

# Adam—Man of clay

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By definition cultural anthropology is the study of the various traditions and beliefs of the peoples of this world. Western society is now so indoctrinated with the theory of evolution that belief in the Genesis account of the creation of man is regarded as ‘medieval’ by our public educators. While theories supportive of evolution come and go, it is encouraging to find that non-Christian traditions from the outside world show a consistent pattern of belief supportive of the Genesis account of the creation of man. Alternative belief systems show no pattern at all. This paper focuses on the widespread belief by non-Christians in the creation of the first man from the clay of the earth.

A century ago the world traveller was struck by the fact that the hand of Western culture was evident from the Bedouin tents of Arabia to the aboriginal huts of Tasmania. At that time, the obvious outward and visible sign was the Singer sewing machine; today, it is the ubiquitous Coke bottle. There is no question here that an idea in the form of a unique product, identified with the manufacturer’s name and geographical location has, in a relatively short time, diffused throughout the world. Commerce knows no real bounds.

The great historian Arnold Toynbee observed that diffusion works in human affairs in a vigorous and effective way in inverse ratio to the value and importance of the social properties conveyed.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Western knick-knacks find an easy market, but Western ideas are much harder to sell. Put another way, religious and philosophical concepts diffuse far less readily than Coke. Yet we face the fact that Islam, Judeo-Christianity and even Darwinism and Marxism have diffused throughout the World from identifiable sources. These ideas are intangible products not based upon material proof but upon faith, and that faith becomes the basis for our particular worldview.

When it comes to the question of human origins, this too is based upon faith, but here the issue is much more sharply divided. Traditionally, there has always been the belief that humanity descended from a single mating pair. Further, the descendants of that original pair were at one point in time reduced to four couples confined to one geographical location, i.e. Noah’s family on Mt Ararat. During the past century or so the opposing view, based upon evolution, has been developed, but this is divided within itself. So far, there have been two opposing schools of thought, each based upon evolution and known among the anthropological fraternity as the Diffusion Theory and the Uniformity Theory, respectively. The latter is dominant today.

## The diffusion and uniformity theories

The early champions of the British Diffusion Theory were W.H. Perry (1923)<sup>2</sup> and Professor G.E. Smith (1930).<sup>3</sup>

The theory argued that there was one account of the beginning of humanity. That account originated in the first high civilization believed to be the Egyptian. This account travelled with people as part of their cultural baggage as they migrated from this point of origin. But with time that account became corrupted. Perry and Smith believed that the Egyptian culture was unique in that it arose without any outside assistance, then diffused as far as the Pacific. However, this turned out to be the Achilles heel of the argument, because most other civilizations are in no way related to the Egyptian. These authors might have been more successful had they chosen Ararat or Babel instead of Egypt as their point of origin! The other 19<sup>th</sup> century school held to the Uniformity Theory championed by Robertson Smith and Sir James George Frazer (figure 1). Smith was the editor of the famed 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1875–1889), and Sir James George Frazer, author of the ever-popular *Golden Bough* (1890). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Frazer found extensive evidence for the Uniformity Theory and published this in his highly documented work, *Folklore in the Old Testament* (1918).<sup>4</sup> Both Smith and Frazer’s works have since virtually eclipsed the Diffusion Theory even though it is admitted that some cultural diffusion has occurred.

As pointed out earlier, the Uniformity Theory is based firmly upon the theory of evolution. It argues that as humans pass through each similar evolutionary stage, their physiological make up has caused them to have similar beliefs. One such belief is the account of human origins. Thus, similar ideas will have occurred spontaneously and independently at different points in time and at different geographic locations. There is no doubt that many practical ideas and inventions have been generated several times, not for any reason of physiology but simply out of expediency. However, to extend this line of reasoning to the genesis of intangible beliefs such as origins is another thing. Moreover, when the evidence for human origins is examined objectively, the case for the Uniformity Theory could not possibly stand up in any court of law.

Sir James George Frazer, acknowledged to be (and likely to remain) the doyen of anthropology, spent over 30 years in the libraries of Cambridge University culling through the written reports of missionaries and travellers of the past. He amassed one of the greatest collections of facts concerning the habits, folklore, and traditions of man. His *Folklore in the Old Testament* was a small part of his total output and was published in three stout volumes in 1918.<sup>4</sup> The first chapter of the first volume gives some 66 accounts from around the world of the origin of humanity. Most of these accounts were collected by missionaries and explorers while the original accounts were, and still are, archived in the libraries of Cambridge University. Rather than attempt to re-document these primary sources here, readers are referred to Frazer's first edition, if they can find one! University libraries seldom have copies; however, a reprint of the original 3-volume edition was published in 2000. Hopefully, it is unexpurgated! The accounts of human origins fall into two categories: the first consists of 37 *very similar* accounts that tell of humans being created from the clay of the ground. The second category consists of 29 *dissimilar* accounts claiming that humans derived in various ways from the lower animals and even plants. The following examples are taken from the first edition of Frazer's *Folklore*.

### Man created from clay

Beginning with the account given in the book of Genesis, Frazer points out that the Hebrew word for ground, *Adamah*, is the feminine of the word for man, *Adam*, while the word for red is *Adom*.<sup>5</sup> Further, we are reminded of connected meanings even in the more familiar Latin roots of our Western tongue. The Latin *Homo* and the French *l'homme* both mean earth-born and are related to the same root found in our word 'humus' or soil. Returning again to the work of Frazer, we find that the Mota, a tribe in the Banks Islands (Melanesia) tell of their hero god, Qat, who molded the first human out of red clay.<sup>6</sup> Then there's the Korkus, a tribe in central India, who have an account of their god, Mahadeo, who took an ant-hill of red earth to make the first human.<sup>7</sup> Then again, the Maidu Indians of



**Figure 1.** Sir James George Frazer, 1854–1941. Scottish anthropologist and Professor at Cambridge spent over 50 years culling through university libraries to find man's ancient beliefs. Confessedly not a Christian he reported with scrupulous care and honesty.

California say that their god, named Earth-Initiate, took dark clay and molded the first man and woman.<sup>8</sup> We might be inclined to think that these accounts and the Hebrew account of creation have a common source. Of greater import, however, is that time between the creation of man and these accounts must surely be only a few thousand years!

Diodorus in Oldfather<sup>9</sup> writing about 50 BC, makes the interesting comment in his *Histories* that the early kings of Egypt would annually sacrifice a man (a foreigner) of red colour or red hair at the grave of Osiris. Plutarch, in Griffiths,<sup>10</sup> says that these annual sacrifices of red-haired men were to assure good crops. Crawley, in Hastings,<sup>11</sup> adds that Viraj of the Indo-Aryans was the first man created, and by the immolation of a man in sacrifice Viraj is also immolated and a good harvest is assured. The suggestion here is that of atonement for the Fall of Adam, the 'red man'. We are

reminded here of the real Atonement by the blood sacrifice of the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45).

### Adam, the 'red man'

Accounts of the first man, and sometimes the first woman, being molded from clay by the deity can be found worldwide. The Babylonian account has a man molded from earth mixed with the blood of the god Bel;<sup>12</sup> Prometheus of Greek legend molded a man out of clay at Panopeus in Phocis, Greece;<sup>12</sup> Khnoumou, the father of the gods in Egyptian mythology, molded men out of clay on a potter's wheel;<sup>12</sup> the Dyaks of Sakarran, Borneo, have the first man molded from damp earth by their god Salampondai,<sup>13</sup> while the Nias of Sumatra believe their god, Luo Zaho, did the same thing.<sup>14</sup> The Cheremiss of Russia, a Finnish people, believe the Creator molded a man out of clay;<sup>15</sup> the god Juok of the Shilluks of the White Nile molded a man from different coloured clays, thus ingeniously explaining the origin of white, red and black races;<sup>15</sup> the Ewe-speaking tribes of Togoland, in West Africa, think that God still makes men out of clay, using good clay and bad clay for good and bad people, respectively.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the Peruvian Indians of Tiahuanaco believe that the Creator restored men after the great Flood by molding them from clay.<sup>17</sup> It should be pointed out that Frazer was in correspondence with some of the contemporary authors of these accounts and received

assurance that the beliefs were held by the individual tribes long before the influence of missionaries and their Bibles. Of course, in the case of the Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greek tales, documentation even existed long prior to the advent of Christianity.

### God's breath animates man

So far, we have not considered the matter of the deity imparting breath or life to the figure of clay, nor the origin of woman. Here we find an even greater concordance with the Genesis account. The Australian Aborigines near Melbourne claim that the Creator, Pund-jel, took two large pieces of bark, laid clay upon them and worked it into two men. Pund-jel then blew hard into their mouths, noses and navels, and they became living men;<sup>18</sup> the Maoris of New Zealand say that their god, named Tu, Tiki, or Tane, took red clay, kneaded it with his own blood into a likeness of himself, then animated it by blowing into its mouth and nostrils<sup>19</sup> (see Genesis 2:7).

### The creation of woman

In Tahiti they believe that the god Toara molded a man from red earth, then later took a bone out of the man and made a woman named 'Ivi', which means 'bone' in their language.<sup>19</sup> A related tribe of Bowditch Island is more specific, saying it was a rib bone and that the woman's name was 'Eevee' meaning 'rib' (see Genesis 2:21–23) and that the whole human race sprang from this pair.<sup>20</sup> The Karens of Burma also say that the man was created from clay, then he was brought to life by blowing into in his nostrils, and that the woman was taken from the man's rib.<sup>20</sup> The Bedel Tartars of Siberia have a similar account where God made the first man from clay, but they then add that the devil took the rib bone out and made the first woman!<sup>21</sup> The Eskimo of Point Barrow, in Alaska, claim a spirit named a-se-lu made the man of clay and breathed life into him; nearby tribes claim that it was the raven who made the first woman out of clay to be a companion to the man.<sup>8</sup>

The Diegueno Indians, called Kawakipais of California, say that their god, Tcaipakomat, took clay, made a man, then took one of the man's ribs and made a woman.<sup>22</sup> This list is by no means exhaustive; it is simply meant to show



**Figure 2.** The oral traditions of Noah saving the animals from a great flood are world-wide, and one little known tradition is from the Haida Indians, called Haida Gwaii, of the Queen Charlotte Islands, Canada (53° North, 132° West). It has been twice reproduced in bronze by artist Bill Reid and may be seen at the Canadian Chancery, Washington D.C. and, at twice this size (almost 6m long), at Vancouver International Airport shown in the photo above. It is seen by hundreds of visitors per day. The explanatory text is virtually cryptic and reads: "The bronze sculpture features legendary Haida creatures paddling a boat that 'goes on forever anchored in the same place'." These last captioned words are part of the tradition and undoubtedly really expresses Noah's feelings throughout the 'journey' since there was no way to steer the huge vessel and nowhere to anchor. The tall man with the hat is the Shaman or priest (Noah) and the diminutive figure beneath his right arm is his wife. The vessel is the familiar Indian canoe while the helmsman is the crafty raven revered by the early Indians as a 'wise bird'.

the remarkable concordance of accounts of human origins from around the world on three major points: the clay, the breath to animate the figure, and the origin of the woman.

### Totemic explanations of man's origin

Frazer points out, somewhat incongruously, that "many savages reject the hypothesis of creation in favor of the theory of evolution",<sup>5</sup> and this forms our second category. Here there is no typical case, but each tribe, particularly totemic tribes, imagine that their ancestors sprang from their totemic animal or even totemic plant. For example, some of the California Indians think they are descended from the prairie wolf or coyoté; they particularly deplore the loss of their tails. Interestingly, Darwin thought that the 'tail' in humans (the *os coccyx*) had been reduced and modified during man's evolution.<sup>23</sup> The Turtle clan of the Iroquois Indians claim they descended from the turtle;<sup>24</sup> the Carp clan of the Ootawak (Ottawa) Indians say they were descended from the eggs of the carp;<sup>25</sup> the Osage Indians claim that humans derived from the unlikely marriage of a male snail and a beaver maid,<sup>24</sup> while the Haida Indians have an equally unlikely union between a raven and a cockle (see figure 2)!<sup>25</sup>



The land Dyaks of Borneo claim they came from a fish, while the Kayans claim they came from a tree.<sup>26</sup>

Practically every animal in creation, including the apes, can claim to be someone's ancestor! Perhaps the most bizarre account is that of the Samoans, who believe that at first two men were developed out of two grubs who had been transformed from the remains of a rotting convolvulus. It happened that one man died and the great god, Tangaloa, changed the body into a woman and brought her to life and these two humans subsequently became the parents of mankind.<sup>27</sup> The Greeks were represented by the account of Empedocles (5<sup>th</sup> century BC), who has shapeless lumps of earth and water thrown into the subterranean fires to form monsters that were gradually eliminated until the existing species of animals and humans remained.<sup>28</sup> Note the almost total absence of concordance among the evolutionary accounts in comparison with the remarkably good concordance among the creation accounts. Surely, any unbiased jury faced with this kind of evidence would declare that God's creation account is likely to be closer to the truth. Nevertheless, today's anthropology has chosen to reject the book of Genesis in favour of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

### 21<sup>st</sup>-century medicine faces the creation account

In 2011 Dr Parvez Haris,<sup>29</sup> head of the Environmental Health group at De Montfort University (Leicester, UK), was called upon to conduct a public health survey of the Sikor or clay sold in the ethnic pharmacies of the UK. The consumers are invariably pregnant women who may eat as much as 500 g of baked clay per day. The declared object being to ensure a healthy child. Haris' study showed high levels of arsenic, lead and cadmium in the Sikor samples, representing a serious health risk to both mothers and children.

The practice of eating baked clay is known as geophagy; it is very ancient and widespread in many parts of the world. It is particularly common in rural Africa and Asia, such as India and Bangladesh. Could this practice be related to God's account of creating Adam from clay of the ground—given as 'dust of the ground' in Genesis 2:7?

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