

# SONS OF ADAM

Studies of Old Testament Characters in New Testament Light

by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ADAM: Myth or Fact?

"DEAD THE FIRST chapter of Genesis," said Samuel T. Coleridge in his *Table Talk*, "and you will be convinced at once. After the narrative of the creation of the earth and brute animals, Moses seems to pause and says: '**And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.**' And in the next chapter he repeats the narrative: '**And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;**' a living soul. Materialism will never explain these last words."

No nomad-shepherd could have invented the sublime creation story recorded on the first pages of the Bible. It differs absolutely from all the creation myths found in the ethnic religions and among primitive tribes. It leaves the impression of truth and conviction.

It's very simplicity precludes the idea of invention. We have here not "**cunningly devised fables**" as in the pagan cosmogonies but an orderly account of the origin of the universe and of the creation of man, the lord of creation. It is one total conception, perfect and consistent in all its parts, unequaled by any other creation epic.

The story of Adam's creation as given in Genesis is confirmed and interpreted by Job (chap. 38), Isaiah (chap. 40), the Psalms (Psalm 8 and 139), as well as by the whole New Testament.

When the Psalmist considers the vast stellar universe, "**the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained,**" he is impressed with the futility and insignificance of man.

**"What is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him?"**

And the reason why GOD is mindful of man and condescends to visit him follows immediately.

**"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:5-8).**

The first thing we learn about Adam and the last in the Scriptures, is that he was made in GOD's image, that he was crowned with glory and honor, that he was a child of GOD by creation and, after his fall, became a child of GOD by redemption. Every man's genealogy leads back as does that of Jesus in Luke's Gospel (3: 38), "**which was the son of Enos which was the son of Seth which was the son of Adam which was the son of God.**"

We are all sons of Adam according to the Scriptures.

The name Adam occurs no less than twenty-two times in the Old Testament and nine times in the New Testament. Most frequently, of course, in the first three chapters of Genesis but also in Deuteronomy 32:8, I Chronicles 1:1, and Job 31: 33.

Our Saviour refers to the creation of Adam and Eve and the sacredness of wedlock in Mark 10:6 and Matthew 19:12: "**From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.**" This is a direct quotation from the Septuagint of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. And Paul's epistles (Romans 5:14; I Corinthians 15; I Timothy 2:13) would prove a lock without a key if the Genesis story of Adam were a mere myth.

There is also a reference to Adam as a historic person in Jude's epistle (verse 14). Calling Enoch "**the seventh from Adam,**" incidentally, is a strong argument for the genealogy (Genesis 5:4-20).

Adam is a Hebrew word meaning ruddy or red or, according to another derivation, it is from an Accadian root, *Adamu*, to make, to create, and signifies a creature. Curiously it has been pointed out by Jewish rabbis that the three root letters A.D.M. form the anagram: Adam, David, Messiah.

The Jewish Talmud and Moslem Tradition add much to the simple story as told in Genesis but most of it is bizarre and some of it ridiculous.

Near Jiddah, the port of Mecca on the Red Sea, one could see the grave of Eve (recently destroyed by King Ibu Saud) and at Arafat Adam and Eve met after their fall from Paradise! Here, also, we have the story that GOD commanded the angels to worship Adam after he was created and they all obeyed except Satan, who was banished from heaven for his disobedience.  
[1]

The story of Adam has been embroidered also by many modern writers of fertile imagination:

Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *New Adam and Eve*, and Mark Twain (amusing but at times irreverent) in *Eve's Diary* and *Extracts from Adam's Diary*. The Dutch poet Van Vondel in his *Lucifer* and Milton in his *Paradise Lost* have been great and worthy interpreters of the early chapters of Genesis. Both were steeped in the Scriptures and men of prayer. Milton outlined his great epic when he was thirty-four and dictated it to his daughters line by line. It was published when he was fifty-nine.

The influence of *Paradise Lost* on English literature and on the common conception of Adam's creation and the Fall cannot be overestimated. He was an inspired interpreter and *Paradise Lost* is a commentary on Genesis. "Henceforth men could write of Eden as a place and Adam and Eve as people because Milton made men's mind familiar with them." [2]

Whether we open Milton's *Paradise Lost* and read his stupendous interpretation of the creation and the fall of man, or, what some consider as an even greater poem, Van Vondel's *Lucifer* on the same theme, we can only understand either poet by going back to the book of Genesis and to references in the epistles of Paul. There we have the facts and their true interpretation, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is not strange that Modern unbelief as well as Ancient heresy stumbles over the record of Adam and Eve in the Garden. When men deny the Virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of our Saviour or scoff at the hope of His return from heaven, it is not strange that they consider the early chapters in Genesis a myth.

The New England Primer which dominated early American education and of which seven million copies were sold before 1840, had Bible rhymes. The one that is generally selected for ridicule reads: [3]

"In Adam's fall  
We sinned all."

Yet in that doggerel we have a synopsis of Paul's Epistle to the Romans and of the magnificent opening lines of *Paradise Lost*:

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe  
With loss of Eden . . . "

Doubt breeds doubt. If we tear pages from the Old Testament because of Darwin or Nietzsche we unconsciously loosen pages in the New Testament, for they are bound together in the bundle of GOD's revelation. As Hilaire Belloc put it in his famous poem: [4]

"Oh, he didn't believe in Adam and Eve  
He put no faith therein;  
His doubts began with the fall of man,  
And he laughed at original sin."

Pelagius first taught this heresy about 400 A.D. and was condemned by the whole church East and West; but the seed of his teaching bore fruit after centuries in all kinds of doubt.

Wellhausen's and Harnack's disciples also did their best to discredit the story of Adam's creation and the fall of man, and awakened an even more hostile attitude when Darwin published his *Origin of Species* [5] and *the Descent of Man*.

Evolution, which began as a theory, became a dogma. The early chapters of Genesis were myth.

The writer in the Encyclopedia Britannica voices the opinion of the critics:

"The narrative is naive and elementary. Yahweh makes an image of moist clay, then he blows into his nostrils. The next problem is what to do with this living toy. So Yahweh plants a garden. The animals march past and as each makes a sound Adam gives them that name. And since none of them prove a suitable companion, another method must be tried. Yahweh throws the man into an anesthetic slumber and takes a rib from his side to form a second creature. When Adam sees her he exclaims, woman."

Such is their modern story of the first man. [6]

The trouble with these Higher Critics is that they swallow the whole theory of Evolution (already in doubt) and discard Inspiration and Revelation. They not only make the account puerile and fail to see its sublimity, but they are behind the times in the field of anthropology and comparative religion. Wilhelm Schmidt, in his encyclopedic work on *the Origin of the Idea of GOD*, has demonstrated that the origin of religion was not by Evolution but by a primitive Revelation. [7]

Anthropology and ethnology are swinging away from the old evolutionary concept as regards primitive races.

Dr. Robert H. Lowie of the American Museum of Natural History in his important study on Primitive Society, says, "The time has come for eschewing the all-embracing and baseless theories of yore and to settle down to sober historical research. The Africans did not pass from a Stone Age to an Age of Copper and Bronze and then to an Iron Age . . . they passed directly from stone tools to the manufacture of iron tools" (13th Edition, N.Y., pp. 436, 437).

The evolution hypothesis in religion has been overworked, and has seriously embarrassed students of religion who have grappled with the problem of sin, its universality, and the universality of its correlate, namely, conscience, that is a sense of sin as a subjective reality.

In the history of religion, and in the study of the origin of the idea of GOD, we may no longer neglect the early chapters of Genesis and the statement of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

Revelation, and not evolution, is the key to the origin of the idea of GOD and of prayer and of sacrifice.

Dr. Walter Lowrie of Princeton, in a recent study of the eclipse of Darwinism, writes:

"The story of the Darwinian theory is a sorry example of scientific pride and prejudice. That story, being now finished, can be told here and it must be told in order to clear the air . . . "

He relates how, after the *Origin of Species* was published, he was at college in the eighties and alive to the controversy when President James McCosh supported the cause of evolution and Dr. Benjamin Warfield, also of Princeton, thundered against it.

"Darwinism even as a tentative theory could not but be profoundly disquieting to Christian believers, not chiefly because it discredits the mythical account of creation in the first chapters of Genesis, but because - and this was its unique value in the eyes of unbelievers - by explaining how everything came about by chance, it made the notion of GOD completely superfluous."

In his scholarly article Dr. Lowrie traces the opposition to this theory by a number of leading scientists and concludes:

"I believe that in Europe, since the time of the First World War, there has been no scientist of repute who has espoused the Darwinian theory."

Oswald Spengler said of this theory that "future generations will look back upon it as one of the most pitiable delusions which ever gained sway over the human mind." That is an extreme statement but it passed unchallenged.

In 1915 Professor Louis More, a physicist of Princeton, gave definite notice that Darwinism was defunct.

In his *Dogma of Evolution* he had to write the obituary, and he did it in plain words. The news was not welcomed even by the godly. "For in academic circles it is not good form to speak ill of Darwinism . . . lest the public should find out that about such an important matter scientists have for several generations been deceived and have been deceivers." [8]

It is refreshing when we open the Bible, therefore, to "**lay aside every weight**" of this discarded theory and the sin of unbelief which so easily besets us and to listen to GOD: "**Let us make man in our image after our likeness.**"

"We can never exhaust the significance of that sentence," as John Duncan said, "for if we are in the image of GOD, we are to Him as the shade is to the substance."

The great preacher, Alexander Whyte, speaking of Adam, takes up the question of evolution and makes a clear distinction between biological evolution in the realm of biology and evolution as an attempt to explain origins in religion. We believe that this distinction should be carefully observed. The two problems in anthropology, to which evolution has no solution, are those of the origin of sin and the conscience on the one hand, and the other the origin of the Sinless One and redemption.

Here follow the weighty words of Dr. Whyte:

"Speaking for myself, as I read the great books of our modern scientific men with a delight and an advantage I cannot put enough words upon, I always miss in them - in them all and in the best of them all - a matter of more importance to me than all else they tell me. For, all the time I am reading their fascinating discoveries and speculations I still feel in myself a disturbance, a disorder, a disharmony, and a positive dislocation from the moral, and even from the material order of the universe around me and above me: a disorder and a dislocation that my scientific teachers neither acknowledge nor leave room for its redress. What about sin? What is sin? When and where did sin enter in the evolution of the human race and seize in this deadly way on the human heart? Why do you all so avoid and shut your eyes to Sin? And, still more, what about JESUS CHRIST? Why do I find nothing in your best text-books about HIM who was WITHOUT SIN? About Him who is more to me, and to so many more of your best readers, than all Nature." [9]

When we read once again the story of Adam's creation and fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, in spite of all difficulties in interpretation, we recall Paul's statement in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "**As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**"

The headship of the human race is also attributed to Adam in the Epistle to the Romans in the same real sense as the headship or the new creation is found in JESUS CHRIST.

When the Lord GOD called to Adam and said unto him, "**Where art thou?**" it is the first question honest question in the pages of the Old Testament and is, in one sense, the key to the whole Book. The entire Old Testament is a commentary in answer to that question. The consequence of the fall of Adam overshadows the remainder of Genesis and continues throughout all the historical and prophetic books.

The first question in the New Testament is, "**Where is He?**" and, in a sense, the whole New Testament is an answer to that question, telling us who CHRIST is and where He is, whence He came and when He is coming again.

In the sin of Adam, portrayed for us in this early record, we have the dawn of conscience, but also the dawn of our redemption and the glory of a new hope.

Paul builds on this one chapter of Genesis his greatest epistle and his great chapter on the Resurrection. The science of anthropology also in some sense corroborates the fall. In many parts of the new world there are traditions regarding a golden age, and of how man was turned out of a Paradise through some fault of his own which brought death and disaster into existence.

What scientists call heredity is the burden and the blight of all humanity.

Sin has three characteristics and it produces in the sinner a threefold condition: a sense of guilt before GOD- "**hid himself**"; pollution of conscience and a sense of shame - "**they made themselves aprons . . . of fig leaves**"; and bondage instead of freedom - Adam lays the blame on Eve.

Such a threefold cord is not easily broken by man.

We read that GOD created man in His own image, in knowledge and righteousness and holiness. When created, Adam apparently had a share of those divine attributes which the creature could share with the Creator. He was the apex of all the works of GOD. The fall of Adam was, therefore, the greatest tragedy of history.

Not without reason does Whately call the third chapter of Genesis the greatest chapter in the Bible. When we read it carefully we see that it was GOD who first uttered the awful word "**death.**" "**In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.**"

When Adam's hand of disobedience, however, opened the gate and let Death in, GOD reprieved the sentence and gave him nine hundred and thirty years respite. Then at last was fulfilled the wages of sin and dust returned to dust because "**the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.**"

We can only read the story with deep compassion as we see the first culprit in the hands of his Maker. If Adam had only believed GOD about sin and death and not hearkened to the Tempter, nor listened to Eve; if Adam could have seen that other Garden and the Son of GOD under the olive trees, as Alexander Whyte reminds us, how different it would have been!

Adam's sin weighed on Paul's conscience or he never would have written:

**"Wherefore as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . so by the obedience . . . Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned."**

But GOD's loving heart had compassion on Adam and on all mankind. Adam heard the voice of the Lord "**walking in the garden,**" so the record tells us, and we can still hear His voice walking in our gardens and speaking in mercy to those who are truly repentant.

"Remembering man is but dust -  
Brother to fickle sand, and stubborn clod  
The sport of every wind of earthly lust -  
Be merciful, O GOD!

"Remembering all flesh is grass -  
Which is, today; tomorrow feeds the flame  
And now sees only darkly, through a glass  
Dear Lord, be slow to blame!

"Remembering as Adam's kin,  
We share his crime, his punishment, his loss  
Consider, Lord, One guiltless of all sin -  
The crown of thorns . . . the cross!"

In this very chapter we have Adam's repentance and the dawn of man's redemption, for Adam did repent or he would never have received the promise of the coming Redeemer.

In Paul's conception (as a quaint old commentator has it), "Adam and CHRIST stand out as the two representatives, alone and unique, with all humanity hanging at their girdles." GOD's question, "**Adam, where art thou?**" was the voice of a brokenhearted father. "**When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him.**"

It is an astonishing fact that the first Evangelist was GOD Himself and that the Evangel was preached to Adam and Eve in Paradise before they lost it. It was preached by word and by the symbol of a sacrament world-wide and age-long. We read: "**I will set enmity** (not peace or compromise) **between thee and the woman. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head**"; and with the word of promise there was the institution of sacrifice symbolized by the "**coats of skin**" which GOD made for Adam and Eve.

Delitzsch and other commentators find a great doctrine of atonement for sin here in the germ. Hear what Melancthon says: In his Postilla for the first Sunday in Advent he reminds us that the first Advent of the Son of GOD took place in the Garden of Eden. "The divine *Logos* or Son of GOD Himself addressed Adam in the giving of the promise, "**The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head**"; and while these words were proclaimed outwardly, the Logos himself was working also within the hearts of Adam and Eve, and cheering them with His comfort, lest they should fall into everlasting death."

In after ages this *Logos* was always present in the Church, as Irenaeus truly says, "He spake with the Fathers and was with them in their heaviest conflicts. He was with Noah in the ark, with Abraham in exile, with Joseph in prison, with Daniel among the lions." "**Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.**"

How did Adam repent?

Al Ghazali has a great chapter on Repentance in which he says it includes three factors:

- knowledge of sin,
- sorrow for sin, and
- forsaking of sin.

Now we find all three in Adam. He went out of Paradise and walked softly all his days; he saw the death of Abel and the doom of Cain. He lived to taste death and the bitter remorse of sin many, many times before the nine hundred and thirty years of his life ended and he, too, died.

How did Adam die? And what was his latter end?

The Scripture does not tell us who was present at the funeral of the father of our race. Yet we know that he died, and so death passed upon all men. GOD's sentence was pronounced in Paradise and not carried out until more than nine hundred years later.

GOD did not deal with Adam according to his iniquity but like as a father pitieth his children, so GOD pitied Adam and Eve.

- **"The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."**

- **"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."**

And in Him we see the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD in the dawn of conscience.

We recall Newman's greatest hymn:

“O loving wisdom of our GOD!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

“O wisest love! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail;

"And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
GOD's presence, and His very Self,  
And essence all-Divine.

“O generous love! that He, who smote  
In man for man the foe,  
The double agony in Man  
For man should undergo;

"And in the garden secretly,  
And on the cross on high,  
Should teach His brethren, and inspire  
To suffer and to die."

O the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of GOD's love for Adam.

One of our American poets, Fay Inchfawn, has caught the inspiration of this tragedy in a very modern but also a deeply significant poem:

"At Adam's Funeral, his race  
Went softly, with averted face,  
Bearing with awe, because they must,  
The red dust, back to the red dust.

"Bewildered and sore amazed,  
Legions of angels gazed  
To see the slow procession pass,  
Over the windswept, short-lived grass,  
Rounding the corner.

"For, close behind His dead,  
With lowly bending head,  
And weary feet that bled,  
Came the chief Mourner.

"O, softly, solemnly,  
Slowly and lovingly,  
Following, following,  
Over the sod;  
Following mournfully,  
Heartsore and drearly,  
Who could it ever be? -  
Yes, it was GOD!"

*O GOD, Thou art the Potter and we are the clay . We are the work of Thy hands. Have mercy upon Thy whole creation. Restore what we have lost by Adam's disobedience through the obedience and merits of the Second Adam, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

1 Surahs 2:28-31; 7:10-17 and 2:33-37.

2 "Lawrence E. Nelson, *The Roving Bible*, p. 56.

3 "The Roving Bible, p. 85.

4 Song of the Pelagian Heresy.

5 E. P. Dutton, New York.

6 Theodore H. Robinson of Cardiff in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

7 *Der Ursprung der Gottes Idee*, 6 vols. And abridged in English, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*. New York, 1931.

8 "A Meditation on Scientific Authority" in *Theology Today*, October, 1945, Princeton, N.J.

9 Zwemer, *Origin of Religion*, p. 280.

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