

IN QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL ADAM

Christians interested in the question of the historical Adam (and Eve) want to know the answers to two questions: (1) What are our biblical commitments as Christians with respect to the historical Adam? And (2) Is belief in a historical Adam compatible with the evidence of contemporary science? In order to avoid the pitfalls occasioned by the flawed hermeneutic of concordism (the attempt to read contemporary science into the biblical texts), it is best to treat these questions separately and in the order stated. Only after having determined what our biblical commitments are, are we then in a position to inquire whether such commitments are compatible with what we know of human origins from contemporary science.

Determining our Biblical Commitments

By “biblical commitments” I mean what Scripture teaches concerning the relevant question. The stories of Adam and Eve are largely confined to but two chapters of Scripture, Gen 2-3. But these chapters should not be read in isolation but in the context of the pre-patriarchal narratives of Gen 1-11, often called the *primaeval* history, of which they are a part. That *primaeval* history, in turn, needs to be understood within the context of Genesis and the Pentateuch as a whole and against the cultural backdrop of the Ancient Near East (ANE). Old Testament (OT) scholars have long remarked on the resemblance of Gen 1-11, in contrast to Gen 12-50, to the religious literature of the ANE, especially in terms of the themes treated. Grand themes like the creation of the world, the origin of mankind, and the near destruction of humanity in the cataclysmic Flood are shared by both the ancient myths and Gen 1-11. In Gen 12-50, by contrast, the focus narrows sharply to Israel, and no similarity of themes exists to ANE myths. The question then naturally arises as to whether the *primaeval* narratives of Gen 1-11 should not be taken to be a compilation of Israelite myths.

The exploration of this question requires us to say a word about the nature or character of myth. In contrast to popular usage, which treats such things as *Star Trek*, the self-made man, Elvis, and the noble savage as examples of myths, the consensus view in classical studies is the folklorist’s understanding of myth as a traditional, sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form. A myth seeks to explain present realities by anchoring them in the prehistoric past and so to validate a culture’s contemporary institutions and values. In contrast to other forms of folklore such as folktales and legends, myths are taken as authoritative for the culture that embraces them. As sacred narratives, their main characters are not usually just human beings but deities or heroes, whose activities are set in an earlier age or another realm. Stories of the origin of the world and of mankind are just two of the most prominent examples of myth.

The lines between myth, folktale, and legend are apt to be blurry, so that it is probably impossible and unprofitable to lay down necessary and sufficient conditions for each of these narrative genres. Instead, we ought to be looking for what Ludwig Wittgenstein called “family resemblances” among stories regarded paradigmatically as myths. Family resemblances among myths include:

1. Myths are narratives, whether oral or literary.
2. Myths are traditional stories handed down from generation to generation.
3. Myths are sacred for the society that embraces them.
4. Myths are objects of belief by members of the society that embraces them.
5. Myths are set in a *primaeval* age or another realm.
6. Myths are stories in which deities are important characters.
7. Myths seek to anchor present realities such as the world, mankind, natural phenomena, cultural practices, and the prevailing cult in a primordial time.
8. Myths exhibit fantastic elements and are not troubled by logical contradiction or incoherence.

Especially salient in classifying Gen 1-11 will be (7), the interest in etiology. This is the very heart of myth. In grounding present realities in the primordial past, the *primaeval* history of Gen 1-11 functions as Israel's foundational myth, laying the basis of Israel's worldview.

The claim is not that the narratives of Gen 1-11 are derived from ANE myths. Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) and the pan-Babylonian school that followed in his train made such an assertion, but few scholars defend the dependence thesis today. Rather the claim is that the *primaeval* narratives belong to the genre of myth principally on the basis of the commonality of mythic themes and the presence of etiology in the various narratives. Gen 1-11 shares with myths in general and the ANE myths in particular the grand etiological themes of the origins of the world, of mankind, of certain natural phenomena, of cultural practices, and of the prevailing cult.

Specifically, in Gen 2 we have an etiological account of the origin of humanity that supplements the brief notice of mankind's creation in 1.26-27. There is little in the text which would lead us to think that chapter 2 describes a different, later creation. On the contrary there are three reasons for thinking that Gen 2 is a description of the original creation of man. (1) The purpose of the *primaeval* narratives of Gen 1-11 is to portray God's universal plan for and dealings with humankind. God was not preoccupied with just the offspring of one specially created human couple to the neglect of everyone else, a sort of pre-Israelite election, but with all mankind. (2) A comparison of the story of the creation of man in Gen 2 with other ANE creation stories such as the *Atrahasis Epic* shows that such stories share an etiological interest in telling of how mankind in general came to exist. (3) The account in Gen 2 when read at face value is about human origins. The author states explicitly that there was no man to do the work of agriculture, until God created man. Moreover, woman does not appear until her creation in Gen 2.22. The name later given by the man to his wife, said to mean "the mother of all living" (Gen 3.20), is *prima facie* an affirmation of her (and the man's) universal progenitorship of all mankind.

Furthermore, etiological motifs concerning natural phenomena abound in the account in Gen 3 of the primordial couple's disobedience to God as a result of their seduction by the serpent and of the punishments pronounced by God upon the serpent, the man, and the woman. While the story does not offer an etiology for evil as such—the deceitful serpent simply appears in the Garden opposing God—, still it does offer a many-faceted etiology for human misery as a result of sin.

So even though attempts to show direct borrowing of Gen 1-11 from ANE myths are fraught with conjecture and uncertainty, it cannot be plausibly denied that these chapters treat many of the same themes as ANE myths and seek to ground present realities in events of the primordial past. The multiplicity and variety of etiological motifs in Gen 1-11 make it difficult to deny that these chapters exemplify this central family resemblance of myths.

The foregoing is not, however, the whole story. For there is an additional feature of Gen 1-11 that must be taken into account: their apparent interest in history. This interest comes most clearly to expression in the genealogies that order the narratives chronologically. The narratives of Genesis are interspersed with genealogical notices that include the principal characters in lines of descent, thus turning the *primaeval* narratives into a *primaeval* history. We do not have in Gen 1-11 a cluster of unordered prehistoric stories but a chronological account beginning at the moment of creation and carrying through to the call of Abraham.

Mere chronology, however, is not sufficient to indicate a historical interest. The *Enuma elish* contains chronologically arranged stories but hardly has a historical interest. What makes Gen 1-11 different is that the genealogies meld seamlessly into the historical period of the patriarchs, where the historical interest is obvious and not in dispute. Just as Abraham is presented as a historical person, so his ancestors are presented as historical persons.

At the same time, the artificial symmetry of ten antediluvian ancestors from Adam through Noah followed by ten postdiluvian ancestors from Shem through Abraham, together with the fantastic lifespans of the antediluvians, which have resisted every scholarly effort to interpret, indicate that we are not dealing here with straightforward history. On the basis of comparative studies of Sumerian literature the eminent Assyriologist Thorkild Jacobsen proposed that we recognize a unique genre of literature which he dubbed “mytho-history.” People in the ANE were already aware that the world was extremely old. According to the Babylonian priest Berossus kings had reigned in Babylon for 432,000 years prior to the Flood. Yet the biblical genealogies famously total to a scant 1,656 years from Adam until the Flood, with another 367 years from the Flood to the call of Abraham. Genesis presents a history of the world that is extremely short by ancient standards, bound tightly by father-son genealogical notices that seem to contemplate no gaps of tens of thousands of years between them. We should not imagine that the genealogies contemplate the enormous leaps that would be necessary to bring them into harmony with what we know of the history of mankind; but neither should we think them to comprise purely fictitious characters. We can avoid these polar opposites by taking the brief history they relate to be a mytho-history which is not meant to be taken literally.

ANE myths are often highly metaphorical rather than literal. Consider, for example, the story of Marduk’s creation of the world from Tiamat’s corpse in the *Enuma elish*. No ancient Babylonian looking to the sky expected to see the desiccated flesh and bones of Tiamat overhead nor did he expect to find the Tigris and Euphrates flowing out of Tiamat’s eye sockets. These are figurative images, not to be taken literally. Similarly, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Gilgamesh and Enkidu’s killing the Bull of Heaven (the constellation Taurus) and distributing its meat to the people of Uruk could not possibly be taken literally. Not only is it impossible for a stellar constellation to rampage through a Sumerian town, be grabbed by the tail and stabbed, butchered, and eaten, but

if all these things literally happened, then the Bull of Heaven should no longer be seen shining serenely in the night sky.

If Gen 1-11 functions as mytho-history, then these chapters need not be read literalistically. The accounts of the origin and fall of man are clearly metaphorical or figurative in nature, featuring as they do a humanoid deity incompatible with the transcendent God of the creation account. The anthropomorphic nature of God, merely hinted at in chapter 2, becomes inescapable in chapter 3, where God is described as walking in the garden in the cool of the day and calling audibly to Adam, who is hiding from Him.

Other aspects of the narratives would be fantastic, even to the Pentateuchal author himself, if taken literally. The idea of an arboretum containing trees bearing fruit which, if eaten, would confer immortality or yield sudden knowledge of good and evil must have seemed fantastic to the author. We are not dealing, after all, with miraculous fruit, as if God would on the occasion of eating supernaturally impose upon the eater immortality or knowledge of good and evil against His will.

Then there is the infamous snake in the garden. He makes for a great character in the story, conniving, sinister, opposed to God, perhaps a symbol of evil, but not plausibly a literal reptile, such as one might encounter in one's own garden, for the author knew that snakes neither talk nor are intelligent agents. Again, the snake's personality and speech cannot be attributed to the miraculous activity of God, lest God become the author of the Fall.

When God drives Adam and Eve from the Garden and posts cherubim and a flashing sword at its entrance to block their re-entry, this is doubtless not intended to be literal, since cherubim were regarded as creatures of fantasy and symbol in ancient Israel. It is not as though the author thought, what realism requires, that the cherubim remained at the entrance of the Garden for years on end until it was either overgrown with weeds or swept away by the Flood.

Since the Pentateuchal author has an interest in history, he intends for his narrative to be at some level historical, to concern people who actually lived and events that really occurred. But those persons and events have been clothed in the garb of the metaphorical and figurative language of myth.

If the stories are not meant to be read literalistically, what, then, are the central truths expressed in the *primaeval* history? The following come almost immediately to mind:

1. God is one, a personal, transcendent Creator of all physical reality, perfectly good and worthy of worship.
2. God has designed the physical world and is the ultimate source of its structure and life forms.
3. Mankind is the pinnacle of the physical creation, personal, if finite, agents like God, and therefore uniquely capable of all Earth's creatures of knowing God.

4. Mankind is gendered, man and woman being of equal value, with marriage given to mankind for procreation and mutuality, the wife being a helper to her husband.
5. Work is good, a sacred assignment by God to mankind to steward the Earth and its creatures.
6. Human exploration and discovery of the workings of nature are a natural outgrowth of man's capacities, rather than divine bestowals without human initiative and effort.
7. Mankind is to set apart one day per week as sacred and for refreshment from work.
8. Man and woman alike have freely chosen to disobey God, suffering alienation from God and spiritual death as their just desert, condemned to a life of hardship and suffering during this mortal existence.
9. Human sin is agglomerative and self-destructive, resulting in God's just judgement.
10. Despite human rebellion against God, God's original purpose to bless all mankind remains intact, as He graciously finds a way to work His will despite human defiance.

Such truths do not depend upon reading the *primaeval* narratives literalistically.

When we turn to the NT, we find the figure of Adam widely deployed, most importantly by Paul. Many scholars have attempted to distinguish between the *literary Adam* and the *historical Adam*. The literary Adam is a character in a story, specifically the stories of Genesis 2-3. The historical Adam is the person, if such there be, who actually existed, the actual individual that the stories are allegedly about. By way of analogy, the Pompey of Plutarch's *Lives* is the literary Pompey, whereas the Roman General who actually lived was the historical Pompey. What we want to know is how closely the literary Pompey of the *Lives* resembles the historical Pompey. Similarly, we want to know how closely the literary Adam of Genesis 2-3 resembles the historical Adam, if such there be, or more precisely whether NT authors assert that the literary Adam of Genesis 2-3 closely resembles the historical Adam.

This distinction implies a further distinction between *truth* and *truth-in-a-story*. A statement is true iff what it states is the case. A statement is true-in-a-story iff it is found in or implied by that story. So if I say, for example, that Gilgamesh slew the Bull of Heaven, my statement, though true-in-the-*Epic of Gilgamesh*, is false. Truth-in-a-story does not, however, preclude truth. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* are, or are implied, statements, such as "Gilgamesh was an ancient Sumerian king," which are both true-in-the-epic as well as true. So the relevant question for us is whether NT passages referring to Adam are intended to assert truths or merely truths-in-the-stories-of-Genesis.

These distinctions are not drawn in order to weasel out of commitments on the part of NT authors to the truth of the Genesis stories and, hence, to the historical Adam. Rather they are

important in our treatment of many NT passages, which, if interpreted as asserting more than truth-in-a-story, would be plausibly false. Intriguingly, some of these passages involve the citation of pseudepigraphal and mythological texts to whose truth we should not wish to be committed.

For example, in condemning the false teachers of his day, Jude contrasts them negatively to the archangel Michael in his dispute with the devil over Moses' body (Jude 9-10). According to the Church Father Origen, the story is to be found in the apocryphal book *The Assumption of Moses*. Unfortunately, the extant version of this treatise, known only from a single, incomplete, sixth century manuscript, does not include the story. Richard Bauckham discerns two different versions of the story in Christian tradition. Noting that ancient lists of apocryphal books mention both a *Testament of Moses* and *The Assumption of Moses*, Bauckham hypothesizes that the earlier, Palestinian *Testament of Moses* was subsequently rewritten and entitled *The Assumption of Moses*. However we reconstruct the story and its evolution within Christian tradition, what is clear is that Jude is citing extra-biblical legends about the burial of Moses. We thus apparently have here illustrative reference to the literary Moses of *The Testament/Assumption of Moses*, not to the literary Moses of Genesis.

After providing various further examples to illustrate the danger of false teachers, Jude then proceeds to actually quote *I Enoch* 1.9, a pseudepigraphal book from 400-200 B. C., as though the author were identical to the Enoch of the antediluvian primaeval history (Jude 14-15). This text is the *reductio ad absurdum* of facile arguments for OT historicity on the basis of NT citation. The idea that an oral tradition emanating from the antediluvian Enoch has been preserved over thousands of years to reach the ears of the author of *I Enoch* can hardly be said to be plausible. But if Jude is using his various examples only illustratively, then overly easy historicity proofs of OT narratives must fail.

One other example is Paul's allusion in I Cor 10.4 to the rock which accompanied the ancient Israelites through their wilderness wanderings. Commentators commonly see a reference here to a Jewish legend based on Num 21.16-18 concerning a miraculous well, shaped like a rock, which continually supplied Israel with water in the desert. This legend, which flourished in later rabbinic Judaism, is documented as early as the first century *Biblical Antiquities* of pseudo-Philo (10.7; 11.15). The tradition in some form doubtless goes back to the pre-Christian era. Paul cites this extra-canonical tradition in order to identify the rock in the story as Christ, who sustained Israel throughout its sojourn in the wilderness.

On the basis of such examples, we can see how naïve it is to argue that because some NT author refers to a literary figure, whether found in the OT or outside it, therefore that figure is asserted to be a historical person. We need to pay close attention to the context in order to determine whether the NT is asserting his historicity, rather than referring to the figure illustratively.

Turning to the many texts concerning Adam in the NT, we find that some of them plausibly do not go beyond the literary figure of Adam in Genesis. The statements of our Lord concerning Adam are plausibly illustrative. He begins by drawing attention to the literary Adam "Have you not read. . .?" He then cites Gen 1.27, "male and female he created them" and weds this

statement with Gen 2.24, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” This forms the basis for his teaching on divorce. Jesus is exegeting the story of Adam and Eve to discern its implications for marriage and divorce, not asserting its historicity. Similarly, many of Paul’s references to Adam may be interpreted not to go beyond the literary Adam.

By contrast, in Rom 5.12-21 Paul’s exposition of effects of Adam’s sin upon the world does imply the historicity of Adam and his fall into sin. For an action that is wholly internal to a fiction cannot have effects outside the fiction; only an action that is external to the fiction can have real world effects. It is impossible for Hamlet, for example, though an individual in Shakespeare’s play, to have real world effects because he does not exist in the real world but exists only in the play, that is to say, in the play he (unlike, for instance, Macbeth’s dagger) exists. Regardless of how we think of the transmission of Adam’s sin to his posterity, whether by imputation or corrupted nature or societal impact, the sin of a purely literary Adam can have no effect on the world outside the fiction. But Paul’s expressions “before the law was given” and “from Adam to Moses” show that he is denominating real epochs of human history as affected by Adam’s act. It follows that Adam and his sin are asserted by Paul to be historical. What is asserted of the historical Adam does not, however, really go beyond what we have already affirmed on the basis of our genre analysis of the *primaeval* history of Gen 1-11, namely, that there was a progenitor of the entire human race through whose disobedience moral evil entered the world.

If the biblical Adam is, or was, a historical person who actually lived, then the obvious question arises, *when* did he live? Given the mythical nature of the *primaeval* history of Gen 1-11, it is to modern science that we must turn in the attempt to answer this question.

Exploring the Scientific Evidence concerning Human Origins

First, however, we must figure out exactly what we are looking for. It would be rash to assume that organisms classified as *Homo* are *ipso facto* 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 like. On the basis of our paradigmatic examples of humans we can delineate certain features which, given sufficient anatomical similarity, are sufficient (if not necessary) for human personhood. Anthropologists Sally McBrearty and Alison Brooks list four characteristics of modern human behavior that are widely recognized and frequently repeated in the literature:

- Abstract thinking, the ability to act with reference to abstract concepts not limited in time or space;
- Planning depth, the ability to formulate strategies based on past experience and to act upon them in a group context;
- Behavioral, economic, and technological innovativeness;

- Symbolic behavior, the ability to represent objects, people, and abstract concepts with arbitrary symbols, vocal or visual, and to reify such symbols in cultural practice.

To deny the humanity of past individuals anatomically similar to modern humans who exhibited such behaviors would be 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. While palaeoneurological evidence provides significant support for humanity's origin prior to the divergence of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, the most important positive evidence for the historical presence of human beings at any time will be the archaeological evidence for modern human behaviors. McBrearty and Brooks list over 25 "archaeological signatures" of modern human behavior, such as new lithic technologies, hafting and composite tools, structured use of domestic space, use of pigment, and so on, which provide tangible traces of the four behaviors listed above. The evidence shows that the characteristics of modern human behavior were already displayed in the archaeological record by the ancestors of Neanderthals and modern humans. Three striking examples illustrate the point.

The Schöningen spears. One of the archaeological signatures of modern human behavior is said to be specialized hunting. Undoubtedly the most amazing evidence of prehistoric hunting indicative of modern cognitive capacity comes from the discovery during the mid-1990s of eight wooden spears at the Lower Paleolithic site of Schöningen, Germany. The open pit 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, dated to 400-300 kya. These spears are over 6- or 7-foot spears sculpted carefully from shafts of spruce or pine and designed for throwing. The circumference of the first third of each 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, reproductions of the Schöningen spears have been made and tested, and they turn out to be on a par with Olympic javelins! Hartmut Thieme, the chief excavator at Schöningen, contends that the manufacture alone of the spears, not to mention the cooperation involved in hunting wild herd animals, is sufficient for abstract, conceptual thinking.

The spears were found in association with remains of a herd of wild horses, the prey of the hunters. The hunters apparently pinned the herd of horses against the shore of a lake and may have driven them into the water where their escape could be slowed, thus evincing a hunting strategy. Thieme believes that in order for such a venture to succeed, "extremely careful planning, coordination, and discussion among the hunters" must have taken place, right down to the many details. Thieme even believes that there must have already existed among the hunters at this early time "highly evolved, richly diverse, verbal communication."

Unfortunately, no human remains were found in connection with the Schöningen spears, leaving us to guess at the identity of the hunters. The incredible antiquity of these artifacts and their

similarity to the finds at Clacton and Boxgrove, England, where human remains have been found, suggests that they are the design and manufacture of Heidelberg Man (*Homo heidelbergensis*), who is regarded as the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals.

Bruniquel Cave. Many palaeoanthropologists consider the designation of different areas of a habitation site for different activities to be indicative of sophisticated cognitive functions. Despite the difficulties posed by disturbance of an original site, there are a number of unambiguous examples of structured use of domestic space in prehistoric contexts. The most striking example comes from the strange, circular structures discovered deep inside Bruniquel Cave, France, and reported in 2016. No humans had entered the cave since its natural closing in the Pleistocene and its re-opening in 1990, guaranteeing that the structures inside are undisturbed. The cave itself is a long, snaking corridor 10-15 m wide, 4-7 m high, and 482 m long. The structures are found in a room at an astonishing depth of 336 m, which places them in complete darkness. They consist of about 400 whole or partial stalagmites weighing 2.2 tons and well-calibrated to mean lengths of 34.4 cm for the long ones and 29.3 cm for the small ones. The pieces are arranged in two circular structures, one measuring 6.7 m $\times$ 4.5 m and the other 2.2 m $\times$ 2.1 m, and four smaller heaps. The two circular structures are composed of one to four stacked layers of aligned stalagmites. Short pieces were placed inside the superposed layers as supports, while others were placed vertically against the main structure perhaps as stays to reinforce the constructions. Traces of fire are to be found on all six structures. Uranium-series dating of stalagmite regrowths on the structures, combined with the dating of stalagmite tips in the structures, give a reliable age of 176.5 kya, making these edifices among the oldest known human constructions.

Neanderthals were the only humans living in Europe at that time. The attribution of the constructions to early Neanderthals is unprecedented in two ways, according to Jacques Jaubert, the lead archaeologist at the site. First, it reveals the appropriation of a deep cave (including lighting) by a pre-modern human species. Second, it involves elaborate constructions that have never been reported before, made with hundreds of partially calibrated, broken stalagmites that appear to have been deliberately moved and placed in their current locations, along with the presence of several intentionally heated zones.

Jaubert contends that the complexity of the structure, combined with its difficult access, are signs of a collective project suggesting the existence of “an organized society that was already on the path to ‘modernity’.” It is not just the complexity of the structure, however, that is indicative of design. Beavers’ dams and huts are probably just as complex but are the result of blind instinct, not conception and planning, as is evident from their uniformity and frequency. What distinguishes the Neanderthal constructions is their conventionality, evident from their rarity and placement, which is the essence of symbolic thinking. Reflecting on the significance of the discovery at Bruniquel Cave, palaeoanthropologist Chris Stringer remarks that this discovery provides clear evidence that Neanderthals possessed “fully human capabilities.”

Neanderthal Twine. Just last year a 6.2 mm fragment of three-ply fiber cord was recovered from the Neanderthal site of Abri du Maras in France. Found with implements dating to 40-50 kya, the

cord consists of three strings of fibers obtained from the inner bark of a gymnosperm (conifer tree) and each twisted clockwise and then as group twisted counterclockwise. The excavators led by B. L. Hardy emphasize that cordage manufacture involves a complex *chaîne opératoire* (sequence of operations), including processing of the bark fibers and keeping track of multiple, sequential operations simultaneously to weave a cord. They opine that the production of cordage requires an understanding of mathematical concepts and general numeracy in the creation of sets of elements and pairs of numbers to create a structure. They conclude that in view of the ongoing revelations of Neanderthal art and technology, “it is difficult to see how we can regard Neanderthals as anything other than the cognitive equals of modern humans.”

Putting It All Together

Given that all human beings are descendants of a founding couple—a theological, not a scientific commitment—, Adam and Eve may be plausibly identified as belonging to the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, usually denominated *Homo heidelbergensis*, or Heidelberg Man, living perhaps >750 kya. Such an identification is fully consonant, both temporally and geographically, 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 kya. Heidelberg Man was not some teratological ape-man but was recognizably human (Fig. 1) with a cranial capacity of 1260 cm³, well within the modern range and appropriate for an author of cognitively modern behaviors.

As human beings, Neanderthals and other archaic humans are in God’s image and therefore have intrinsic moral value and share in man’s vocation. But what of Adam and Eve’s contemporaries that 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 (Gen1.26-27).

We may imagine an initial population of hominins, animals which were in many respects like human beings, but which lacked the capacity for rational thought. Out of this population, God selected two and furnished them with intellects by renovating their brains and endowing them with rational souls. One can envision a regulatory genetic mutation, perhaps divinely caused, which effected a change in the functioning of the brain that resulted in a significantly greater cognitive capacity. Such a transformation could equip them with the neurological structure to support a rational soul. Thus the radical transition effected in the founding pair that lifted them to the human level plausibly involved both biological and spiritual renovation. Some behavioral outworkings of this transformation would be immediate, but others would emerge slowly over time through environmental niche construction and gene-cultural coevolution.

Given the incompleteness of the data and the provisionality of science, the quest of the historical Adam will doubtless never be concluded in our lifetime--or in anyone’s lifetime, for that matter. Fortunately, due to the relatively low theoretical level of the science of archaeology, our tentative conclusions are not highly susceptible to sweeping changes. Adam plausibly lived sometime between around 1mya to 750 kya, a conclusion consistent with the evidence of population

genetics. The most recent plausible date for human origins will probably be pushed back with further palaeontological and archaeological discoveries. We may also expect clarification of the place of *Homo heidelbergensis* through palaeoproteomic analysis of the remains of this species. The name serves at least as a useful placeholder for that large-brained human species which was ancestral to *Homo sapiens* and our various sister species of the human family. We can live with uncertainty. For though we now see through a glass darkly, we shall one day see face to face (I Cor 13.12). In the meantime, we await new discoveries with excitement and anticipation.