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Genesis And Its Underlying Realities

Survey of Genesis ii-xi

EARLIEST men were free to roam anywhere and were given a completely free choice of vegetables and fruit for food (Gen. i. 29). By contrast, Adam was confined to the garden of Eden (ii. 15), and forbidden to eat from one particular tree (ii. 17). It will be noted in passing that i. 29 does not necessarily mean that earliest men restricted their diet to vegetables and fruit. The statement is that their diet of vegetables and fruit was free from restriction.

The Genesis narrative is so arranged that the creation of man and the creation of Adam are separated by a period of time called the 'seventh day', during which God rested from His creative activity (ii. 2).

Thus, when Adam was created and placed in Eden, the human race was already long established, and it is possible that quite advanced civilisations were already in being.

The existence of the human race before and during Adam's time (as dated in the Biblical chronology) is confirmed by abundant evidence in the fields of archaeology and anthropology, as well as by Scriptural allusions such as Gen. ii. 14-17 and vi. 2, 4.¹

It was essential for God's redemptive purpose that the garden in Eden should be isolated and cut off from the various races of mankind who existed at that time.

¹ The Biblical genealogy (Septuagint) puts Adam at about 5,500 B.C. The Genesis account describes an agricultural and pastoral life in the time of Adam, and a rapid development in the civilised arts (including the use of metals) in the period shortly afterwards.

This state of culture is compatible with what we know of the Near East in about 5000 to 6000 B.C., but it is not compatible with the ice-age conditions which existed before about 9000 B.C.

The existence of men before 9000 B.C. is well established by archaeology, and fossil remains indicate that their bone structure was the same as that of present day man. See F. E. Zeuner, 'Dating the Past, An Introduction to Geochronology' (1958).

The fine cave art of the ice-age period indicates that man had attained a very reasonable standard of mental development. This further supports the fossil evidence that intelligent men were living on the earth well before 9000 B.C. See H. Breuil, 'Forty Centuries of Cave Art' (1952).

Such isolation was achieved by locating the garden in a rainless area, where no vegetation grew. Agriculture was almost impossible and it is stated in the narrative that there were no agricultural inhabitants (ii. 5).

In the midst of this drought area the trees of the garden were sustained by a river, whose head waters were located in distant lands (ii. 10-14).

The existence of the river indicates that the rainless conditions in Eden were local and not world-wide.

The ground surrounding the garden was watered by a mist or flood (ii. 6), which must have originated from water transported to the site by the river (as there was no rain), and therefore it too must have been local in extent.

A mist might also have provided a measure of concealment from any passing travellers and may even have served to frighten them away from the area by playing on their sense of superstition and fear of the unknown.¹

When Adam and his wife were expelled from the garden, they appear to have continued living in the region nearby. The water carried by a mist might have made it possible to carry on an agricultural life, but only with the greatest difficulty (iii. 17-19). Nevertheless, the climatic conditions near the river were probably very much better than those further away, where there was little or no water to support the crops necessary for human existence.² It appears that Adam remained in this place and was still there by the time Cain and Abel had grown up. It is referred to by name in Gen. iv. 16 as 'the Presence of the Lord'.

After Cain had killed his brother Abel he was expelled from this area by God and forced to leave it entirely (iv. 11-14). Cain was now

¹ B. Ramm, 'The Christian View of Science and Scripture' (1955), p. 232.

Ramm recognised the isolated nature of Eden. He writes: 'The second chapter of Genesis states that a certain territory is staked out as it were, for man, with certain plants and certain animals making it a paradise. How large the areas was we do not know but it was an oasis for man. His days of probation were spent there. The animals that Adam named were not the thousands of the world, but those in this staked-off territory.'

² Ramm, *op. cit.* p. 233. A similar suggestion is put forward:

'Outside the Garden of Eden were death, disease, weeds, thorns, carnivores, deadly serpents, and intemperate weather. To think otherwise is to run counter to an immense avalanche of fact. Part of the blessedness of man was that he was spared all of these things in his Paradise, and part of the judgment of man was that he had to forsake such a Paradise and enter the world as it was outside the Garden, where thistles grew and weeds were abundant and where wild animals roamed and where life was possible only by the sweat of man's brow.'

being driven out into a forbidding wilderness, where the struggle for existence would be even more difficult than in the past (iv. 12). Worse still, driven out of the enshrouding mists of the river area he would be alone, unhidden, and completely at the mercy of any who might find him. By this time Cain must have been aware of the existence of other men, and aware too that their presence spelt danger. He felt certain he would be discovered and killed (iv. 14). It seems his fears were well founded, for God took his appeal seriously and marked him for his own protection (iv. 15).

Cain did more than merely establish friendly relations with the existing population in the area 'to the east'. He married into them, organised them, and became a man who was feared (iv. 17-24). The descendants of this racial intermarriage were pioneers of accomplishment in the civilisation of their day (iv. 20-22).

In the meantime the reason for Cain's expulsion from his family had become apparent. In his absence, a third son, Seth, had been born, who was chosen to carry on the Messianic Succession (iv. 25). After this, the narrative records that Adam had further sons and daughters (ii. 4).

Genesis vi describes how Adam's sons intermarried with earlier inhabitants, and indicates that this had a dramatic effect on the future history of the civilisation (vi. 2).

Although the descendants of this intermarriage were men of outstanding ability in the material and cultural spheres, their influence also led to deepening moral and spiritual wickedness which ultimately led to the destruction of the entire civilisation at the time of the flood (vi. 1-7).

The term 'sons of God', used in vi. 2, 4, would be applied naturally enough to Adam's descendants, because they would be associated in men's minds with his own miraculous origin in Eden, and the same expression is used of Adam in the New Testament in Luke iii. 38.

Man's need and God's redemptive purpose were first revealed to the human race through Adam. The lesson and message of Eden must have been passed down from generation to generation by the patriarchs of the Messianic Succession until it was incorporated into the book of Genesis by Moses. Evidence of the spiritual life it produced can be seen amongst the Messianic patriarchs themselves, in Enoch, Noah and Abraham, as well as in others such as Abel, Job and Melchisedec.

Such a message, and such an unusual and indeed incredible testimony as that which Adam gave, would be certain to arouse a great deal of

scepticism amongst the majority of his fellow-men. Thus we can readily see why God endorsed this earliest revelation of His purpose, by bestowing on those who carried His message the gift of miraculous longevity (v. 3-32, and xi. 10-32). The patriarchs of the Messianic line lived to such miraculous ages that all who encountered them must have felt compelled to acknowledge the divine origin of their message.¹

The climatic changes which occurred as a result of the flood are worthy of note. As we have seen, the drought region, which was a means of isolating Eden from the rest of mankind, became the scene of Adam's unrewarding toil when he was expelled from the garden. His contemporaries in the early Mesopotamian civilisation must have suffered from the same unfavourable climatic conditions. The flood, however, brought about changes which led to a more normal climate and much easier agriculture (viii. 32). The sight of the rainbow was probably unknown in the area before the flood, due to the lack of atmospheric moisture. Its first appearance after the flood must have made an admirable token of God's covenant to those who had never previously seen it (ix. 12-16).

The Place of Adam in Scripture

One reason for the popularity of the traditional doctrine of the universal fatherhood of Adam is its apparent simplicity. Its simplicity, however, is not a valid reason for its defence. In the sphere of science, we have been forced to abandon the simplicity of Newtonian astronomy in favour of the complex and 'difficult' Relativity theory of Einstein. The simplicity of a theory, either in science or theology, is no criterion of its correctness. If we are to find any valid support for the doctrine of universal human descent from Adam, we must seek it in Scripture, which is the only reliable authority on this particular subject at our disposal.

Romans v. 12-21

We are not told in this passage that sin and death are transmitted through heredity. The means of transmission is not stated, but it is clear that transmission does occur, that it originates in Adam, and

¹ Ramm. op. cit. p. 242. Ramm recognised that longevity might be a special gift of the Messianic patriarchs, not shared by other men. He writes:

'In passing it must be mentioned that longevity is attributed to the Seth line and not the Cain line, i.e. not all men lived to such ages but only those who were bearers of the true religion of God and the promises.'

that it reaches to the whole human race, both those who received the Law and those who did not.

The influence of time factor is referred to in v. 13 and v. 14, where Paul differentiates between the period before the Law and that after. The period from 'Adam to Moses' is expressly mentioned. However, before laying too much stress on the time factor, we must note the very wide and sweeping scope of v. 18, where the righteousness of Christ is described as opening up the way for all men for justification.

The existence of men in Old Testament times, who clearly benefited from grace, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham, shows that the grace provided in Christ was operative backwards in time as well as forwards. But it appears from this passage as a whole and particularly from x. 18 f. that there is a great deal of similarity between the ministration of sin and death from Adam and the ministration of grace from Christ. It is therefore conceivable, if the sin and death from Adam were transmitted in the same way as grace, that it too could be operative backwards in time from Adam as well as forwards. Adam, therefore, might have been a valid representative of men who lived before him as well as of those who lived after.

Before leaving this passage we must note that transmission of sin by heredity is not mentioned, and that although Adam is viewed as a representative man, he is not said to be the first man ever to live on earth.

1 Cor. xv. 21 f. and 45-49

This passage continues on essentially the same theme as the previous one. Verses 21 and 22 reiterate what we have already read in Romans v.

The subsequent verses bring the first possible reference to Adam as the first man on earth. Before reaching conclusions about these verses, however, we must ask ourselves in what way Adam is to be viewed as first.

It is clear that this passage is seeking to draw a comparison between Adam and Christ, so that positive statements about Adam are paralleled with similar but contrasting statements about Christ. We see two titles given to Christ, 'the last Adam', and 'the second man'. Clearly, these two titles of Christ are meant to convey a spiritual meaning, rather than some literal statement of fact.

However, if the passage is seeking to draw a comparison between Adam and Christ in the spiritual sense, and for this purpose Christ is given the title of 'the second man', we must feel free to view Adam's titles in a spiritual sense also. We cannot accept that Christ's title of 'the second man' (45, 47) should be viewed in a literal and natural sense, and therefore we cannot insist that Adam's title of the 'first man' (45, 47) should be viewed in a literal and natural sense either. Of course, the possibility of such an interpretation is not ruled out, but on the other hand we cannot definitely say that the passage teaches it.

1 Tim. ii. 13 f.

This passage deals with the conduct and relative precedence of men and women in Christian life and church affairs. Paul supports his teaching by reference to a created order indicated in Gen. ii. In the created order of Gen. ii, 'Adam was first formed, then Eve' (14). While this verse clearly teaches the precedence of Adam relative to Eve, it cannot, in its contest, be taken as teaching the precedence of Adam relative to the whole human race.

Jude 14

This verse refers to Enoch being seventh from Adam. It conveys the fact that there were seven generations between Adam and Enoch, but could hardly be taken to convey anything more. Adam, after all, if he were not the first human being on earth, nevertheless retains the position of being the first human being to be specifically named and described in the record of Scripture. As such, he is the inevitable landmark from which Biblical genealogies are reckoned.

Summary of New Testament References

In summarising our examination of the New Testament references, we must note that we cannot anywhere find a clear and definite statement to indicate conclusively that Adam was the first man on earth, nor can we find a clear and definite statement that all men now living are descended from him. This is certainly not to deny the unity of the whole human race. Such unity is implied in the statement that when God created man, He made man 'in His image, after His likeness' (Gen. i. 26). Adam is identified in this unity, in Gen. v. 2. And in the 'transmission' of sin and death, described in Rom. v, all men are identified in the unity of the human race without any boundaries whatsoever.

Gen. v. 1, 2

A number of points in the detailed wording of these verses are worthy of careful consideration. They involve a double statement, based on the dual sense of the Hebrew or original pre-Hebrew word which can equally mean either 'Adam' or 'Man'.

Referring to 'Adam', Gen. v. 2 states that he was called 'Man', or, in other words, the Adam who lived in the garden of Eden had a fully human nature. The second and more important meaning of Gen. v. 2, achieved simply by reversing the senses in which the word is understood, bring us to its deeper application. For when 'Man' was first created (in Gen. 1), God called their name 'Adam'. The form and context of the verse enforce the simultaneous use of both these two meanings. Because the verse is an integral part of the Messianic genealogy, the reference to Adam as subject is unavoidable. But at the same time the verse is cast in an unusual form and with associative wording which relate it to the original creation of man described in Gen. 1. 26 f., thereby enforcing the second meaning.

Firstly, we may consider the verses as they relate strictly to the couple in Eden. It is clear from the narrative of Gen. 2 that both Adam and Eve were especial and unique creations of God. Gen. v. 1 clearly refers to a creation, but we must note that it does not explicitly state that it was the first creation. We may therefore take Gen. v. 1 f. as applying to the couple in Eden without in any way committing ourselves to the view that they were the first human beings on earth, from whom all others are descended. The close association of these verses with the table of Adam's generations suggests that they do in fact refer primarily to him. In that they refer primarily to him, they make it clear that he was made in the likeness of God, and hence shared a common nature with man of Gen. 1. 26 f.

A secondary meaning to the verses is also clearly suggested. The name 'Adam' can equally be translated 'the man' and vice versa, and it is interesting to note how the Authorised translators' choice of words brings out the second meaning rather than the first. The expression 'in the day that God created man' immediately connects in the reader's mind with the 'day' of creation in Gen. 1. Furthermore, the whole form of Gen. v. 1 and 2 seems superfluous to the strict requirements of the historical narrative at this point, if it were taken as referring solely to Eden. The same form acquires point and relevant meaning when the verses are considered in the light of their secondary but vital purpose of associating the original man of Gen.

i. 26-28 with the Adam of Gen. ii. The expression 'called their name Adam' indicates that original man, like ourselves, was reckoned to share in the nature of Adam, and therefore to share in his sin and in his condemnation to spiritual and physical death. The use of the plural and the emphasis on the creation of 'male and female' (a further reflection of Gen. i. 27) serve to underline further this secondary meaning.

We must be quite clear that the two meanings conveyed by these verses are not incompatible and mutually exclusive. Rather, they exist side by side in the verses. While the primary reference is that of the context, to the Adam of Eden, the form, content, and associations of the verses also imply a vital link with the originally created man of Gen. i. 26 ff. Thus the verses are, in effect, the Old Testament equivalent of Rom. v and 1 Cor. xv, and they say exactly the same thing about the spiritual relationship between the entire human race and the Adam of Eden as these later New Testament passages.

Deut. xxxii. 8

This verse appears to refer to the dispersion of peoples and nations after the flood. They are described here as 'the sons of Adam', although the alternative rendering 'the sons of man' would be equally valid. The first rendering is certainly correct in that the peoples of the dispersion were descendants of Noah, who himself traced his descent to Adam. A reference to 'the sons of Adam' in this context is therefore quite in place, whether Adam was the first man on earth or whether he was not.

Psalm li. 5

No reference is made to Adam in this verse, but it seems to indicate that a corrupt and sinful nature is transmitted by heredity. At birth, and even before, this nature is implanted within the individual.

The verse is linked in the minds of many with Rom. v, and it is suggested that the method of 'transmission' of sin and death in Rom. v is by the process of heredity described in Psalm li. 5. From this it is argued that all men must be descended from Adam, because they all obtain a sinful and corrupt nature through heredity.

However, we must note that the New Testament writers do not specifically link these verses. Even if heredity does play a part in the transmission of sin and death to all men, it does not necessarily follow that the line of heredity stems from Adam.

In Gen. v. 2 we see a spiritual identification of the originally created human race with Adam. It is therefore irrelevant whether the first man was Adam or whether he was not. Scripture teaches that 'God called *their* name Adam, in the day when *they* were created'. Here then, in the origin of the human race (wherever or whenever it was), we have an identification with Adam, and in such an identification with Adam we find sin and death coming upon the first men. If sin and death are in any sense transmitted by heredity it is equally possible that they could be transmitted from these earliest men rather than from Adam himself. We have already noted how the results of Adam's sin may operate backwards in time as well as forwards, in the same way as the saving work of Christ. Thus men who lived long before Adam would be under the same dominion of sin and death as those who have lived since. This is not to say that we can explain the transmission of sin and death in Romans v fully in terms of the heredity process of Psalm li. 5. But whatever part the process of heredity plays, it in no way ties down to Adam as being the first man on earth and father of the whole human race.

The Role of Adam in Theology

Adam was a man whom God created individually and specially, to fulfil the role of 'First Representative' (1 Cor. xv. 47).

His isolation in the garden in Eden, the idealised conditions of paradise which prevailed there, and his miraculous creation from the dust and from the Breath of God, all had one end in view. This was to demonstrate that man will sin against God regardless of his origin and circumstances. The manner of Adam's creation safeguarded him from any possible taint of heredity or environment, whilst the isolation of the garden safeguarded him from the evil and tainting influences of his fellow men. His circumstances were in every way ideal and could hardly be improved upon. He had no lack of suitable companionship. The commandment he was given cost him nothing to keep, for he had sufficient to eat and an ample choice. Yet Adam broke the only commandment which God had given him, and 1 Tim. ii. 14 records that he was not acting under any deception when he did so.

Adam could make no excuses about his heredity or environment. Before God, he was without any excuse at all. The death penalty passed upon him was an act of complete justice.

Adam's name, which simply means 'the Man', identifies him as a

valid representative of the human race. We can find nothing special about him, apart from his unusual creation. His name gives no identifying feature which would make him distinguishable from anyone else, indeed, it seems deliberately chosen to associate him with the whole of humanity.

Thus Rom. v and I Cor. xv bring Adam before us as a representative of the human race, and in the latter passage he is termed 'The First Man', implying a similar representative office to that of Christ, who is termed in the same context 'The Second Man'. (Clearly we cannot accept Christ's title of Second Man in a literal sense, and therefore we would not be justified in taking Adam's title of First Man in a literal sense either.)

Because of man's effective identity with Adam, God's judgment and condemnation of the human race in Adam is an act of absolute justice. God's sentence is passed, not merely on human sin, but on sin which by its nature is utterly without excuse. Everyday experience teaches us that we sin, and also that we have, and have always had, a sinful and corrupt nature. Lest we should blame our behaviour on our nature, and claim that it is God's fault in creation for allowing us to be as corrupt as we are, Eden is brought before us. In Eden we see that man's sin is at root independent of heredity and environment. Created without a sinful and corrupt nature, man will still sin, and thereby acquire one.

Thus, in Rom. v. 12, we see that sentence of death was passed upon all men, not because they are descended from Adam, but because they all sinned in him. In Adam man's sin is brought out into the open (Rom. v. 13). It is a violation of God's covenant (Hos. vi. 7), utterly without excuse. Such sin demands the death sentence, but in sentencing Adam, God must sentence the whole human race who bear his nature. Adam and man are so bound together by their kinship of nature that it is impossible to separate them. All men do not commit precisely the sin which Adam committed (Rom. v. 14), simply because they have not been put in his position. A covenant-breaking sin cannot be committed when there is no covenant, but nevertheless sin remains a reality in man's nature (Rom. v. 13), and given a covenant to break, man will surely break it (Rom. ii. 1).

The Spiritual Status of Man

In the foreknowledge of God the human race has been reckoned 'in Adam' even from its inception, because the fundamental nature and

character of man has been basically unchanged throughout his history (Gen. i. 26 f.).

The spiritual identity of the human race with Adam, from the time of its creation onwards, is taught in Gen. v. 2. The statement in Gen. v. 2 that when God created Man, he called their name Adam, implies that from the very beginning God has counted the human race as having Adam's nature. And by having Adam's nature, Man was counted as a potential partaker in Adam's sin, even though Adam's sin was then still future. As a result the death sentence described in Romans v. was operative on mankind even before the time of Adam, as well as on mankind after him. In the same way, the saving work of Christ was operative in Old Testament times, long before His redemptive act had actually taken place (Heb. xi. 13-16). The foreknowledge of God permits both the saving work of Christ and the condemnation through Adam to be operative throughout the entire period of human history, both before and after the central events concerned.

Thus it will be seen that God's condemnation of man is not due to his corrupt heredity. It is possible that heredity may be used as one of the instruments of condemnation, for instance by transmitting traits leading to senility and ultimate death. But heredity is neither the reason for condemnation nor the ultimate cause of it. The New Testament passages which deal with this subject, namely Rom. v and 1 Cor. xv, have nothing to say about heredity. On the contrary, the Genesis account of Eden makes it clear that the chain of heredity was deliberately broken (Gen. ii. 7), thus demonstrating that it was not the factor involved.

Man cannot be condemned to death for his heredity, for it is a matter over which he has no control. He is condemned for a wilful act of disobedience, committed in Eden, in which the operation of heredity could not be held to blame.

Man's sin in Eden demonstrates that his problem goes very much deeper than his heredity, environment, circumstances, companionships, or even the kind of commands or spiritual laws he is required to keep. Eden shows that the ultimate seat of man's problem is to be found in his own freedom of will and freedom of self-determination. Yet rob him of these and he is no longer truly man, for he is no longer in the image and likeness of God. Here we have a dilemma, and it is one of such magnitude that the only possible solution was to be found in the Cross and redemptive work of Christ.

It is of course equally true that the human race is self-contaminating and that environmental and hereditary conditions have a corrupting

influence on man. These facts are taught in Gen. v. 4 and Ps. li. 5. But we must note that these factors are given a second place in Scripture, and are not mentioned at all in the New Testament, in the key passages which deal with the origin and universality of human sin.

In Eden we see that sin is, at root, independent of heredity. And God condemns man because of his sin in Eden, not because of his heredity. Thus men do not die 'from Adam', implying a process of heredity, but, as the apostle Paul said, they die 'in Adam', implying effective identity (1 Cor. xv. 22).

The Typology of Eden

It is not the purpose of this thesis to develop or discuss the typology of Eden in any detail. However, the subject must be given a brief mention in order to fit it in with the main subject under consideration, and deal with a possible cause of difficulty in Gen. iii. 20.

We are familiar already with two typological allusions in the Eden narrative, firstly, that in which the common flesh and blood of Adam and Eve represents the marriage institution, and secondly, that in which Adam represents Christ and Eve the Church.

However the most consistent, and therefore, perhaps, most important typological allusion is that in which Adam represents the general race of man whilst Eve represents the redeemed who are called out of it. In this type we first see that God himself creates a redeemed race from a parent humanity (Gen. ii. 22). It will be noted that the parent humanity is unconscious of the process which is really taking place (21) and also that the redeemed race is small compared with the parent, being represented merely by a rib in the type. The spiritual attitudes of Adam and Eve were very different, as pointed out in 1 Tim. iii. 14. The latter verse implies that Adam's sin was deliberate, which is a most serious charge, but the verse also says that Eve's sin was the result of her being deceived. It will be noted that the serpent directed all his attentions to Eve, and did not waste any time on Adam: clearly it was not necessary, as the narrative subsequently bears out, for Adam's sin was not dependent on the wiles of the serpent. When challenged by God, Eve said she was 'beguiled', but Adam had no such excuse to offer. However, the most significant difference brought out in the type is the difference in treatment meted out to the two sinners. Adam, the deliberate sinner, was condemned to death (iii. 19), but Eve, although punished by suffering and sorrow, and condemned to subservience to her husband,

was to be the bearer of new life (16). The fact that Eve was not specifically condemned to death is most significant, both in this type and in the type of Christ and the Church previously mentioned.

In the narrative Adam's naming of Eve (iii. 20) is closely connected with God's judgment which had just been announced, for the future now hinged on the future life which Eve alone could bring forth. In the type this incident is used to drive home the spiritual meaning. Eve has been beguiled into sinning and is technically just as guilty as Adam. Nevertheless she has a different attitude of heart to Adam, and has found a place of forgiveness before God. While suffering much she will bring forth a new and eternal life. In this capacity she is, spiritually, 'the mother of all living'.

Although the spiritual teaching of this type might be taken further, it is convenient to leave it at this point, having dealt with the spiritual meaning underlying Gen. iii. 20; a verse which would otherwise cause difficulty in the general theory of origins which has been under consideration.

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