



# The Typology of Adam and Eve

Greg Cootsona 

in *Mere Science and Christian Faith*

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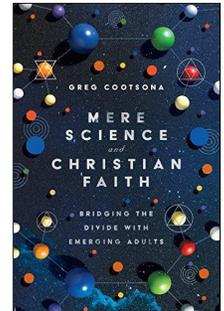
I was bottle fed on the casual, happy secularism of the region now known as Silicon Valley. I grew up not needing God, but being satisfied by superb weather, comfortable surroundings, and a sufficient degree of personal achievement. If I had a theological creed, it was agnosticism or functional atheism. To be clear, I was a buoyant secular Northern Californian, not some kind of dour atheistic postmodernist. To me—and many around me—an alleged Deity’s existence didn’t prove relevant or advantageous. So it was easy for me to wander the path set by a self-sufficient San Mateo County where a small percentage of its residents can be caught in church on any given Sunday. Recently, the Barna Group found Oakland-San Francisco-San Jose to be the number one “unchurched” and “dechurching” region in the country, followed not far behind by Chico-Redding, where I live now.<sup>1</sup> Today my early self would be counted as a None, and “Noneness” continues to run through my veins and fill the cultural air I breathe.

At age seventeen, I started at U.C. Berkeley and shortly thereafter became a follower of Christ. I admit it—“Grow up in a secular home. Go to Berkeley. Become a Christian”—is an almost laughable oxymoron. But that’s what happened.

*This article is adapted from [Mere Science and Christian Faith](#) (InterVarsity Press, 2018).*

Greg Cootsona is Lecturer in Religious Studies and Humanities at California State University at Chico and directs [Science and Theology for Emerging Adult Ministries](#) (or STEAM). I came to know Cootsona through STEAM, which awarded us a grant, “Inquiry Into Common Ground.” Over the last couple years, Cootsona has been a consistent friend and support, especially of our work on [the Genealogical Adam and Eve](#). A [forum discussion](#) with him last year about his new book [Mere Science and Christian Faith](#) was enlightening, and I recommend his book to students all the time. Though Cootsona himself does not affirm a historical Adam and Eve, he has been a friend and supporter of *Peaceful Science*. He has not read [my book](#) yet (coming out 12/10/2019 from IVP). When he does read it, the conversation will be interesting! I’m not sure what to expect. That is the beauty of disagreement in community, and I’m very pleased to have Cootsona as part of the *Peaceful Science* community. Now, I am honored to present this article from him on Adam and Eve.

As a first-year student, I was dazed by this spectacular university and undone by my newfound collegiate license. No parent or teacher could provide me with new certainties, and quite frankly, the old ones didn’t work so well. The voice of self-sufficiency, Ayn Rand’s “virtue of selfishness” (which I had learned at home), and whatever personal fulfillments I could cobble together, rang hollow.



Admittedly, this search for God wasn’t purely intellectual—I’ve since learned that we don’t engage arguments in abstraction, we engage with people we respect (another theme I’ll return to.) But it wasn’t anti-intellectual either. I found stunningly respectable, intelligent Christians. We had arguments, conversations, and more arguments, in fraternity’s, at Berkeley cafes, walking to and from classes at Dwinelle Hall.

All these friends handed me various books, many now forgotten, with the obvious exception of the Bible and C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*—which includes his intellectual disenchantment with atheism—got under my skin with its reasoned and reasonable approach to Christian faith. Lewis’s approach, by the way, also taught me a confidence in Christian thought that it could engage any cultural influence—including scientific ones.

In the second quarter of my first year in this exquisitely secular college, without every answer clearly figured out, I committed my life to following him. For many years, I didn’t concern myself with the first Adam—I was too busy with figuring out how to articulate and defend the second Adam, the God-Man, Jesus.

Since then, I’ve spent many more hours in the Bible, especially Genesis 1-3, systematic theology, and how various science relate to all these. Nevertheless, I stay focused on Jesus and I’m convinced that sets any debate about Adam and Eve and their historicity into the right perspective.

I mentioned the relevant sciences a moment ago. I am convinced that faithful Christians must learn from science that’s mainstream (or “consensual science,” i.e., the consensus of those in the scientific fields).<sup>2</sup> And the strong consensus of mainstream science affirms human evolution. That contrasts with the views of most evangelical Christians. According to a 2012 Pew Report, many Christians do not believe that human beings evolved. “A majority of white evangelical

1. See [Barna: Update](#), accessed 27 June 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/church-attendance-trends-around-country>.

2. See my “[A Parable That Arrived A Bit Too Late](#).”

Protestants (64%) and half of black Protestants (50%) say that humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.” Interestingly, the report adds that 78% of white mainline Protestants are in support of human evolution.<sup>3</sup> One reason, for those of us who take the Bible seriously as God’s Word, human evolution is hard to square with a literal Adam and Eve.

And this leads me to my central question: In its simplest framing, all Christians believe that Adam is a type of Christ—thus Adam is typological—but do he and Eve also have to be historical?

In response to this, there are also three dominant positions by mere Christians. Imagine these three on a continuum with Position One taking the most literal interpretation of the relevant biblical texts but rejecting mainstream science; Position Three opting for a consistency with mainstream science and a typological, and solely not literal, interpretation; while Position Two mediates between them. (And, like all typologies, some specific thinkers fit more or less well, but I’ll keep the three types as useful categories for what to make of Adam and Eve’s historicity.)

## Position One, Far Too Briefly

First, Position One, namely Young Earth Creationism (YEC), maintains a traditional perspective of a relatively young earth (about 6,000-10,000 years), with God’s special creation of the historical pair, Adam and Eve, who lived in a perfect state for a period of time, ate a fruit (not particularly an apple—that detail belongs to masterful seventeenth century poet, John Milton), and that they experienced condemnation for their sin and death. Because of its biblical interpretation (or more technically, its hermeneutics), this position rejects mainstream science. Since I see science as a gift from God, I’m convinced it’s not true, and I won’t have much more to say about this perspective. Of course, I don’t deny that there are many Christians who hold to YEC are members of the Body of Christ. I simply am persuaded they are wrong about their science and thus components of their theology.

## Position Three

Other confessional “mere Christians,” like C. S. Lewis, Francis Collins, and me (it’s fun, but a bit pompous, to put me in that list), propose Position Three: These thinkers conclude that mainstream science and sound biblical interpretation do not lead to the conclusion that a literal first pair, Adam and Eve, ever existed<sup>4</sup> and argue that, instead of being historical, Adam and Eve are paradigmatic of the human condition. (In this piece, I’ll emphasize biblical interpretation more than science.) Lewis wrote, “For long centuries, God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of himself.”<sup>5</sup> Given this approach, we are not descended from one pair, but from the gradual evolutionary development of hominins.<sup>6</sup> Thus we share common descent with the great apes but *please note this does not mean “we descended from*

*monkeys.”* According to evolutionary theory, great apes and humans arose from a common ancestral species that existed in the distant past. From that ancestor, separated populations developed in various directions and ultimately split off to form the different hominid species that are alive today.

Lewis contended that God implanted a divine consciousness on those early animals or hominins, but “we do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell.... They wanted, as we say, to “call their souls their own.” But that means to live a lie, for our souls are not, in fact, our own.”<sup>7</sup> This means that we all are created for good and we all turn away, but that there was no one historical first pair, specially created by God out the dust and then from a rib (not through the normal process of childbirth).

Does this position have biblical support or is simply a capitulation to science? In Genesis 1-3, the word *adam* in Hebrew simply means “human” generically and is often used in these texts with the article, thus “the human.” It’s worth noting that the first occurrence of the Hebrew word *adam* is in Genesis 1:26-27 where the Lord God creates *adam* in his image. Later in Genesis 2, we read about *Eve*, whose name means “mother of the living” or “life.” Thus that their proper names were not “Adam” and “Eve,” but their names are essentially “Human” and “Life,” or as New Testament scholar Scot McKnight—emphasizing different nuances in the original Hebrew—phrases it, “Dusty” and Momma.” Moreover, if this pair lived even six thousand years ago, it is improbable that they spoke Hebrew, which didn’t come into existence until at least a couple thousand years later. All in all, Adam and Eve don’t really come off as proper names, but as symbolic or typological ones.

Position Three lines up easily with modern science. Technically, these thinkers follow an Inference to Best Explanation, a leading theory of how scientific proof actually works.<sup>8</sup> Put differently and by way of analogy, the science of Big Bang cosmology points to an initial singularity, which, it can be argued, is best explained with a sovereign God who creates out of nothing.<sup>9</sup> The relevant sciences for the discussion of human development such as anthropology, genetics, and paleontology can be consistent with an historical first couple, but that is not the best, most elegant, explanation. For example, modern genetic studies of populations do not support that we are all descended from one sole pair.<sup>10</sup> Let me add here that this research is rapidly changing. When my daughter started her undergraduate course in anthropology at Columbia University a few years ago, they

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6. By the way, the preferred term is now “hominin,” not “hominid.” *Hominid* is the group consisting of all modern and extinct great apes, that is, modern humans, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans plus all their immediate ancestors. *Hominin* represent the group consisting of modern humans, extinct human species and all our immediate ancestors, including members of *Homo*, *Australopithecus*, *Paranthropus* and *Ardipithecus*. See <http://australianmuseum.net.au/hominid-and-hominin-whats-the-difference>.

7. *Problem of Pain*, 79-80.

8. Oxford philosopher of science Peter Lipton has formulated this view. See his “*Inference to the Best Explanation*,” in W.H. Newton-Smith (ed) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science* (Blackwell, 2000) 184-193.

9. Again, there are qualifications to this view, which I’ve discussed in *Mere Science and Christian Faith: Bridging the Divide with Emerging Adults* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 74-80

10. This is shorthand, and I recognize there are other ways to read the genomic and genealogical record (e.g., Joshua Swamidass, whom I’ll discuss below).

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3. Pew does consistently [solid and trustworthy work](#) on all forms of public opinion.

4. I don’t want to fill this short paper with too many endnotes, and so I’m simply stating what Position Two concludes, but I can assure the reader that this is the majority consensus of the discussions I’ve had with scientists who are Christians (and of course research) over the past two decades.

5. Lewis, *Problem of Pain* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 77.

quite boldly asserted that a considerable body of anthropological studies had changed in the past decade. That means what I write here, like all good science, is provisional, awaiting further confirmation. Still, even if we've read about "Mitochondrial Eve" and "y-chromosomal adam,"<sup>11</sup> the related scientific discoveries do not lead us to an historical Adam and Eve—that we learn instead as a result of a particular interpretation of Genesis 1-3, a hermeneutics I find faithful, but not convincing. Please note, as I'll describe below, several Position Two thinkers do demonstrate how an historical Adam and Eve is *not inconsistent* with science, but that's a different, and to my mind, less convincing form of proof.

I have called this position typological, but the terms *paradigmatic*, or *archetypal* also apply. By *typological*, I mean that the first Adam (in Genesis) is a *type of human being* (see Romans 5:14) and thus *typical of human experience*. Similarly, *paradigmatic* means that what he and Eve experience—of being called to, and moving away from, God—is a pattern or paradigm for every human. Many use the word *archetypal* because Adam is he "embodies all others in the group."<sup>12</sup>

In any event, sin enters when we move toward self and away from God. We pay the price not for a human pair's transgression back in history, but for our own individual and collective sin. Thus we need Jesus the Redeemer, the historical figure, who died on a cross in April 33ad under a particular Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, and who rose bodily from the dead. The point of all this, as the world class New Testament scholar N. T. Wright (whose name is fitting because he's so often right) is "*the call to be an image-bearing human being renewed in Christ.*"<sup>13</sup>

## Position Two

To this, some will respond, "Yes, Position Three lines up easily with modern science—*too easily.*" As so we come to Position Two, which falls somewhere between YEC and a typological, but non-historical, Adam and Eve. In summary, this view takes in modern scientific consensus on the age of the earth and development of hominids, but it says, "Hey, wait! We can't simply jettison Adam and Eve as real, historical people. There are biblical and theological commitments that are wrapped up in this." Position Two is convinced that Adam and Eve are in some ways historical figures (John Walton, Tim Keller, Derek Kidner, and Josh Swamidass), but generally sets out a period of time for common descent with other primates and then designates a point when God decided to set Adam and Eve apart as the first and original image-bearing *Homo sapiens*. The period of time between Adam and Eve and us varies.

Several decades ago, the evangelical biblical scholar Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Genesis, proposed two kinds of humans at the time of Adam could be called "Adamites" and "pre-Adamites."<sup>14</sup> Kidner's "tentative" concept could fit with geneticists' theory of

human origination from a single larger population. He proposed that pre-Adamites and Adamites shared the same genetic heritage and existed simultaneously. There was, however, "no natural bridge from animal to man." God had to place his image upon Adam, and then he may have acted similarly with the others who existed at that time, "to bring them into the same realm of being." In Kidner's view, Scripture presents Adam's sin "in terms not of heredity but of solidarity." In theological terms, his "federal headship," extended, "outwards to his contemporaries as well as onwards to his offspring, and his disobedience disinherited both alike."<sup>15</sup>

As a voice to set out this perspective who summarizes these positions and knows how to take the biology serious, I'll lean on my friend, colleague, and career professor of biology, Gary Fugle as a guide. And as he was training in evolutionary biology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the beauty and stunning intricacy of nature led him to become a follower of Christ. At UCSB he met some thoughtful Christians, who didn't necessarily answer every question, but had a confidence that what was true (whether discovered in the Bible, through the sciences, or other places) was good and true would lead him to Christ. He also found the "wisdom of St. Clive" (my words for the writings of Clive Staples Lewis) when he read *Mere Christianity* and began to see the reasons for Christian faith.

*Then a marvelous serendipity occurred: In studying evolutionary biology, Gary became a Christian.* All this makes sense for why he taught biology his entire career (before retiring a few years ago) while maintaining leadership roles in his evangelical Presbyterian Church of America.<sup>16</sup> You can't say—or at least I can't—that Gary doesn't take the Bible seriously. He does. But he also is convinced by evolutionary science.

Gary, like these other things, sees the development through time from which *Homo sapiens* (our ultimately image-bearing species) emerged. Gary presents two possibilities for the historical Adam that square with modern science. First of all, "that Adam was singly taken aside by God from physically evolved humans and the image was divinely imparted to him." He adds, this image "was not something that simply evolved along with human physical features."<sup>17</sup> The second possibility is that God "revealed himself in a special way to two individuals or a group of humans and this knowledge of God spread outward to other people who would hear."<sup>18</sup> This latter idea solves some puzzles, for example, where all the wives came from for Cain and Seth without their violating God's prohibitions against incest and how there's the population of other human beings implied in Genesis 4.

Around the time of finishing up my book *Mere Science and Christian Faith*, I encountered the ideas of Joshua Swamidass, assistant professor in the Laboratory and Genomic Medicine Division at Washington University in St Louis, which called attention to the possibility that we could all share genealogical ancestors very recently.<sup>19</sup> His position is extremely nuanced and deeply informed by

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11. For a general reader the Wikipedia pages should work just fine: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y-chromosomal\\_Adam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y-chromosomal_Adam) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial\\_Eve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial_Eve).

12. John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 74. I need to add that John believes in an historical Adam.

13. In Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 179.

14. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 31.

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15. Kidner, 32.

16. "Where is God in Nature?" BioLogos blog, October 29, 2015. <http://biologos.org/blogs/ted-davis-reading-the-book-of-nature/where-is-god-in-nature#sthash.AM0xpWoz.dpuf>.

17. Fugle, *Laying Down Arms to Heal the Creation-Evolution Divide* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 252.

18. Fugle, 253.

science—which should be the case since Josh is a brilliant scientist—and it plays on the distinction between *genealogical* and *genetic*. *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of the first, “relating to the study or tracing of lines of family descent,” which is what the biblical texts are most concerned with, as in the genealogies of Adam’s descents in Genesis 5, Matthew 1, and Luke 1 (to name just three).

In Josh’s hands, *genealogical* is notably different from *genetic*, which we commonly use to mean something like the *OED's* informal use “a unit of heredity which is transferred from a parent to offspring and is held to determine some characteristic of the offspring.”<sup>20</sup> In order to understand Josh’s work, we need to add to *genetic* that this unit is discoverable in the DNA of the offspring. What I learned from Josh is that many, if not all, of DNA connections between me and my forebears can be lost and undiscoverable after just a few generations. Here is where 23 and Me might lead us astray. All it can tell us in, within certain probability ranges, that I may be 44% French and German and 13% Greek and Balkan, but it cannot pinpoint my specific great-great-great-great (and I could go on) grandparents. That requires other types of record-keeping besides that encoded in my DNA.

Josh’s work is impressive, creative, and still emerging as I write this piece. Because he affirms both an historical Adam and Eve and works to connect with this with mainstream science, I set his work within Position Two (but like I mentioned above, all typologies are limiting).

And here’s the theological payoff for the first image-bearing humans, Adam and Eve: *All of us today may be genealogically related to this first pair, but that genealogical lineage is not genetically detectable. Therefore, science cannot disprove the historical Adam.*

## How do we decide?

Position Two, as it’s generally formulated, doesn’t really sound to me and others like an historical Adam and Eve—like two people that God created specially in a garden in Mesopotamia six thousand or so years ago. Though Josh’s Genealogical Adam and Eve includes a form of the Garden of Eden, according to Position Three, this stretches almost to a breaking point what science would lead us to conclude. To repeat what I wrote earlier, it’s *not inconsistent* with the scientific consensus, and this may be enough for many, but for Position it’s not the best inference from the science either. When the church reads Psalm 19:6, that the sun “rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other,” it is more consistent with an earth-centered universe than a heliocentric one—in fact we still today talk about the sun “rising” and “setting.” But it was Copernican science that helped us realize that a geocentric view of this verse (and others) is flawed. A heliocentric reading of the Bible is the best inference from science and few would argue that it’s unfaithful to Scripture.

More substantially Position Two strikes me as wedded to an *ad hoc*, “pick and choose” hermeneutic, and this is why some head toward a typological Adam and Eve. In other words, as a pastor commented in one of the monthly science and religion meetings I host, “Why interpret some components of Genesis 1-3 literally, but not others?” Here’s what I mean: Position Two takes Adam and Eve seriously, but

leaves aside other things. For example, “the Lord God formed *adam* [man], the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), which doesn’t take a strict literalist to conclude that this isn’t describing the birth of Adam from a woman. The simplest reading of the text is that Adam and Eve are directly created by God. Neither has a father and mother, but in Position Two they do.

“Ah yes,” Position Two responds with their most effective point and the one that gives me pause, “but there are several other texts to consider, but one is absolutely critical—and it leads into an interconnected doctrine, namely, original sin. How is it that Adam and Eve’s disobedience affects us today without the historical Adam?” Even more, as Wright would want me to include, how is it that the divine calling of image bearing was lost and is ultimately re-established in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

We come to Romans 5:12-21. I have also altered phrases from the NIV where necessary—but please note the phrases in italics because they indicate key phrases: “12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world *through one man*, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, *because all sinned*<sup>21</sup>—13 To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a *type* of the one to come.” And then we arrive at Paul’s succinct formulation in 1 Corinthians 15: “21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

*One man, the first Adam paired with one man, the new Adam.* This seems fairly clear—Paul believed in an historical Adam and so should we. Here’s why many evangelicals will find themselves uncomfortable with the purely paradigmatic or typological approach. It doesn’t seem to square with the natural reading of Scripture and certainly contradicts many statements of evangelical faith, as summarized in Wheaton’s statement, “God directly created Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the entire human race.”<sup>22</sup>

This interpretation also fits with the classic view of original sin, which Augustine put his stamp on, and which flows from his translation of the final phrase from verse 12. Instead of *because all have sinned*, Augustine knew the Latin translation of the original Greek (called the Vulgate), *in whom all sinned*. Adam did it, and in him we also all sinned. Instead the original Greek phrase *because all sinned* seems to leave a less direct connection and affirms that we are all guilty because we all commit sin. Moreover, many commentators seem to miss the apocalyptic language of Paul’s letters. Here’s what I mean and how it helps: Adam and Eve’s fall initiated a cosmic change. It defines an old age or world that is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31). With Christ a new world (or age) has begun. Christians, from Paul’s time until today, are caught between these two worlds, between their power. We feel torn as Paul describes in Romans 7:13-25,<sup>23</sup> and so

21. For what it’s worth, interpreting this phrase, which is literally “because of one, all sinned” *eph ho pantas hemarton* is the crux of the issue historically. See C. E. B. Cranfield’s always careful exegesis in *Romans*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary, J. A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, gen ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 274-81.

22. <http://www.wheaton.edu/About-Wheaton/Statement-of-Faith-and-Educational-Purpose>.

19. “A Genealogical Adam and Eve in Evolution,” accessed June 30, 2017.

20. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/genealogical> and <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/genetic>.

we groan with all creation for the full revelation of what the new Adam, Christ, has brought (Romans 8:18-24), which is indeed where the Spirit leads with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26-27).

With that in mind, which position best fits biblical studies, theology, philosophy and science? The noted evangelical scholar and biblical commentator James D. G. Dunn interprets Romans 5, especially verse 12, with a nuance that fits with fully typological or paradigmatic approach, “If anything, we should say that the effect of the comparison between two epochal figures, Adam and Christ, is not so much to historicize the individual Adam as to bring out the more than individual significance of the historic Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Dunn’s words carry us to a key point we ought not miss: *Christ is the focus of Paul’s letters—and indeed the whole New Testament—not Adam.* Therefore, if Adam proves to be non-historical, but solely paradigmatic, there’s no problem for what Paul is teaching here. Position Three concludes, “Yes, Paul didn’t teach the historical Adam as doctrine. So this is good exegesis, faithful to an orthodox confession of Christ, and matches with excellent modern science.”

Position Two cannot agree. I can imagine that few reading this would want to disagree quickly or easily with the former New York City pastor and bestselling author, Tim Keller (I know I don’t), “If Adam doesn’t exist, Paul’s whole argument—that both sin and grace work ‘covenantally’—falls apart. You can’t say that ‘Paul was a man of his time’ but we can accept his basic teaching about Adam. If you don’t believe what he believes about Adam, you are denying the core of Paul’s teaching.”<sup>25</sup>

## Let’s keep our eyes on Jesus

To answer that last question, let me repeat: *The center of our faith is Christ, not Adam.* It’s probably also worth noting that Adam does not make extensive appearances in the Bible nor the Creed.<sup>26</sup> Which views fit with the work of the historical God-man Jesus the Christ and his offer of redemption through his life, death, and bodily resurrection? Let’s keep our eyes on Jesus as a real historical figure, He is our center. Therefore, *we have to start with Jesus Christ—with his life, death, and resurrection, that he has saved us from sin, the world, and the devil—and then see what this implies about Adam.*

This brings me to a quip from physicist Karl Giberson (and Karl, who is brilliant, quips so well), whether we believe in an historical Adam and Eve or not “shouldn’t cause us to hurl accusations of infidelity at one another.”<sup>27</sup> So if some of the statements above about Adam make

a portion of us in the church nervous—that if the other side wins, we will soon jettison all biblical truth or all engagement with modern science—we need to clarify that this process goes both ways. Here I turn not first to theologians or biblical scholars but a philosopher of science Imre Lakatos who taught in scientific research programmes, there are certain teachings (for us, the divinity of Christ as the historical God-man, for example) that are at the “hard core” of Christianity. There are not jettisoned easily or lightly, even in the presence of some anomalies.<sup>28</sup> But Position Three decides that Adam and Eve’s historicity does not represent the “hard core” of Christian faith, while Position Two (or One) decides that it is.

The bestselling author and theologian Greg Boyd read Lewis’s views as an undergraduate, while struggling with what he thought was the Christian consensus, but also discovered that YEC made little sense scientifically. Lewis’s insights into Adam and the fall helped keep the Christian faith viable. Ultimately, Boyd comments that he’s inclined to believe in an historical Adam, but the experience of reading Lewis and the purely typological view lead him to this conclusion. “I, as a pastor of an evangelical and Anabaptist church, think it vitally important that we *not* put for the historicity of Adam as a matter that is essential to Christian faith.”<sup>29</sup>

Boyd ends a reflection on whether belief in the historical Adam is essential to confessing Christian faith and answers no, and for those who can understand that the statements “I believe in Christ” and “I believe Adam wasn’t historical” go together, he concludes, “I implore them to refrain from becoming dogmatic on this point and simply to trust the genuineness of those who disagree. The fact is, dogmatism on this point would have tragically barred C.S. Lewis, myself, and a multitude of others from the life-giving kingdom.”<sup>30</sup> This debate, he concludes, “should be construed as a debate among orthodox Christians, *not* as a debate that determines *whether or not* one is an orthodox Christian.”<sup>31</sup>

Which do I think is right? I’ve already stated my reasons for rejecting the literalism of Position One. In my opinion, Position Two manages best with traditional biblical and theological positions, and it can certainly fit with mainstream science, while Position Three fares best with the current scientific consensus and features a more integrated and satisfying biblical interpretation and theology. For what it’s worth, though I find Position Three more satisfying, I’m content with either of these latter two options. And, I must add, all three can lead us to Jesus.

How do we decide in the meantime? Let’s keep working at this with our eyes focused, not on Adam and Eve, but on Jesus. I know that’s what brought me to faith. That will also bring with it amazing grace and indispensable good will.

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28. Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), 91-106.

29. Boyd, “Whether of Not There Was an Historical Adam, Our Faith is Secure,” in *Four Views of the Historical Adam*, 260.

30. Boyd, 260.

31. Boyd, 266.

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23. Just in case it seems like I’m skating over the interpretation of some, like N. T. Wright, that Paul is describing his pre-Christian experience, I’m aware of that school of thought, but am convinced by other commentaries, ably represented by C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2 volumes.

24. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, World Biblical Commentary, vol 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 289-90. Note: First two are on p. 289, last on p. 290.

25. *Christianity Today* June 3, 2011, “[The Search for the Historical Adam.](#)”

26. There are twenty-two places where Adam is a name (not a town as in Joshua 3:16 or Hosea 6:7), but principally in Genesis 2-3, Romans 5, and 1 Corinthians 15. Here’s the full list, Genesis 2:4; 2:20, 25; 3:17; 3:20, 21; 4:1, 25; 5:1, 3, 4, 5; 1 Chronicles 1:1; Luke 3:38; Romans 5:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15: 22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; Jude 1:14.

27. *Christianity Today*, “[The Search for the Historical Adam.](#)”

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