



# A Biblical Scholar's Perspective on People Outside the Garden

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I would like to thank everyone involved inside AAR for making this year's meeting possible, as well as Dr. Swamidass for inviting me to respond to his book. I'd also like to thank Douglas Kump for introducing me to Dr. Swamidass's work.

Time is short so I'll get right to it.

Swamidass's thesis is summarized concisely early on in the book (pp. 9-10):

Entirely consistent with the genetic and archeological evidence, it is possible that Adam was created out of dust, and Eve out of his rib, less than ten thousand years ago. Leaving the Garden, their offspring would have blended with those outside it, biologically identical neighbors from the surrounding area. In a few thousand years, they would become genealogical ancestors of everyone....Evolution would be progressing in the mystery outside the Garden....God created everyone outside the garden through a providentially governed process of common descent, a process legitimately described by evolutionary science.

## General Thoughts

To front my ultimate conclusion about the book, I don't see any biblical passage that is fatal to the thesis. On the other hand, I also don't see—and the author admits this openly—any explicit data in the text to support the thesis. Swamidass is therefore not making a biblical argument. He is instead offering a hypothesis that presumes (really, insists) that general revelation, the information gleaned from the study of our biology via the tools of science, be allowed to tell one story, while Scripture be allowed to tell its story. The two stories follow similar trajectories and ultimately entwine, but they are nonetheless different. They are also both coherent and true on their own terms, with respect to the truth claims they describe and put forth.

What I want to say going forward is the perspective of a biblical scholar. I'm no scientist, so I can't evaluate the science. I'm encouraged that its science is sound based on reviews by genetics experts both favorable toward, and hostile to, the book's religious apologetic. Consequently, I view my task today as one of interacting with the material as a biblical scholar, both to discuss how the thesis *cannot* be supported and how it *could* be supported via certain readings of the text. This is therefore a thought experiment.

Before beginning I want to put my presuppositions on the table. I should also say up front that I am positively disposed to the hypothesis, but I'm not of the concordist school. If we're going to be serious about interpreting the biblical text in context, then we can't seriously think God found writers in the first millennium BC who knew genetics to ensure that Genesis would give us an account of creation that accords with genetics. That is, by definition, to impose modern information and questions upon the biblical writers; that is, it is imposing a foreign context onto the text. God didn't download modern knowledge into the heads of the writers. The Bible is not a channeled book. God did not encrypt scientific data into the biblical text without the writers' knowledge. I harbor no suspicion that the genetic story is somehow detectable in the Hebrew text of Genesis. If modern science conveyed by the biblical text was what God intended, his choices for human authors were extraordinarily poor ones. These things should be obvious but in my experience to many they are not. We need to let the Bible be what it is—an ancient book whose ancient writers were chosen by God, writers whose cognitive environment was quite different than our own, who wrote under the providential guidance of God who, at the end of that process, approved of the outcome. We ought not impose foreign contexts on the Bible for sake of its interpretation. It is pretentious to make the Bible say such things—or criticize it for not saying what it was never intended to say. That Swamidass is not forcing the Bible to speak science is fundamentally sound and important.

Second, when I first heard of Swamidass's book, my initial thought was whether he was aware of the dangers of racist polygenism, the idea that humanity's races have evolved from distinct ancestral types, some superior or inferior to the others. I've spent a good deal of time reading in that area, so I was hoping we weren't in for another round of that. We're not. Those who are acquainted with the intellectual history of polygenism will know that the very concept of "race" being biologically determined and detectable is a flawed modern concept. Swamidass is an expert on genetics, so he knows the idea is nonsense. Chapter Four is devoted to debunking the idea on the basis of science. In that chapter he explicitly states:

We are all linked together in the recent past by genealogical ancestry. The human race is a single family, in a common story. Whatever our skin color, country of origin, ethnicity, or culture, we are all one family. We are one blood, one race, the human race.<sup>1</sup>

1. S. Joshua Swamidass, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry* (InterVarsity Press, 2019), 55.

Swamidass can say this, and yet simultaneously have genealogical Adam and Eve and people outside the garden because (a) he isn't talking about races, and (b) he argues that all people alive since as early as 1 CE (and perhaps much earlier) are humans descended from Adam and Eve. The early descendants of Adam and Eve interbred with people outside the garden. Since viable offspring came from these unions, those people were also human, though not the same as Adam and Eve. This gets us into the problem of defining the term "human," something for which there is still no scientific consensus. Swamidass devotes an entire chapter to explaining this impasse.<sup>2</sup>

## Implicit Biblical Coherence

Swamidass's hypothesis works only if it is correct that there were people outside the garden of Eden. The idea stretches back to the fifth century BCE., married as it was to the question of whether there were other worlds before, or in addition to, this one. The notion of *additional* worlds takes the discussion in the direction of the subject of extraterrestrial life. The ancient history of that question as it relates to Judeo-Christian theology has been well chronicled by scholars like Michael J. Crowe.<sup>3</sup> As theologically stimulating as I find astrobiology and the ET life question, that isn't on the docket. The question raised by Swamidass's book relates to *other* worlds, not additional ones. By this phrase we refer here to other human civilizations, or modes of communal life that fall short of what we'd define as civilization, that preceded Adam and Eve. Were there other humans before Adam and Eve and hence outside the garden of Eden?

In his biography of Isaac La Peyrère, the seventeenth century French theologian and lawyer credited with (or blamed for) vaulting pre-Adamism into the religious-intellectual battle over the discovery of people in the wake of European exploration, Richard Popkin points out there is primary source evidence as early as the second century CE for Christians debating pagans about the existence of human civilizations far older than biblical chronology allowed.<sup>4</sup>

In biblical terms, the only reasonable trajectory for the idea of people outside Eden is Genesis 4, a passage that bristles with ambiguities. The chapter opens with the births of Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve (Gen 4:1-2). The text does not specifically alert us to the fact that

these two boys were the first children of Adam and Eve. That is, of course, how the text has traditionally been read, and is certainly plausible. But that detail is unstated. The text is also silent in regard to other humans outside the family of Adam and Eve.

The story of Cain and Abel ensues and describes the conflict that develops between them, one that involves offerings to the Lord, where Abel's offering was acceptable to God but Cain's was not (Gen 4:3-7). Genesis 4:3 states that the offerings occurred "in the course of time" (Hebrew: *vayehi miqqêts yâmim*; more literally: "And it came to pass after the end of days"). How much time has elapsed since the boys were born? We are not told.<sup>5</sup> It is reasonable to think they are at least in their late teens or a bit more, but that notion is nothing more than a presumption. Given the lifespans described for the early generations of Adam and Eve in Genesis 5, centuries could have passed. Were Adam and Eve having other children during this time? We know they did afterward (Gen 5:4), but there is no actual commentary that they had no other children prior to the birth of Seth in Gen 5:1-3. And daughters go unmentioned until Gen 5:4, as is normative for most biblical genealogies.

The conflict between Cain and Abel leads to Cain's murder of his brother (Gen 4:8). God confronts Cain for his sin and punishes him with banishment (Gen 4:9-12). At that point we read:

<sup>13</sup> Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.

<sup>14</sup> Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.<sup>16</sup> Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.<sup>17</sup> Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. (ESV)

The reader is again left to ponder certain ambiguities. How much time has elapsed between the crime of Cain and his judgment? Readers have traditionally assumed that God rebuked him and judged him immediately, and this is the most transparent reading of these verses. But again, a specific chronology is omitted. There is of course no reason for God to have delayed in addressing what Cain has done, so it seems reasonable to conclude that the other chronological ambiguities of the passage noted above are more germane to the present question of other humans outside the garden of Eden, upon which the Swamidass hypothesis depends.

In Gen 4:14, after hearing God's judgment declared, the murderer Cain laments, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." A face value reading of Genesis to this

2. See Swamidass, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve*, 97-104 for a discussion on the scientific difficulties in defining what a human is.

3. Michael J. Crowe, *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate: Antiquity to 1915: A Source Book* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

4. Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work, and Influence* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987). See especially chapters three and four. As David Livingstone chronicles so thoroughly in *Adam's Ancestors*, his fascinating intellectual history of pre- and co-Adamism, La Peyrère's work was the precursor to racist polygenism, a deeply flawed and treacherous idea whose history and legacy are all too familiar to us today. See David N. Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). La Peyrère thought pre-Adamites were the Gentiles, while the Adamites were the Jews. Yet he insisted that those descended from Adam (Jews) had no racial superiority over any Gentile. Popkin (p. 46) quotes La Peyrère on the matter: "For they (the Jews) were made up of the same flesh and blood as the Gentiles and were temper'd with the same clay of which other men were fram'd" (sic). Popkin's source is an English translation of La Peyrère's two-part *Prae-Adamitae* entitled, *Men before Adam, or a Discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth Verses of the First Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans. By which are prov'd that the first Men were created before Adam* (London, 1656), Book I, Chapter 1, p. 59. See also La Peyrère, *Systema Theologicum ex Præadamitarum Hypothesi: Pars prima*, lib. ii, cap. xi, 1655.

5. As Cassuto notes, the Hebrew phrase is ambiguous, expressing an indeterminate amount of time: "Some explain the phrase to mean, *at the end of a year*; others, *at the end of some time*. The second interpretation is the more probable, since we are not told from when the year is counted. So, too, 1 Kings 17:7: *And after a while* [מים ויחייב מן הים *miqqêts yâmim*] *the brook dried up*. Similar expressions occur in Jud. 11:4, 15:1: *וַיֵּחַי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִיַּמֵּי הַיָּם* [*way'hî miyyâmim*] [literally, 'and it was from days'; rendered: 'After a time', 'After a while']; Jud. 14:8: *And after a while* [מים ויחייב מן הים *miyyâmim*] *he returned to take her*." Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah (Genesis I-VI 8)*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), 205.

point has, after Cain's murder of his brother Abel, only Cain, Adam, and Eve constituting the human population of the earth. Whom does Cain fear? Who are these other people that might kill him?

The verse could be read as suggesting there are other people outside Cain's particular family who would hear of his awful deed and kill him on sight. That is, when Cain says *today* (Heb., *hayyôm*) you have expelled me and then worries about his fate, immediacy of the threat is assumed. A few lines later, in Gen 4:16-17, Cain departs and settles in "the land of Nod, east of Eden" where he meets a woman, marries her and then builds a city. This of course takes us to the famous "Where did Cain get his wife?" question and follows that query with another: How would Cain build a city all by himself?<sup>6</sup>

This reading has led some to conclude that there must have been humans outside the genealogical line of Adam and Eve. This reading of Genesis 4 takes advantage of the chronological ambiguities, but those ambiguities are also its own encumbrance. The "people outside Eden" approach to the passage *assumes* a tight chronology between Cain's expulsion and the encounter he fears, thus subverting the argument that the other people required by the narrative must come from Adam and Eve.<sup>7</sup>

But *hayyôm* can be read with equal conjecture to presume that "today" is to be *contrasted* with the verbs "shall be" (a fugitive) and "will kill" (Cain).<sup>8</sup> In this reading, a long stretch of time between the expulsion and the threat feared by Cain is assumed. With respect to that time period, the statement of Gen 5:4 is brought to bear, that Adam and Eve "had other sons and daughters." This allows his potentially lethal enemies, his future wife, and the necessary co-workers in city-building to come from Adam and Eve's subsequent children.

So, should we marry *hayyôm* ("today") with the imperfect (future time) verb forms or divorce those two features of the text? It's a matter of hermeneutical preference. As a result, we have a textual

uncertainty that creates an interpretive opening for people outside Eden, but nothing more.

## Dead-End Trajectories

While Genesis 4 at least gives us a possibility to ponder, other so-called biblical arguments that seek to bolster the idea of people outside Eden do not. They are internally inconsistent with respect to the early chapters of Genesis or otherwise have no merit.

We will begin with two popular speculations. First, this writer has encountered the notion that the Bible may speak of non-Adamic humans based on a presumed distinction between two Hebrew words that refer to humans: *'ādām* and *'îsh*. The argument extends from the fact that the latter term can be used of animals (Gen 7:2 [twice]). Supposedly, this usage allows the argument that the lineage of Adam (Hebrew *'ādām*) is distinct from other humans (or sub-humans lesser than *'ādām*) described by the word *'îsh*. The idea that Hebrew *'ādām* and *'îsh* are two different humanities is untenable. That the use of *'îsh* for animals in Gen 7:2 only denotes gender, and not a qualitative distinction between separate kinds of humanity is evident via a comparison of Gen 7:2 with Gen 7:3 (cf. Gen 6:19), where the two groups are distinguished as male (*zākār*) and female (*nēqēvah*). Further, Gen 2:24 has Eve created "out of *'îsh*." The *'îsh* in view is, of course Adam, which the preceding verses (Gen 2:21-23) make clear, making use of Hebrew *'ādām* when doing so. Eve is thus linked to both *'ādām* and *'îsh*, disallowing the use of the two terms as speaking of two different human lineages.<sup>9</sup>

A second speculation is that the single term *'ādām* might allow for two separate human lineages, one inside the garden, the other outside. Technically, when *'ādām* is prefixed with the definite article (*ha-'ādām*), the form should not be translated as a proper personal name by rule of Hebrew grammar. Translations such as "humankind," "the man," or "this/that man" are appropriate. When *'ādām* lacks the definite article, the term may be a proper personal name (Adam) or not. Besides a personal name, the term may be translated as indefinite ("a man") or, still, generically ("humankind").<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, this variability has raised the question of whether the early chapters of Genesis might be re-read for two human lines, one deriving from generic or indefinite *'ādām*, the other from personal name *'ādām*.

This argument is part of a wider theological consideration. It has long been noted that Adam's story has several strong parallels to the story of Israel.<sup>11</sup> The import of the observation is that it allows the postulate, as Israel was an elect subset of humanity (the corporate "son of God" according to Exod 4:23; Hos 11:1), so might Adam be an elect subset of a wider humanity?

6. Hamilton acknowledges the variability of these verses and summarizes how they have been approached: "This statement suggests that at this point there are people in the world besides Adam, Eve, and Cain. The existence of others is also indicated later by the reference to Cain's wife (v. 17). Who are these people and where do they come from? Critical scholars see in these details support for the contention that the Cain-Abel story is originally independent of the Adam-Eve narrative, and that the Cain-Abel story surfaced in a period when there was a sizable population. Only later was it added to the Adam-Eve sagas, with the inconsistencies brought about by merger left intact. Or we may suggest that Cain, Abel, and Seth are the only children of Adam and Eve specifically mentioned and named. Cain's wife would be his sister, and those who might kill Cain—assuming a family proliferation that spreads over centuries—would be Cain's siblings. If that is the case, and it is the one we prefer, then the situation is even more freighted with irony. He who turned on one of his relatives now must watch out for any of his relatives. The "avenger of blood," the one who seeks retributive justice against the criminal, may be a family member." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 233.

7. The biblical genealogies and their year lengths do not refute this subversion, as those genealogies describe only the lineage of Adam and Eve, not other people whose genealogy is outside that lineage.

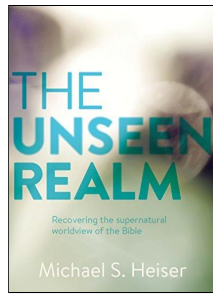
8. See for example Umberto Cassuto, U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah (Genesis I–VI 8)*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), 222–225. Specifically (p. 225), Cassuto writes, "[Cain said]: Although I acquiesce in the punishment that you decree upon me *this day* (now we understand why Cain stressed the words, *this day*), yet I am afraid lest in the future something over and above what you decree." Italics are those of Cassuto.

9. Hebrew *'îsh* is used in Gen 2:24 instead of *'adam* to create the wordplay with *'ishah* ("woman"): *'îsh* : *'ishah* // man : woman.

10. The same article rules and options apply when a prefixed preposition that subsumes the article is found with *'ādām* (e.g., ׀ַאָדָם). If one considers (in this example) the article present with the prefixed preposition, one should not translate "to/for Adam" but instead "to/for humankind," "to/for the man," or "to/for this/that man." In regard to the lemma with prefixed preposition, there are several instances that the Masoretes pointed as ׀ַאָדָם (without the article) that scholars argue should be amended to having the article (׀ַאָדָם) due to the context indicating a particular human (i.e., Adam, partner of Eve).

11. Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

Whatever coherence the Adam:Israel analogy might have, applying to the question of people outside Eden is unsustainable. The “two *’ādām*” strategy for doing so is undermined by Gen 5:1, where we are provided with the genealogy of Adam (no definite article on *’ādām*). This genealogy is not just any man, nor of all generic humanity, but Adam. Genesis 5:1b-2 takes this form, *’ādām* without the article, and links it to Gen 1:26-27, where humans are created *bara’* in the image of God (or as the image of God, a rendering based on a point of Hebrew grammar and syntax that leads me to take the functional view of the image).<sup>12</sup> The image of God describes a status, not any quality or attribute.<sup>13</sup> In Gen



1:26-27 we have the word *’ādām* with and without the definite article as the point of reference of the same act of creation, a creation that Genesis 5:1a assigns specifically to Adam the person. Then in Gen 5:3 we get the lifespan of *’ādām* (again, without the article). The point is that in Gen 5:1-3 we see that the writer uses *’ādām* without the article to refer to both the person Adam and the humanity that extends from him and Eve. Isolating that one textual form to non-Adamic humans cannot stand.<sup>14</sup>

Swamidass also notes appeals to Gen 6:1-4, the episode of the sons of God, the daughters of men, and the Nephilim. Some posit that the sons of God are the godly line of Adam, continued via Seth in Genesis 5, and the daughters of man are some other less godly human lineage (that of Cain in the standard articulation of this idea). The Nephilim produced by the forbidden union are not giants or anything else unusual, since (so this view argues) “Nephilim” comes from Hebrew *naphal* and means “fallen ones” (evil people) or “those who fall upon” (warriors).

I say Swamidass “notes” this perspective because he doesn’t base his hypothesis on this trajectory. This is wise, as none of these presumptions stand scrutiny. They have no textual, contextual, or logical merit.<sup>15</sup> The passage rather describes a transgression of

12. All views of the image of God recognize that it is what distinguishes humanity from the rest of terrestrial creation. Consideration of Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6 informs us that the image has several characteristics. It is equally possessed by all humans, male and female. There is no suggestion in the biblical text that it is dispensed incrementally. This point rules out any qualitative definition, for humans at various stages of development do not possess the standard list of qualities proposed as the image (e.g., intelligence, sentience, consciousness, speech ability, emotion, rationality, etc.). The multi-celled zygote in a woman’s womb does not possess such things, for they are connected to brain function. It is ethically perilous to argue that the fetus will at some point possess such things, for that means that the contents of the womb are only potentially created in God’s image, and that the image (quality) can be lost through defect, injury, or dementia. The image must also be something that only humans possess with respect to their earthly orientation. Intelligence is one of the most tenuous candidates for the image because of the potential for achieving artificial intelligence or the discovery of extraterrestrial intelligence. The field of animal cognition has already demonstrated that certain animals have intelligence. Since these qualities are invariably linked to brain function, more abstract qualities like prayer, seeking God, and worship also fail. The zygote isn’t capable of these things. The point is that each qualitative candidate, when scrutinized, contains inconsistencies with respect to the biblical characteristics of the image. Presumed “spiritual attributes” likewise do not solve this problem. Appeal to the *nephesh* (“soul”) or *ruach* (“spirit”) fail because these Hebrew terms are interchangeable for the faculties of emotion, rationality, intelligence, volition, and the internal life, and because animals also have the *nephesh* and *ruach* (e.g., Gen 1:21; Eccl. 3:21). The same is true of the *nishmat chayyâh* (“breath of life”). While Adam is animated in relation to this phrase (Gen 2:7), so is animal life (Gen 7:22-23). The phrase speaks of animate life, which is obviously not unique to humankind. For these reasons and others, a qualitative view of the image of God fails due to inconsistencies with the biblical portrait and opens the door to serious ethical difficulties. A functional view is not only preferable but is exegetically defensible.

13. The functional view of the image aligns well with the Swamidass hypothesis. Not only does this view avoid the theological / textual inconsistencies and ethical quandaries noted above, but it has an exegetical basis in Hebrew grammar and syntax. I refer here to the understanding of the preposition *beth* (ב) prefixed to *tselem* (“image”) as an indication of predication, the so-called *beth* of predication or *beth essentiae*. See Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Edited by E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley; 2d English ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 379 (Par. 119i); Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003), 2:486 (Par 133c). Gen 1:26 is a good example of the *beth essentiae*, which produces a functional semantic. Jacques E. J. Boulet, “The Biblical Hebrew Beth Essentiae: Predicate Marker,” *Journal for Semitics* 29:2 (2020), 27 pp. (not numbered). This last resource specifically takes note of Gen 1:26. Understanding the preposition *beth* prefixed to *tselem* (“image”) results in the following translation: “...let us create humankind as our image...So God created humankind as his image.” The idea is that humans are God’s imagers, his proxies. This makes excellent contextual sense in view of the fact that humankind’s creation is accompanied by a mandate (Gen 1:28). The plurality language and its interchange with singular forms (cp. Gen 1:26 to Gen 1:27) is not a cryptic reference to the Trinity as is commonly supposed by Christian interpreters. Rather, God is speaking to his heavenly host. They do not participate in human creation, though, as the singular verb in Gen 1:27 (and elsewhere, throughout the Hebrew Bible) indicates. The

plural-singular interchange provides a conceptual-theological linkage between the members of the heavenly host, God’s spiritual children who are his imagers/proxies in the spiritual world (cf. the phrase “sons of God” in passages like Job 38:6-7) and God’s human children-partners on earth. There are also ancient Near Eastern and grammatical reasons that the plural exhortation (“let us”) points to the heavenly host. The major scholarly study in this regard is W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 15; Leiden: Brill, 2003). See also Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Lexham Press, 2015), 23-43.

14. Fortunately, this “two *’ādām* strategy” is not what Dr. Swamidass’s hypothesis proposes. His hypothesis as stated earlier involves Adam and Eve being specially created as new humans, not electively chosen out of the people already on earth. That said, perhaps the issue is only semantic. The idea that Adam and Eve were the products of a choice of God (i.e., a decision made to create them) would still make them a subset of humanity. But this trajectory isn’t to be argued on the basis of *’ādām* with or without the grammatical article.

15. To briefly summarize the internal incoherence of the Sethite view, nothing in the early chapters of Genesis affirm that Adam’s direct genealogical line was more godly (“sons of God”) than other humans. Some has drawn attention to Genesis 4:26 to argue this point—that in the days of Seth people began to worship Yahweh. The text never says the *only* people who “called on the name of the Lord” were men from Seth’s lineage. That idea is simply imposed on the text. The same is true of the women in the episode. Genesis 6:1-4 never calls the women in the episode “daughters of Cain.” The idea that the God-less people in the story are women also smacks of misogyny. How normal sons of Seth would produce Nephilim giants (see the following) by marriages to normal, but ungodly women is never explained. There is also no command in the Genesis story against intermarrying human lines, regardless of their nature. The Sethite view of Gen 6:1-4 depends on what is *not* present in the text, which is the very antithesis of exegesis. Nothing in Genesis 6:1-4 or anywhere else in the Bible identifies people who come from Seth’s lineage with the descriptive phrase “sons of God.” 2 Peter 2:4 refers to the transgressors “angels that sinned” at the time of Noah, not men from the line of Seth. These offenders are sent to Tartarus, the destination of the Greek Titans, who obviously were not men (cf. the verb *tartaroo* in the verse, often translated “cast into hell” to obscure the terminology). The so-called “divinized human rulers” approach to the sons of God also suffers from incoherence (and is not at all in line with the external context points delineated in footnote 16). This view has the sons of God as kings thought to be divine who had harems and engaged in polygamous marriage. Genesis 6:1-4 never says the marriages were polygamous, nor is there any prohibition of polygamy in the earlier chapters of Genesis. Ancient Near Eastern literature and religion restrict divine sonship language to *individual* kings. Consequently, the idea of a *group* of sons of God being human kings lacks a coherent ancient parallel. The plural phrase refers to divine beings elsewhere in the Old Testament, not kings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Pss 29:1; 82:6 [cf. 82:1b]; 89:6

supernatural and natural realms and how it produced demigods and/or giants and, ultimately, demons.<sup>16</sup> This interpretation is firmly rooted in the Mesopotamian literature against which the Gen 6:1-4 polemic is aimed and has clear relationships to Second Temple Jewish texts that also references the earlier Mesopotamian target, and which are repurposed by New Testament writers. The scholarly literature establishing these assertions is copious.<sup>17</sup>

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[Hebrew: 89:7]). These are the more obvious problems with the view. Lastly, and more to the specific focus of this paper, the “divinized human rulers in polygamous marriages” perspective does not suggest any specific lineage of humans, much less non-Adamites. For more discussion of the flaws of this view and the Sethite view of Gen 6:1-4, see Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Lexham Press, 2015), 94-97 and the resources in the following footnote.

16. Try as many might to argue that *Nephilim* derives from *naphal* allowing the understanding of “fallen ones” or “those who fall upon” (i.e., warriors), the Hebrew scribes did not point (vocalize) the term in Gen 6:4 or Num 13:32 in the ways required to produce those translations (*nephulim* and *nophelim* respectively). Neither did the ancient translators of the Septuagint understand the term in those ways. The Septuagint does not translate the Hebrew term *nephilim* as though it comes from *naphal* (Greek lemma: *piptō*). Rather, it nearly always uses *gigantes* or *titanes* (“giants” and “Titans” respectively) for both the Nephilim and their descendants (Anakim, Rephaim, etc.) or transliterates those descendant names. For *gigantes* see LXX Gen 14:5; Josh 12:4; 13:12; Job 26:5; Prov 21:16; Isa 14:9; 1 Chr 11:15; 14:9; 20:4. For *titanes* see 2 Sam (LXX = 2 Kingdoms) 5:18, 22. Transliteration of the Anakim and the Amorite/Canaanite and Transjordan Rephaim (Num 13:32-22; Deut 2-3; Amos 2:9-10) occurs in Gen 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20 (twice); Deut 3:11, 13; Num 13:32-33; Josh 15:8; 18:16; 2 Sam 23:13. Note that in the Hebrew Bible, *nēpīlīm* occurs twice in Num 13:33. It also apparently did in the text used by the LXX translator, who chose to render the term *andres hypermēkeis* (“men of great stature”) in one instance. The earliest connection between *Nephilim* and *piptō* comes from one writer, Aquila, who produced his own Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible in the second century CE, 300-400 years subsequent to the Septuagint. What more ancient scribes and translators thought the term meant is not difficult to parse. With respect to people outside Eden and their lineages, it should also be noted that the Nephilim are *not* the ones engaged in “interbreeding” in Gen 6:1-4. They are the effect, not the cause. The only ancient evidence for identifying the Nephilim with the sons of God comes from one of the stranger texts in the rabbinic period, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (7th-8th century CE), infamous for having Eve cohabit with Satan. That Targum inserts names of the fallen angels of 1 Enoch (Shemihazah and Asael) into Gen 6:4, thus combining the fallen sons of God (Watchers in 1 Enoch’s language) with the Nephilim. A handful of modern scholars have tried to make the equation by taking “*sher*” in Gen 6:4b as a relative pronoun (reading: “There were Nephilim on the earth in those days, *which* sons of God went into the daughters of men...”) instead of a temporal conjunction (“... *when* the sons of God went into the daughters of men”). The view is idiosyncratic, as most scholars would agree. See Westermann’s assessment after which he concludes the phrase is “best understood temporally.” See Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 376. Kvanvig marshals a number of other reasons for the majority temporal view, as it dovetails with other grammatical-syntactical features in the text. See H. Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 149; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 285-298.

17. On the ancient Near Eastern background for Gen 6:1-4 and its theological polemic, see Amar Annus, “On the Origin of the Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 19.4 (2010): 277–320, and Ida Frölich, “Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions,” in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Angela Kim Hawkins, Kelley Coblenz Bautch, and John Endres; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 11–24; Helge S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and the Son of Man* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988); Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 149; Leiden: Brill, 2011). On connections to the Greek material, see G. Mussies, “Titans,” *DDD* 872–74; Mussies, “Giants,” *DDD* 343–45; David M. Johnson, “Hesiod’s Descriptions of Tartarus (*Theogony* 721–819),” *The Phoenix* 53.1–2 (1999): 8–28; Birger A. Pearson, “A Reminiscence of Classical Myth at 2 Peter 2.4,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 10 (1969): 71–80; Jan N. Bremmer, “Greek Fallen Angels: Kronos and the Titans,” in *Greek Religion and*

## Romans 5:12-14 a Fatal Blow?

This brings us to the passage that launched La Peyrère’s thinking in regard to pre-Adamites. La Peyrère was also influenced by other factors, such as his exposure to the monuments of Egypt and Babylon, their knowledge of astronomy (known to him through classical writers), and more recent discoveries of people in remote locations, but Romans 5:12-14 was where he himself said his journey began. The writings of contemporaries in his circle make it clear that La Peyrère could not read Greek (nor Hebrew for that matter), so this passage in Romans was known to him via Latin and a 1656 English translation that he quotes in his writings, which reads as follows:

As by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin, death: so likewise death had power over all men, because in him all men sinned. For till the time of the Law sin was in the world, but sin was not imputed, when the Law was not. But death reigned from Adam into Moses, even upon those who had not sinned according to the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is The Type of the future.<sup>18</sup>

The key line for La Peyrère in this regard was “For till the time of the Law sin was in the world, but sin was not imputed, when the Law was not.” La Peyrère interpreted the passage to say that law came into the world with Adam (by which he meant “natural law” that preceded the Law of Moses). This must be the case since there was sin before Adam. How can one call any act “sin” if there was no law? The language must speak of willful acts against an order by intelligent, willful transgressors. Consequently, La Peyrère reasoned, “there was sin before Adam, but it only took on moral significance with Adam. Therefore, there must have been men before Adam.”<sup>19</sup>

Contemporary biblical scholars of all theological persuasions (or none) will immediately recognize the weaknesses of these arguments and La Peyrère’s interpretation. But that doesn’t matter. Swamidass isn’t depending on Romans 5. So, the question in regard to Romans 5:12-14 should be whether, if the Swamidass hypothesis is correct, there is a violation of the meaning of that text? In that regard, the central point is v. 12 (now from ESV):

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

The verse seems to disallow people before Adam. It clearly states that Adam’s sin brought death into God’s world. If there were people

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*Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 73–99; Amar Annus, “Are There Greek Rephaim? On the Etymology of Greek Meropes and Titanes,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 31 (1999): 13–30. For connections to the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Giant Mythology and Demonology: From Ancient Near East to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Demons: The Demonology of Israelite-Jewish and Early Christian Literature in Context of Their Environment*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Diethard Röhmel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 31–38; Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation: Reflections on the Posture of Early Apocalyptic Traditions,” *DSD* 7.3 (2000): 354–77; Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); idem, “Some Observations on Philo’s *De Gigantibus* and Evil Spirits in Second Temple Judaism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36.4 (2005): 471–88.

18. I am quoting the translation as it is reproduced in Popkin, 43.

19. Popkin, 44.

before Adam, did they not die? If these people could die, how are they really people? Could they not sin? In any view of the image, being created in God's image has something to do with moral responsibility and culpability. This is especially true, though, for the functional view (which, again, I hold). Romans 5 seems to force the conclusion that humans created in God's image before Adam cannot be biblically feasible.

But this conclusion is premature as the following thought experiment illustrates.

We know from elsewhere in Romans 5 that Paul is talking about Adam, and so he has the Fall of Genesis 3 in view, the first sin of humankind. There's no ambiguity on that point. Romans 5:12's statement that, "just as sin came into the world through one man," is about the first sin, which can only refer to what happened in Eden to the man Adam (and Eve, by extension). It thus applies only to Adam, Eve, and their progeny—no one else. The ensuing phrase ("and death through sin") has nothing to do with physical death of any animal or person *before* the Fall. It is a comment about the event of Eden and circumstances *after* the Fall. Death now invades the Edenic storyline which will affect all of Adam and Eve's descendants. The original desire of God did not include death.

Another phrase follows: "so death spread to all men [i.e., humankind]." Death has entered the picture because of Adam and Eve's sin. The death Paul is speaking of is both spiritual and physical. Spiritually, the humans born from the couple that shared God's sacred space are now estranged from God. Why this must be part of our reading of Eden's fall has long been noted by biblical scholars. Adam and Eve didn't drop over dead when they sinned—but they *were* separated from God. Physically, Adam and Eve will now age and die. Their children—and in the Swamidass hypothesis, this subsumes all humanity that extends from them—are no longer destined for immortality. Death spreads to all humanity—the humanity this concerns is the same humanity referenced with respect to the sin: Adam and Eve and all who will inherit the creation mandate from them—their children.

The last part of Romans 5:12 is another concern for many (ESV: "because all sinned"). This has, for the most part, been understood as indicating Adam's guilt now falls to all his descendants (not just death, which is actually what the verse says was transmitted), via either the seminal or headship understanding. But a minority of Christian thinkers takes a different position, that Rom 5:12 has nothing to do with the transference of guilt.<sup>20</sup> I hold this view, which

is based on two considerations: (1) not over-reading the passage to insert guilt into the verse alongside death, and (2) interpreting the grammar and syntax of preposition *epi*+ relative pronoun preceding the verb form differently, and understanding the verb as a gnomic (or perhaps a constative) aorist, so that the phrase is translated "with the result that all sin / have sinned."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the idea traditionally extracted from Rom 5:12, that the guilt of Adam is somehow transferred to all humans thereafter isn't an obstacle for me when considering the Swamidass hypothesis. However, it should be noted that his hypothesis isn't dependent on this minority view of Rom 5:12. Why? Because he's still only talking about humans who descend from Adam and Eve. The question of *why* humans are guilty

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Salvation," Diss. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999); Adam Harwood, "The Spiritual Condition of Infants: A Biblical-Historical Survey and Systematic Proposal," Diss. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007). These studies are from a Baptist orientation. Certain Baptist groups have a long history of a differing approach to Rom 5:12, held in concert with infant salvation and the defense of an "age of accountability" related to infants and young children, but extended to others who lack the brain function to choose or reject the gospel. This point notwithstanding, the meaning of Rom 5:12 extends from analysis of its grammar and syntax (see the ensuing footnote). The notion of an age of accountability, often described in relation to a prior time of moral innocence, has its roots in the Old Testament phrase "(not) knowing good and/or evil." Relevant passages for studying the phrase include Gen 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22; Deut 1:39; Isa 7:15-16. See Robert Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76:2 (1957): 123-138; Herold S. Stern, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," *Vetus Testamentum* 8:1 (1958): 405-418; George Wesley Buchanan, "The Old Testament Meaning of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75:2 (1956): 114-120.

21. Murray Harris notes of the combination (ἐφ' ᾧ), "Few phrases in Paul's writings have generated more controversy than ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. J. A. Fitzmyer lists no fewer than eleven proposed meanings for ἐφ' ᾧ,<sup>3</sup> he himself opts for "with the result that" (cf. LSJ 622c, "wherefore")....Since some nexus between Adam and his descendants regarding sin seems demanded by Paul's Adam-Christ analogy (see Ro 5:18-19; cf. 1 Co 15:22), the most likely options seem to be: (1) "death spread to all people because all sinned" (either actually in Adam's primal transgression or in their federal representative, Adam, ἥμαρτον being a constative aorist) (2) "death spread to all people because all do sin" (as those who have inherited Adam's nature, ἥμαρτον being a gnomic aorist), (3) "death spread to all people because all [since the time of Adam] have sinned" (ἥμαρτον being a constative aorist)." The last option is Harris's preference. See Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 140. Cranfield notes of the "with the result that all sin" option adopted above, "refers to men's actual sinning (death has come to all men in their turn because all men have sinned in their own persons voluntarily), but—contrast the Pelagian view (i.e. (v) above)—their sinning is related to Adam's transgression not merely externally, as being an imitation of it, but also internally, as being its natural consequence, the fruit of the desperate moral debility and corruption which resulted from man's primal transgression and which all succeeding generations of mankind have inherited. According to this interpretation, while men did not sin in Adam in Augustine's sense, they certainly do sin in Adam in the sense that they sin in a real solidarity with him, as a result of the entail of his transgression. Cyril of Alexandria seems to have understood the clause in this way." See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 278. In his discussion of the relative pronoun, Wallace briefly comments, "The prepositional phrase here is often debated. It is possible that ᾧ refers back to "one man" (ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου) mentioned earlier in the verse. If so, the idea is either 'all sinned in one man,' or 'all sinned because of one man.' But the distance to ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου is too great for this to be a natural reading. But if ἐφ' ᾧ functions as a conjunction, it does not look back at any antecedent, but explains how death passed to all: 'Death is universal for the precise reason that sin is universal.' This usage finds parallels in the papyri and in the rest of the Pauline corpus (cf. 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:12)." This trajectory is not oppositional to the perspective taken here or noted by Harris or Fitzmyer. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1996), 342.

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20. Many readers will know that Eastern Orthodox Christianity does not consider Adam's sin to have resulted in guilt for the rest of humanity. However, I am referring to Christians in the Protestant stream, including evangelicals. Sources for Eastern Orthodoxy's position include Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background* (transl. Cajetan Finegan; New York: Alba House, 1972); David M. Weaver, "The exegesis of Romans 5:12 among the Greek fathers and its implication for the doctrine of original sin," Diss. St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1983); idem, "The Exegesis of Romans 5:12 Among the Greek Fathers and Its Implications for the Doctrine of Original Sin: The 5th-12th Centuries," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29:3 (1985): 231-257. Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), 66-81. Louth writes (p. 73): "In the West, with Augustine and his followers, there develops a notion of original sin, *peccatum originale*: a sin that has its origin in Adam and infects, like an inherited disease, all humanity. This idea, in this very specific sense, never developed in the East...." Protestant departures from the interpretation of Rom 5:12 that has humanity inheriting Adam's guilt are chronicled in Earl Waggoner, "Baptist Approaches to the Question of Infant

before God is wrapped up in how one takes the end of Rom 5:12. Swamidass isn't concerned with that issue.

What about the humans before Adam and Eve's fall—the humans with which Rom 5:12 is not concerned. If they are human must they not also be created as God's imagers? It is at this point that the functional view of the image of God (vs. a qualitative view) is brought to bear in my thought experiment. It matters not that hominid archaeology shows us they had human intelligence. Intelligence—indeed no quality at all—defines the image of God. Rather, the grammar informs us we should understand the image as a functional status.<sup>22</sup> Adam, Eve, and their descendants (cf. Gen 5:1-3; 9:6) are the image of God. That is, they were created to be God's proxies on earth, which explains why the image language is accompanied by a mandate in Gen 1:27-28). Attributes are the means by which this new, unique status will be carried out but, as noted earlier, all the attributes theologians tend to use to define the image are either not unique to Adam, Eve, and their descendants, or are not equally possessed by all their descendants. No quality or set of qualities defines the image. It is a functional status.

The practical result of this approach is that the everlasting destiny of creatures that have intelligence or some other capacity in a way that transcends the animal world are outside of both the act that makes redemption necessary and that secures redemption. They may be part of the new earth regardless. Animals certainly are (the new Eden is what the old Eden was supposed to be, only on a global scale). Colossians 1:20 is a significant text in this regard. Paul is not speaking of the offer of redemption in that passage. "Reconcil[ing] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" refers to the restoration of creation order and authority. With respect to the Swamidass hypothesis, humans outside Adam and Eve were part of the original creation, though outside it. Colossians 1:20 may therefore indicate that those

humans will be part of the new creation as well. At the very least, Col 1:20 should be part of further discussion of the hypothesis.<sup>23</sup>

And so in the end of our thought experiment, the Swamidass hypothesis is workable. Romans 5:12 need not violate Genesis 1, 2, or 3. God created Adam and Eve *de novo*, stepping into his experiment to create a world filled with embodied life forms. He enjoyed it so much that he desired to intervene and take some of the material of that world to create people who would image (represent) him, to be steward-rulers of his property. They would be his children and partners.

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22. See the scholarly references in footnote 13 on this perspective.

23. On this point some comment on Col 1:20 is in order. I have discussed that passage elsewhere in regard to the matter of whether redemption is offered to fallen supernatural beings. Some of that material is relevant here: "...[T]he work of Christ is connected to the renewal of creation. That has nothing to do with forgiving sins. Creation did not sin—it committed no moral offense against God. Its 'reconciliation' (creation is, of course, included in 'all things') means something different than forgiveness of sins....[T]he statements in Colossians 1:16 ('for by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible') must be understood in tandem with Colossians 1:20 ('through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven'). Both statements are in the same paragraph unit, and both verbs are aorist tense, the Greek tense which focuses on completed action—not action in process, or action yet unaccomplished. Therefore, the reconciliation of Colossians 1:20 (which still needs to be defined) is rooted in creation, and now, after the cross, it is moving toward its consummation, which itself is expressed as the dominion of the Son over all things....Connecting Colossians 1:20 with 1:16 and 2:15 shows us that 'reconciliation' does not mean an offer of forgiveness that is still on the table....[I]t must be defined as an already-completed reality that is consistent with both original creation order and the kingship of the risen Christ....[R]econciling 'all things, whether on earth or in heaven' in Colossians 1:20 refers to the restoration of creation order and authority." See Michael S. Heiser, *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God's Heavenly Host* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 149-151. On the grammatical point about the aorist forms, Wallace's words (citing B. Fanning) are helpful: "The aorist tense 'presents an occurrence in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence.'" See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 554. Citing Porter (positively), Runge says of the aorist tense: "The aorist conveys 'perfective' aspect, portraying the action as 'a complete and undifferentiated process.'" See Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 129.

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