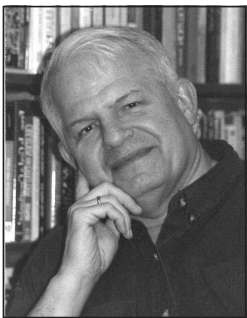


Dialogue: Response

The Original Adam and the Reality of Sin



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[McIntyre's] proposed explanation of the creation of the image of God [is]: we became human — in God's image — by learning to sin.

I must state at the outset that I am not a theologian, nor all that familiar with debates in that field. I think there are some problems with McIntyre's discussions of the creeds that are beyond my area of expertise, and I trust the theologians among us will speak to them. Nevertheless, I do feel certain aspects of McIntyre's reconciliation of theological questions and the scientific data raise serious questions.

I agree that there are discrepancies between the description of culture in the early chapters of Genesis and the descriptions of science of the early chapters of modern human existence. Tens, or possibly hundreds, of thousands of years lie between the early moderns and their dynamic stone-age cultures and the first urban civilizations. Thus, to take both narratives seriously, either one must consider the biblical cultural description as a metaphor for culture in general or one must change the meaning of the explanation for how humanity became flawed. McIntyre has chosen the latter. I believe this reconciliation has some serious problems.

First, note his proposed explanation of the creation of the image of God: we became human — in God's image — by learning to sin. Before that, Adam was apparently innocent but not righteous — God's law was written on his heart by disobeying it, by following his here-to-for "innocent animal desires." But surely God's law was placed in Adam's mind by the *command* of God, not by Adam's

failure to obey it. Further, it was not Adam's animal desire (nice fruit!) but the Satanic desire (be like God himself!) which led to the disobedience, i.e., the *first* sin is pride and envy, not gluttony. Adam learned only what rebellion/evil felt like — if he had obeyed, he would have learned righteousness instead.

Further, McIntyre argues that this fall into sin is *how* humanity comes to be in God's image. But Gen. 1:26–29 states that God *created* humanity in his image. The implication would be that human disobedience is God's method of creation, how we "fell up" to become what he intended us to be. This I consider inconsistent with God's holiness. Jesus was the full image of God because he did *not* disobey. Rather than Adam "transcending" the world by disobedience, he became subject to the earthly law of death. His "transcendence" as the master of the Garden was lost in sweat and thistles.

McIntyre argues that the method of transmission of "the image of God/the fall into sin" from the man Adam to other people living at that time was by a sort of cultural infection. Cultural transmissions always mutate as they go. So why is there still a common moral core to human civilizations? C. S. Lewis did speak about the movement of civilization from a common source like an epidemic — but Lewis was arguing that the common Tao of diverse civilizations implied a common *divine* source for moral ideas, a common writing on the hearts of all people. One wonders why no human ethnic group resisted the disobedience and remained innocent.

So, can city formation be used as a marker for this spreading epidemic of transcendent sinners? It is true that city formation can be timed and traced. But I do not think the tie of

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city to morality can be falsified—except for McIntyre’s #5, page 97. According to Jonathan Haas of the Chicago Field Museum, urban development came to the coast of Peru around 3000 BC, 4,000 years “early” based on McIntyre’s time line for communication routes. Beyond that, the suggested tests of the theory simply cannot be applied.

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McIntyre defines sin as acts which are wrong *due to the state of the heart of the doer*—as long as the doer of the act is innocent, no act is sin—not even human sacrifice. There is no way to read the state of the heart of long dead people. Thus, we cannot tell if there were sinners before *or* after Adam, nor if sin existed before 9000 BC, nor if there were sinners among the farmers before the cities, nor if the inhabitants of the cities were sinners. Did the fact that native Australians built no cities mean they were still innocent, unfallen, when Europeans arrived? We cannot falsify the theory.

Personally, I think Adam lived long before the culture of Genesis, that he disobeyed the divine command, choosing the downward *rather than* the upward path and that all of us—his kids, foster or genetic—trail along after him. We are sinners born, not because we are guilty at birth but because we will disobey as soon as we get the chance. That propensity is our “original sin.” We are sinners. We are bipeds. We do not become bipeds by taking our first step. It is innate. We do not need medicine, we need a soul transplant. ☼



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