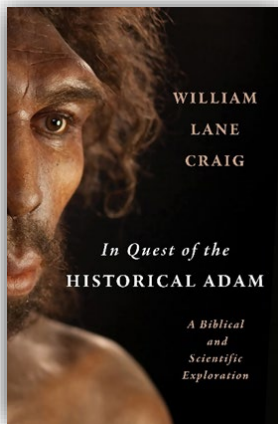


BOOK REVIEW

In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration

By William Lane Craig

Reviewed by Megan Stueve



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Author William Lane Craig attempts to tackle one of the big theological questions: Where does biblical Adam fit in the ever-expanding tree of human evolution? A theologian and philosopher, by nature Craig is attuned to asking the big questions and this one seems the biggest. If science can show the plenitude of human ancestors and the Bible can tell us the story of Adam and Eve, where do the two overlap?

Craig separates his book into four parts, beginning by detailing the question at hand, followed by a breakdown of the biblical evidence and then the scientific evidence for Adam, finishing with an integration of the two into one cohesive answer. His argument begins with the fact that scientific theories relating to human origins are constantly updated as new evidence emerges and as such the theologian also needs to update their understandings with each new piece of evidence. He touches on this to highlight the adaptability of the modern Christian to an advancing world and show that the biblical story is not an

outdated fairytale from a time gone by, but instead a history that holds true above and outside of these changes.

After laying out his argument in the first section, the following section spends six chapters breaking down the verses in Genesis 1-11 and the history of previous theological arguments related to those verses. Seemingly checking boxes as he goes, Craig makes sure to discuss all the major theologians and their lengthy discourse. At times this causes the reader to lose Craig's voice, but he returns at the close of each chapter to once again incorporate his own perspective. He discusses the definitions of myth, legend, and folktale to ask the reader if the Christian creation story belongs in one of those categories. He delves into the creation stories of neighboring regions to compare our story with those clearly marked fictional. He uses math and science to discuss the ages of the antediluvians and whether there would be enough time post-flood for the animal population to rebound to its current numbers. Ever the devil's advocate, Craig gets ahead of these tough and sometimes unapproachable questions with a poise and tact that dismisses the literal interpretation of the Hebrew creation story in favor of the figurative. He succinctly suggests that the argument is not if the Bible presents a historical accounting of the fall of humanity but whether the account is of a historical event.

In the third part of his book, Craig moves on to discuss the scientific evidence for Adam within the known ancestors of modern humans. He begins by putting up some parameters, effectively confining Adam to the *Homo* lineage based on his conditions for humanness. A discussion of cranial capacity, hunting techniques, burial practices and artistic capabilities allows Craig to posit that Neanderthals and Denisovans arise in a world post-Adam. Most crucially, Craig reminds the reader that DNA from

Neanderthals and Denisovans runs through their own blood, therefore our biblical progenitor must have emerged prior to interspecies breeding. Given the lengthy and sometimes dizzying tangle of theological arguments in the previous section of the book, one would hope for a similarly lengthy discussion of this side of the argument. Although the author does touch on all the right paleoanthropological points and hits on all the key authors, the reader is left feeling a little lopsided. Perhaps Craig's intention was to entice the reader with just enough information to encourage one to explore the possibilities and conduct research on their own.

In the final section of the book, the reader finally hears the author's voice. This shift from technical jargon to personal reflection truly shows the passion the author has towards the subject matter. He concludes that biblical Adam must have existed somewhere during the existence of *Homo heidelbergensis*, which is the last common ancestor between *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals. Based on the variability in human genetics, to have a single paired couple be the progenitor of humankind to the exclusion of their contemporaries would require the date range of *Homo heidelbergensis* for biblical Adam. Therefore, Craig pinpoints the existence of Adam to fall roughly within 1MYA to 750KYA. A worthy hypothesis, the reader is left with an answer that is something not provided in theological debate or scholarly cogitation. The introduction of genetics to this conversation is something not often considered, yet it remains one of the most solid pieces of evidence for the existence of Adam—and Eve—outside of the Bible.

Written by a theologian, the most fitting audience for this book seems to be students of theology. It provides an excellent introduction to the basics of human evolution from a theological perspective. It announces that God exists in a world inclusive of science. And with a few seemingly offhanded comments sprinkled throughout the book, Craig once again spurs the reader to learn more. For instance, referencing only a few short Bible verses, Craig casually mentions these giants living in isolated groups, cursed for breeding with us, and cast aside as fallen warriors. Are these Nephilim our Neanderthals? Perhaps the Bible has provided us with direct evidence of our evolutionary cousins, and perhaps with our interests piqued, William Lane Craig is saving that for his next book.



Megan Stueve is a research archaeologist at Desert Research Institute in Las Vegas, Nevada. She has research interests in Neanderthal thanatology, human impacts on the ancient environment and Southwestern Archaeology.

Author email: mstueve@eastern.edu
or megan.stueve@dri.edu
