



# Adam & Eve: A Survey of Models for Catholics

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## Introduction

**D**id Adam and Eve really exist? Were there two, real people from whom our entire human race descended? What do Catholic Christians believe about this issue? Is there room in Catholic theology for a genealogical Adam along the lines of what Joshua Swamidass has proposed? In this article, I explore these questions from a Catholic Christian perspective.

As She often does, the Church permits latitude among specific proposals while also setting up particular doctrinal boundaries. Hence, there is not one required view of Adam and Eve. Nonetheless, there are views which clearly fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching and others which do not. Below, I consider various proposals with an eye on advantages and disadvantages.

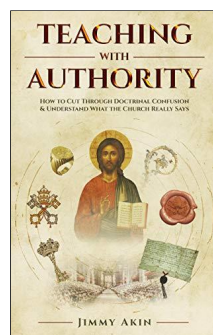
Along the way, I pose several questions that have not been definitively answered by the Catholic magisterium. My hope is that this survey serves both Catholic and Non-Catholic Christians in their understanding of Adam and Eve.

## Catholic Christians and Church Authority

Catholic Christians profess faith in God and all that He has revealed (cf. CCC 150). For the Catholic, the content of divine revelation is found in Scripture and Tradition, which are interpreted by the Magisterium. Catholics recognize that the Church does not teach *monolithically*; She proposes doctrines with different levels of authority.<sup>1</sup>

The three main levels of magisterial teaching and authority are as follows:

- Level 1: The Church sets forth a doctrine of faith or morals to be believed as divinely revealed.
- Level 2: The Church sets forth a doctrine of faith or morals to be definitively held.
- Level 3: The Church sets forth a doctrine of faith or morals that is owed religious submission.



1. For a primer on Catholic authority, see Jimmy Akin's book *Teaching with Authority*.

In level 1 and level 2 teachings, the Church exercises her infallible teaching authority. In response, an unwavering assent is demanded by the faithful. In other words, it is outside the bounds of Catholic teaching to view a Level 1 or Level 2 doctrine as possibly false.

In level 3 teachings, the Church exercises her non-infallible teaching authority, sometimes referred to as merely authentic magisterium. Since this mode of teaching is non-definitive, the mode of assent required is not the unwavering adherence required for definitive teaching. Rather, level 3 teachings are owed religious assent (or religious submission of mind and will) such that one acquiesces to the teaching as true, even while recognizing that there are possible (exceptional) cases where a level 3 teaching could be false.<sup>2</sup>

This brings me to an important question. What are the qualities of a proposition such that it falls within the bounds of Catholic teaching? Here, I suggest the following thesis:

- (A) A proposition *p* is *within the bounds of Catholic teaching* if affirming *p* is compatible with firmly holding all level 1 and level 2 teachings as well as giving religious submission to all level 3 teachings.<sup>3</sup>

Some positions are *clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching while others are *clearly* out of bounds. Still other positions occupy a middle ground where it is less than clear if they fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching. I evaluate potential Catholic views of Adam and Eve according to this scheme:

- 1. A position is *clearly not* within the bounds of Catholic teaching. (Red)
- 2. A position is *not clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching. (Yellow)
- 3. A position is *clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching. (Green)

2. For guidance on the conditions surrounding possible, legitimate dissent from level 3 teachings, read paragraphs 24-33 in the document *Donum Veritatis*. There are further levels of distinction one can find in Jimmy Akin's book *Teaching with Authority*. A primer on the three levels of teaching authority occurs in this podcast episode with Dr. John Joy: [www.classicatheism.com/joy](http://www.classicatheism.com/joy)

3. This is a working thesis for this article. I avoid the language of "orthodox" and "heterodox" so as to avoid the insinuating that person X is a heretic or that person Y teaches heresy. Of course, those are very important matters, but for the official judgments of such things I defer to the magisterium as well as professional theologians and canon lawyers.

These three designations map on well to a standard traffic light. A red light is given to (1); such views are out of bounds for Catholics. A green light is given to (3); such views are clearly in-bounds for Catholics. A yellow light of caution can be assigned to (2); it is not clear whether the view is within the bounds of Catholic teaching. It should be noted that “not clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching” is not the same as “automatically heterodox.” Rather, the view’s conformity to Church teaching is not evident, and the magisterium has not asserted in its favor.<sup>4</sup>

## The Minimum Requirements

Here we probe three sources to determine the essential elements required for conformity with Catholic Teaching on Adam and Eve. We consider the Catechism, the Council of Trent, and *Humani Generis*. First, note that the genre of the early chapters of Genesis does not demand literalistic adherence to the letter of the text. As the Catechism says, “The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents (CCC 390).”

Also, the Catechism says, “The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original “state of holiness and justice”. This grace of original holiness was “to share in. . .divine life” (CCC 375, emphasis mine).

In her wisdom, the Church explains that the Bible, and especially the early chapters of Genesis, contain figurative language and symbolism. So, rigid literalism is not required. Nonetheless, a view that suggests purely metaphorical and symbolic story-telling with no connection to history is also rejected. Hence, the Catechism says Genesis “affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man.” So, Catholics hold the Fall is a real, historical event while also acknowledging the use of symbols and figurative language in the early chapters of Genesis.

Next, we consider two prominent magisterial statements on the issue of Adam and Eve.

*The Council of Trent: Session 5, Selections of Canon 3 (1546)*

“If any one asserts that this sin of Adam, which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own, is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, ... let him be anathema”

*Humani Generis, Paragraphs 36-37 (1950):*

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4. Consider an example of how these categories apply to an issue in contemporary Catholic moral theology. The proposition that In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) is ethically permissible is *clearly not* within the bounds of Catholic teaching. In other words, IVF is immoral. The view that adoption is ethically permissible is *clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching; people can legitimately adopt. But what about adopting a stranger’s embryo that was frozen in the course of IVF? Is that ethically permissible? The answer is not clear, and moral theologians have argued both ways. Hence, the view that adopting a stranger’s embryo is ethically permissible is *not clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching.

“36. For these reasons the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter - for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God... .”

“37. When, however, there is question of another conjectural opinion, namely polygenism, the children of the Church by no means enjoy such liberty. For the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains that either after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents. Now it is no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own.”

The strength of the teaching from Trent is at least Level 2, and the strength of the teaching from *Humani Generis* is at least Level 3. From the Catechism and these magisterial texts, we infer that the following elements are essential to a Catholic understanding of Adam and Eve:

- (F1) The Fall refers to a real event involving our first parents.
- (F2) The sin of Adam was “in its origin one.”
- (F3) Original sin is passed on to all “by propagation, not by imitation.”<sup>5</sup>
- (F4) There was “a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all.”
- (F5) All “true men” on Earth after Adam “take their origin through natural generation from him.”
- (F6) Evolution of the human body is possible, but God’s special action is required for the creation of the soul.

While there may be additional essential elements (e.g. that Adam was male, that he had freedom of choice, that Eve was made from him, etc.), these six suffice as a workable list to consult when evaluating options. To the extent that proposals about Adam and Eve are compatible with (F1) - (F6), they are compatible with Catholic teaching.

## Challenges from Modern Science & Possible Answers

Mainstream cosmology, geology, biology, and genetics support the following three theses:

- (S1) The universe and the Earth are billions of years old.
- (S2) “[C]ommon ancestry and biological evolution are supported by several lines of empirical evidence.”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, “Species

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5. In Catholic theology, “original sin” constitutes a deprivation of the original grace possessed by our first parents. It is not a guilty status imputed to us as if we too committed the sin of Adam. Rather, we are born deprived of the grace in which our parents were created.

6. This is a quote from the [Next Generation Science Standards](#)

originate by descent with modification from previously existing species.”<sup>7</sup>

- (S3) Modern humans originally came from a population of at least several thousand individuals.<sup>8</sup>

To the extent that Christian views can accommodate mainstream science, they gain credibility among those who take science seriously. In the remainder of this article, we explore various “models” of Adam and Eve with an eye on their compatibility with mainstream science and Catholic teaching.<sup>9</sup>

## Young Earth Creation Models

According to Young Earth creation (YEC) models<sup>10</sup>, the Earth was made 6,000 - 10,000 years ago, Adam and Eve were specially created by God as the first human beings in existence, and the general theory of evolution is false. YEC models are permitted by the Church, and they are clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Catholics who take this route can readily affirm (F1) - (F6). So, one option for Catholics is to mine the YEC literature and visit sources such as [creation.com](http://creation.com) and [answersingenesis.org](http://answersingenesis.org).

One advantage of this approach is that it clearly squares with the early chapters of Genesis; it takes those accounts to be historically and scientifically accurate. Another advantage of YEC models is that they clearly comport with what many early Church fathers believed concerning the historical truth of early Genesis.

The major disadvantage of YEC models is that they clash with mounting scientific evidence in favor of an old universe, old earth, evolution, and common descent. They require a denial of (S1), (S2), and (S3). Another disadvantage is that these models tend to insist Genesis provides a scientifically accurate account of man’s origin rather than permitting the author to write within a genre that doesn’t demand scientific accuracy.

## Old Earth Creation Models

According to Old Earth Creation (OEC) models, the universe and Earth are billions of years old, Adam and Eve were specially created by God as the first human beings in existence, and the general theory of evolution is false. OEC models are permitted by the Church, and they are clearly within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy. Catholics pursuing this route can readily affirm (F1) - (F6) and they can find resources from OEC advocates such as those at [Reasons to Believe](#).

One advantage of OEC models is that they are consistent with ample, mainstream scientific evidence that the Earth and universe are old (S1). This is a major advantage over YEC models. Another advantage of OEC models is that they clearly preserve God’s special divine action in the making of the first human beings.

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7. Kemp, Kenneth. “Science, Theology, and Monogenesis”, 221.

8. This thesis must be qualified based on the meaning of “Modern humans.” Some recent scientific discussions suggest that as long as the single couple lived sufficiently long ago, it’s possible that rational humans descended from just two individuals rather than several thousand.

9. I do not claim that mainstream science is unquestionable or unassailable; it is not. But challenging mainstream scientific views goes beyond the scope of this article.

10. When giving a “model” for a proposition or set of propositions, one provides a description of how the propositions could be true.

One disadvantage of OEC models is their inconsistency with (S2). In particular, these models conflict with the genetic and fossil evidence that suggests common descent. Additionally, OEC models seem incompatible with (S3); genetic evidence suggests the original human population must have been several thousand individuals. However, recent scientific discussions show that if the original couple is pushed into the distant past, further than 500,000 years ago, (S3) is not necessarily true. This will be discussed below when we visit William Lane Craig’s model.

## Theistic Evolution Models

Theistic evolution models are permitted and supported by the Church. These views vary in their details and below we examine several specific proposals.

## Merely Symbolic Proposals

According to symbolic proposals, Adam was not a real individual human being, but rather the name “Adam” symbolizes the original human community or communities. In one iteration, the name “Adam” is a mere metaphor for the unity of all beings with the same nature, and yet there was no actual, historical moment where a particular first community fell away from God’s grace. Instead, it is noted that all human beings have a common tendency to sin and stand in need of redemption.

In a second iteration, Adam symbolizes the first community of, say, several thousand human beings who were the first humans endowed with rational freedom. That first community corporately turned away from God, such that the Fall was a real historical event implicating all of them. After the Fall, original sin was passed on through natural generation.

Both iterations are clearly not within the bounds of Catholic teaching. The first view fails to acknowledge the Fall as a real, historical event, and thus fails to include that a sin is “actually committed by an individual Adam.”

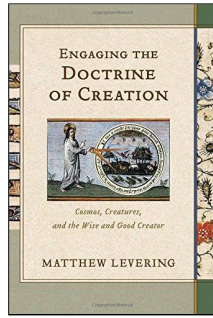
The first view is compatible with (F1), (F3), and (F6), but it is incompatible with (F4). It could be made compatible with (F2) and (F5) if the symbolic reading of “Adam” is permitted there. However, it clearly conflicts with (F4), which says: There was “a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all.” It is implausible to read this statement as anything other than an individual person, Adam, who committed the sin.

Of the two views, the second iteration is much more palatable, but, to my mind, it is clearly not within the bounds of Catholic teaching. The reason is that (F4) entails Adam is an individual and (F5) requires that all “true men” on Earth after Adam “take their origin through natural generation from him.” Since this symbolic view holds Adam was not an individual and therefore allows “true men” to descend from the original community in such a way that they did not come from an individual Adam, it is outside the bounds of what Pope Pius XII explains in [Humani Generis](#) 37.

The main advantage of both symbolic views is that they are fully compatible with mainstream science. Nonetheless, the main disadvantage of both views is that they do not conform to Catholic teaching.

## Karl Rahner's Proposal

According to this view, there was a decision of human freedom at the dawn of humanity that directed humanity's plight negatively.<sup>11</sup> In one place, Rahner describes a possible scenario that unfolds as follows, "The first man created in the state of original justice is nominated by God as the trustee, in respect of the justice compulsorily intended by God for all men, for all the men who follow him, whether they descend from him physically or not." Call this representative Adam. Now, according to Rahner, Adam could be part of an original community, and yet if he chose to sin, original justice would be lost for the representative individual Adam as well as all members in the community.



If Rahner's view allows that multiple human beings in this original community possessed rational freedom, then the view fails to fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching. The reason is that (F5) will not be true, since not all true men will take their origin through natural generation from Adam – some people have been on-the-scene independently of descent from Adam.<sup>12</sup>

An advantage of Rahner's view is that it is fully compatible with mainstream science. A disadvantage of the view is that it does not fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching.

## Kenneth Kemp's Proposal

According to this view, we can distinguish man as a biological species, philosophical species, and theological species. The biological species includes all human individuals that are reproductively compatible. Man as a philosophical species refers to human beings that possess a rational soul. Philosophical human beings that are also offered an eternal destiny of friendship with God constitute a theological species. These categories are not necessarily coextensive.<sup>13</sup>

Kemp's proposal invites us to consider the possibility of an original community of several thousand "hominids" that lacked a rational soul. These individuals would be "biologically human" without being "philosophical humans" or "theological humans." Within this population, God endows two individuals, Adam and Eve, with rational souls and creates them in his friendship. God's action secures that all offspring of "theological humans" possess a rational soul.

After the Fall, "theological humans" may interbreed with mere "biological humans" which allows for more genetic diversity to enter the race of "theological humans." Eventually, mere "biological humans" become extinct such that the only human beings alive are both biologically and theologically human. So, it is true that all modern human beings descended from an original couple, Adam and

Eve, while it is also true that the human race may have come from thousands of biological humans.

One advantage of this view is that it is consistent with all of our best and mainstream scientific evidence. Another advantage of this view is that it is clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Hence, it is my preferred Catholic solution if we grant the general theory of evolution.

One disadvantage of Kemp's proposal is that it involves interbreeding which some have dubbed bestiality. Some critics find this to be incompatible with God's providential plan for humanity. Another criticism made of Kemp's proposal is that it rests on Platonic dualism or Cartesian dualism whereas the Catholic tradition favors hylomorphic dualism.<sup>14</sup>

## Antoine Suarez's Proposal

This view grants, along the lines of Kemp, a distinction between a biological species and theological species. Nonetheless, Suarez includes several auxiliary hypotheses to avoid the interbreeding that Kemp's hypothesis allows. Here's how it works.

Suarez holds that God endowed two human beings, Adam and Eve, with a fully rational soul. These were the first rational humans though they may have lived among non-rational biological humans. After Adam and Eve sinned, they were deprived of the original holiness and justice which God had afforded. At that moment (i.e. the moment of their transgression), through special divine action, God raised all of the non-rational biological humans to the status of fully rational human beings. Ever since that moment, the entire human race and all of their offspring were rational and fallen.

One advantage of this view is that it is compatible with all mainstream science. Another advantage of this view is that it avoids the interbreeding in Kemp's solution which some have found problematic. Additionally, Suarez does not think personal modern humans could have lived among non-rational humans.<sup>15</sup> Also, Suarez preserves the existence of an original couple who committed a sin that plunged humanity into a fallen state.

One disadvantage of this view is that it is exotic; it involves the miracle of raising all biological human beings, scattered wherever they existed at that time, to a new rational life. Of course, this does not contradict the divine power, but it is quite the miracle of which we find no trace in Scripture, Tradition, or magisterial teaching. Another disadvantage is that the view is *not clearly* within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Why not?

Suarez's proposal entails that some fully rational human beings come into existence apart from generational descent through Adam and Eve. Yet, the phraseology "by propagation" at the Council of Trent as

14. Kemp responds to both of these criticisms in an interview I had with him here: [www.classicaltheism.com/kemp](http://www.classicaltheism.com/kemp)

15. Suarez asks, "Would it have been possible for personal modern humans to have met non-personal ones and lived with them? I think the answer is no." "'Transmission at Generation': Could original sin have happened at the time when *Homo sapiens* already had a large population size?," *Scientia et Fides*, 2016, Antoine Suarez. Though it goes beyond the scope of this essay, I do not find Suarez's reasons compelling on this point. A reply to Suarez on this matter can be found in the forthcoming [episode 201](#) of the Classical Theism Podcast.

11. Levering, Matthew. *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation*, 237.

12. If Rahner's view allows that multiple human beings in that community were not fully rational human beings, then his view would merge with Kemp's, which is evaluated next.

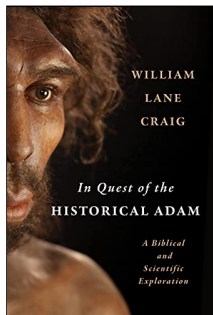
13. Kemp, 230.

well as “through generation” and “natural generation” in *Humani Generis* are most plausibly read as “through biological descent” (i.e. not a special creative act of God apart from biological descent).

In response, Suarez points out that “natural generation” cannot solely refer to intercourse, because God also grants rational souls to humans born through in vitro fertilization.<sup>16</sup> On that point he is correct. Nonetheless, in vitro fertilization still involves the joining of sperm and egg in a process dependent on human parents – biological descent is retained. It is not clear that God’s special action to transform all non-rational human beings into fully rational human beings (i.e. the novel element of Suarez’s proposal) counts as “natural generation” or “propagation” as prescribed by Trent and *Humani Generis*. Hence, his view is not clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching.

## William Lane Craig’s Proposal

William Lane Craig and Dennis Bonnette have made proposals that challenge (S3), which says, “Modern humans originally came from a population of at least several thousand individuals.”<sup>17</sup> Both Craig and Bonnette argue that there is no requirement of an original population of thousands if Adam and Eve are pushed far enough into the past. If Adam and Eve are placed too recently, a population of thousands may be needed to account for the genetic variation we presently witness (given other standard scientific assumptions). But, if Adam and Eve lived around 500,000 or 1-million years ago, they could have been the original couple of rational humans from which the entire race descended, and no interbreeding with other hominids is required.



In Craig’s book *In Search of the Historical Adam*, he argues that several lines of evidence point toward identifying the first rational human beings with homo-heidelbergensis (or Heidelberg Man for short). They came into existence in the right time frame (i.e. 500,000 to 1 million years ago) to plausibly correspond with Adam and Eve. Craig maintains that God’s direct action was involved in the origination of the first two fully rational human beings.<sup>18</sup>

The major advantage of this view is that it is both compatible with mainstream science and within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Additionally, it does not require that rational human beings interbred with non-rational human beings.

One disadvantage of this view is that it pushes Adam and Eve extremely far into the past, such that they lived eons prior to the first civilizations of human beings. Why would God create our first parents

so long ago prior to the birth of Christ? To be more intellectually satisfying, Craig’s view should be supplemented with possible philosophical or theological answers to that question. Also, to date, it has not been widely admitted by Christians that Neanderthals and other ancient hominids were fully rational members of the human race. Nonetheless, the scholarly work in Craig’s book is quite comprehensive and his arguments on this front deserve serious attention.<sup>19</sup>

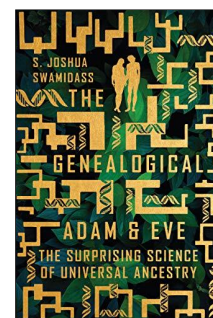
## Joshua Swamidass’s Proposal: The Genealogical Adam and Eve

In *The Genealogical Adam and Eve*, Joshua Swamidass examines a score of information related to this topic. He does not advance a single thesis regarding Adam and Eve, but rather a plurality of possible models. According to Swamidass, the proposals of Kemp and Suarez would count as models consistent with his own.

However, here I will highlight one unique proposal from Swamidass and discuss whether it falls within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Swamidass distinguishes ‘genetic descent’ from ‘genealogical descent.’ X *genetically descends* from Y if a portion of the genome of X was inherited from Y. X *genealogically descends* from Y if Y is a parent of X or a parent of one of X’s parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so forth.<sup>20</sup>

Swamidass shows that it is scientifically possible that all human beings living today could be *genealogical descendants* of Adam and Eve, even if Adam and Eve were created out of the dust of the ground just a few thousand years ago. Hence, his view is compatible with a theologically conservative paradigm as Kemp notes, “Swamidass’s results permit dates recent enough to satisfy even those who take the Genesis chronologies relatively literally.”<sup>21</sup> However, this presents theological concerns.

If God created Adam and Eve just a few thousand years ago, they could only be genealogical ancestors of all human beings in the current theological era if they lived among a larger population of beings with rational souls. Additionally, fully rational human beings that did not descend from Adam and Eve would have been on the scene prior to a few thousand years ago—or at least this would be the common position of mainstream scientists given data from archaeology and paleontology. So, there would be, on this iteration of Swamidass’s work, fully rational beings outside the Garden of Eden that pre-existed the garden.



While this possibility is open to the divine power, it does not fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Particularly, (F5) would be

16. Suarez 278.

17. See William Lane Craig’s book *In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration* (2021) as well as Dr. Dennis Bonnette’s article “The Scientific Possibility of Adam and Eve” at [Strangenotions.com](http://Strangenotions.com).

18. “God’s creation of Adam and Eve plausibly required both biological and spiritual renovations, biological to equip their brains with the capacity to serve as instruments of rational thought and spiritual to furnish them with rational souls different from any sort of soul that nonhuman animals might be thought to possess.” *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, William Lane Craig, 540.

19. In his review of the Craig’s book at *First Things*, Kenneth Kemp speaks positively about Craig’s conclusions on the point of when Adam lived: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/12/the-science-of-adam>

20. Swamidass notes, “[T]he genealogical hypothesis states Adam and Eve are our universal *genealogical* ancestors, but not necessarily our universal *genetic* ancestors.” *The Genealogical Adam and Eve*, 40.

21. “*Adam and Eve and Evolution*”, Kenneth Kemp’s review of *The Genealogical Adam and Eve* by Joshua Swamidass.



false. In other words, the following would not be true: “All “true men” on Earth after Adam “take their origin through natural generation from him.”

Swamidass wonders if it may be possible to construe “true men” in a way that fits with his proposal. Perhaps *Humani Generis* could allow that “true men” refers to all of those related genealogically and covenantally to Adam and Eve while withholding judgment on whether there are other rational beings who don’t meet that standard. After all, Catholics willingly acknowledge the possibility of a rational beings apart from Adam and Eve. Consider the following examples:

- (i) The angels who are immaterial rational beings.
- (ii) The possibility of an intelligent alien race somewhere else in the universe.
- (iii) The possibility of a rational human race that lived and died out prior to Adam and Eve, without overlapping chronologically.

Perhaps Catholics will be surprised to hear that (iii) was traditionally considered orthodox. Orthodox sources well before the Second Vatican Council affirm the possibility of (iii). For example, the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia contains a section on “Preadamites” which permits (iii). Additionally, in a 1928 work of Catholic apologetics, Fr. Thomas B. Chetwood SJ reports:

The Scripture and the Church’s Tradition together with the teaching of the Fathers are unanimous in proclaiming one pair of progenitors for the whole human race. It is true this teaching would not strictly exclude the existence of an earlier race which had passed away entirely when the present human arrived.<sup>22</sup>

Still, the possibility that “true men” in *Humani Generis* could be expanded along the lines I suggested above is doubtful. After all, the passage containing “true men” (HG 37) follows the paragraph describing man ontologically (HG 36). In context, the import of “true men” living “after Adam” means all human beings endowed with a rational soul from Adam’s creation onward. Since the model that places our first parents just a few thousand years ago includes other *living* fully rational human beings at the time of Adam’s creation, the view is not clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching.

An advantage of the view discussed in this section is that it is fully compatible with a traditional theory of Adam and Eve who were created by a direct miracle of God. Additionally, the view is compatible with all mainstream science. A third advantage concerns the view’s congruence with a relatively literal reading of the Biblical data, especially in Genesis 1 – 11.<sup>23</sup> The major disadvantage of this view is that it is not clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching.

Catholic theologians might further inquire about Swamidass’s proposal by investigating the following questions: Why is it consistent with Catholic teaching for there to be a rational human race that existed prior to Adam but died out before Adam? Why is it inconsistent with Catholic teaching for there to be fully rational humans after Adam who are unrelated to him genetically? What are the theological foundations for the teachings proposed and referenced in *Humani Generis* 37? Is there a possibility of magisterial clarification or development that allows Swamidass’s proposal to fall within the bounds of Catholic teaching? While these questions are worthwhile, they would take us well beyond this article.

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22. *God and Creation*, Fr. Thomas B. Chetwood S.J., 1928, published by Benzinger Brothers.

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23. For Catholics, those chapters need not be read as literal history as we discussed in section 3.

## Summary of the Evaluations

Model	Within the bounds of Catholic teaching?	Compatible with mainstream science?
Young Earth Creationism	Yes	No
Old Earth Creationism	Yes	No
Merely Symbolic views	No	Yes
Rahner's Proposal	Not clearly	Yes
Kemp's Proposal	Yes	Yes
Suarez's Proposal	Not clearly	Yes
Craig's Proposal (as well as Bonnette's)	Yes	Yes
Swamidass's Proposal	Not clearly	Yes

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## Links

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## Conclusion

There is no single Catholic understanding of Adam and Eve. When exploring this topic, Catholics should stick to models that are clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching. Affirming such models ensures that one is not committing to something opposed to the faith. Additionally, if one values the conclusions of mainstream science, then it is fitting to select models compatible with that science.

Catholic Christians should consider various proposals, assessing their advantages and disadvantages. The views of Kenneth Kemp, William Lane Craig, and Dennis Bonnette stand out as proposals that are both clearly within the bounds of Catholic teaching and fully compatible with mainstream science. Such proposals neutralize purported conflict between evolution and the existence of Adam and Eve.

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