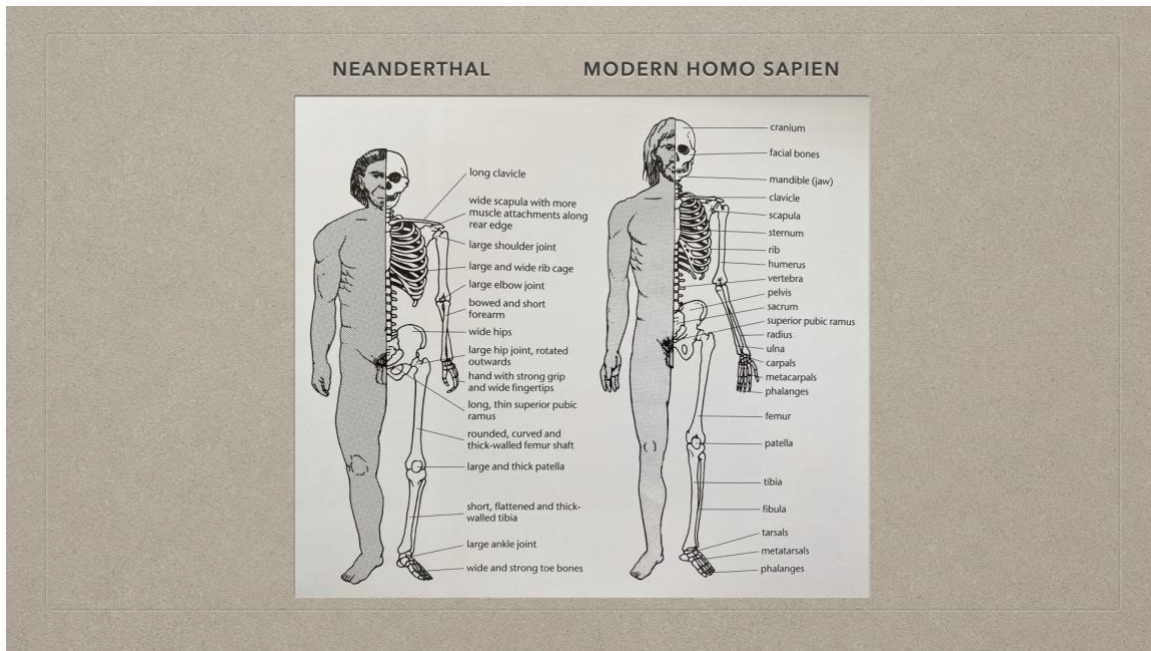
Welcome to Defenders class! Coming to you from my home office during this time of quarantine, I almost feel as though we should rename the class Defenders-in-Exile! But we are all doing well. Jan and I are well in the midst of this time of sequestration, though the COVID-19 virus has touched the Reasonable Faith family. One of our staff members in Oklahoma who is involved in this live stream of the Defenders class came down with the virus and has been feeling pretty crummy. But he's soldiering through and is actually helping with the live stream this morning as we go out.

I received a question on Facebook concerning last week's lesson that I thought worth addressing this morning before we move to the lesson today. Someone said, "Why do you associate absolute brain size with increased cognitive capacity or intelligence? Aren't there other mammals, for example elephants, that have much larger brains than human beings and yet they are not more intelligent than human beings?" The answer is that in hominins in particular brain size is positively correlated with increased cognitive capacity and intelligence. With respect to other mammals who have larger brains than human beings like whales or elephants, what is crucial here is to also consider not simply the absolute size but what's called the encephalization quotient which is a sort of ratio between brain size and body mass. When you calculate that you find that the encephalization quotient for whales and elephants is very small whereas for human beings it is somewhere about 7. So when you look at the so-called "EQ" as well as the absolute brain size this confirms that the increased brain size in hominins is positively correlated with an increase in cognitive capacity and intelligence.

In our lesson last time we saw that human beings in the full sense of that word originated on this planet somewhere between one million years ago at the earliest and 50,000 years ago at the very latest. By pushing these boundaries inward if we can, we can try to determine more exactly the point of human origins.

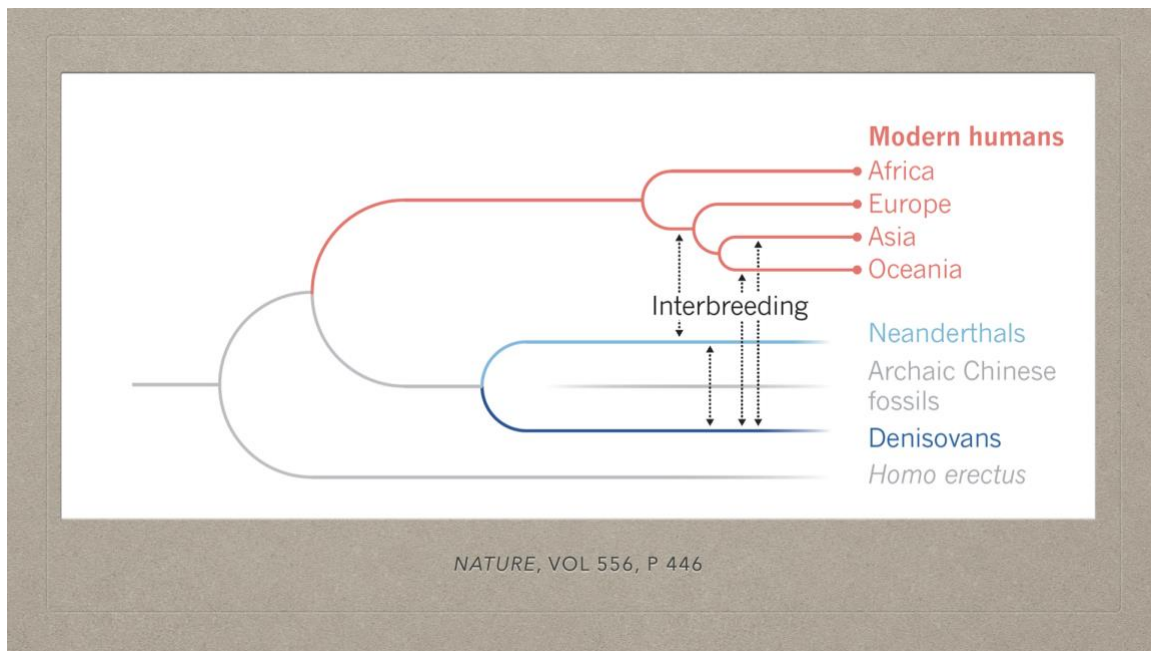
The key question to be answered here with respect to the time of human origins is whether Neanderthals were human. Neanderthals lived in the Middle East and Europe between about 350,000 years ago down to 30,000 years ago. They lived in both warmer climates and then later through the ice ages. They were shorter and wider than modern *Homo sapiens*, more like modern peoples who are adapted to the cold climate, such as the Inuit Indians.

Here you see a slide that exhibits the anatomical similarities between Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*. I think you can see that although there are certainly differences, these differences are not major.



According to Stringer and Andrews in their book, *The Complete World of Human Evolution*, “in response to their demanding, and at times, dangerous lives, the Neanderthal skeleton was strongly reinforced with thick bone, particularly in the shape and strength of the leg bones. Their physique has been described as combining that of a powerful wrestler with the endurance of a marathon runner!” As we have seen Neanderthals had a brain capacity equal to that of modern man.

In 2010 scientists were able to reconstruct the complete Neanderthal genome from fossil remains and then to compare Neanderthal DNA with that of modern *Homo sapiens*. What they discovered is that *Homo sapiens* had interbred with Neanderthals over a very considerable time and also with another ancient hominin called Denisovans. As a consequence, around 2% of the DNA from people today outside Africa is derived from Neanderthals, and Oceanic populations have an additional 2%–4% of their DNA from ancient Denisovans.



The simple fact of interbreeding carries implications for the humanity of Neanderthals and Denisovans. They interacted repeatedly with anatomically modern human beings over tens of thousands of years. Such social and sexual intercourse plausibly requires communication, and, hence, language. Kai Whiting comments,

it seems quite unreasonable to assume that all sexual encounters between the different *Homo* species were of the non-consensual variety. It is much more likely that at least some of the instances of interbreeding between co-existing *Homo* species, including anatomically modern humans, were the result of communication and a degree of affection or appreciation. Regardless of the exact dynamics of sexual relations, we know for certain that some resulted in offspring that could claim kinship to more than one set of human species.<sup>31</sup>

And we are descended from these people today.

There is thus a strong presumption, I think, in favor of Neanderthals' humanity.

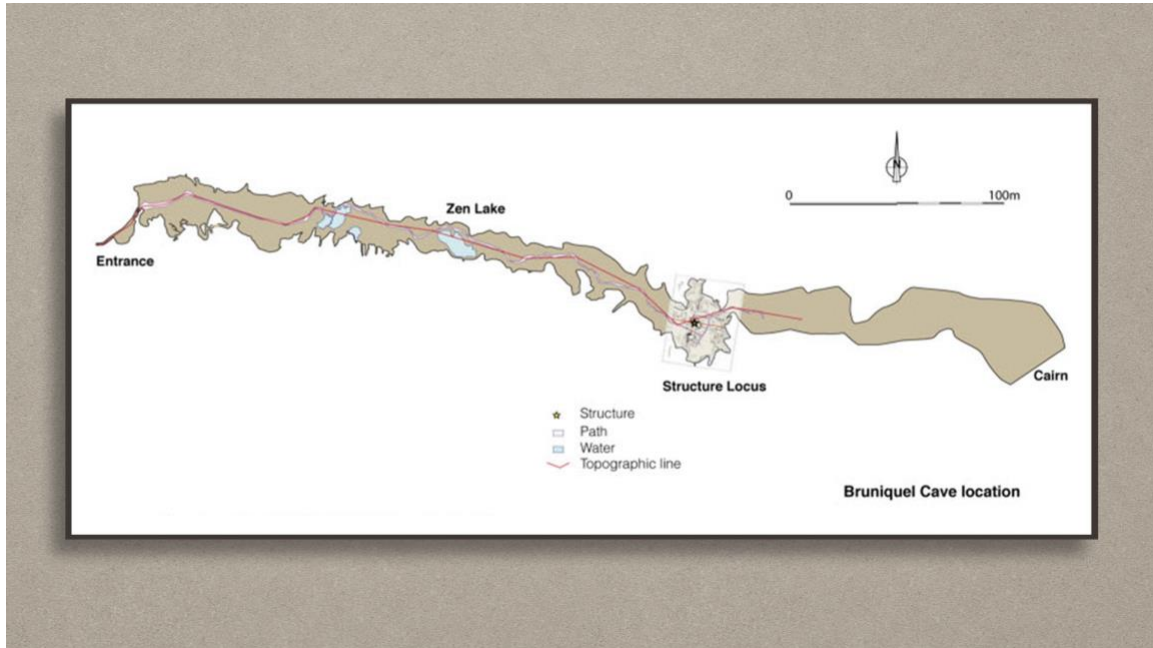
Let me home in now on just three archaeological discoveries that confirm this conclusion.

1. The constructions at Bruniquel Cave in France. In 2016 French archaeologists reported on strange circular constructions found deep inside Bruniquel Cave in southwestern France. No humans had entered the cave since its natural closing in the Pleistocene Epoch and its re-opening in 1990, guaranteeing that the structures inside are undisturbed. The cave itself is a long, snaking corridor 10 to 15 meters wide and 482 meters long. The

<sup>31</sup> Kai Whiting et al, "Were Neanderthals Rational? A Stoic Approach," *Humanities* 7 (2018): 39; doi:10.3390/h7020039



structures are found in a room at the astonishing depth of 336 meters from the cave entrance, which places them in complete darkness. They consist of about 400 whole or partial stalagmites with lengths of 34 centimeters for the long ones and 29 centimeters for the small ones. The pieces are arranged in two large rings and four smaller heaps. The two rings are composed of one to four stacked layers of aligned stalagmites. Traces of fire are to be found on all six structures.



Uranium-series dating gives a reliable age of 176,000 years to these structures, making them among the oldest constructions made by man ever discovered. Neanderthals were the only humans living in Europe at that time. Jacques Jaubert, the lead archaeologist at the site, comments on the significance of these constructions:

This type of construction implies the beginnings of a social organization: This organization could consist of a project that was designed and discussed by one or several individuals, a distribution of the tasks of choosing, collecting and calibrating the speleofacts [stalagmites], followed by their transport (or vice versa) and placement according to a predetermined plan. This work would also require adequate lighting. . . . The complexity of the structure, combined with its difficult access (335 m from the cave entrance), are signs of a collective project

and therefore suggest the existence of an organized society that was already on the path to ‘modernity’.

No one knows what would prompt these early humans to penetrate deep into the interior of a cave, torches in hand, to build such structures. Such activity may well betoken ritualistic or symbolic behavior, thus underlining the human status of the individuals involved. This is but one piece of evidence that we and Neanderthals are both members of the human family descended from Adam.

2. The discovery of Neanderthal art. Up until very recently all the prehistoric art discovered seemed to belong to *Homo sapiens*. Now hand stencils have been identified in Maltravieso Cave in Spain, along with other instances of non-figurative paintings in La Pasiega Cave and Ardales Cave. Uranium-thorium testing of calcium carbonate crusts overlying the hand stencil dated it to at least 66,700 years ago and dated the paintings collectively at a minimum of 64,800 years ago, predating the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in Europe by some 20,000 years. “The implication is, therefore, that the artists were Neanderthals.”<sup>32</sup>

Reflecting on the significance of this finding, Hoffman and his colleagues (the lead excavators) state,

This cave painting activity constitutes a symbolic behavior by definition, and one that is deeply rooted. At Ardales, distinct episodes over a period of more than 25 ka corroborate that we are not dealing with a one-off burst but with a long tradition that may well stretch back to the time of the annular construction found in Bruniquel cave, France, dated to  $176.5 \pm 2.1$  ka ago. Dating results for the excavation site at Cueva de los Aviones, Spain, which place symbolic use of marine shells and mineral pigments by Neandertals at  $>115$  ka ago, further support the antiquity of Neanderthal symbolism.<sup>33</sup>

Given that the use of imagery and representation in art is a signature of modern human behavior among *Homo sapiens*, it would prejudicial to deny the humanity of the Neanderthal artists. The contemporaneous presence of similar cave art in both Spain and Indonesia half the world away implies an origin of symbolic behavior and hence, humanity, which is vastly older still.

3. The Schöningen spears. Excavations during the 1990s at the site of an open pit coal mine near Schöningen, Germany, unearthed eight remarkable wooden spears. The coal mine from which the spears were excavated has six sequences of multiple layers of sedimentary deposits. The spears were found in the fourth layer of the second sequence,

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<sup>32</sup> D. L. Hoffmann, et al., “U-Th dating of carbonate crusts reveals Neandertal origin of Iberian cave art,” *Science* 359 (23 Feb 2018), pp. 912-915, DOI: 10.1126/science.aap7778.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 915.

dated to the third interglacial period between 400,000 and 300,000 years ago! These spears aren't anything like the sticks that chimpanzees sharpen with their teeth and use to stick things. Rather, these are over 6 or 7 foot long sculpted spears designed for throwing.

Here you see some photographs of these spears. They have suffered severe deformation from the weight of the sedimentary layers overlying them over hundreds of thousands of years.



**SCHÖNINGEN SPEAR**



The circumference of the first third of the spear is greater, so that it tapers off toward the butt. As a result, most of the weight is forward, to assist in throwing like a javelin. In fact, wooden reproductions of these spears have been made and tested for accuracy, distance, and penetration by Olympic athletes. And these spears were found to be on a par with modern Olympic javelins! Hartmut Thieme, the lead excavator at Schöningen, says, “Found in association with stone tools and the butchered remains of more than ten horses, the spears strongly suggest that systematic hunting, involving foresight, planning and the use of appropriate technology, was part of the behavioral repertoire of pre-modern hominids.” The mention of foresight and planning is especially significant, since these are commonly thought to be indicative of a truly human consciousness which is freed from the immediate here and now and can therefore imagine possibilities.

Big game hunting, such as the hunters at Schöningen were engaged in, is a risky business which would have required cooperation and perhaps even language ability, which is uniquely human. Possible big game hunting has also been suggested at sites such as Boxgrove (ca. 500,000 years ago) and Clacton (ca. 300,000 years ago), England. At Clacton, a fragment of such a wooden spear was found. I’m persuaded that the Schöningen spears, along with the remains of *Homo heidelbergensis* (or Heidelberg Man) at Boxgrove, England, are enormously significant in demonstrating incredibly early “modern” cognitive behavior. The remains at Boxgrove from several rhinoceros and horse skeletons bear butchery marks from stone tools, and microscopic analysis of the wear on stone scrapers from sites such as Clacton indicate that a number of these tools

were used for hide-scraping. Hides could then have been used for blankets, simple clothing, cords for stitching or tying things together, or carrying items.

*Homo heidelbergensis* (Heidelberg Man), widely regarded as the ancestor of both *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals already then exhibits human behavior and modern cognitive capacity.

In sum, humanity should not be thought to comprise only *Homo sapiens*. Rather, Neanderthals, too, exhibit the cognitive signs of human behavior and so should be regarded as part of the human family.

Next time we will see what implications this has for locating the historical Adam. Until then, stay safe.<sup>34</sup>



## Lecture 16: Locating the Historical Adam

Welcome to Defenders. I'm glad that you could join us for this podcast.

In our last few sessions, we've been looking at the scientific evidence for the date of the origin of humanity in order to determine when, plausibly, the historical Adam might have lived. As we probed the evidence for human origins, the evidence has pointed us again and again to the progenitor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals as the fount of humanity, the mysterious Heidelberg Man. What do we know of him?

In 1907 the lower jaw of a hominin was discovered at the Grafenrain sand and gravel quarry in Mauer, Germany, in the vicinity of Heidelberg. Dating from about 600,000 years ago, the jaw appeared to belong to a previously unknown species of early hominin. The following year the name *Homo heidelbergensis* was bestowed by Otto Schoetensack upon this species. In 1921 a nearly complete skull appropriate to the Mauer mandible along with a shin bone was unearthed in a metal ore mine at Broken Hill, Rhodesia. Initially classed as belonging to a new species, *Homo rhodesiensis*, the new find eventually came to be classified as an instance of *Homo heidelbergensis*. Although the brain case was relatively long and low compared to that of modern man, it was higher and more expansive than that of *Homo erectus* and had a capacity between 800-1300 cm<sup>3</sup>, thus overlapping the modern average, which is about 1100-1500 cm<sup>3</sup>. The man at Broken Hill is estimated to have stood about 6 feet tall and to have weighed around 160 pounds. Since the discovery at Broken Hill a number of finds have been made and have been identified as belonging to *Homo heidelbergensis*, including remains from Boxgrove, England; Arago, France; Bilzingsleben, Germany; Petralona, Greece; Bodo, Ethiopia; Kapthurin, Kenya, and Elandsfontein, South Africa.<sup>35</sup>

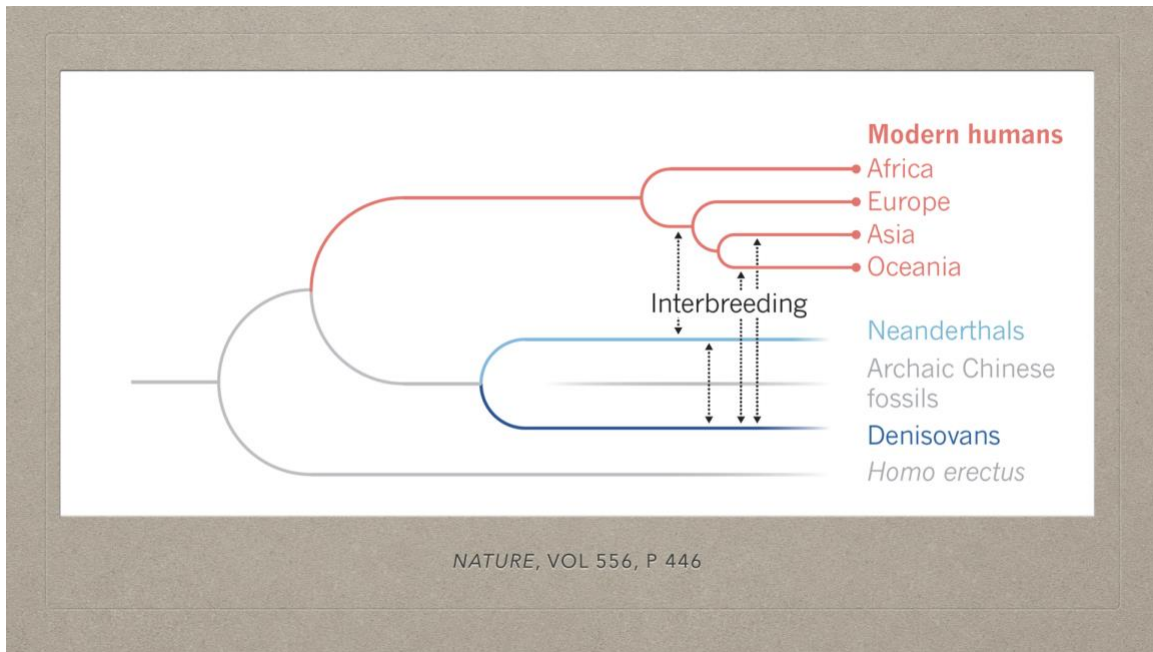
Ian Tattersal calls *Homo heidelbergensis* "a truly cosmopolitan hominid species" which may lie at the origin of the European and African lineages that eventually led to Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*.<sup>36</sup> The origin of Heidelberg Man himself is shrouded in antiquity. He may have originated in either Asia or Europe or Africa and then migrated to the other regions.

The date range for the last common ancestor of Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* has been pushed back by analysis of the Neanderthal genome. On the basis of a complete genome analysis of the Altai Neanderthal in Russia, the best estimate for the divergence of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals is now between 765,000 and 550,000 years ago.

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<sup>35</sup> For a list of fossils that may represent *Homo heidelbergensis* see Chris Stringer, "The Status of *Homo heidelbergensis* (Schoetensack 1908)," *Evolutionary Anthropology* 21 (May 2012): 103, Table 2; for a list of traits characteristic of this assemblage see *ibid.*, p. 102, Table 1.

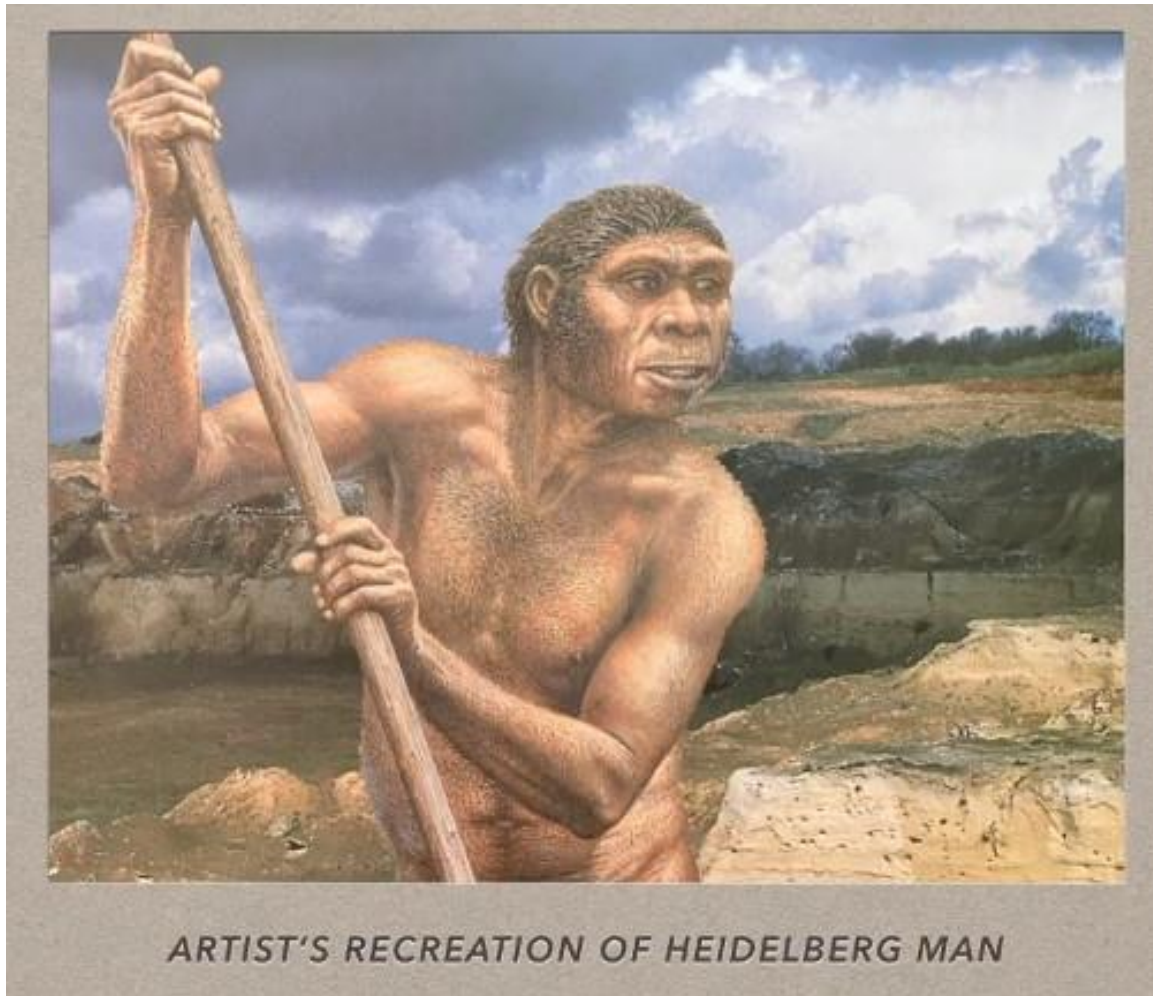
<sup>36</sup> Tattersal, *Fossil Trail*, p. 280.



Recent protein analysis of a tooth from Gran Dolina, Spain, led the researchers to infer that the hominin in question, called *Homo antecessor*, “was a sister group to the group containing *Homo sapiens*, Neanderthals, and Denisovans,” thus implying that they all share a common ancestor. The researchers note that this is consistent with the accepted date of the divergence of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthal/Denisovan lineages between 765 and 550 thousand years ago. The researchers did not address the identity of the last common ancestor, but if it is Heidelberg Man, as is usually thought, then Heidelberg Man could be regarded as the last common ancestor of all these species.

*Homo antecessor* has a remarkably-looking modern face. The positioning of *Homo antecessor* as one of our sister species sharing a common ancestor implies, in the words of the researchers, that a modern-like face must have a considerably deep ancestry in the genus *Homo*. So Adam may have looked very much like us. Here is an artist’s recreation of Heidelberg Man from the frontispiece of Stringer and Andrews’ book:





ARTIST'S RECREATION OF HEIDELBERG MAN

I like that the artist pictures Heidelberg Man holding a spear like those found at Schöningen, Germany. I think you'll agree that you know people today who look rather like this. Of course, this painting is the creation of the artist's imagination. We have no idea of Adam's skin color, for example. Still, I think you can see that we're not dealing here with some slumping ape-man, but rather with someone who could pass amongst us without raising too many eyebrows. Moreover, with a brain capacity of  $1260 \text{ cm}^3$ , well within the modern range, Heidelberg Man is appropriate as the author of cognitively modern behaviors.

Robert Fortney sums it up beautifully,

The tendencies toward large brain size were carried further, while the social habits, tool-making, and all the paraphernalia attached to hunting and gathering

tribes were added piece by piece until you can say of the creature standing before you: *ecce homo* [behold, the man].<sup>37</sup>

Adam, then, may be plausibly identified as a member of *Homo heidelbergensis*, living perhaps sometime earlier than 750,000 years ago. He could even have lived in the Near East in the biblical site of the Garden of Eden—though vastly earlier, of course. His descendants migrated southward into Africa, where they gave rise to *Homo sapiens*, and westward into Europe where they evolved into *Homo antecessor*, Neanderthals, and Denisovans. Eventually, these separate lines of his descendants began to interbreed, leaving their genetic signatures in our DNA.

Palaeoanthropologists debate whether modern man emerged through a gradual, multi-species development or by a sudden, mutational event occurring within a single species. Francesco D’Errico and Chris Stringer explain that,

Some authors consider that a genetic mutation in the functioning of the brain is the most probable prime mover and have argued that such a mutation, leading to a sudden diffusion of modern traits, must have occurred approximately 50 000 years ago (50 ka) among African anatomically modern humans. Others situate this neurological switch between 60 and 80 ka and associate it with cultural innovations recorded at this time in southern Africa.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to this view, D’Errico and Stringer explain, partisans of what could be called the “cultural” model argue that,

the cognitive prerequisites of modern human behaviour were already largely in place among the ancestors of Neanderthals and modern humans and cite social and demographic factors. . . to explain the asynchronous emergence, disappearance and re-emergence of modern cultural traits among both African ‘modern’ and Eurasian ‘archaic’ populations.<sup>39</sup>

According to this scenario, “‘modernity’ and its corollary ‘cumulative culture’ is the end product of a cultural evolution within human populations that were to a large extent. . . cognitively modern.”<sup>40</sup>

It should be evident, I think, that these two views are not mutually exclusive. One can imagine a scenario in which a regulatory mutation, perhaps divinely caused, occurs in a member (or members) of a population belonging to *Homo heidelbergensis* which effects a change in the functioning of the brain that results in significantly greater cognitive capacity. Some behavioral outworkings of this increased cognitive capacity would be

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<sup>37</sup> Fortey, *Life*, p. 324.

<sup>38</sup> D’Errico and Stringer, “Evolution, revolution or saltation,” pp. 1060-61.

<sup>39</sup> D’Errico and Stringer, “Evolution, revolution or saltation,” p. 1061.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1061.

immediate, but others would emerge slowly over time among this person's descendants through gene-cultural co-evolution. This is in line with the cultural model, we are to imagine both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* as heirs to the cognitive capacity for modern behaviors already present in Heidelberg Man and, in line with the first model, this increased cognitive capacity as itself the result of a crucial mutation in some ancestral individual(s) belonging to *Homo heidelbergensis*. These individuals could have been Adam and Eve. Their descendants multiplied and then became the human race. And the rest, as they say, is history!<sup>41</sup>

## Lecture 17: Genetic Challenges to Adam and Eve

Welcome to Defenders class. Thank you for joining us this morning. It occurred to me that during this time of the coronavirus pandemic, some of you joining us today might actually be suffering from the coronavirus yourselves, and you are taking advantage of this podcast to be able to be part of our Defenders class. So I want to give a special welcome to any of you who are dealing with such a trial.

In our last session I argued that Adam and Eve should be thought of as the most recent common ancestor of both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*. This traditional view of Adam and Eve as the fountainhead of all humanity has been vigorously challenged by some on the basis of the science of population genetics. This morning I would like to look at this challenge with you.

In order to understand this challenge, it is important to understand that according to the theory of evolution, and perhaps contrary to popular impression, evolution does not proceed along an isolated individual line. It is not as though there is some sequence of individual reptiles that evolved, for example, into the first bird. Rather, the idea is that whole populations evolve over time. So the ongoing front of evolution is not like the point of a spear; rather, it is like a broad front, as a whole population of organisms evolves together over time. In this sense, a whole population of reptiles would be evolving bird-like characteristics. Similarly, in the case of human evolution, there is a whole population of hominins – that is to say, man-like primates – which is gradually evolving characteristics of modern human beings. So, it is typically thought that there weren't originally two human persons – a original couple – that were the ancestors of everybody else. Rather, modern human beings evolved through a whole population of hominins moving gradually toward some more recognizable modern human forms.

But why couldn't there have been within this wider population of non-human hominins a first couple who made the transition to humanity and whose descendants then became the human race? Some critics have alleged that this scenario is impossible, since it contradicts the data of population genetics. In order to understand this challenge, let's briefly review what we learned in high school biology.

Human beings have in each nucleus of each cell 23 pairs of chromosomes containing the DNA that determines our genes. A segment of DNA is called a locus (Latin for "place"). The sequence of DNA letters at any locus is called an allele. Since our chromosomes come in pairs, we therefore have one allele at a locus on one chromosome and another allele at a similar locus on the other chromosome. These alleles determine features like eye color, height, skin color, and so on. Now the claim is that when we look at the genetic profile of the human population today, it is impossible that it could have stemmed from

an original couple alone; there had to be numerous ancestors from the very beginning in order for the human race to have arrived at its present condition.

So what exactly is the problem supposed to be here? Computational biologist Joshua Swamidass distinguishes at least four different problems that have been put forward in the popular literature as incompatible with the existence of an original human couple:

1. Multiplicity of alleles: There are just too many different alleles in the present population to have all come from an original human couple within the last 18 million years, which is long before human beings ever appeared on this planet.
2. Effective population size estimates: Various independent methods of estimating past population size all concur that the human population in the past was never fewer than around 10,000 breeding people.
3. Trans-species variation: In order for all the alleles which we have in common with chimpanzees to be passed on to us from a common ancestor, there needed to have been more than one couple who transmitted these genetic lines from that ancestor to us. In other words, a single couple could not have passed on to us all the genetic material which we share with chimps.
4. Divergence of alleles: To grasp this point it is vital to differentiate genetic divergence from genetic diversity. I shall take “genetic diversity” or “variation” to refer to the multiplicity of alleles in a population.<sup>42</sup> Genetic divergence, on the other hand, has to do with the mutational distances between alleles in a population. We can visualize divergence by representing alleles as dots plotted on a plane. The more mutations separating two alleles, the greater the distance between them on the plot. One way to measure divergence would be to measure the distances of the farthest alleles from the most central allele. Draw a circle around all the dots, and the radius of that circle provides a measure of their genetic divergence.

Notice that the multiplicity of alleles (what I’m calling genetic diversity) is irrelevant; what matters is the spread of the alleles (genetic divergence). The wider the spread, the more ancient the most recent common ancestor of those alleles. We want to compute genetic divergence across the whole human genome. We can then ask how long and how rapidly mutations must have been occurring for the distances separating alleles in the present population to arise from a pair of sole genetic progenitors. Given the known mutation rate, we can use genetic divergence to calculate the time back to the most recent common ancestor (TMRCA). The argument is that it would take millions and millions of years for the observed divergence of alleles to have arisen from a common ancestor. We

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<sup>42</sup> This is how the term is used by Dennis Venema and others who press argument (1) (Dennis R. Venema and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2017], pp. 46-48).

cannot reach single pair of sole genetic progenitors of the human race within the time during which hominins have existed on Earth. As one writer put it, this would make Adam literally “a monkey’s uncle!”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, there could not have been an original human pair from whom we all descend.

On the basis of evidence such as the above biologist Dennis Venema expresses supreme confidence that humanity did not descend from a single human couple: “Some ideas in science are so well supported that it is highly unlikely new evidence will substantially modify them, and these are among them. The sun is at the center of our solar system, humans evolved, and we evolved as a population.”<sup>44</sup> He here expresses what has been called “heliocentric certainty” against an original human pair.<sup>45</sup>

Swamidass has subjected the above four arguments to searching criticism. Let’s look at responses to each.

First, the multiplicity of alleles and ancient population sizes. Swamidass dismisses arguments based upon (1) and (2), as “just wrongheaded. These arguments are total misdirections that have nothing to do with the key question. They are category errors.”<sup>46</sup> From the mere number or variety of alleles in the human population today, nothing at all follows about population sizes in the deep past. What matters is the divergence of alleles in the population. The argument from genetic diversity, as I have defined the term, is a red herring.

As for arguments based on estimated effective population size, these are misleading because such estimates are averages over a window of time and so are consistent with peaks and valleys within the intervals. Venema consistently errs in taking these estimates to concern *minimum* population size rather than *average* population size.<sup>47</sup> In 2017, geneticist Richard Buggs pointed out that the hypothesis of a bottleneck of two people had in fact never been tested scientifically.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, as Swamidass observes, we know that at some point in the past the number of human beings goes to zero and therefore to fewer than 10,000 individuals. In thinking otherwise, Venema is guilty of a crucial equivocation between “ancestors” and “humans.”<sup>49</sup> Even if the ancestral population of hominins leading to humans remains constantly above some minimal size of several thousand, it does not follow that there

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<sup>43</sup> David Wilcox, “Finding Adam: The Genetics of Human Origins,” in *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, ed. Keith B. Miller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 252.

<sup>44</sup> Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*, p. 55.

<sup>45</sup> Joshua Swamidass, “Heliocentric Certainty Against a Bottleneck of Two?” <https://discourse.peacefulscience.org/t/heliocentric-certainty-against-a-bottleneck-of-two/61/4>.

<sup>46</sup> Personal communication, June 6, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*, pp. 44, 52, 53, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Buggs, “Adam and Eve: a tested hypothesis?”

<sup>49</sup> Swamidass, “Heliocentric Certainty.”



were not at some time exactly two humans who emerged within that population. It is entirely possible that at some time in the past, the total number of humans was exactly two, even though the total population of hominins at the time was much greater. The descendants of these early humans might or might not have interbred with their non-human contemporaries. If they did, then that founding couple would not be our sole genetic progenitors, since outsiders would have had genetic input into the human race. On the other hand, if such interbreeding never occurred, the founding couple would be the sole genetic progenitors of the human race, since there would be no outside input. In either case, there would have been an original founding pair.

What, then, of the third argument – the argument from *trans-species variation*? While initially plausible, the argument dissolves upon examination. Since every human being has two sets of similar chromosomes (not counting the X and Y chromosomes determining sex), a founding human pair can together carry at most four alleles at any locus into the descendant population. So if it could be shown that there are more than four allele lineages exhibiting trans-species variation, then we should have a strong argument against an originating human pair. But apart from an outdated study by Francisco Ayala, there is no evidence for this. Although this issue is still under debate, Swamidass reports that other studies have failed to uncover evidence of trans-species variation between humans and non-human ancestors involving more than four allele lineages. Even if such variation should be discovered, it could indicate no more than the fact that Adam and Eve were not our sole genetic progenitors, but that there was interbreeding with outsiders, who introduced more alleles into the human population.

Moreover, there is a plausible alternative explanation of trans-species variation among hominins, namely, convergent evolution. In convergent evolution, similar alleles evolve independently in different species. Convergent evolution seems to be common among hominin species, producing similarities, for example, bipedalism, among independent species that may be misleading in determining lines of descent. Swamidass notes that the particular gene studied by Ayala is “one of the genes with clear evidence of convergent evolution.”<sup>50</sup> This finding robs the argument from trans-species variation of its force.

Finally, the fourth argument from genetic divergence. The decisive question, then, concerns the divergence of alleles in the present human population. Swamidass points out that a founding couple could have been heterozygous, each carrying two different alleles at any locus of their chromosome pairs, for a total of four alleles between the two of them for any locus to be passed on to their descendants.<sup>51</sup> In that case the relevant time is not the TMRCA but the time to the most recent four alleles (TMR4A). Population genetics

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



has been concerned only with the TMRCA, so that no studies of the TMR4A had been published prior to Swamidass' work, requiring him to do his own original modeling in order to obtain a date. I'll skip the fascinating details and cut to the chase. Swamidass determines a date of 495,000 (plus or minus 100,000) years ago for the TMR4A. So there could have been a founding couple about 500,000 years ago who were the sole genetic progenitors of humankind. On the basis of this work, Richard Buggs agreed that Swamidass, for the first time, had tested the hypothesis of an original human pair.

More recently these findings have been confirmed by Ola Hössjer and Ann Gauger, who explore what they call a Single Couple Origin (SCO) model of the human race.<sup>52</sup> They find that the data are consistent with at least two SCO models: (1) A model featuring a homozygous first couple dating to about 2,000,000 years ago, and (2) a model featuring a heterozygous first couple who lived about 500,000 years ago. Thus, they conclude, given common assumptions shared by evolutionary geneticists, a single-couple origin is possible, despite claims to the contrary.

So while a recent bottleneck is ruled out by the genetic divergence exhibited by today's human population, a bottleneck of two before 500,000 years ago is possible, in which case the founding pair would be the common ancestors of *Homo sapiens*, Neanderthals and Denisovans. "The dust has yet to settle on the scientific details," says Swamidass, "But it looks likely at this point that a bottleneck anytime before 700 kya is undetectable in genetic data."<sup>53</sup> Such a date is well within the range of our proposed identification of Adam as Heidelberg Man.

After extended discussion with Buggs, Swamidass, and others, Venema came to acknowledge in 2019 the failure of his arguments against a single couple origin. "Based on some new simulations and some other published studies that we drew on, our group came to an agreement – that if an event like this had happened, we would be able to detect it if it happened more recently than 500,000 years ago. That was surprising to me, to be sure – I thought beforehand that an event like that would show up even further back in time."<sup>54</sup>

Venema nonetheless insists that, despite the *possibility* of a founding pair before 500,000 years ago, the existence of such a couple is *highly improbable*. "In order for this to work,

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<sup>52</sup> Ola Hössjer and Ann Gauger, "A Single-Couple Human Origin is Possible," *BIO-Complexity* 1 (2019):1-20. Swamidass, however, thinks that their study has some serious errors.

<sup>53</sup> Joshua Swamidass, "Reworking the science of Adam," <http://peacefulscience.org/reworking-Adam/>.

<sup>54</sup> Dennis Venema, "Adam—Once More, with Feeling" (November 24, 2019), <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2019/11/04/adam-once-more-with-feeling/>. *N.B.* that this statement confuses necessary and sufficient conditions. Venema should say "only if it happened." Swamidass informs me that in fact the group did not conclude that such a bottleneck would be detectable if it occurred within the last 500,000 years. To say that a bottleneck prior to 500 kya is not detectable does not imply that a bottleneck less than 500 kya is detectable.

one would have to propose that in one generation all of them were obliterated, save two.”<sup>55</sup> This bold claim is obviously false, since a founding pair could have existed as part of a wider population with whom the founding pair’s descendants may or may not have interbred.

It is important to understand that the existence of a historical Adam and Eve need not imply their sole genetic progenitorship, especially over tens of thousands of years. Even if their descendants were for a time reproductively isolated, such isolation could result, not from population reduction, but from social distancing due to a myriad of factors, including geographic isolation, tribalism, language barriers, xenophobia, cognitive capacity differences, racism, just plain revulsion, and so on, as well as any population reduction we might imagine. Perhaps these barriers were sometimes breached, but then we do not have any idea whether there were offspring of such unions that had genetic input into the human line. Of course, once Adam and Eve’s descendants replaced Heidelberg Man, we know that there was interbreeding among the extended human family, but we can only conjecture as to what happened before that point.

In conclusion, Adam and Eve may be plausibly identified as members of the species *Homo heidelbergensis* and as the founding pair at the root of all human species. Challenges to this hypothesis from population genetics fail principally because we cannot rule out on the basis of the genetic divergence exhibited by the contemporary human population that our most recent common ancestors, situated more than 500,000 years ago, are the sole genetic progenitors of the entire human race, whether past or present.

Next time, I’m going to conclude by reflecting theologically upon what we have discovered.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Venema, “Adam—Once More, With Feeling.”

<sup>56</sup> Total Running Time: 25:13 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)

## Lecture 18: Putting It All Together

Good morning! Welcome to Defenders. We're glad that you could join us this morning. Today we want to summarize the results of our study of the historical Adam and then reflect on those conclusions.

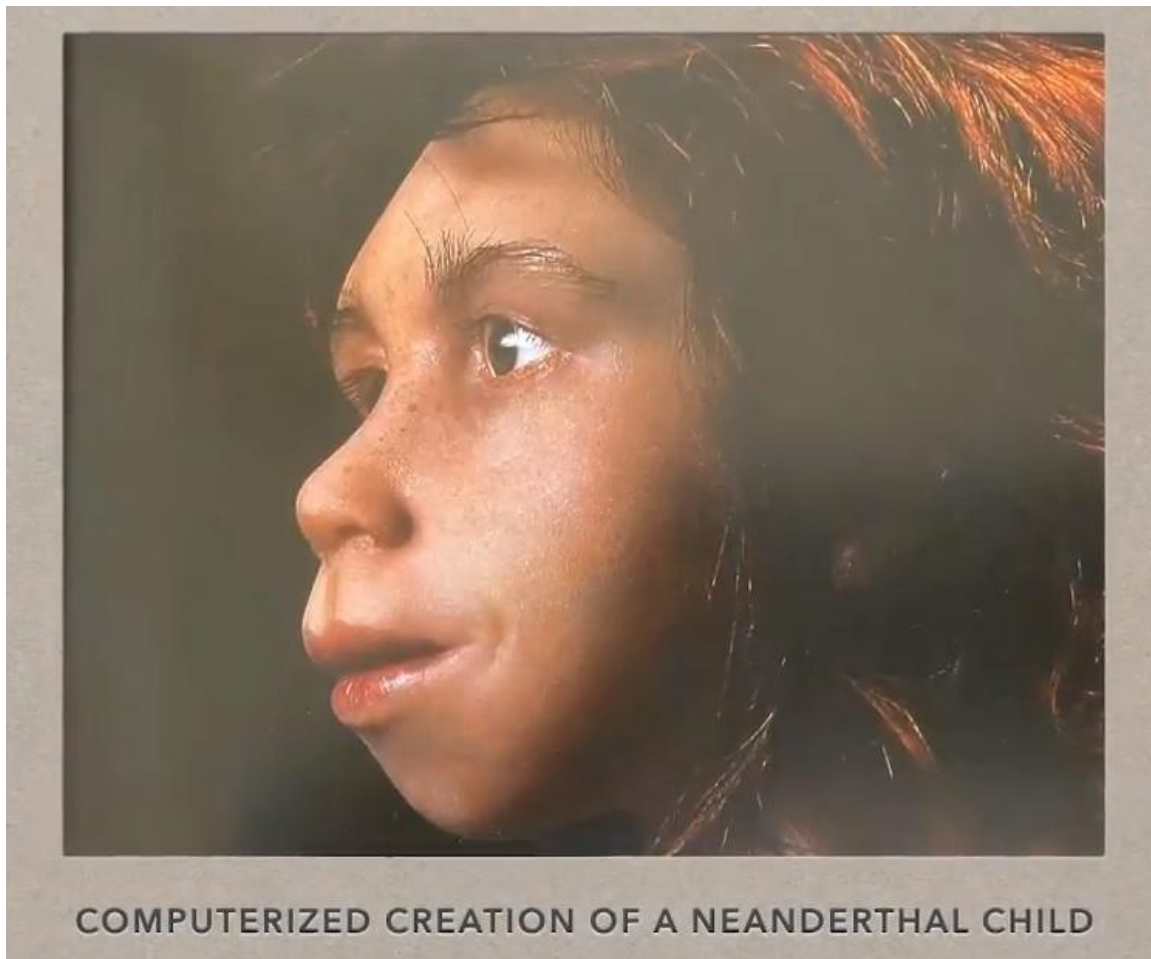
On the basis of a detailed genre analysis of Genesis 1-11, we concluded that it's plausible to regard these chapters as a Hebrew mytho-history which serves as a universal, foundational charter for the nation and identity of Israel over against her neighbors. While these narratives need not be read as literal history, the ordering presence of genealogies terminating in persons who were indisputably taken to be historical as well as the teaching of Paul in the New Testament about Adam, which bursts the bounds of a purely literary figure, oblige the biblical Christian to affirm the historicity of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve should be affirmed to be the fount of all humanity, the genealogical ancestors of every human being who has ever lived on the face of this planet.

A review of the scientific evidence concerning the time of human origins reveals that, based on widely accepted criteria for human cognitive capacity, human beings ought not to be identified with *Homo sapiens* alone but ought also to include Neanderthals as well. Given that all human beings are descendants of a founding couple, Adam and Eve may be plausibly identified as belonging to the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, usually denominated *Homo heidelbergensis* (Heidelberg Man). Such an identification is fully consonant with the data of population genetics, which does not rule out the existence of two, heterozygous, sole genetic progenitors of the human race earlier than 500,000 years ago. In this final section we want to reflect upon the ramifications of such an identification.

Given the doctrine of physical, bodily, eschatological (or "end-time") resurrection of the dead, it would be disconcerting if Adam and Eve were so different from us that they and their immediate descendants would be physically repugnant to the vast majority of the risen saints. Fortunately, Heidelberg Man was not some sort of hybrid ape-man but was recognizably human. Indeed, as we have seen, *Homo antecessor*, a sister species of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, had a remarkably modern facial morphology, suggesting that the modern face is deeply rooted in human evolutionary history. The morphological differences between Neanderthals and modern humans, including the large Neanderthal nose, may well be, in the opinion of many palaeoanthropologists, the result of their adaption to Ice Age climates and so not ancestral characteristics.

Palaeoanthropologists have said that "if a Neanderthal were seen today dressed in a three-piece suit and boarding a subway train in New York, he would not have attracted undue

attention.”<sup>57</sup> Presumably this is not a commentary on the indifference of New Yorkers! Here is a slide of a three-dimensional reconstruction of the head of a Neanderthal girl based upon fossil remains.



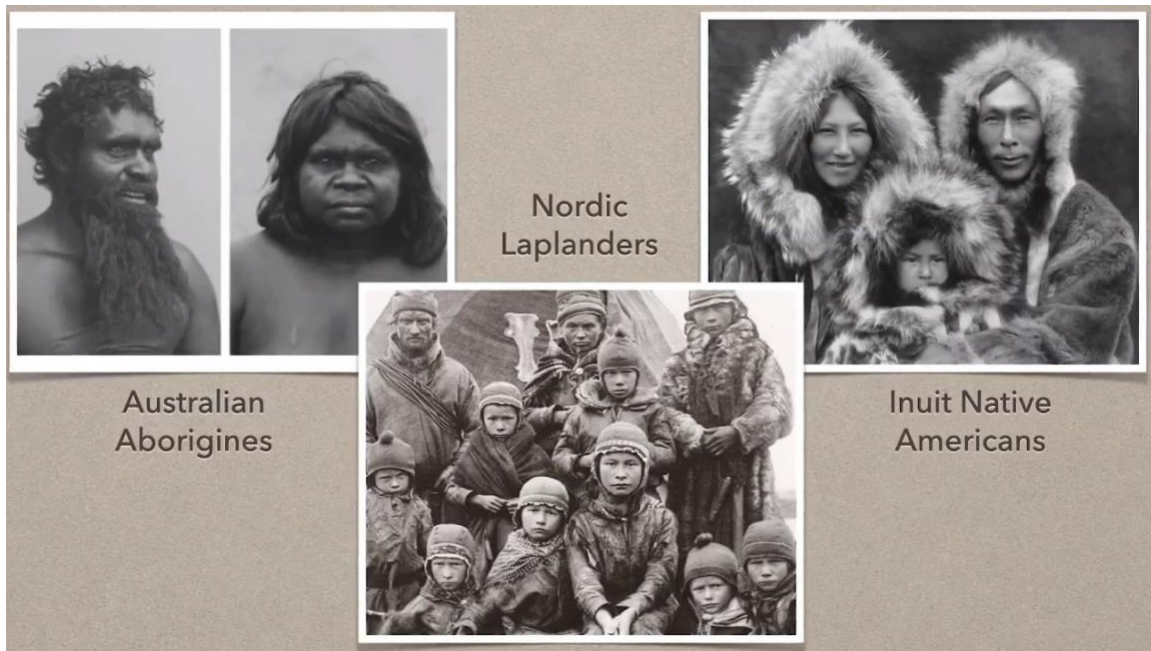
Could anyone, looking at this reconstruction, deny that this is a human little girl? Certainly, her facial features might differ somewhat from ours, but could anyone deny that this is a human child? A child who had a brain capacity comparable to ours today, and whose parents had a cognitive capacity that exhibited modern human behaviors.

When one thinks of the diversity within our contemporary human population, from Australian aborigines to Nordic Laplanders to Inuit Native Americans, then including archaic humans within the human family is not so radical a step.

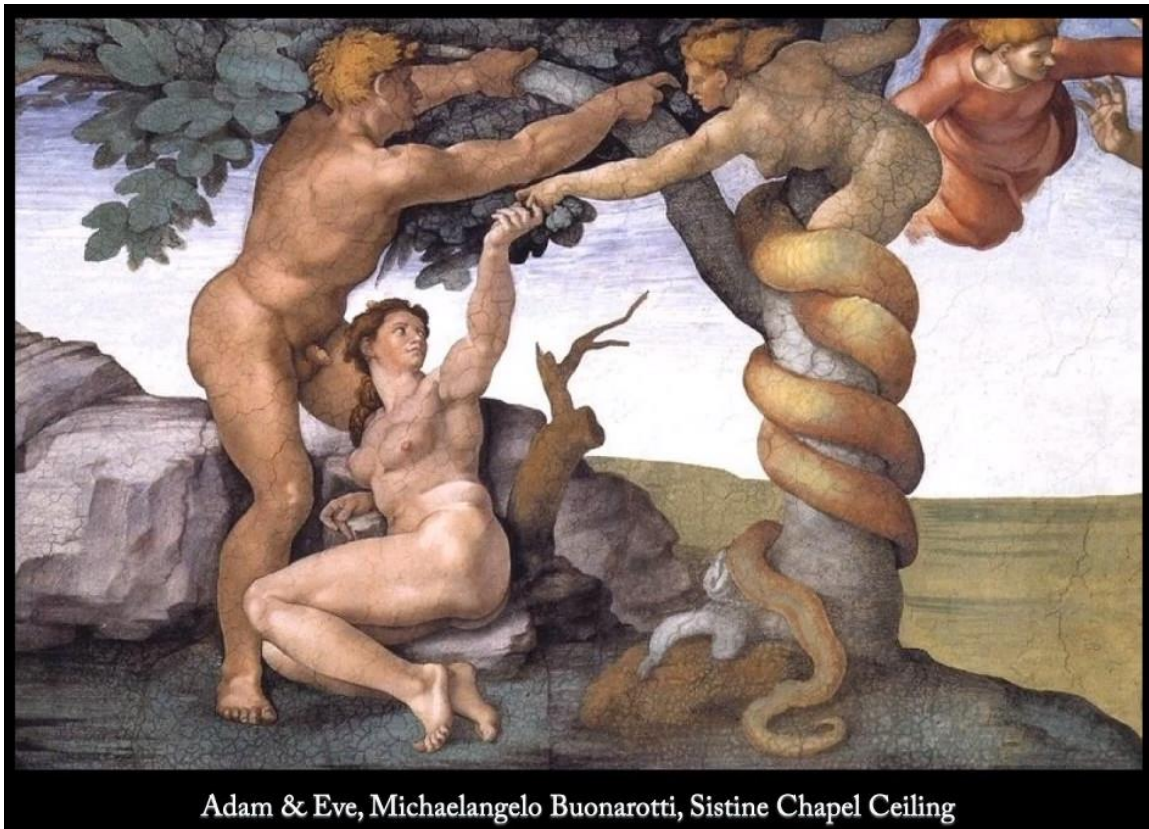
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<sup>57</sup> ?James P. Hurd, “Hominids in the Garden,” *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, ed. Keith B. Miller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 217.





We in the West have a deeply inherited tendency to think of Adam and Eve as European Caucasians, which is nothing more than a cultural and racial prejudice.





If we can get used to the thought that Adam and Eve may have resembled African Bushmen more than white people, then surely we can get used to the idea that Adam and Eve looked like Heidelberg Man rather than us.





Indeed, I can imagine that in the eschaton Neanderthals and other archaic humans might be the subjects of special regard: “You were there near the beginning, weren’t you? Tell me what was it like!”

The thought that Neanderthals and other archaic humans might share with us Christians the eschatological state of “the new heavens and the new earth” brings the startling realization that as members of the human family, Neanderthals, Denisovans, and others were, like us, people whom God loves and for whom Christ died. Paul describes how God “overlooked the times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30) and “passed over former sins” committed prior to Christ’s advent (Romans 3:25). Christ’s death atoned for the sins of past humanity all the way back to Adam’s sin. Unless one embraces the doctrine of limited atonement, Christ’s atoning death must therefore have encompassed the sins of these archaic humans. This realization raises the difficult question of the accessibility of salvation for those who, like Job, lived outside the Old Testament covenant with Israel; but any solution to that problem, such as appeal to God’s general revelation in nature and conscience, can be applied equally to Neanderthals and other archaic humans. We may well see some of them therefore in “heaven,” and I think that we’ll be delighted to do so.

If Adam and Eve were the ancestors of Neanderthals and other archaic humans, then it follows that they, like Adam and Eve, are in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic moral value and share in man’s vocation. But what of Adam and Eve’s contemporaries



who were not their descendants? On an evolutionary scenario, Adam and Eve emerged from a wider population of hominins. Since Adam and Eve are the fount of all humanity, it follows necessarily that Adam and Eve's contemporaries were not human and therefore not in the image of God, since to be human is to be in God's image. No other earthly creature than man, according to the account in Genesis 1, has been created in God's image and likeness. Thus, Adam and Eve's contemporaries who were not their descendants were neither human nor in God's image.

The radical transition effected in the founding pair that lifted them to the human level plausibly involved both biological and spiritual renovation, perhaps divinely caused. Biologically, we may envision a regulatory mutation that radically increased the cognitive capacity of the brain beyond what other hominins enjoy. Such a transformation could equip the organism with the neurological structure to support a rational soul. Thus, God's creation of Adam and Eve plausibly required both biological and spiritual renovations, biological to equip their brains with the capacity to serve as the instruments of rational thought and spiritual to furnish them with rational souls different from any sort of soul that non-human animals might be thought to possess. Thus, Adam and Eve were something radically new.

How would Adam and Eve consort, then, with their non-human contemporaries? We can plausibly conjecture that as bearers of a modern human consciousness and linguistic capacity, Adam and Eve would increasingly feel themselves at something of a distance from their non-human contemporaries and, as their descendants multiplied, their tribe would be naturally inclined to increasingly self-isolate. If there were sexual encounters with non-human hominins, these would be cases of bestiality, contrary to God's will for humanity, though not entirely surprising for a fallen race. Eventually, as Adam and Eve's descendants superseded the other hominin species, the possibility of such liaisons disappear.

So we may envision an initial population of several thousand hominins, animals which are in some respects like human beings, but which lack the capacity for rational thought. Out of this population, God selects two and furnishes them with intellects by renovating their brains and endowing them with rational souls. Only they are therefore truly human. At some point they become aware of God's moral requirements, which renders them responsible moral agents. Unfortunately, they misuse their free will by choosing to commit a sin (the original sin), thereby becoming morally guilty before God and alienating themselves from God, though not from God's offer of love and forgiveness. They thereby introduce spiritual, though not physical, death into the human race, for we saw from 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 that Adam was created physically mortal like other biological organisms, but was the gateway through which spiritual death and condemnation entered the human race.

We might think it unfair of God not to extend to Adam and Eve's contemporaries the same opportunity of a relationship with God that he bestowed upon Adam and Eve. But Kenneth Kemp effectively exposes the flaw in such reasoning, asking,

would it not have been unjust of God to give to Adam and Eve the gift of a rational soul, a gift which would make them fully human. . . , with the additional prospect of eternal happiness with God in Heaven, while leaving in an animal state their siblings and cousins. . . ? I think not. . . . God did not owe Adam and Eve's cousins a rational and therefore immortal soul. Indeed the very idea that God owes an intellectual soul to those cousins risks incoherence—how could God owe it to some being to make it not exist and to make another being exist in its place?<sup>58</sup>

Kemp's retort is doubly correct if there was a biological difference between Adam and his progenitors, for there is nothing unjust about treating animals as animals. It is no more inconsistent with God's nature to treat *Homo erectus* as *Homo erectus* than to treat a pelican as a pelican or an elephant as an elephant or a chimpanzee as a chimpanzee.

What I have proposed is just one view of human origins. I'm not even claiming that it is the best alternative. But if it is a plausible alternative, as I maintain, it suffices to show that there is no incompatibility between the existence of an historical Adam and contemporary science concerning human origins.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> ?Kenneth W. Kemp, "Science, Theology, and Monogenesis," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85/2 [2011]: 233.

<sup>59</sup> ?Total Running Time: 16:15 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)

## Lecture 19: Man as Sinner

Good morning! Welcome to Defenders. We are podcasting today from my home office. We've learned from the church that we normally meet at that it will not be until mid-August that we'll be allowed to meet again at the church building. So until that time we'll continue with our podcasts from home.

Today we come to the fourth subsection of our study of the doctrine of man, which is "Man as Sinner." Let's look first at the classic doctrine of the Fall. We will look at three biblical passages concerning the Fall. The first is from Genesis 3:1-7:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

From this point the remainder of the story goes on to tell of how God then cast certain curses upon the man and the woman for their disobedience in the Garden.

The principal passage in the New Testament which reflects on the Fall is found in Paul's letter to the Romans 5:12-21. Paul writes,

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned – sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the

one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 Paul writes, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

These are the three critical passages in the Scriptures relevant to the doctrine of the Fall, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Let's turn now to some attempt to systematize these biblical data.

Traditionally, the doctrine of the Fall is taken to be the doctrine that man was originally created in what was called the state of integrity. But man's original state of integrity and sinlessness was lost through Adam's fall, and we now find ourselves as a result in a state of corruption. The state of integrity is what man was created to be like. The state of corruption in man is in contradiction to what he was created to be like. So in one sense, the truly natural state is the state of integrity. The state of corruption is an unnatural state contrary to the way we ought to be, and that is the result of the human fall into sin.

In the state of integrity, man possessed a certain set of perfections – both the so-called major perfections, which were perfections of the soul, and then also minor perfections, which were the perfections of the body. Among the major perfections – that is to say, the perfections of the soul – we find the knowledge of God, the sanctity of the will (that is to say, we will to do what we ought to do), and the purity and harmony of man's desires. In the state of integrity, the body also possesses certain perfections as well. These would include immortality, freedom from harm, and being the lord of the earth. All of these perfections were considered to be lost in the Fall; both the major and minor perfections were lost, and so now we find ourselves in a state of corruption in which we no longer possess these perfections.

Let's say a word about the state of man in the state of integrity with respect to his ability to resist sin compared to the state of corruption. In the state of integrity, man had the ability to not sin. In Latin this is written *posse non peccare* – able not to sin. Man was able not to sin; he had the ability to resist temptation, to do righteousness, and his passions were in harmony with his will, and therefore he had the ability to avoid sin. But, in the state of corruption, man loses his ability to not sin, so that he can only sin in various ways. He has lost his ability to not sin, so that now, in the state of corruption, man

is still free but he is free only to sin. He can choose various sins to commit; but he is fallen and therefore unable to avoid sin – *non posse non peccare*.

As for the origin of sin, where does this come from? The Genesis narrative does not address the origin of moral evil. The evil serpent opposed to God just shows up unexplained in the Garden. The character of the serpent in the Garden is traditionally thought to be or to represent Satan. The origin of evil could be thought of as due to creaturely freedom. With respect to Satan, Satan was usually thought to be some sort of an angelic being who fell into sin, whose will was no longer directed toward God as the greatest good, but he sought lesser goods and therefore fell away from and became opposed to God. So Satan is essentially a fallen angel.

On a deeper level, however, it might be thought that in one sense the origin of sin is due to God's own decree. Perhaps there are worlds feasible for God to actualize in which human beings never sin but always freely choose to do what is right. But suppose that a world in which Christ's self-giving sacrifice to redeem mankind from sin is better than any world lacking Christ's sacrifice. In that case God might prefer a world in which Christ's sacrifice occurs over a world without it. But any world in which Christ's redeeming sacrifice occurs is a world with human sin. There has to be sin in order for Christ to redeem man from it. So God actually prefers a world with sin over a world without it.

This scenario is related to the Calvinistic debate between Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism. This is the idea that God's decrees have a certain logical order to them. Supralapsarians hold that God's primary decree was the decree to the election of the saved and the reprobation of the damned. In order to have something to save the elect from and to condemn the non-elect for, God decreed man's fall into sin. On this view, the cross is not so much thought of as a remedy for the Fall into which man has tumbled; rather, quite the reverse. Logically, in order to have the act of the cross, you need to have a state from which mankind needs to be rescued and redeemed.

Infralapsarianism would say that first God decrees the Fall, and then in light of the Fall, He decrees the elect and the reprobate. God first decides to create a world with sinful creatures, and then He decides what to do about it. On this view God decrees the cross in order to rescue man from the Fall.

In either case, you'll note the actual agent of sin will not be God; it will be the creatures themselves who freely misuse their will – their free will is a good thing, a God-given thing. They use this free will in order to rebel against God.

Let's briefly contrast this traditional view of the Fall with more modern views of the Fall. For many modern theologians the idea of the Fall is in a literary sense – I don't mean this negatively – a myth. That is to say, it is a sort of figurative re-telling of the condition of

every man. Every individual during his life falls into sin and therefore loses his innocence and finds himself in a state of corruption and alienation from God. Adam is a sort of symbol or representation of all persons who find themselves guilty before God. So the Fall, on these modern views, is not so much a historical event in the past but rather a symbol of man's condition in general.

Next time, we will want to give some evaluation of how we ought to understand the Fall – whether historically or in a purely symbolic sense or perhaps in some combination of the two. Until then, I wish you Godspeed.<sup>60</sup>

## Lecture 20: The Fall of Man and the Nature of Sin

Welcome to Defenders! We're so glad that you could join us on this podcast.

Today I'd like to say a few brief remarks by way of evaluation of the doctrine of the Fall before we turn to a new subsection dealing with the nature of sin.

On the one hand, there is clearly truth in the modern interpretation of the Fall of Adam and Eve. As their very names indicate, Adam and Eve do have a symbolic significance in the story. "Adam" just is the Hebrew word for "man." So Genesis 1 is speaking in universal terms: in the beginning God created man – "Adam." This, I think, shows clearly that Adam is a sort of symbol of mankind. Moreover, as we have seen, the narrative of the Fall is filled with all sorts of symbolic or figurative elements like the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent in the Garden who deceives the woman, an anthropomorphic deity who is physically walking in the Garden, and so forth.

Nevertheless, in spite of the figurative language and the obvious symbolic function of the narrative, we also have seen good biblical grounds for thinking that Adam was an actual historical person. Thus, it seems to me that, despite their symbolic function in the Genesis narrative, Adam and Eve are regarded by the biblical writers as genuine historical persons. I think what we can say is that the creation and Fall of man are historical events that actually happened though they are told in a dramatic literary form involving figurative speech. The story of Adam and Eve has been called a historical drama. It is a dramatized, or figurative, story telling of an actual historical event. I've argued previously that a more sensitive genre analysis of Genesis 1-11 would classify the stories of the primeval history as mytho-history.

How might the Fall have looked literally? We may envision, with Catholic thinker Kenneth Kemp, an initial population of, say, 5,000 hominins, animals which are in many respects like human beings, but which lack the capacity for rational thought. Out of this population, God selects two and furnishes them with intellects by renovating their brains and endowing them with rational souls. (Alternatively, God creates *de novo* an original human pair with rational souls.) Only they are therefore truly human. At some point they become aware of God's moral requirements, which renders them responsible moral agents. Unfortunately, they misuse their free will by choosing to commit a sin (the original sin, if you will), thereby becoming morally guilty before God and alienating themselves from God, though not from his offer of love and forgiveness. As we have seen from our study of Genesis 3, 1 Corinthians 15, and Romans 5, Adam was thus responsible for introducing spiritual death, but not physical death, into the human race, since as biological organisms Adam and Eve were naturally mortal. Whether their sin was imputed to all of their human descendants or somehow corrupted the human nature of all



their descendants will be discussed when we get to the section of our discussion on original sin. For now, given the historicity of Adam and Eve, there is no reason to deny the reality of a first sin on their part for which God held them morally culpable.

We are thinking about man insofar as he is a sinner and fallen before God. We've looked briefly at the doctrine of the Fall, and now I want to turn to a new subsection on the nature of sin – what is sin? How should we understand sin?

Let's look first at four biblical passages on the nature of sin. First, Genesis 2:15-17:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'.

Here God gives man a command to keep, and it will be through the transgression of this command that man falls into sin.

Next let's look at Romans 5:12-13, 18-19. Paul, reflecting upon Adam's sin and Christ's atoning death, writes,

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam. . . . Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

In this intriguing passage, Paul speaks of Adam's sin in terms of "trespass" and in terms of "disobedience" to God. But he recognizes that sin was in the world even before the giving of the law, though he seems to say that the people in that case were not culpable for their sin.

Now turn to Romans 7:7-12. Here Paul describes some of the effects of sin in the natural man. He says,

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, finding opportunity in the

commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Finally, the fourth passage is from 1 John 3:4. Here John gives a very pithy definition of sin: “Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” So here is John’s concept of sin. Sin is lawlessness.

Let’s look now at some attempts to systematize this biblical data.

First, let’s talk a bit about the traditional view of the nature of sin. Traditionally, sin has been understood to be a transgression of God’s moral law. We saw that the Scripture speaks of sin as lawlessness and that Paul speaks of a trespass on the part of Adam. So sin is a transgression of God’s moral law.

There are three characteristics of sin that have been traditionally identified by Christian theologians. The first would be pride. Genesis 3:5 speaks of this. This is the account of the serpent’s temptation of Eve. He says to her, “For God knows that when you eat of it [that is, of the tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Here you see an appeal to the pride of man; man is tempted to arrogate to himself the place of God. So one of the characteristics of sin is pride – arrogating to one’s self a status that one ought not to have.

The second characteristic traditionally ascribed to sin is concupiscence. Not a word that we often use today, but concupiscence basically means a grasping, a coveting, a kind of envying that sin produces. Paul speaks of this as we saw in Romans 7:7: “. . . if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’” But sin produces in us this sort of selfish grasping and desire for self-gratification, as opposed to seeking what God wants. So concupiscence, lust if you will – not just sexual lust, but this craving or coveting –, is a traditional characteristic of sin.

Finally, the third traditional characteristic of sin identified by Christian theologians is unbelief. In Romans 14:23, Paul says, “for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” So, one of the characteristic marks of sin is unbelief. Indeed, for Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, this is the chief characteristic of sin – unbelief – because it is out of unbelief that all of the other aspects of sin flow. It is fundamentally unbelief in God that is the root of all the other evils that are produced. So unbelief, far from being trivial, is really the principal sin that we commit.

Luther also characterized sin, interestingly enough, as a kind of curvature of the soul in upon one’s self. One is no longer oriented toward God as the supreme good, but there is a kind of bentness, a kind of self-curvature, whereby we are curved in upon our selves, seeking our own gratification and desires.

Those are some of the traditional ways in which sin has been characterized by Christian theologians.

Now, in contrast to the traditional view, many modern theologians have tried to domesticate sin by reinterpreting it. For example, the father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher, the early 19th century German theologian, held that sin is a weakness of our God consciousness. He thought that the essence of religion was having a consciousness of God and of one's dependence upon God moment by moment throughout life, a sort of absolute dependence upon God. Sin is a weakness in this God consciousness. It is being oblivious to God – not being aware of one's dependence upon God, a sort of forgetfulness of God. So on such a view man is not really fatally morally flawed. He is not morally guilty and condemned before God. Rather, he is just inhibited. He needs to come to a kind of full realization of his dependence upon God, to expand his consciousness, as it were, and to experience his absolute dependence upon God moment by moment. So Schleiermacher really robs the traditional doctrine of sin of any of its moral quality.

Similarly in the case of the 20th century theologian Paul Tillich. Tillich really could not even be called a theist. He didn't believe that there really is a personal mind or being distinct from the world who has created the world. Tillich referred to God as "the ground of being." He is a sort of non-descript ultimate reality that is the foundation or the ground of everything else, and everything else is simply a manifestation of this fundamental reality. For Tillich sin is alienation from the ground of being. Rather than recognizing your unity with the world and with the ground of being, you are estranged from it. You don't recognize your unity with the ground of being and so are alienated from it.

So Tillich reinterpreted the three traditional characteristics of sin in line with this philosophy. For example, what was unbelief for Tillich? Unbelief is the failure to recognize your unity with God. You really are one with God. God is the ground of your being, and you are one with God, but unbelief is a failure to recognize that oneness with God. So you need to get rid of that alienation and estrangement by recognizing your fundamental unity with God.

What is pride for Tillich? Pride is self-exaltation. Rather than being oriented toward God, you are oriented toward yourself and exalt yourself. It is a refusal to recognize yourself as finite. You are just a finite creature that is ultimately doomed to perish and pass away, and pride is thinking of yourself as somehow more significant than you really are; failing to recognize your finitude in the face of the ground of being.

Finally, concupiscence Tillich reinterprets to be, again, just self-seeking – seeking your own goods and interests. For Tillich I think you can see, as with Schleiermacher, we have this same tendency to obscure the moral dimension of sin and to deny it. We don't hear

anything here about guilt or condemnation or punishment or the need for forgiveness and redemption. Sin is just a sort of failure of human consciousness to realize our oneness with God and dependency upon God.

I don't mean to imply that all modern theologians hold to views like Schleiermacher and Tillich – far from it – but nevertheless I think that they illustrate the movement away from the traditional concept of sin that has characterized some modernist thinkers.

Next week, we'll say something by way of evaluation about the nature of sin. Until then, stay safe.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> ?Total Running Time: 20:47 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)

## Lecture 21: Evaluating the Nature of Sin

Welcome to Defenders. I hope you had a good week. Last Sunday we had folks joining us from Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as Europe and North America. We're glad that you've taken time to be with us today.

Today we want to come to some evaluation about the nature of sin. Recall Romans 5:12-14:

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam . . .

It is generally agreed that in Romans 5:13 Paul interrupts his train of thought with a possible objection, namely, even if people lied and stole and murdered and so on prior to the giving of the Mosaic law, how could such acts count as sin, since they had not been forbidden? Such an objection seems to arise from Paul's own theology, for he had just said, "where there is no law there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15).

The objection is a profound one, which still occupies Christian ethicists today. It comes up, for example, in my debate with Eric Wielenberg on "God and Morality." On a typical Divine Command Theory of ethics, moral values are rooted in God's nature and our moral duties in his commands. The question arises then concerning acts which are objectively evil, since they are contrary to the divine nature, but which are not morally wrong because God has not forbidden them to certain persons at various times and places in history. Such acts are morally *bad* but not morally *wrong*. Someone engaged in such acts is therefore evil but blameless, since he contravenes no moral duty. Such persons therefore cannot be justly punished for their sins, since they have done nothing wrong, but nevertheless still find themselves alienated from God by their evil character. Paul seems to envision just such persons living between the time of Adam and Moses. The question is how God can judge such people.

Unfortunately, Paul's thinking about this problem is not as clear as we might have appreciated. One should have expected Paul to answer the objection by repeating what he said earlier in Romans 2:14-15, "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts . . ." Hence, they are, indeed, accountable. Why Paul does not answer in this way is a puzzle. Some commentators suggest that Paul is anticipating his later introducing the law as a way of exacerbating sin (Romans 7:7-25), and so he argues here by way of concession that

people without the Mosaic Law are not responsible for meeting its demands. Paul could maintain both positions consistently by holding that the Mosaic Law introduces a degree of specificity (e.g., Sabbath observance) that was not available through general revelation alone. That would accord with his saying in verse 20, “Law came in, to *increase* the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

Be that as it may, Paul seems willing to countenance the existence of people who lived between the times of Adam and Moses who were *evildoers* but not *wrongdoers*, that is to say, they were morally evil but not accountable. Commentators seem to agree that when Paul says that their sins were not like the transgression of Adam, Paul makes this very differentiation. Since they do not have the law, the morally evil things they do are not, properly speaking, transgressions, that is to say, the breaking of a law or commandment.

Paul asserts that death nevertheless reigned over such people. He thereby seems implicitly to differentiate between death as a *consequence* of sin and death as a *penalty* for sin. Since the relevant persons are not accountable, death cannot be their just desert, that is to say, the punishment that justice requires. Rather death would have to be the consequence of their sin. This fact shows that Paul is talking here about spiritual, not physical, death. It would be outlandish to think that each person is born physically immortal and then by sinning brings about physical mortality upon himself. But each person might be reasonably said to bring spiritual death upon himself in virtue of his sinning. Evildoing is spiritually deadly and alienates us from a holy God, so that spiritual death is a consequence of sin even if it is not a punishment for sin for those who have no law.

So sin is not just a transgression of God’s moral law. Sin becomes a transgression once God issues a command against a certain form of evildoing. This would seem to bear out Martin Luther’s judgment that sin is basically unbelief. It is acting in ways contrary to the nature of God.

Because God is the Good and has constituted certain moral duties for us by issuing commandments to us, disobedience to those commandments is sinful transgression. But sin is so much more than just law-breaking. Sin is a personal affront to God. It is not simply transgression of some moral law, it is turning away from God himself. So there is a much more personal dimension to sin than simply breaking the law. It is an affront to God.

In any case we should not think of sin as just a weakness in man, as many modern theologians do. Rather, I think we need to affirm that man is objectively morally alienated from God and guilty before God and therefore finds himself in a state of condemnation. He is both a sinner and a transgressor. It is not just guilt feelings which are our problem.



Rather, we are objectively morally guilty before God and therefore under his just condemnation, deserving his punishment and wrath.

I think that this understanding of sin is important because it helps to answer non-believers who say, “What kind of God is this? ‘Believe in me or be damned!’ Is that an all-loving God? Is that the kind of God that you believe in?” And the answer is: No, not at all! It’s not that God says, “Believe or be damned!” Rather, we are already objectively guilty and alienated from God. We have already raised our fists against him and so find ourselves in a state of condemnation and guilt and lostness before him. So God says to us, “Believe and be saved!” That is his offer to us. Believe and be saved! So when we understand the nature of sin and our condemnation before God, I think we have a clearer understanding of the predicament in which we find ourselves and of why God’s offer of salvation in Christ is truly a *rescue* operation. It is an offer of salvation to save us from the state of condemnation in which we already exist. Failing to understand that, as many non-believers do, will make God appear to be an arbitrary and tyrannical person who says, “Believe in me or else I will damn you.” That is not the proper concept of God. He is trying to save us from our self-induced condemnation.

What I’ve said underscores why unbelief is, as Luther says, the most fundamental sin. For it is unbelief that truly separates us from God’s saving grace. We are already separated from God and condemned before him in virtue of our evildoing and our transgression. If God says to us, “Believe and be saved!” and we say, “I will not believe,” then we thrust God and his salvation from us and push him away. So I think that this understanding of sin is really critical if we are to understand God’s offer of salvation and God’s grace extended to us in Jesus Christ.

Next time we will take up the question of original sin – whether or not we somehow stand condemned because of Adam’s sin and culpable for the sin that he committed. See you next time!<sup>62</sup>

## Lecture 22: Original Sin

Thank you for joining us in Defenders class this morning.

Today we want to turn to the subject of original sin, a subject to which we have alluded several times in our previous sessions. We want to begin by looking at some of the biblical data concerning the doctrine of original sin.

You will not find the doctrine of original sin, as you might expect, in the story of the Fall in the book of Genesis. There is nothing in the curses pronounced upon Adam and Eve as a result of their Fall about their sin being imputed to all of their descendants or about their Fall's corrupting human nature.

Neither do we find the doctrine in Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Sometimes those overzealous to find proof texts for the doctrine of original sin appeal to this verse. But I think that that is a mistake hermeneutically. The psalms are poetry. They often employ hyperbolic language, here as a way of saying how sinful David feels. The verse is not a theological reflection upon how the sin of Adam was imputed to David. Rather, it is just a poetic and hyperbolic way of affirming his intense sinfulness or feeling of sinfulness before the Lord.

Rather the doctrine of original sin is based upon New Testament evidence, particularly Romans 5:12-21. There Paul writes,

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned— sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in

death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we see Paul's typology of Adam and Christ. Just as sin came into the world through Adam and led to condemnation for many, so Christ's one act of righteousness – that is, his atoning death on the cross – brings acquittal and life to many. The only other apparently relevant passage is 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Paul writes, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." There again we see a typological parallel drawn between Adam and Christ. But we've already seen in previous lessons that in 1 Corinthians 15, the parallel is different than in Romans. In Romans Paul is comparing the spiritual consequences of Adam's sin and Christ's death. But in 1 Corinthians 15 the comparison concerns the difference between Adam's *creation* and Christ's *resurrection*. So the passage in 1 Corinthians 15 is not relevant after all to the doctrine of original sin.

Thus, the doctrine of original sin is based virtually entirely upon this single Pauline passage in Romans 5.

Now we want to turn to various attempts to systematize these biblical data.

The first figure that we want to look at is perhaps the greatest and most influential of the church fathers, namely, Augustine (whose dates are AD 354 to 430). Augustine was a North African bishop of the church in the city of Hippo. Augustine is the church father who is most significant in formulating the classic doctrine of original sin. In his analysis of sin Augustine held that all human beings sinned in Adam. In Adam's sin, we all fell, and so we share the guilt of Adam's sin as well as a corrupted human nature which was inherited from Adam. So all persons are comprised in the sin of Adam. You and I bear the guilt and the responsibility for Adam's sin, as well as the proclivity to sin that we have inherited from Adam.

Augustine stressed both the universality and the totality of sin. Sin is truly universal because it is endemic to human nature as a result of our fall in Adam. Also, sin affects every part of the human personality. We are not fallen simply in one aspect of our character or person; rather all aspects of the human person are affected by sin. So as a result of Adam's fall, sin is universal and affects us totally.

As we saw before, Augustine also stressed our "*non-posse-non-peccare*" in our state of fallenness before God. We are not able to avoid sin. Sin is inevitable for us because we carry it in our very being. Therefore, in this state of fallenness, it is impossible for anyone to live a sinless life. We are born with the stain and the guilt of Adam's sin and therefore we are not able to not sin. Sin is inevitable among fallen humanity.

Augustine, therefore, stressed man's inability to earn God's grace or approval. That God should extend forgiveness and reconciliation is something that can come only from God's side. We are fallen and guilty before him and therefore worthy only of condemnation.

Finally, Augustine emphasized that the redemption that was wrought by Christ consisted mainly in laying aside the guilt of sin. There is a strong moral character to Augustine's view of Christ's atonement. Christ lays aside both the guilt of original sin that we inherit from Adam as well as the guilt of the individual sins that each of us commits in our lifetimes. These features of Augustine's doctrine are now part and parcel of the classic doctrine of original sin.

In addition to these points, however, it must be admitted that there are other aspects of Augustine's doctrine of original sin that are less helpful. For example, Augustine held that the transmission of original sin is a matter of biology. He thought that original sin was something that we literally pass on physically from parents to child, much like a genetic disease. So theoretically, at least, one might think that through genetic engineering, we could perhaps engineer sinless people. If original sin really is a physically transmitted trait, then it seems that science ought to be able to get rid of it. In fact, Augustine connected original sin very closely with sexual desire, and he made sexual intercourse the means by which original sin was passed on. So original sin is like a sexually transmitted disease. You can imagine the negative attitude that this view would encourage toward human sexuality, even in the context of marriage, and how this might promote monasticism and celibacy as a way of trying to avoid passing on original sin.

Augustine's concept of original sin also tended to dim the understanding of sin as disobedience to God. We really can't help sinning. It plays down the degree to which we are individually responsible for rebelling against and disobeying God.

Finally, Augustine connected the doctrine of original sin to the doctrine of infant baptism. The baptism of infants was justified as the way by which Adam's sin was cleansed from these infants, so that children who die in infancy, before they can reach the age of accountability, can be saved if they've been baptized. For then they have been cleansed of Adam's sin and therefore are no longer culpable for Adam's sin. So the rite of baptism was interpreted not simply sacramentally as a means of grace by which God bestows redeeming grace upon a person, but it was extended to infants in view of original sin and the need to deal with original sin. This, of course, tends to eclipse the need for personal conversion and repentance. It is all too easy to say, "I was baptized as an infant and therefore I am a Christian. I received God's redeeming grace as an infant when I was baptized." This tends to play down your own personal need for repentance and faith as an adult. Those are some of the characteristics of Augustine's doctrine of original sin which are less helpful.

Let's turn secondly to another church father, whom Augustine opposed. This is Pelagius (whose dates are AD 354 to 418). Pelagius held that man is perfectly free to do good or evil. We are not prisoners inevitably condemned to sin. When we sin, we do so of our own free will, and therefore we are responsible when we sin. We are free to do what is right, to choose good, instead. Pelagius recognized the universality of sin. The world is suffused with sin, and we all fall into it eventually. So no one is sinless, and all are in need of Christ's atoning death for salvation. The corruption of sin comes however through imitation, not through inheritance. It is not as though we inherit original sin from Adam, and therefore this works itself out as sinning. It is rather that we are born into a corrupted, fallen world, and we then, by imitation, take on the pattern of sinning as well. So sin is not a matter of inheritance. We aren't born sinners; rather sin is a matter of imitation through the corrupted world into which we are born.

Pelagius recognized as well that man can do good only through the grace of God. He is not saying that without God's grace you can avoid sin. Of course, you need God's grace in order to resist sin. But he would say that, in creating man, God has already given to man all of the grace that he needs in order to resist sin. There is a sort of natural gifting given to man when God creates him. If man would draw upon those resources, then he could resist sin. The fact that he doesn't and that he falls into sin is therefore his own fault. He can't blame Adam, he can't blame God; it is his own fault. He, as a human being, has the inherent gifts of God's grace that are sufficient for leading a sinless life. But people don't do so. They all eventually fall into sin, and therefore they now need God's forgiveness and redemption.

Next time we'll look at an attempt to synthesize the views of Augustine and Pelagius. Until then, have a great week!<sup>63</sup>

## **Lecture 23: Original Sin: Semi-Pelagianism, Reformation, Enlightenment, Modern Era**

Welcome to Defenders! We're glad that you could join us again this week.

We've been talking about the doctrine of original sin. Last time we examined the views of Augustine and his opponent, Pelagius, concerning this doctrine.

Today we want to turn to a third view called Semi-Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism attempts to come closer to the classic Augustinian doctrine of original sin than Pelagius himself did. Recall that Pelagius thought that we already have, as created human beings, all the grace we need in order to live sinless lives before God. This seems wrong. It seems that surely we need to call upon God to assist us in order to live holy lives, to give us more grace and more strength in order to live a sinless life. So Semi-Pelagians attempted to accommodate themselves to the doctrine of original sin by saying that man's will is, indeed, weakened by the Fall. As a result of Adam's sin, there is a kind of weakness of will that we are heir to. But they said that the basic tendency to good still lies within man. So grace is indeed necessary – that is to say, additional grace, not just the grace given you as a created being – , and additional grace is available in order to deal with this weakness of will. But this grace is given only in response to your free will. You go to God and say, “God, I can't live a sinless life without you. I need your help. I come to you poor, destitute, naked. Give me the grace to live a holy life that is pleasing to you.” Grace then will be given to you by God in response to your free petition.

By your own free decision, therefore, you receive salvation or damnation. It is not as though God is the one who takes the initiative in bestowing grace upon those whom he wills while passing over others. It is not as though God has predestined some to one end and some to the other. Rather, we may all come to God and ask for his grace. On that basis, God will give us the grace for salvation. Otherwise, we will not receive his grace. If we do not seek his grace but neglect it, we condemn ourselves to perdition.

By the time of the Middle Ages, Semi-Pelagianism had become very widespread in the church. The doctrine of original sin had come to mean simply an inherited inclination to sin. But the idea of Augustine that we actually bear the culpability of Adam's sin and that we therefore stand condemned in virtue of Adam's sin had been largely eclipsed. Original sin was to be interpreted as a weakness of will and an inclination to sinning but we are all born with this as a result of the corruption that Adam introduced into human nature.

With the Reformation came a reclamation of Augustine's doctrine of original sin. The principal Reformers like Luther and Calvin took over the main elements of Augustine's doctrine of original sin. Indeed, they stressed even more strongly the guilt inherited from

Adam – that we are guilty for Adam’s sin and therefore under the condemnation and wrath of God by nature. Even though the Reformers had a strong emphasis upon personal faith in Christ as the means by which we receive God’s grace, they still held to the doctrine of infant baptism. They agreed with Augustine’s doctrine of infant baptism as a means of dealing with the guilt of origin sin imputed to us from Adam. The doctrine of imputation avoided the need to see original sin as something transmitted biologically from parents to children. Rather, Adam was conceived to be the federal head of the human race. He represented us before God. Therefore what our representative did, we did. Adam did not act for himself alone; rather he acted on behalf of all humanity. Therefore his guilt is imputed to us as well. The doctrine of imputation connects very closely with the Reformers’ view of justification as a legal or forensic declaration of God. When we are redeemed, it is not as though we suddenly become virtuous people, selfless, loving, without fault. Rather God declares us to be righteous. It is a legal declaration, like an executive pardon, which cancels the guilt of the condemned criminal. Similarly, Adam’s sin is legally imputed to us in virtue of his federal headship; we are, as it were, found guilty of being vicariously liable for his crime.

Finally, let me say something about post-Enlightenment views of original sin. As you can imagine, in the modern period the doctrine of original sin fell into disfavor. The Enlightenment thinkers – people like Voltaire and other rationalists – argued that it is impossible that we could be held guilty or punished for another person’s sin. The argument is very similar to Faustus Socinus’ earlier criticism of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, which we examined in our discussion of the doctrine of Christ.

If some other person committed a sin, then he alone is the one that is guilty and bears the responsibility. It would be manifestly unjust of God to hold you responsible – to punish you – for a sin that somebody else committed. Indeed, how *could* you be guilty of his sin? You didn’t do it! So how in the world could you be guilty for something that you didn’t do? Therefore, the doctrine of original sin was thought to be simply an incoherence, a moral impossibility.

The father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher also reinterpreted the doctrine of original sin in line with his theology. You will recall that for Schleiermacher the essence of the Christian religion is a sense of absolute dependence upon God, a strong God consciousness. As you live, day by day you are aware at every moment of your dependence on God. So original sin is reinterpreted to mean simply that we have a weakening of this God consciousness. It is the overpowering of the spiritual by the material aspects of life. The things of this world seem so much more real and pressing upon us, and therefore our awareness of spiritual things tends to be eclipsed and our consciousness of God is accordingly weakened. As a result we find ourselves incapable of really doing the good that we know we should, and that just is original sin.



In classical liberal theology of the late 19th century, represented by someone like the theologian Albrecht Ritschl, sin is closely connected with social injustice. It is not so much an individual affair anymore. Rather, the emphasis is that the institutions of society are infected with sin. All of our societal structures like government, the economic and business world, the entertainment industry, are infected with sin, which therefore affect everything we do. Ritschl called this systemic sin the Kingdom of Evil. He thought that this systemic evil is much worse than your own individual sins. Obviously, this conviction would then lead to classical liberal theology's reconstrual of Christianity as a movement of social reform. You need to reform the institutions of society in order to bring about the Kingdom of God through social action. I think you can see how relevant this classical liberal theological view is to our current situation in Western society today. Political liberals likewise emphasize systemic racism, anti-feminist attitudes, anti-LGBT bias, and other perceived forms of social injustice, and the need for reforms of society's institutions, far more than individual sins.

That is just a bird's eye view of some of the history of thinking about the doctrine of original sin. Next time we'll come to some evaluation of this doctrine.<sup>64</sup>

## Lecture 24: Evaluating the Doctrine of Original Sin

Good morning! Welcome to Defenders. I hope that you've found this section on the doctrine of sin to be as interesting and stimulating as I have. Today we want to come to some evaluation of the doctrine of original sin. I've been asked by some of our viewers to deliver my lesson a little bit more slowly to help facilitate note-taking, so I'm going to try to use a more measured pace in our lesson today.

The degree to which we are persuaded to adopt Augustine's view of original sin is going to depend upon our exegesis of Romans 5:12-21. Augustine's doctrine was in fact based upon a mistranslation of Romans 5:12, where Paul says, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men," and then Augustine's Latin text read, "in whom all men sinned." That is to say, he thought that the text meant that death spread to all men because in Adam all men sinned. But that is not how the original Greek text reads. Most commentators construe the Greek expression *eph hō* as a causal conjunction "because" and take "all men sinned" to refer to people's own individual acts of sin. Paul says then that "death spread to all men because all men sinned."

Douglas Moo, who is the author of a major commentary on the book of Romans, insists that some explanation is needed for why "people so consistently turn from good to evil of all kinds."<sup>65</sup> No one thinks that every person just sins by sheer coincidence. Moo says, "Paul affirms in this passage that human solidarity in the sin of Adam is the explanation – and whether we explain this solidarity in terms of sinning in and with Adam or because of a corrupt nature inherited from him does not matter at this point."<sup>66</sup>

Moo's first alternative – sinning in and with Adam – in fact does nothing to explain why people consistently sin, for as we saw in our study of the doctrine of the atonement the imputation of sin is purely a legal or forensic notion which has no effect whatever upon a person's moral character. Just as the pardon of a condemned criminal does not suddenly make him a virtuous person but simply no longer legally guilty, so also the legal imputation of guilt does not transform the moral character of an otherwise blameless person.

Hence, the traditional doctrine of original sin postulates minimally a corrupted human nature inherited from Adam, if not imputed guilt, as the explanation for the universality of sin. But does Paul teach such a thing? As Moo observes, the doctrine is, perhaps

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<sup>65</sup> Moo, *Romans*, p. 356.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

surprisingly, nowhere to be found in Romans 5:12-21. There is nothing here about a corrupted nature inherited from Adam.

That raises the question: is there no *other* alternative to either imputation or corrupted nature for explaining the universality of sin? Of course there is: our inherent self-seeking animal nature in combination with the web of corruption in which we are born and raised explains the universality of sin. Such a natural biological tendency towards survival and, hence, selfishness, coupled with a morally corrupt environment, suffices to explain why all have sinned. This explanation of the universality of human sin does not require even that Adam and Eve had biological ancestors, merely that they were created by God with a biological propensity to survival that is then reinforced and distorted by upbringing and society.

So on this view Adam was the floodgate through which sin and death entered the world, and death then spread to all men because each one sinned in his own turn. When Paul goes on to say that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” that “one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men,” that “because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man,” and that “many died through one man’s trespass,” he may be understood to trace all sinning and, hence, condemnation and spiritual death back to Adam’s initial transgression, through which sin entered the world.

Scholars sometime appeal to pseudepigrapha Jewish texts like 4 Ezra 7:118 as an anticipation of Paul’s doctrine of the imputation of Adam’s sin to all men. But these scholars typically fail to quote the verse in context. Here is the conversation that takes place between Ezra and the Lord:

I answered and said, “This is my first and last word: It would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what are you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised us, but we have miserably failed? Or that safe and healthful habitations have been reserved for us, but we have lived wickedly? Or that the glory of the Most High will defend those who have led a pure life, but we have walked in the most wicked ways? Or that a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it, because we have lived in unseemly places? Or that the faces of those who practiced self-control shall shine more than the stars but our faces shall be blacker

than darkness? For while we lived and committed iniquity we did not consider what we should suffer after death.”

He answered and said. “This is the meaning of the contest which every man who is born on earth shall wage, that if he is defeated he shall suffer what you have said, but if he is victorious he shall receive what I have said” (4 Ezra 7:116-29).

Read in context, the text actually expresses beautifully the balance between Adam’s failure and people’s responsibility for their own acts of sin, just as we find in Romans 5:12: “as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.”

Next time we’ll take a look at how Augustine’s doctrine of original sin might be philosophically defended if we should choose to adopt it. Until then, God bless.<sup>67</sup>

## Lecture 25: A Continued Evaluation of Original Sin

Welcome to Defenders. I'm glad that you could join us today.

We've been talking about the doctrine of original sin. Last time I argued on the basis of our study of Romans 5 that Paul teaches neither the imputation of Adam's sin to all men nor that all men inherit a corrupted human nature from Adam. Therefore, I think that Augustine's doctrine of original sin is not incumbent upon the biblically faithful Christian.

But suppose we do want to go Augustine's route in thinking that all men somehow sin in Adam. How might we understand such a doctrine in the face of the Enlightenment critique, which as you'll remember, held that no person can be justly punished for another man's sin? Well, traditionally Reformation theologians have understood Adam to be the federal head of the human race. He represents us before God just as here in the United States our federal representative represents us in the United States Congress. Our representative votes for us. We don't live in a pure democracy in which all of us go and vote. Rather, we have a representative system whereby our representative votes in our place. Or to borrow a different analogy from the financial world, think of a stockholders' meeting. Jan and I sometimes receive in the mail a proxy form which we are asked to sign in order to authorize someone else to serve as our proxy at the shareholders' meeting. Since *we* ourselves do not attend the stockholders' meeting, our proxy does, and he votes in our place. It is *our* vote, however, that he is casting, not his own, because he is our proxy. Similarly, if we think of Adam as our proxy before God, or as the federal head of the human race, then it seems to me that we can make sense of the idea that all persons are culpable for what Adam does. He acts on our behalf, and we are held responsible for it. Therefore, all persons are born sinners and condemned before God.

The natural response to this, I think, is to say, "Well, who asked Adam to be my representative? I didn't authorize him to be my proxy! Why give him the right to stand before God and act in my place to make a decision for which I am then held blameworthy?" It seems to me that what the defender of Augustine's doctrine could say is that Adam, as our divinely appointed representative, sinned before God and that had we been in Adam's place instead we would have done exactly the same thing. So the Augustinian may affirm the truth of a counterfactual of freedom about each one of us; namely, if I had been in Adam's place, I would have done the same thing and sinned. Therefore, we cannot complain that we have been misrepresented by Adam before God. Adam has faithfully represented us before God; he has done exactly what we would have done in that situation.

This would not, however, explain the universality and totality of sin. We should need to supplement the imputation of Adam's sin with a corrupted human nature inherited from Adam as well. While this may not be taught in Romans 5, the Christian theologian is certainly within his rights to supplement Scripture with such a hypothesis. It's worth mentioning in this connection that when classical Reformed theologians talk about total depravity, they do not mean that people are as bad as they could possibly be. Obviously, some people are a whole lot worse than others. Hitler was a lot worse than Mother Teresa. So what total depravity means is that there isn't any aspect of human nature which is untainted by sin or is pristine. Rather, every aspect of the human personality is tainted by sin. It's analogous to a drop of ink in a glass of water. The drop of ink diffuses itself throughout the entire glass and affects all of the water – the water is totally affected by the drop of ink. But obviously, the water isn't as black as it could possibly be. It could be a lot worse, but nevertheless there is totality in the sense that the whole is affected.

So a corrupted nature would explain why people inevitably sin. On the Pelagian view, it would be possible for a human being to grow up and never need Christ as his Savior. He would never need to be redeemed because sin isn't inevitable. He could live a sinless life, either through the grace given him by nature, as Pelagius thought, or in response to his request for grace, as the Semi-Pelagian believed. But if we are heirs of a corrupted nature, then there is no possibility of heaven without Christ's atoning death on our behalf.

How should we then regard children? I think Jesus' attitude toward little children shows that God's graciousness is extended to children. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven." I think that Jesus' attitude toward children gives good grounds for thinking that either children are not imputed original sin or else that God's grace is extended to children, particularly to those who die in infancy. It seems to me therefore that the practice of infant baptism is not only unnecessary but is a terrible mistake, especially when it is conjoined with the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that is to say, the doctrine that in water baptism one is also baptized in the Holy Spirit and regenerated. The practice of infant baptism tends to lead to a church filled with unregenerate people who are trusting in their baptism as infants as the basis upon which they are Christians but who haven't actually made a personal decision to receive Christ and so be regenerated. If infant baptism is regarded as merely a symbolic act but isn't actually simultaneous with Spirit baptism, then that problem would be somewhat alleviated because one wouldn't regard a person as regenerate simply as a result of being baptized as an infant. But when you conjoin infant baptism with the doctrine of baptismal regeneration in order to wash away original sin, then you court the real danger of having unregenerate adults.

So I don't think that infant baptism removes the stain of original sin. There is nothing in Scripture that would suggest that baptism is a means of grace by which original sin is expunged. Rather, we can simply trust God to be gracious to those who die in infancy.

Furthermore, it seems to me that we should not think of original sin as sexual in nature or as passed on through sexual intercourse, as Augustine believed. That would turn sin into a sexually transmitted disease. But surely sin is not a physical ailment. Rather, what proponents of the doctrine of original sin should hold is that man's moral capacities are now somehow flawed. In virtue of Adam's sin the soul is somehow incapacitated in its moral abilities to resist sin and to do good. So man in the state of nature – that is, in his unregenerate state – doesn't seek God.

Pelagius erred in thinking that in his unregenerate state human beings will seek for God, ask for his grace, and so forth. Rather the testimony of Scripture is that the natural man does not seek the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him. He does not understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore, no one would come freely to God unless God took the initiative. God must seek out the erring sinner. It is not that we come to God of our own free will and ask for his grace; rather, God's grace is expressed in his taking the initiative and in drawing us to him. Now, the question of whether we have the freedom to resist that drawing or whether God's grace is irresistible is a further question, and we'll take up that question when we get to the doctrine of salvation. But for now I think that we ought to affirm that we do not take the initiative in salvation; we are sinful, fallen, alienated from God, estranged from him, and therefore we would not come to him apart from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and God's taking the initiative.

Finally, I think we should affirm that sin does permeate social institutions. The liberal theologians were right in seeing sin as something that gets institutionalized in commerce, in entertainment, in government, in politics. This is very true. Here in the United States, for example, our entertainment industry is thoroughly corrupted by graphic violence, sexuality, and profanity. We have also seen systemic evil in government over the past few years in the efforts of the so-called "deep state" to carry out, in effect, a presidential coup, by the spurious accusations which lay at the root of the Muller investigation. We live in a society that is inherently corrupted by sin. But this is because *individuals* sin. Society is corrupted because it is made up of corrupted and fallen individuals who then try to live together as best they can in some sort of harmony. So Christians must never be distracted from our primary task of sharing the Gospel with other individuals, even as we also pursue efforts at societal reform.



Next time we'll turn to the subject of the freedom of the will. Until then, have a great week.<sup>68</sup>

## Lecture 26: Freedom of the Will

Welcome to Defenders! I'm glad that you could join us.

In our discussion of the doctrine of man, we've been thinking now for many weeks about man as sinner. We've just finished a discussion of the doctrine of original sin.

Today we want to turn to the topic of the freedom of the will. The operative question in this section is this: Given our fallenness and sinfulness before God, do we have the freedom to respond to God's gracious initiatives? Or are we completely passive, if not resistant, such that all of the activity and efficacy of salvation comes from the divine side?

Let's begin by looking at some biblical data on this question. Let's look first at four Pauline passages from the New Testament that speak to this subject.

First is Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast."

Second is Romans 9:6-25. Speaking of Israel's failure to attain salvation, Paul writes,

It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants; but "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants. For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son." And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me thus?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one

vessel for beauty and another for menial use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people  
I will call ‘my people,’  
and her who was not beloved  
I will call ‘my beloved.’”

Then in Romans 10:6-13, Paul goes on to say:

But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Finally, in Galatians 3:6-9 Paul writes,

Thus Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.

These are the scriptural data that we want to reflect upon concerning the freedom of the will.

Let’s turn now to various attempts to systematize these biblical data.

First, let’s look at what the Protestant Reformers had to say about the question of the freedom of the will. The Reformers held to the so-called “bondage of the will.” Infected with original sin, fallen man is incapable of freely choosing for God and appropriating his grace. So Martin Luther, for example, held that human beings are, as he put it, free in

things below but bound in things above. That is to say, Luther was willing to grant that human beings have freedom of the will with respect to earthly affairs, for example, the decision to shop at Publix instead of at Trader Joe's. But, when it comes to things above (that is to say, spiritual matters), man's sinfulness has bound his will, so that man is not free to choose for God and to appropriate his grace. Rather, redemption must come entirely from God's side. It is God who chooses and saves whom he wills.

The Swiss Reformer John Calvin was even more stringent than Luther in his view of the bondage of the will. Calvin emphasized the doctrine of total depravity – that every aspect of the human person is fallen and infected with sin. Being thus totally depraved, you have no ability to respond to God's offer of salvation. Preaching the Gospel to you is like preaching to a dead man because you are dead in your sins. So God must unconditionally elect those whom he wills to save, and he simply passes over those whom he does not elect to save, and they are damned as a result.

Following on total depravity and unconditional election is God's irresistible grace. Given that saving grace comes from God alone and that God is omnipotent, God's grace is irresistible by human beings. Bound in sin, you do not have the freedom to respond to God's grace, but neither do you have the freedom to resist God's grace because God has unconditionally elected to save you. Therefore, if by his sovereign decree, he wills that you will be saved, then you will be saved, and his grace will inevitably and irresistibly produce its effect in you. So salvation is totally determined from the side of God.

The foregoing is the sense in which the Protestant Reformers affirmed the doctrine of *sola gratia* (that is, salvation by grace alone). It is not simply that we are saved through no merit of our own but only by God's undeserved favor. It is much more than that. The Reformers affirmed an irresistible grace that you have no power to refuse. There is nothing about you that would prompt God to choose you, such as a disposition to have faith in God; rather he simply sovereignly chooses to save whomever he wills, and he gives irresistible grace to those persons alone, and as a result they are saved. So there is no freedom of the will with respect to salvation.

Next time we will consider the view of the Catholic Counter-Reformers concerning freedom of the will. Until next time then, have a blessed week.<sup>69</sup>

## Lecture 27: The Catholic View of Freedom of the Will

We've been talking about the freedom of the will. The operative question is whether human beings in their sinful and fallen state have the freedom to respond to God's grace. Last time we reviewed the view of the Protestant Reformers which is the bondage of the will. Today we want to look at the Roman Catholic view as expressed at the Council of Trent.

In contrast to the Reformers' view stands the Roman Catholic view that was enunciated at the Council of Trent following the Protestant Reformation. The Council of Trent was held over many years and in many sessions between the years 1545 and 1563. It was, as it were, the Catholic response to the Reformation. It epitomized the beliefs and teaching of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in response to the Reformers' doctrine.

The doctrine promulgated at Trent affirms freedom of the will in contrast to the doctrine of the Reformers. According to Trent, the process of salvation has several steps, or stages as it were, in which God and man each plays his part:

1. *God's prevenient grace.* This first step is from God's side. Against Pelagius the Council of Trent held that no one approaches God, saying "Oh, God, I need you. I want you. I have this God-shaped vacuum in my heart and therefore I am turning to you for salvation." No, God's grace comes first – it is prevenient. God's grace first seeks you out. For sinful, fallen, corrupted, natural man does not seek the things of the Spirit of God. So the first step must come entirely from the divine side. It is God's initiative in salvation to seek out sinful persons.

2. *Preparation of the heart for the receiving of God's grace.* This step comes from the human side. This is the human response to God's prevenient grace, which is drawing you to himself. This is the point at which freedom of the will enters in. The bestowal of God's grace is not a unilateral process. It requires some sort of human response in return.

3. *Justification.* Here, in response to the human preparation of the heart, God infuses his grace into the individual believer. So in the first step we have God acting, then in the second step the human response, and now thirdly God again with his justifying grace.

4. *Human beings are enabled to perform good works which God's grace works in you.* We are back again to the human response: filled with God's grace – in the power of God's grace – we are enabled to do good works.

5. *The merit of the good works that you perform then win your salvation.* So the final step in the process is eternal life which, through the merit of the good works that God's grace has enabled you to perform, you find heaven.

So I think you can see that the Catholic view is a blend of both divine and human factors in salvation. From God's side we have prevenient grace, his infusion of justifying grace, and his bestowal of eternal life; but from the human side we have the response of the heart to God's prevenient grace and then the performance of good works through the power of God's grace working in you that then merit the eternal life that God bestows.

Let's now turn to an evaluation of these attempts to systematize the biblical data concerning freedom of the will. By way of review, we've seen that for the Reformers like Luther and Calvin there is no freedom of the will with respect to the reception of God's grace or finding salvation. We are dead in sin, slaves to sin, bound in sin and darkness, and it is only by God's grace that anyone can be saved. The initiative in salvation comes entirely from God's side, and his grace is irresistible. He freely selects certain persons to be recipients of that grace and then irresistibly wins the consent of the creaturely will so as to achieve a person's salvation. So freedom of the will is excluded.

By contrast, we saw that on the Roman Catholic view as enunciated at the Council of Trent both God and man play a role in the process of salvation. (1) First is God's role in providing prevenient grace. Then (2) there is the preparation of the human heart as we respond to that prevenient grace of God. For those who respond affirmatively to God's grace, then (3) God infuses justifying grace, so that they are now justified before God by his grace. (4) Through the inner grace of God empowering us and filling us, we are then enabled to perform good works which then merit salvation. The result is finally, (5) eternal life.

How might we evaluate these competing views? Protestants and Catholics agree on the first step – the necessity of God's prevenient grace in the process of salvation, and rightly so, I think. The natural man left to himself does not seek God. So apart from the prevenient grace of God, no one would ever be saved. God must take the initiative in convicting of sin and drawing persons to himself.

But then it seems at some point along the line human beings do have the freedom either to accede to that drawing of God's grace or to resist it and push back and refuse to receive God's grace of salvation. We need not think of this as even the ability to receive God's grace but merely to quit resisting it. Thus, human free will does enter the process at this point.

Someone might say, but doesn't Romans 9 teach that human beings are completely inert in the process of salvation? That it belongs entirely to God's will who is elect and who is reprobate and left unsaved. Doesn't Romans 9 teach a strong doctrine of predestination and irresistible grace that excludes any sort of human role in terms of a free response such as I have suggested? I would like to suggest for your consideration a very different reading of Romans 9 than the one that we so often hear. Typically, people think of

Romans 9 as God's narrowing down the scope of election to just those few people that he wants to save. He passes over the broad mass of humanity to selectively save those few that he has picked out. I want to suggest that Paul's burden in Romans 9 is exactly the opposite. What Paul wants to do here is to broaden the scope of salvation, not to narrow it down to a select few. He wants to broaden it as wide as possible.

The problem that Paul is dealing with in Romans 9 concerns Jewish persons who think that because of their Jewish ethnicity they have a sort of leg up on salvation by God. Those who were ethnically Jewish found it unthinkable that God would reject his chosen people Israel and instead allow these execrable Gentiles to go into the Kingdom of God rather than his own people. How God could prefer over the Jews these Gentile dogs and save them and pass over the Jews was just unthinkable for these Jewish people. So what Paul wants to emphasize in Romans 9 is God's sovereignty in electing and saving *whomever* he wants regardless of their ethnic background. Whether Jew or Gentile, it is God's choice as to who will be saved.

So you notice at the beginning of chapter 9 Paul expresses his anguish concerning those Israelites to whom all of the promises of the old covenant belong but who are not believers in Christ. He says in verse 6 that it is not as though God's Word has failed. Rather he says that not everyone who is descended from Israel belongs to Israel. Not everybody is a real child of Abraham just because they are his physical descendant. Just because you are ethnically Jewish doesn't mean that you have some sort of a favored status with God. Rather, as Paul illustrates with the story of Jacob and Esau, God has the freedom to choose whom he wills to be saved. Just being descended from Abraham physically is no guarantee.

So in verses 6-24, Paul says God is free to save whomever he wants and that no one can call into question God's choice. No one has the right to talk back to God; no one has the right to say that God has to prefer his own people Israel over these Gentiles. If God wants to broaden the scope of salvation to include Gentiles in addition to and even instead of his chosen people, the ethnic Jews, then no one can talk back to God. It is God who has mercy upon whom he has mercy and has compassion upon whom he has compassion.

So here is the key question: Who is it, then, according to Romans 9, that God has chosen to elect if it is not those who are ethnically Jewish? The answer is: those who have faith in Christ Jesus. Those are the ones that he has chosen to elect and save. So in verse 30 he writes,

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works.



So what God has done is that he has decided to save all those who have faith in Christ Jesus – whether Jew or Gentile it doesn't matter. It is those who have faith in Christ Jesus whom God has elected. Therefore, given God's sovereign choice, ethnically Jewish people cannot complain if God has preferred to save certain Gentiles over certain Jewish persons.

This is all based upon the principle of faith that Paul explains back in Romans 3 and 4 with respect to Abraham himself. In Romans 3:21ff, Paul writes:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

In verse 27 Paul says, “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.” Then he asks specifically, “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith.”

So it is through faith that one becomes a true child of Abraham, a member of that elect body that will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Next time we'll see how this doctrine works itself out in Romans 10. Until that time, have a great week.<sup>70</sup>

## Lecture 28: Freedom of the Will and Romans 10

As we continue to bring our Defenders lessons to you from my home office, I'm glad that you could join us today.

Last time I explained that Protestants and Catholics agree on the necessity of God's prevenient grace in the process of salvation, and I think quite rightly so.

I then proceeded to argue that the Catholic view is correct that at some point along the line human beings have the freedom either to accede to the working of God's grace and to let it have its effect or to resist it and refuse to let God's grace of salvation produce its effect in a person's life.

With respect to Romans 9, I argued that the burden of that chapter is not to narrow down the scope of salvation to a select few but rather to broaden it out to include Gentiles as well as ethnic Jews. God is sovereign and has mercy upon whomever he wills. And who is it that God has chosen to have mercy on? Those who have faith in Christ Jesus. So it is through faith that one becomes a true child of Abraham, a member of that elect body that will inherit the Kingdom of God.

If you look at the book of Galatians, which is almost like a précis of Paul's argument in Romans, you see this very nicely summarized in Galatians 3:6-9. Paul writes,

Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.

So who are the true sons of Abraham? Not simply those who are physically descended from Abraham; rather it is those who have faith in Christ Jesus.

That is why Paul can then go on in Romans 10 to write in verses 8-13,

The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Now, you can't make sense of Romans 10 on the interpretation of Romans 9 that construes it as God's electing some minority of people irrespective of their free will, entirely dependent upon God's unilateral choice. The only way that I think you can make sense of Romans 10 is by interpreting it along the lines as I have done. God has chosen to save not just ethnically Jewish people; he has chosen to save everyone who has faith in Christ regardless of their ethnic background. That is why everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

If I'm understanding Romans 9 correctly, this chapter is not teaching a kind of predestinarianism that takes no cognizance of the human free response to God's grace. Quite the contrary, it seems to me that it is broadening out the scope of God's election to say that it is going to include everybody who meets the condition of having faith in Christ.

That is the free human response to God's grace. God's grace comes preveniently, that is to say, it seeks out sinful, alienated, spiritually estranged people, and draws them to himself to that point where one can make a free response by faith or not.

You might say, but didn't we read in Ephesians 2:8-9 that faith is a gift of God, not something that we can produce? Look again at Ephesians 2:8-9. Paul says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast." Doesn't this show that faith is simply God's gift to you and not something that you do on your own?

No. In Greek every noun has a gender. There are three genders – masculine, feminine, and neuter. Now, what is the gender of the Greek word "faith" (*pistis*)? It's feminine. What is the gender of the pronoun *touto* ("this") in verse 8? Neuter! So the antecedent of "this" is not the word "faith." You would have to have a feminine pronoun in order for that to refer to "faith." Rather, what the word "this" refers to is the whole antecedent clause, namely, salvation by grace through faith. That is not your own doing. That is the gift of God. This is the way that God has chosen to set it up; he is going to save by grace through faith everyone who places his faith in Christ.

I want to say something here about the way our Reformed brethren treat the idea of faith. For many of them, if I exercise faith in Christ, if I respond to God's grace through faith, that is somehow my meriting or winning salvation. It is something that I do; I have faith, and so I have done some meritorious work, which is excluded by Paul because salvation is by grace not by meritorious works. But in so saying, I think that they have completely misunderstood Paul. When you read Paul, he always opposes faith to works. For Paul, faith is the antithesis of works. He does not think that placing your faith in Christ is a work, much less a meritorious work. Paul always contrasts faith and works. So, in receiving Christ by faith by acceding to God's grace, you are not doing anything

meritorious to save yourself. You are simply yielding, as it were, to the grace of God and allowing it to do its justifying work in your life. This is not in any sense a meritorious work.

So I want to agree with the Roman Catholic view that there is prevenient grace of God that seeks out sinners and that we have the freedom to respond to that. So I would substitute for the second step in the process of salvation “the free response of the creaturely will to the grace of God.” It is simply acceding to the grace of God in your life rather than resisting it, not a meritorious work that you perform, but simply a grateful and humble reception of God’s grace.

It would follow from this that God’s grace is not irresistible – it can be resisted. Those who resist it separate themselves from God and so have no one to blame but themselves for their fate. Those who do not resist do not do anything to merit God’s grace; they just allow it to do its work in their lives. So there is no credit that accrues to you for responding to God’s grace. It is not a meritorious work that you do. Faith is in fact the antithesis of works.

I’ve argued that God has sovereignly chosen to elect and save all of those who have faith in Christ Jesus. The result in receiving God’s grace is justification. So we may agree with Catholics on the third step: God’s bestowal of justifying grace. Now Protestants and Catholics have important differences in how they understand justifying grace. But we’ll delay our discussion of that question until we come to our next locus – the doctrine of salvation. At this point we can say at least that Catholics and Protestants agree that crucial to salvation is justification by grace through faith.

But then we come to the fourth and fifth steps, that by God’s grace we are enabled to perform good works which merit salvation. Certainly God gives us the ability to do good works. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” But to think that our good works then merit salvation seems to me utterly unacceptable. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:9, “this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast.” Salvation is entirely of God’s grace.

The only way one could possibly defend the idea that we perform good works that then merit salvation would be to say the God’s grace turns us into marionettes, into puppets on strings, so that the works that we do are wrought by God’s pulling the strings and we don’t really do anything. But then that view excludes human freedom. The whole point of this analysis was to include human freedom along with God’s grace in the process of salvation.

So it seems to me that instead of the merit of good works, what we ought to substitute for step (5) is perseverance. If one doesn’t persevere in faith to the end of one’s earthly life,

then one will not experience eternal salvation. Perseverance is necessary in order to obtain eternal life. Perseverance will be the working out of God's grace in your life and sanctifying you, filling you with the Holy Spirit, conforming you to the image of Christ, as you walk in the Spirit. God will help you to persevere in faith to the end and so finally be saved and inherit eternal life. Whether we have the freedom to fall away from faith is again a further question which we'll take up when we come to the doctrine of salvation. But for now we should insist that there is nothing of our own doing that earns salvation.

By way of summary, here is how I would analyze the 5 steps in the process of salvation:

1. God's prevenient grace.
2. Human free response to God's prevenient grace.
3. Justification by God.
4. God enables us to perform good works.
5. Perseverance in God's grace until death.

There is no work that we perform that merits eternal life, but there is in the process of salvation an element of human freedom that makes us more than passive puppets in God's hands.

That brings us to the conclusion of the doctrine of man. Next time we'll move on to our next locus and begin to talk about the doctrine of salvation.

Until then, may God richly bless you as you walk with him and serve him in his Kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> ?Total Running Time: 16:29 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)