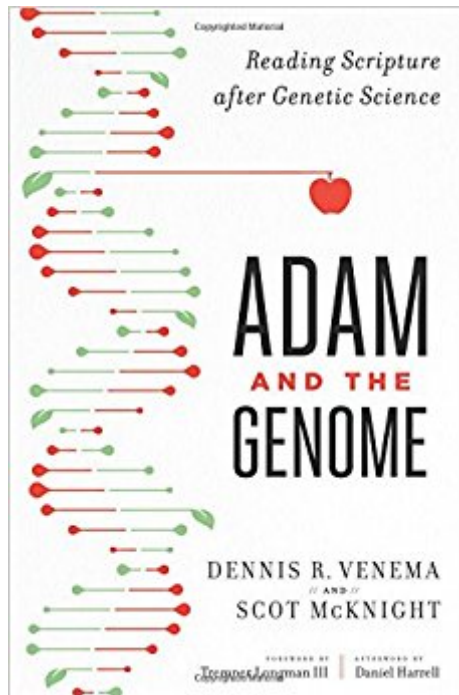




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# Adam And The Genome: Reading Scripture After Genetic Science



## Synopsis

Genomic science indicates that humans descend not from an individual pair but from a large population. What does this mean for the basic claim of many Christians: that humans descend from Adam and Eve? Leading evangelical geneticist Dennis Venema and popular New Testament scholar Scot McKnight combine their expertise to offer informed guidance and answers to questions pertaining to evolution, genomic science, and the historical Adam. Some of the questions they explore include:- Is there credible evidence for evolution?- Do we descend from a population or are we the offspring of Adam and Eve? - Does taking the Bible seriously mean rejecting recent genomic science?- How do Genesis's creation stories reflect their ancient Near Eastern context, and how did Judaism understand the Adam and Eve of Genesis?- Doesn't Paul's use of Adam in the New Testament prove that Adam was a historical individual? The authors address up-to-date genomics data with expert commentary from both genetic and theological perspectives, showing that genome research and Scripture are not irreconcilable. Foreword by Tremper Longman III and afterword by Daniel Harrell.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Marks a watershed moment in the history of evangelical Christianity" "Adam and the Genome is both hugely needed and splendidly written. Anyone who has wrestled with the notion that science is an obstacle to faith will benefit from its clarity and informed insight. I hope it's widely read inside the church--and out."--John Ortberg, senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church and best-selling

author"Few topics generate greater passion among evangelical Christians today than the question of the literal accuracy of the biblical creation story. With the advances in science, we have two accounts of the origin of living beings--one scientific, the other scriptural--and many believe that they are mutually exclusive. This book carefully considers whether that claim is true. The result is the most lucid and thorough discussion of the topic I have ever read. This book will mark a watershed moment in the history of evangelical Christianity."--Darrel Falk, Point Loma Nazarene University

"Venema and McKnight address in a learned yet accessible way issues about which many of us have little understanding. We are indebted to them for giving us information and insights that enable us to think about human origins in ways that are both scientifically informed and grounded in a carefully nuanced interaction with the biblical text and early Jewish traditions."--John Å H. Walton, Wheaton College

"This is a unique and valuable book: an expert geneticist and a leading New Testament scholar come together to address questions of Adam and Eve. Not all readers will agree with their conclusions, but the book is essential reading for all who seek an understanding of human origins that respects both Scripture and God's creation."--Deborah Haarsma, president of BioLogos

"Anyone who doubts that Christian faith and evolutionary science can have a peaceful and fruitful relationship needs to read this remarkable book, a shining example of a complementary approach to science and religion in which both enhance, enrich, and complete each other. I highly recommend this book."--Denis Å O. Lamoureux, St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta

Dennis R. Venema (PhD, University of British Columbia) is professor of biology at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, and Fellow of Biology for the BioLogos Foundation. He writes and speaks regularly about the biological evidence for evolution.

Scot McKnight (PhD, University of Nottingham), a world-renowned scholar, writer, and speaker, is Julius Å R. Mantey Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. He is the author or editor of more than sixty books, including *Kingdom Conspiracy*, *The Jesus Creed*, *The King Jesus Gospel*, and *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*. He is also a popular blogger (*Jesus Creed*).

Good book. I loved the first half that explains the science behind the genome project and evolutionary biology. This book is a perfect introduction for someone who grew up sheltered from science and wants to educate themselves as an adult. The second half of the book I found to be quite boring and dull, and it dragged on longer than I think it needed to because of repetition. Overall it is worth reading for the excellent perspective it offers, but be prepared for a bit of dryness in the second half.

The first scientific chapters are just that - scientific. They are very heavy reading but lay the groundwork for the theological discussion that follows. By reading this book it is easy to see that there is no conflict between science and the Bible.

I struggle with only rating this 3 stars. While parts of it are definitely helpful, I think there are better resources out there that cover this subject matter. Dennis Venema's first two chapters offer one of the clearest and most succinct Christian defenses of evolution I've seen. Additionally, nearly all the studies he examines are recent (within the last 2-6 years) and not just a rehashing of what can already be found in similar books. You can, however, find almost all of it for free on his blog:

<http://biologos.org/blogs/dennis-venema-letters-to-the-duchess> Daniel Harrell's

Afterward is insightful and quoteworthy. In discussing terms that secular evolutionists often ascribe to evolution (random, wasteful, purposeless), he asks "what if what looks like randomness was instead understood as freedom? What if nature is creatively endowed with a liberty and capacity to self-assemble as it will?... Or, what if wastefulness was instead understood as sacrifice? The universe and humanity come about at immense cost, a cost that ascribes to them immense value (cf. John 3:16). Or, what if purposelessness was understood as fruitfulness or, to borrow a fancy theological word, telos (from the Greek meaning "ultimate aim or end")?... a progression from simplicity to complexity and eventually to a humanity with unique capabilities of reason, empathy, cooperation, wonder, and worship. I look forward to finding any other materials he's produced. [Edit: I've now started his book *Nature's Witness: How Evolution Can Inspire Faith (Living Theology)* and I'm impressed with Harrell's ability to communicate humbly and clearly on the subject]. Unfortunately, the rest of the book fails to match the persuasiveness and clarity that some similar resources demonstrate. If you get confused by Venema's treatment of Mitochondrial Eve and Y-chromosome Adam, his blog offers a helpful chart that didn't make it into the book:

<http://biologos.org/blogs/dennis-venema-letters-to-the-duchess/understanding-evolution-mitochondrial-eve-y-chromosome-adam> Strangely, though Venema spends a whole chapter countering the claims of Intelligent Design, he leaves his definition of Intelligent Design in an Endnote that most people will never find. His definition is somewhat crucial to understanding why he even bothers

debating Intelligent Design and why we should care. Although I'm not sure that, even with the definition, he actually made it clear why we should care about disproving the arguments of Intelligent Design. Both Venema's and McKnight's sections end without summary statements or "conclusions." Additionally, their lack of cross-references towards each other's sections make the book seem disjointed, like independent works bound together by a hurried editor. This was a missed opportunity to demonstrate the relevance between the scientific and theological positions. I had high hopes for Scot McKnight's treatment of the subject since he is a less controversial figure than other Evangelical authors who have tackled it recently. I (positively) quoted him in many undergraduate papers, and expected he would bring some credibility and insight to readers who may have previously been too leery to accept such scholarship. Unfortunately, he seems to get distracted and forget the purpose of this book. After 80 pages discussing the different views of Adam among Paul and Paul's Jewish contemporaries, he ends without really making any headway or conclusions concerning the relevance of it to the book's subject. From a response I saw him write, it sounds like he had to leave out a lot of valuable material in order to spend so much time convincing us to eliminate the designation of a "historical Adam" and replace it with designations such as "literary Adam" and "genealogical Adam." I recognize that he was trying to assure readers that you can believe in human sinfulness without believing Adam was "historical," yet he admits that Paul seemed to believe in a real, genealogical Adam (which would essentially be a "historical" Adam). So I've failed to find much value in all those pages and I really wish he'd spent them making points more relevant to the foundation Venema laid at the beginning. I appreciate McKnight's bravery to even contribute to such a book. I know he will receive backlash from some colleagues and friends. Yet it almost seems like he purposely avoided making any conclusions to minimize such backlash. He really doesn't say much that even a fundamentalist would argue with, which is a bewilderment considering the implications Evolution has on this topic. His discussion is not worded or formatted for newcomers to this information, and he doesn't uncover any new insights. So I can't really recommend McKnight's section to newcomers or to those well versed in the subject. For a much clearer and robust treatment of McKnight's assigned subject, check out Peter Enns's *The Evolution of Adam, What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins*

This book may save the faith of many.

Two world-class scholars, biologist Dennis Venema (Ph.D, University of British Columbia) and theologian Scot McKnight (Ph.D, University of Nottingham) team up to provide a defense for the compatibility of God and evolution in the book *Adam and the Genome*. Their shared thesis is that God and evolution are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that it is possible to have faith in God as Creator while simultaneously accepting evolution as the most likely explanation for HOW God created. In the first half of the book, Dr. Venema introduces some of the scientific evidence for evolution using the whimsical examples of tetrapods and cetaceans. From there, he moves to an explanation of the human genome as language, using language itself to demonstrate how evolution works. Additionally, he provides enough basic genetic theory to explain how DNA sequencing, replication and mutations are used to predict origins with a very high confidence level. One chapter is devoted to an explanation for how the completion of the Human Genome Project provides the mathematical and statistical evidence for the unlikelihood that all humans descended from 2 people. His final chapter focuses on the evidence against Intelligent Design as a possible explanation for human origins (as postulated by Michael Behe), including the problems with "irreducible complexity." Along the way, he debunks several other common arguments contra evolution, e.g. mitochondrial Eve, Y-Chromosome Adam. Dr. McKnight begins his half of the book proposing four principles for reading Genesis: 1) Respect (for context and literary genre); 2) Honesty (be open to Truth, both Biblical and Scientific); 3) Sensitivity (to students of science); and 4) Prima Scriptura (although it is the Book to which we must look first AND last, the Bible is not the only "Book of God. His observable creation is also a "book worthy of study). He presents an articulate defense for interpreting the Genesis creation account as a literary narrative, as opposed to a historical narrative, basically a nuanced "framework hypothesis." With that groundwork, the balance of the book is devoted to how "literary Adam & Eve" can be reconciled to the doctrine of original sin, both from an OT and NT perspective. As a reasonably intelligent non-scientist (I am an accountant by trade), I found some of the more technical parts of Dr. Venema's chapters challenging. However, I could comprehend enough of the technical details to grasp the conceptual big ideas, and I thought he presented a convincing case for the genomic support for evolution. As a TEDS MDiv graduate, I am familiar with Dr. McKnight's arguments for Genesis as "literary narrative." A similar approach is advocated by one of my OT professors, Dr. Richard Averbeck, in his contribution to the book "Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation." This approach seems to be gathering momentum within the scholarly evangelical community as the

evidence for evolution grows and becomes more accessible to the average person (and as the church loses more millennials). It seemed to me at first that there was an over-dependency on John Walton, but by the time I finished the book, I felt it provided a balanced survey of scholars. I would have liked for Dr. McKnight to have interacted more with those who strongly disagree with reading Genesis 1-2 as literary narrative, like Millard Erickson, for instance, as Dr. Venema did with Behe and others. Nonetheless, Dr. McKnight did a good job explaining how the doctrine of original sin remains intact even with a literary Adam & Eve in view. It's an ambitious and critical topic right now, and advances the scholarship surrounding the historicity of Adam & Eve in positive ways. Both authors share their personal story of how they each came to accept the truth of both God and evolution at the beginning of their respective sections. Mine is here:

<http://mosessister.net/changed-mind-evolution/>, although the fact that someone of Dr.

McKnight's stature is defending both evolution and an orthodox understanding of God's Word is reason enough to accept it, frankly. I highly recommend the book for anyone who cares about reaching millennials who have been told that belief in evolution is incompatible with belief in God, and for anyone who cares about reaching scientists who have been told that belief in God is incompatible with evolutionary theory.

Makes good sense

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