

Christology without the “Fall”

**Do we need Adam and Eve?
Impact on Jesus’ mission(s)**

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Outline

- Goal: What? So what?
- Earlier talks
- Development of *homo sapiens*
- Conscience/soul
- Definition of a “fall”
- God, Evolution and Jazz
- ...a wrathful God?
- Jesus’ Mission(s)

Disclaimers

- I realize that a study of Christology may not be relevant to non-Christians in the audience.
- I will be challenging the literal truth of Genesis chapters 2 and 3.
- I will be contradicting the teachings of some “Fathers” of my faith – St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Anselm. Please don’t burn me at the stake!
- By the way, I’ll be contradicting John Calvin too.
- Important because bad science leads to bad theology which can be destructive to one’s faith, e.g., “how can a loving God want this?”.
- Most of the “science” regarding Adam and Eve was presented by Chick Keller’s talk.

I'm not alone in my concerns

Saving Adam: Evolution & Original Sin, by John Farrell, in *Commonweal*, July 6, 2018

- “One way of dealing with the dissonance is simply to ignore or even deny the science.”
- “At the other end of the spectrum, ...In his book *Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration* (2011), Fr. Jack Mahoney argues that, after Darwin, there is no longer a need or a place in Christian belief for the doctrines of the Fall, original sin, and human concupiscence resulting from that sin.”
- Other theologians include Piet Schoonenberg, Herbert McCabe, Daryl P. Domning, Monika K. Hellwig, and Josef Ratzinger.



Definitions

- Christology is a historical and systematic study of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the object and foundation of the Christian faith. John P. Galvin, “Jesus Christ,” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2nd ed. Ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 255-314.
- Soteriology (derived from *soteria*) is the study of the saving work of Christ—“Something exceedingly good happens to people in their encounter with Jesus Christ. Fundamentally they are put right with God. . . Given the profound impact of Jesus Christ on their lives the question naturally arises – who is he?” Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 4.
- The “Fall” - later

Goal

- What?
 - Chick showed that *Gen: 2/3* are allegorical, not historical.
 - There was no collective “Fall” from grace.
 - Bad science (or no science) can lead to bad theology
- So what?
 - Our God is not a wrathful God
 - Jesus was not sent to “patch things up” between God and man
 - What were Jesus’ mission(s)?
 - Did Jesus have to die?
 - Did Jesus die for our sins or to give hope for eternal life?

Relevant earlier talks by LA F&S Authors

- “God, Evolution, and Jazz”, Pastor Bruce Kuenzel, June 2014
- “Soteriology after Darwin: Mission(s) of Jesus Christ”, Morris Pongratz, March, 2015
- “Evolution Observed and Thought About”, Chick Keller, June 2018
- “Adam, the Genome, and Evolution” and “Evolution, Intelligent Design, and the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis”, Prof. Dennis Venema, July 2018
- “Why have Hope?”, Morris Pongratz, June, 2020
- “The Genes of Genesis: Original Sin and Gene-Culture Co-evolution”, Nels Hoffman, June 2020
- “Adam and Eve Their existence and implications from both Science and Faith”, Chick Keller, October, 2020

Development of *homo sapiens*

Recap from “Adam and Eve: Their existence and implications from both Science and Faith” Chick Keller, 10/15/2020

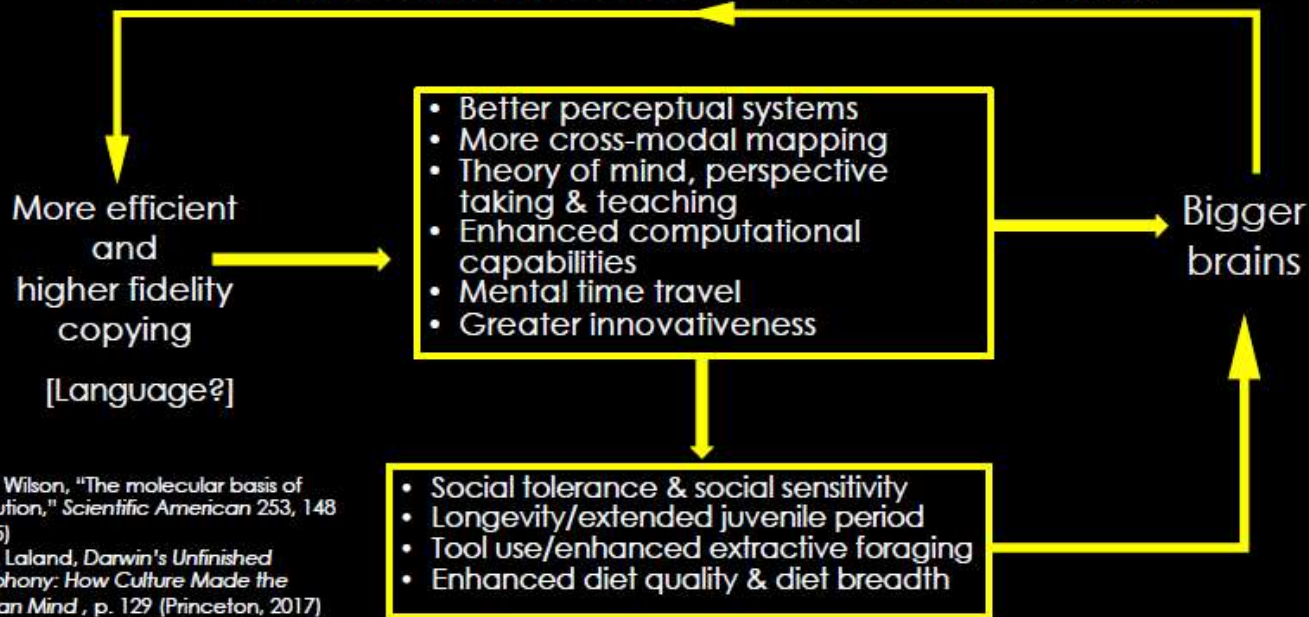
- A rather continuous record of increasing brain size and abilities from fossils.
- *Homo Sapiens* seems to have originated from a combination of previous hominins in particular *Homo erectus* and *H. heidelbergensis*.
- Neanderthals seem to also have come from *H. heidelbergensis*
- Earliest records of *H. sapiens* come from Africa—325,000 years ago. By 200,000 year ago they had spread throughout Africa, and they now have been found to have left Africa at least 125,000 years ago!
- *Homo erectus* has been found over most of Asia and Africa much earlier than *H. sapiens* but perhaps overlapping?
- From gene studies, must have been part of a larger group—6,000-10,000 individuals

Lifted from Nels' talk last year "The Genes of Genesis" 13 May 2020

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HOW DID BEHAVIORAL MODERNITY EMERGE?

The "cultural drive" hypothesis:
Selection for more efficient and accurate social learning leads to increased brain size, which feeds back to enhance social learning



Allan C. Wilson, "The molecular basis of evolution," *Scientific American* 253, 148 (1985)
Kevin N. Laland, *Darwin's Unfinished Symphony: How Culture Made the Human Mind*, p. 129 (Princeton, 2017)

Caveat

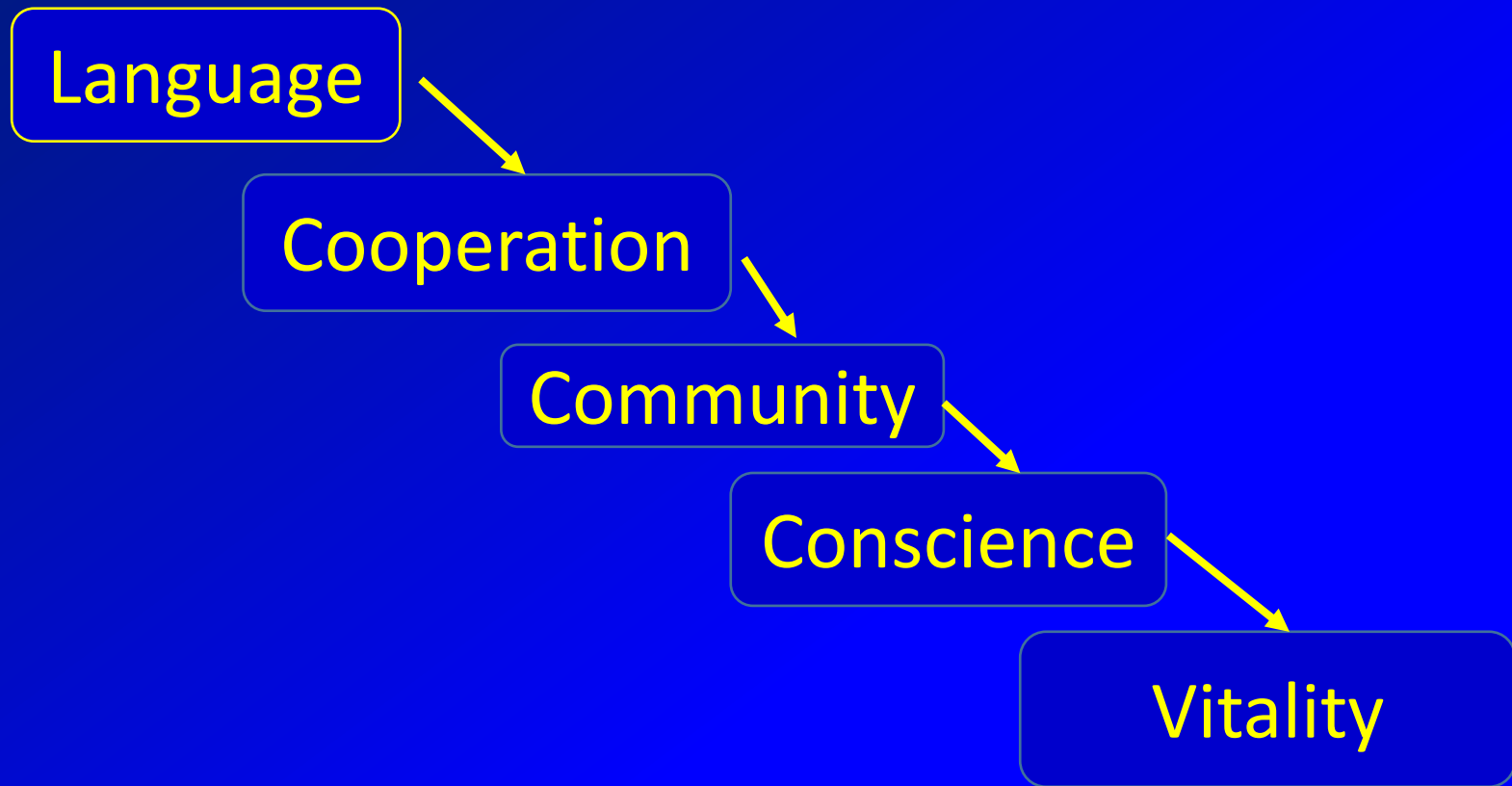
“When you look at the narrative for hominin origins, it’s just a big mess — there’s no consensus whatsoever...People are working under completely different paradigms, and that’s something that I don’t see happening in other fields of science.” Sergio Almécija, a senior research scientist in the American Museum of Natural History’s Division of Anthropology

The fairer sex did play an important role:
Recent research shows that Betty and Wilma invented
language – can there be any doubt?



Cascade of Improvements

My hypothesis: eons of time – with feedback – no “t-zero”



The knowledge of good and evil

How did/do humans acquire a conscience?

- Development of a conscience actually strengthened the evolution of hominids.
 - Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*) demonstrated that our altruistic behavior originated in evolution because it helps our survival.
- Those hominids with a conscience prospered and flourished. The other hominids disappeared.
- Humans did not need Judeo-Christian revelation to develop a belief in God, e.g., Native Americans belief in a “Great Spirit”.
- Does the “soul” develop with “conscience”?
 - Soul = “Form” of the body, in Scholasticism.
 - “Soul” = “knowledge of right and wrong”???
- Hypothesis - “Soul” is not binary, it grows in proportion to ability to love.
- With a conscience and awareness of good and evil came the **angst**, the fear of death and judgement.

Definition of the “fall”

- A “fall” is a transition from one state to another, lower one.
- Description of the two states:

Before the fall

- Adam and Eve possessed these gifts before the Fall.
Catechism of the Catholic Church, #374-376.
- Preternatural gifts
 - infused knowledge,
 - absence of concupiscence, and
 - bodily immortality
- We were not to remain in the Garden of Paradise forever even if Adam had not sinned, but after passing through the years of our probation or trial upon earth we were to be taken, body and soul, into heaven without suffering death.

After the fall

Gen 3:16-17

- Adam and Eve, on account of their sin, lost innocence and holiness, and were doomed to sickness and death.
- Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise and condemned to toil. God also ordained that henceforth the earth should yield no crops without cultivation, and that the beasts, man's former friends, should become his savage enemies.
- Our nature was corrupted by the sin of our first parents, which darkened our understanding, weakened our will, and left in us a strong inclination to evil.
- God shut the gates to heaven.

From “Adam and Eve: Their existence and implications from both Science and Faith” Chick Keller, 10/15/2020

Stories in Genesis we probably no longer believe

- The 900 year or so ages of early humans
- That bad angels bred with humans to produce giants
- That building of the tower of Babel really was the source of languages
- That Noah could have put all of the Earth’s animals into the Arc
- That there is enough water to flood the entire earth
- **The Garden of Eden which needed a Cherubim with a flaming sword to keep people out (Gen 3:24)**
- A tree whose fruit could give you the knowledge of good and evil
- Where that garden was--given that humans arose in Africa
- That women suddenly had pain in childbirth
- That snakes didn’t exist till then

Protestant and Orthodox teachings regarding Adam and Eve

The primary difference between such evangelical Protestant and Orthodox teachings regarding Adam and Eve lay in the Orthodox emphasis on life before the Fall as unknowable mystery, and in Orthodox anthropology that emphasizes the Fall as a catastrophic Ancestral Sin making man susceptible to sin and death—not involving the personal inherited guilt of Augustinian Original Sin taught in many Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

Father Seraphim Rose compiled by Abbot Damascene Christiansen in the late-twentieth-century English-language book “*Genesis, Creation, and Early Man*”

A “Fall”?

My God, we’re getting better!

- Science has never found any evidence that a “before the Fall” world existed.
- If anything, the data shows an incline going upwards in human behavior
- A look at the data – Steven Arthur Pinker
 - Murder
 - Poverty
 - Pollution
 - War
 - Autocrats
 - War
 - Democracy
 - Homicide
 - Car crashes
 - Act of god
 - lightning

“God, Evolution, and Jazz”

Pastor Bruce Kuenzel, June 2014

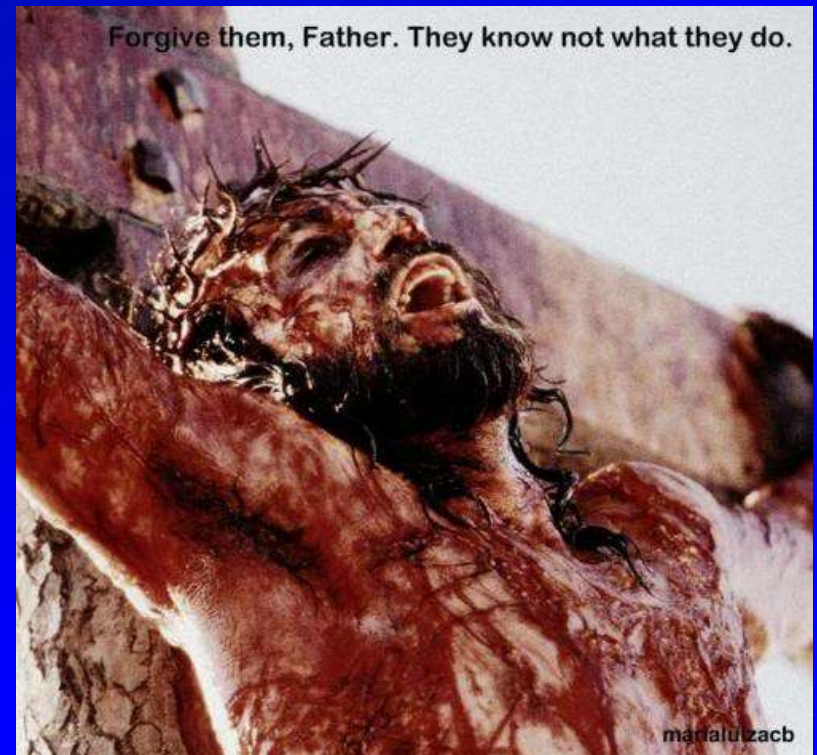
- I'd like to begin by suggesting God is more like Wynton Marsalis than Ludwig van Beethoven...
- ...I believe that both Scripture and science suggest a different image of God -- God as a jazz master. God is something like Wynton Marsalis...
- ...Here is what I mean. In jazz, there are certain constants or givens that are set down before anyone begins to play. The ensemble also has to agree on a key signature and the tempo...
- ...If death is something that God did not intend from the beginning, but rather is something that emerged from a range of contingent possibilities, then what did God do about this? Did God simply shrug God's shoulders and say: "Oh, well." How did God respond to the emergence of death? ...
- The Christian gospel is one answer. The Christian gospel makes three basic claims. The **first** is that the Creator did not remain a distant observer...The **second** claim is that in Jesus God took into God's own self all the world's pain, sickness, terror, tragedy and death. Finally, the **third** claim is that God transforms death.

Jesus' mission absent a "Fall"

- In the face of human fragility, God did not turn his back on humankind. No alienation between God and Humankind. No need to make amends to God.
- Historian Robin Lane Fox argues that the foundation of Augustine's doctrine of original sin ... was based on a mis-translation of Paul the Apostle's Epistle to the Romans (Romans 5:12-21) by Augustine, in his *"On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin"*.

What kind of a God demands the crucifixion of his Son as payment for our sins?

- The movie “The Passion of the Christ” got me to thinking... Why did Jesus have to die? And die a painful, public, humiliating death? Wouldn't a paper cut have been enough?
- The Satisfaction theory of the atonement was formulated by Anselm of Canterbury in his book, *Cur Deus Homo* (lit. 'Why the God-Man?'). Anselm undertook to explain the rational necessity of the Christian mystery of the atonement.
- The argument at its core is that only a human being can make recompense for human sin against God, but this being impossible for any human being, such recompense could only be made by God.
- God's way of opening up a way of salvation and reversing the effects of Adam's fall required one who possessed the inclination to sin and yet overcome it's temptations completely to be a perfect sacrifice to take away sin. Jesus then was totally unique. He was indeed the only begotten son of God.
- I disagree...



Jesus' mission -I

Shepherd - telling us how to live

- Mark 1: ¹⁴ *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*
- Luke 4:43: *But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."*
- Matthew 5: the beatitudes
- His parables *“promised a radical reversal of values, bringing in a new world in a revolution wrought by God, not humans”* John Meier, “Jesus,” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, (New York: Pearson, 1989), 1320.

Jesus' mission - II

Pathfinder – conquering death

- Pathfinder - a person who goes ahead and discovers or shows others a path or way.
- Mark 10:33-34: *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death, but after three days he will rise.”*
- John 3:16: *“For **God so loved the world** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*
- Jesus needed a savage, public death to establish the miracle of the resurrection and our afterlife - his bona fides.

Questions?

- God's role – a Beethoven symphony or Pastor Kuenzel's "jazz" analogy?
- Why did Saint Anselm propose the "atonement" mission?
- Why did Jesus die?

Jesus – Shepherd and Pathfinder

- “On the cross Jesus shared in the brokenness of our world. This means that God determines in absolute freedom, down the ages, who and how he wills to be in his deepest being, namely a God of men and women, an ally in our suffering and absurdity, and also an ally in the good we do. In his own being he is a God for us.”
- – Edward Schillebeeckx, Church, 126.
- “God’s plunging into human history and transforming it from within”
- – Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse (NY: Crossroad, 1992), 153. It shows that the transcendent God “is capable
- “The victory of shalom is won not by the sword of the warrior god but by the awesome power of compassionate love, in and through solidarity with those who suffer”
- – Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is, 159.

“God, Evolution, and Jazz”

Pastor Bruce Kuenzel, June 2014

- I'd like to begin by suggesting God is more like Wynton Marsalis than Ludwig van Beethoven. Here's what I mean by that. Beethoven was a symphonic composer. For example, he sat down and composed his *Fifth Symphony*. He wrote the whole thing from beginning to end between 1805-1808.
- The problem with this image of God, at least in my mind, is that it doesn't reflect what we know about God: not only from the study of the Scriptures, but also our study of the universe. This image of God comes much more from the ancient Greek notion of fate.
- I believe that both Scripture and science suggest a different image of God -- God as a jazz master. God is something like Wynton Marsalis. Here is what I mean. In jazz, there are certain constants or givens that are set down before anyone begins to play. There is the melody – let's say, *Oh When the Saints*. The ensemble also has to agree on a key signature and the tempo. For example: “Let's play it in the key of G at 85 beats per minute.”

“God, Evolution, and Jazz”

Pastor Bruce Kuenzel, June 2014

- So there is a fixed structure. There are parameters. But once Marsalis and his jazz mates start to play there is genuine freedom. They make it up as they go along – in response to the audience, the other musicians, and what is happening internally.
- If death is something that God did not intend from the beginning, but rather is something that emerged from a range of contingent possibilities, then what did God do about this? Did God simply shrug God’s shoulders and say: “Oh, well.” How did God respond to the emergence of death? What does God do about this?
- The Christian gospel is one answer. The Christian gospel makes three basic claims. The first is that the Creator did not remain a distant observer. But much more remarkably the Christian gospel asserts that in Jesus of Nazareth the Creator and the creation were fused in a single person. The second claim is that in Jesus God took into God’s own self all the world’s pain, sickness, terror, tragedy and death. Finally, the third claim is that God transforms death.