



EXCERPT



The Genealogical Adam & Eve *The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry*

December 10, 2019 | \$27, 225 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-5263-5

What if the biblical creation account is true, with the origins of Adam and Eve taking place *alongside* evolution? Building on well-established but overlooked science, S. Joshua Swamidass explains how it's possible for Adam and Eve to be rightly identified as the ancestors of everyone, opening up new possibilities for understanding Adam and Eve consistent both with current scientific consensus and with traditional readings of Scripture.

New Possibilities of Understanding Adam and Eve

I am a scientist in the Church and a Christian in science. My goal is to “make room for our differences, even as we maintain our own beliefs and practices.” We all come from different starting points. Some are certain Adam and Eve are a myth. Some are certain evolution is a myth. Whatever the truth of the matter, let us travel together for a moment, seeking a common good.

The question of human origins sits at one fracture in society, where divisions have grown into injuries. There are different stories in the Church and in science. Evolution splinters the traditional account of Adam and Eve along several dilemmas. This splintering brings me to a question: Alongside the scientific evidence, what are the full range of ways in which we could understand Adam and Eve? In what way does evolutionary science press on our understanding of Adam and Eve?

For thousands of years, most readers of Genesis thought Adam and Eve were real people, who (1) lived in the Middle East, just several thousand years ago, (2) were the ancestors of everyone, and (3) were created, with no parents, by a direct act of God. This account is not airtight or self-contained, nor is it articulated in the precise language of science. It includes lacunae, or gaps, that are bridged in diverse ways. This is the “traditional” *de novo* account of Adam and Eve on which this book focuses.

There may be valid reasons to object to this definition of the traditional account. Other readings of Genesis are found in history, and they might be considered traditional too. It is possible, moreover, that a nontraditional understanding of Adam and Eve might be a faithful reading of Scripture. The traditional *de novo* account described here, nonetheless, is how most people through history read Genesis. This account is intertwined with deep traditions of the Church, and it is the account that seems disproven by science. The atheist biologist Jerry Coyne succinctly states the consensus:

These are the scientific facts. And, unlike the case of Jesus’ virgin birth and resurrection, we can dismiss a physical Adam and Eve with near scientific certainty.

In agreement, “evolutionary creationists” argued for years,

The *de novo* creation of Adam and Eve is not compatible with what scientists have found in God’s creation.

Is this how evolutionary science presses on the story of Adam and Eve? Does scientific evidence demonstrate the traditional account is incorrect? Maybe not.

This book arises from an ongoing “civic practice” of science “rooted in three aspirations: tolerance, humility, and patience.” In humility, we recognize that we cannot convince everyone to agree with us. In tolerance, we make space for



Karin DeHaven, academic publicist
800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or kdehaven@ivpress.com



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S. Joshua Swamidass (MD, PhD, UC-Irvine) is a scientist, physician, and associate professor of laboratory and genomic medicine at Washington University in Saint Louis, where he uses artificial intelligence to explore science at the intersection of medicine, biology, and chemistry. He is a Veritas Forums speaker and blogs at *Peaceful Science*. Visit his website and read his blog at peacefulscience.org. Follow him on Twitter: @swamidass.

those with whom we disagree. In patience, we seek understanding, listening to the concerns of others, taking their questions seriously. The common good is served as we put these virtues into public practice, making room for differences. These virtues also make room for science. Science is driven by the dynamic exchange of disagreement over questions. Here, in science, the question of Adam and Eve followed me for decades.

The question, at first, required courage.

The question, eventually, was driven by curiosity.

The question, now, is motivated by empathy.

The question, here, is to be studied with a genealogical hypothesis.

The question is answered with a genealogical correction.

This question, already, is a crossroad.

As a scientist, and in the spirit of science, I want to take the question of Adam and Eve seriously, engaging it with rigor and honesty. Steeped in centuries of history, the question is storied, but a new conversation might arise around it now. Sitting at a fracture, the question itself is a crossroad for an exchange.

–Taken from chapter one, “Courage, Curiosity, Empathy”



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