"VanDoodewaard shows us real history is as good as epic—seemingly inexorable trends, alarming tolerance, and an ominous slide; compelling, illuminating, and more than a bit unnerving. Only with historical treatises such as VanDoodewaard's can we see clearly from where we came, how far we have slid, and yet how simple the answer is."

—Kurt P. Wise, professor of biology, Truett-McConnell College

"A very necessary book. In Brazil, where the influence of liberal theology and Darwinian evolution has eroded the confidence of many evangelicals in the historicity and reliability of the Genesis account of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve, such a work must be translated, published, and widely discussed, especially in theological schools of historical denominations. Dr. VanDoodewaard has given us a major contribution to the understanding and defense of the biblical narrative about the first Adam, and therefore has also strengthened our faith in the second Adam."

—Augustus Lopes Nicodemus, chancellor emeritus, Mackenzie University, Sao Paulo, and professor of New Testament, Andrew Jumper Post-Graduate School of Theology

"The credibility of the Christian faith rests upon the historicity of two individuals: Adam and Jesus Christ. This claim is required not by a reactive and antiscientific reading of Genesis, but by reading Genesis in harmony with the theological arguments of St. Paul. This important new study illustrates some of the means by which Christians turned Adam into a character of myth—and how that move threatens our understanding of the work of Jesus Christ."

—Crawford Gribben, professor, School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University, Belfast

"This book is an amazingly comprehensive and detailed documentation of views on the origins of Adam throughout church history, with particular attention to recent controversies. While he himself is convinced of the literal interpretation of the creation of humanity, the author allows alternate views to speak in their own words. That, in turn, enables insightful comparisons."

—Noel Weeks, honorary senior lecturer, ancient Near Eastern studies, University of Sydney

"Theologians' attitudes toward the historical Adam and Eve and the uses to which they put the narrative of the fall in Genesis 3 reveal much about their hermeneutics and the entire structure of their thought. Building on a thorough and perceptive survey of the history of the use of the first parents in

successive periods of the church's history and in modern secular philosophers, including Darwin, VanDoodewaard enters into the discussion of alternatives to acceptance of the historical veracity of Genesis 1–3 during the past sixty-five years. His sophisticated and sensitive analysis shows how vital affirmation of the historicity of Adam and Eve is for the entire corpus of biblical teaching."

—Robert Kolb, missions professor of systematic theology emeritus, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

"A comprehensive and well-documented historical analysis of theological responses to significant questions related to human origins. The author provides a much-needed perspective for those seeking to interpret the biblical text against the backdrop of scientific claims."

—Mohan Chacko, principal emeritus and professor of theology, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehra Dun, India

"A work of outstanding scholarship. *The Quest for the Historical Adam* by William VanDoodewaard provides an in-depth study of the varied Christian positions on human origins. This survey of past and present interpretations of Genesis 1–2 is foundational for future commentary."

—Emerson T. McMullen, associate professor, history of science, department of history, Georgia Southern University

"It does not overstate to say that the gospel of Jesus Christ loses its biblical meaning and efficacy apart from Adam and Eve as the first human beings from whom all others descend. The author's thorough and instructive survey of the long history of interpretation down to the present, particularly of the opening chapters of Genesis, shows unmistakably how questionable hermeneutical commitments and unsound exegesis lead to denial or uncertainty regarding the Bible's clear teaching on common descent and, in conclusion, points out the disastrous consequences that follow for sound doctrine and the life of the church. One need not agree at every point with his own literal Genesis interpretation to appreciate the compelling value of his contribution. This is an important book and, given differences and confused thinking about the historicity of Adam increasingly among those claiming to be evangelical, particularly timely. It deserves careful reading and reflection by anyone interested in this crucial issue."

—Richard B. Gaffin Jr., professor of biblical and systematic theology emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

"This is one of the best books, to my knowledge, on the controversy surrounding the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis and its relation to modern

science and the influx of Enlightenment thought, providing a historical survey on how Adam has been understood from the patristic era up to the past several decades. While holding to the literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation of the first human being, Adam, VanDoodewaard presents alternate interpretations with a thorough and fair mind. This is a fine biblical–historical contribution to Adam scholarship."

—Daniel Hojoon Ryou, professor of Old Testament,
Baekseok University Divinity School, Seoul, Korea

"This is a bold and refreshing presentation of the literal hermeneutical approach to the creation and human origins story given in Genesis 1 and 2. Committed to the authority and priority of Scripture, focusing on the biblical theology of key Scripture passages, and with a balanced and comprehensive survey of the history of interpretation of early Genesis, VanDoodewaard gives us the fruit of a theologically sound quest for the historic Adam. I wholeheartedly recommend this fine scholarly work."

—Tewoldemedhin Habtu, associate professor of Old Testament,
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology,
Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya

"The biblical truth claims of the historicity of Adam and the reality of the fall are neither incidental nor insignificant to the Christian faith. They are matters of gospel importance. But in our time the validity of the church's doctrine of the special creation of Adam and Eve, body and soul, as our first parents, based on Genesis 1–2, and the corresponding affirmation of the historical reality of the fall, based on Genesis 3, have come under serious cross-examination. There are voices (some of whom self-identify as evangelical) calling on the church to abandon and to revise its historic teaching. Many reveal an unfamiliarity with the history of the church's exegesis on these issues and its assessment of their hermeneutical and theological significance. William VanDoodewaard's book, *The Quest for the Historical Adam*, then, arrives not a moment too soon. He provides us with a careful, clear, important, orthodox assessment of the question as well as a tremendously helpful survey of the history of interpretation (including current views). This will prove to be an enormously valuable resource to pastors and teachers wanting to get up to speed on the historical theology behind this discussion and to gain a quick grasp of the present theological lay of the land. Those arguing for a revisionist interpretation must now deal with the material VanDoodewaard has amassed and articulated."

—Ligon Duncan, chancellor and John E. Richards Professor of Systematic
and Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary

"Dr. Bill VanDoodewaard has gifted the church with a work that began as a labor of love but has grown into a significant major study in which he marries the disciplines of a church historian and the concerns of a Christian theologian. The issues on which he touches reach down to the very foundations of the Christian worldview, to creation itself. Those who share the author's understanding of the early chapters of Genesis will deeply appreciate his detailed analysis and synthesis of how they have been interpreted throughout the Christian centuries. And those who differ, whether in fine details or in major ways, ought, in integrity, to familiarize themselves with the copious material that Dr. VanDoodewaard here presents. This is a valuable and significant contribution to a much-debated subject and from a perspective that has too often been overlooked."

—Sinclair B. Ferguson, professor of systematic theology,
Redeemer Theological Seminary, Dallas

"While scholarship may be turning away increasingly from the literal approach to the creation narrative of Genesis 1–3 and related texts, Dr. VanDoodewaard sets out in a fair and balanced manner the implications that such alternative hermeneutical approaches have not for just our understanding of creation and the origins of Adam, but even for basics such as our understanding of the inspiration and authority of Scripture and of Christ and His salvific work. This is a very informative and helpful overview of a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith."

—Brian Wintle, academic coordinator, Centre for Advanced Theological Studies,
SHIATS University, Allahabad, India; visiting professor of New Testament,
South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India;
former regional secretary (India), Asia Theological Association

"I have found that often when I am wrestling with someone who holds on to a major doctrinal aberration, there is almost invariably a failure of sound hermeneutics in dealing with the first three chapters of Genesis. Equally true is the fact that a good understanding of these foundational chapters in Genesis is like the proverbial stitch in time that saves nine. Dr. VanDoodewaard's Herculean effort to get us back to a sure footing in this matter through this doctrinal and historical survey may prove to be that life-saving stitch. It is a scholarly work of the highest standard. Be assured you will be abundantly rewarded in reading it."

—Conrad Mbewe, pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church; chancellor,
African Christian University, Lusaka, Zambia

"An indispensable resource that puts the hotly debated hermeneutics of Genesis 1–2 in historical perspective. *The Quest for the Historical Adam* is staggering

in its scope, rigorous in its documentation, and sobering in its conclusions. Whether subsequent writers are sympathetic to the author's anthropology and cosmology or not, their literature on this topic will either be in conversation with VanDoodewaard's work or be proportionately deficient. This church historian has made a lasting contribution to Old Testament studies."

—John Makujina, professor of biblical studies, Erskine College

"VanDoodewaard demonstrates that virtually the entirety of Christendom has held to the historicity of Adam and Eve as the first human pair, created in the manner described in Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22. *The Quest for the Historical Adam* contains a wealth of information and research—it is clearly the most comprehensive treatment of the historicity and significance of the creation of Adam and Eve that exists. All future studies on Adam and Eve must now start with this tome."

—Mark F. Rooker, professor of Old Testament and Hebrew,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

"Dr. VanDoodewaard has served the church well in this labor. More than a history of interpretation, *The Quest for the Historical Adam* pulls a chair up for theologians of the past to join the church's present deliberation on a vital issue, and it clarifies the doctrinal stakes. A pathway of history stretches from the first Adam to the last—may this book foster the wisdom to not separate what God's Word has joined together."

—L. Michael Morales, professor of Old Testament,
Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

"Modern scholarship on Genesis has confused the church with a tangle of speculations. Dr. VanDoodewaard skillfully exposes the problems of the new, 'scientific' Adam. He shows that recent debates on Adam do little justice to Scripture, ignore church history, and are scientifically ill defined."

—Neal A. Doran, professor of biology, Bryan College

"William VanDoodewaard's thoroughly documented survey of the history of interpretation of Adam and Eve is an essential entry point to understand the contemporary debate. Highly recommended."

—Iain Duguid, professor of Old Testament and religion, Grove City College;
professor of Old Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

The Quest for the Historical Adam

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Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins

William VanDoodewaard

Foreword by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

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Reformation Heritage Books
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Foreword

Each generation of Christians faces its own set of theological challenges. For this generation of evangelicals, the question of beginnings is taking on a new urgency. In fact, this question is now a matter of gospel urgency. How are we to understand the Bible's story if we can have no confidence that we know how it even begins?

In terms of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the most urgent question related to beginnings has to do with the existence of Adam and Eve as the first parents to all humanity and to the reality of the fall as the explanation for human sinfulness and all that comes with sin.

This question has become especially urgent since the Bible's account of beginnings is being increasingly repudiated. We are not talking about arguments over the interpretation of a few verses or even chapters of the Bible. We are now dealing with the straightforward rejection not only of the existence of Adam and Eve but of both Eden and the fall. Though shocking, this line of argument is not really new. The new development is the fact that growing numbers of evangelicals are apparently buying the argument.

Especially since Darwin's challenge and the appearance of evolutionary theory, some Christians have tried to argue that the opening chapters of the Bible should not be taken literally. While no honest reader of the Bible would deny the literary character of Genesis 1–3, the fact remains that significant truth claims are being presented in these chapters. Furthermore, it is clear that the historical character of these chapters is crucial to understanding the Bible's central message—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul in Romans 5, for example, clearly understood Adam to be a fully historical human who was also the genetic father of the entire human race. The fall of the human race in Adam sets the stage for the salvation of sinful humanity by Jesus Christ.

The implications for biblical authority are clear, as is the fact that if these arguments hold sway, we will have to come up with an entirely new understanding of the gospel metanarrative and the Bible's story line. The denial of a historical Adam and Eve as the first parents of all humanity and the solitary first human pair severs the link between Adam and Christ that is so crucial to the gospel. If we do not know how the story of the gospel begins, then we do not know what that story means. Make no mistake: a false start to the story produces a false grasp of the gospel.

This is one of the many reasons I am thankful for Dr. VanDoodewaard's new book, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins*. VanDoodewaard's survey of the history of interpretation and subsequent application to modern theological controversy surrounding Genesis 1–3 is just the type of antidote needed to rectify careless theological reflection on this issue. This survey of the history of interpretation is a wonderful step forward in the conversation and a necessary project in the defense of biblical orthodoxy.

—R. Albert Mohler Jr.
President, The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

Acknowledgments

This book originated through an invitation to speak at the Origins Conference at Patrick Henry College, near Washington, D.C., in 2012. Little did I, or my wife, expect that nearly two years later what had been a short address on the theological importance of the historicity of Adam for visiting scientists, college faculty, and students would have grown into a project nearly as consuming as another doctoral dissertation. Initial reflections, reading, and conversations, particularly with Stephen Lloyd, led to the awareness that there was a paucity of scholarship on the history of the interpretation of Genesis in relation to human origins. And so the project began.

Many have helped along the way: Neal Doran, Kurt Wise, Todd Wood, and others, provided thoughtful engagement on both the history of science and interpretations of origins. Dariusz Brycko, Gregory Cumbee, Spencer Snow, and Pieter VanderHoek aided in research at points along the way, as did Gerald Bilkes, Gabriel Fluhrer, Laura Ladwig, Michael Lynch, Matthew Miller, Wayne Sparkman, Peter Williams, and Gregory Wills. Michael Barrett was an invaluable sounding board in his erudite knowledge of Hebrew and other ancient Near Eastern languages. Harold Schnyders provided thoughtful engagement on the wider issues of faith and science from the vantage of a Christian physicist. Fred Sweet gave numerous bibliographic recommendations. Others, including Adam Barr, Kevin DeYoung, John Fesko, Jason Helopoulos, Jeffrey Kingswood, Matthew Kingswood, Ryan McGraw, and Benjamin Short, gave encouragement and critical interaction with the manuscript along the way. Joel Beeke, Jay Collier, Annette Gysen, and the rest of the staff at Reformation Heritage Books were kindly helpful throughout.

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Hekman Library and Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Post-Reformation Digital Library, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids; Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary Library, Grand Rapids; Miller Library, Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids; Concordia Theological Seminary Library, St. Louis, Missouri; PCA Historical Center, St. Louis. Without their assistance, this history and analysis of Christian interpretation of Genesis on origins would not be.

More than anyone, my wife, Rebecca, and children, Anna, Matthew, and Julia, deserve thanks for sacrifices made, loving encouragement in the work, and all the rest of life surrounding it. Thank you. Above all I thank our Triune God, the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and everything in them, and the provider of every good gift, for His incalculable goodness and grace. I pray He will prosper all that by His grace is good in this volume, and graciously override its weaknesses. To God alone be the glory.

Introduction

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a new movement developed among Protestant theologians engaging the claims of scientific naturalism and higher criticism: the search for the historical Jesus. Viewing the New Testament text as limited in its account and religiously or culturally conditioned to the point of fallibility, scholars devoted themselves to trying to discern who the historical Jesus "behind the text" actually was. What was He really like? What did He really do? Many were intrigued by the possibility that new textual approaches, in harmony with science, archaeology, and comparative studies, would bring forward a more accurate historical Jesus. This Jesus would be freed from the limitations of the inherently contextualized writings of the early Christian community (i.e., the New Testament), and also freed from millennia of "literalist," "unthinking" attachment of traditional Christianity to these texts. The result, as Albert Schweitzer noted in his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* was quite a variety of historical Jesuses, with some even arguing outright for the acceptance of a mythical Jesus.[1] None of these were the Jesus of Scripture. The undermining of Scripture's authority and scriptural doctrine among scholars and teachers in the academy led to an ensuing loss of scriptural doctrine in the life of many mainline Protestant denominations—not only due to the teaching of liberal theologians, but also because of broadly evangelical majorities which either refused or failed to act against them.[2] One result was

1. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede,* trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910). Schweitzer presents his analysis and critique of the movement in this work but, in seeking to forge a better alternative, provides a devastating answer which is similarly far from historic Christianity: Jesus was a kingdom-of-God-seeking apocalyptic who challenged the powers of his day but was crushed by them, though his eschatology and "spirit" lived on.

2. Darryl Hart, commenting on the decline of Princeton Theological Seminary in the early twentieth century, states, "Conservatives were no longer in control…it was evangelicals who were not alarmed by liberals who took control of Princeton Theological Seminary [leading to

that as mainline churches moved into increasing theological declension, new conservative denominations and movements formed, whether under the lead of the "fundamentalists" or the confessionals of the early twentieth century.

Today, while most mainline Protestant churches continue along a now-advanced trajectory of decline into apostasy, a movement similar to, though not the same as, the old quest for the historical Jesus is gaining influence. This movement, while passé among mainline Protestants, is an innovative edge of theology among the evangelical and confessional heirs and supporters of the early twentieth-century "fundamentalists" and confessional Protestants.[3] Rather than Jesus Christ, whom Paul proclaims as the second Adam (cf. Romans 5; 1 Cor. 15:45), this quest centers on the first Adam. This "quest for the historical Adam" is not new—it has been pursued to some degree in evangelical academia for decades and has historical precedent going back to at least the nineteenth century. Its popularity is attested by the Biologos Forum, evangelical publishers, well-known preachers, and academics. Driven by arguments and conclusions from the scientific community, some, like Peter Enns, now argue that Adam is merely a mythical representative of early humanity.[4] Others, like John Collins, state that as long as there was "a" historical Adam, issues of who he was, when he lived, and what his origins are may be of little or no consequence to the Christian faith.[5]

Special and General Revelation

Like Schweitzer's *Quest,* this book narrates and assesses a vast topic while tackling "the quest for the historical Adam." It does so recognizing that engagement with evolutionary models of human origins from a scientific standpoint provides a needed and valuable contribution to Christian understanding,

its downfall]." Darryl Hart, *Machen and the End of Princeton* (lecture, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Spring Theology Conference, Greenville, S.C., March 13–15, 2012).

3. "Confessionals" or "confessional Protestants" refers to those Protestant denominations and individuals that continue to meaningfully maintain the commitment of their ministers, elders, congregations, and regional and denominational assemblies or synods to historic Protestant confessions of faith, including the Westminster Standards, the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt), the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord, and the various Baptist confessions, such as the London Baptist Confession of 1689. The evangelical heirs of the early fundamentalists tended to reflect a movement that subscribed to less comprehensive statements of belief.

4. Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 122.

5. C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2011), 122, 130–31.

particularly when that engagement is undertaken with the conviction that Scripture has an authoritative and interpretive role where it speaks to comprehending human biological and geological history.[6] Special revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (the natural order) are in harmony with one another. Thus, an accurate understanding of Scripture will in most cases not contradict accurate scientific interpretations of present natural reality, nor vice versa.[7]

Most Christians, whether holding to literal six-day creation, or alternative hermeneutical approaches with a range of conclusions on origins and natural history (including theistic evolutionary models), agree at this point. There is also broad agreement that special revelation and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation due to the fall into sin and the noetic effects of sin, in which men suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Yet, despite such common ground, divergence among evangelicals is widening—and individuals are diverging from historic Protestant evangelicalism—over the question of how to accurately interpret general revelation in coherence with special revelation in the area of creation history and human origins. There is also significant divergence in hermeneutical approaches to special revelation on creation history and human origins—and steady debate as to which are biblically warranted.[8]

Diverging Views of Hermeneutics and Human Origins

The crux of current division on creation and human origins is found where evolutionary theory stands in conflict with the traditional, literalistic reading of Genesis 1 through 5 common to the history of Christianity. Some attempt to harmonize Genesis with evolutionary theory by maintaining a literal reading of early Genesis but viewing it as a primitive conception. More often, evangelicals abandon the traditional literal reading to adopt an alternate hermeneutical approach to the text that allows for better coherence with an

6. Valuable areas for contribution in relation to human origins include engaging in the systematics and dating of early human and ape remains and in molecular, population genetics models for the understanding of origins and descent.

7. Exceptions to this include supernatural and miraculous events. It may also be stated that where science is defined, delimited, and epistemologically based in the overarching theology of reality rooted in divine self-revelation, these events should not be understood as contradictions, but rather as coherent in and congruent to a created order under the active sovereignty of God.

8. Andrew Kulikovsky provides a survey of this debate in his chapter, "Scripture, Science and Interpretation," in *Creation, Fall, Restoration: A Biblical Theology of Creation* (Fearn, U.K.: Christian Focus, 2009), 28–58.

evolutionary model of origins. Believing that contemporary scientific interpretation of natural evidence is usually accurate, proponents of these views argue that the need for adjustment in Christian understanding falls in the area of interpretation of Scripture and in Christian theology, resulting in a quest for the historical Adam.[9]

In contrast, those who hold to a literal interpretation of early Genesis argue that a literal reading, predicated by the textual form and content of early Genesis, is the clear intent of divine revelation, which is further confirmed in its harmony with the rest of Scripture. The origin, initial context and condition of man and the rest of creation, the fall into sin, the curse, and the promise, indicate that early Genesis is innately part of what is necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation.[10] Genesis 1 and 2 are seen as an intentional and precise historical record of events—a narration of the divine supernatural work of creation taking place within the space of six days of ordinary duration, with the diverse work of creation including the creation of time and its measurement by days and weeks. Adam and Eve are understood to be specially created by God in His image on the sixth day: Adam from the dust of the earth, and becoming a living being after God breathed into him the breath of life, and Eve from Adam's rib. As a result, proponents of the literal tradition's interpretation of the Genesis account either reject outright or loosely hold aspects of mainstream scientific interpretations of human origins and natural history. Some work toward alternative scientific models, pursuing alternate scientific hermeneutics for the interpretation of the evidence of general revelation.

Aside from these two divergent groups, there is a third range of possibility which stands somewhat in the middle. It includes those who hold to alternative hermeneutical approaches and at the same time posit a special, "temporally immediate" creation of Adam and Eve, following a literal reading of Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22.[11] They tend to read at least Genesis 1:1–2:3 with an

9. Some of the proponents of alternate hermeneutical approaches reject arguments for a literal reading of early Genesis, including reference to the doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture, claiming the need for a more complex hermeneutic as much of this text is not necessarily "plain in itself" and beyond that necessary for salvation. Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.7.

10. The first chapters of Genesis are seen as belonging to that which is "so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them." Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.7.

11. The term "special" is used to describe the creation of Adam and Eve as distinct and separate from the creation of other living things. The term "temporally immediate" refers to the creation of Adam and Eve as occurring divinely and supernaturally over a relatively brief

overarching "nonliteral" hermeneutic, rejecting the text as a historical narration of God's work of creation, beginning with and spanning the first six ordinary days, while maintaining the text still does convey historical realities. Typically a transition to a more literal approach occurs in relation to some or all of the detail in Genesis 2:4 and following, usually due to the weight of theological and exegetical grounds from the rest of Scripture. This "middle way" receives critique from both literal creationists and full proponents of theistic evolutionary origins as lacking internal consistency.[12] Within the context of Genesis exegesis, such a transition in Genesis 2 arguably relies on what is at best a hermeneutically porous border and at worst a hermeneutical and exegetical inconsistency—despite the theological benefits to a historic confessional evangelical theology in retaining a literal view of the creation of Adam

duration of time (less than an ordinary day), a description in replacement of the sixth day "boundaries," which are removed in most of the hermeneutical approaches presented as alternatives to the literal tradition. The use of "temporally immediate" in relation to the creation of the first couple does not necessitate an ex nihilo act and reflects the fact that God used existing, nonliving matter, "the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7) in Adam's case and Adam's rib in Eve's case, in creating them. John Murray correctly notes that Reformation and post-Reformation theologians helpfully used the term "immediate" as a theological term in describing creation ex nihilo and "mediate" in describing "a creative action of God, using preexisting material"—speaking of the creation of the soul of man as "immediate" and the body of man as "mediate." While this was functional in the context of a popular conception of a young earth and a creation week of six generally ordinary days, the functionality of the term "mediate" diminished as its semantic range changed with the increasing acceptance of old earth and evolutionary hypotheses. Charles Hodge's adjusted use of the term "mediate" as including God's activity in the course of ordinary providence was commonplace in the nineteenth century and was often synthesized with evolutionary process to form a theistic evolution. B. B. Warfield notes the latter in his essay "Creation, Evolution, and Mediate Creation." While Warfield's argument for returning to the earlier definition of "mediate" creation is helpful in relation to the mode of creation, it nonetheless fails to eliminate the possibility of a theistic evolutionary model under supernatural influence when moved into an old earth context. The introduction of the common philosophical concept of temporal immediacy proves helpful here, just as Tertullian's introduction of a new use for the term "trinity" proved helpful to patristic theology. John Murray, "Immediate and Mediate Creation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 17, no. 1 (November 1954): 22–43; Charles Hodge, "Mediate and Immediate Creation," in *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:556–74; B. B. Warfield, "Creation, Evolution, and Mediate Creation," in *B. B. Warfield: Evolution, Science and Scripture—Selected Writings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 204–5.

12. See, for example, James B. Jordan's engagement with Waltke, Kline, Collins, Seely, and Futato in his *Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 1999); and Joseph Pipa's "From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3," in *Did God Create in Six Days?,* ed. Joseph A. Pipa and David W. Hall (Greenville, S.C.: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 153–98; as well as the critique by Daniel Harlow in his article, "After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62, no. 3 (September 2010): 179–95.

and Eve. Functionally, it appears to rely heavily on New Testament passages referring to Adam in building a "theology of retrieval"—lifting a specially created Adam and Eve, made as described in Genesis 2 and apart from any evolutionary origins, out of an otherwise substantially less literal Genesis 1 and 2. It shies from some mainstream scientific interpretations on origins for parts of the text (usually in relation to Adam and Eve and the ultimate origins of the universe) but accepts them and calls for adjustment in the interpretation of Scripture at others.

Defining the "Literal Interpretation" of Genesis 1 and 2

In the previous paragraphs, I referred to a "literal" six-day creation and interpretation of Genesis in contrast to alternative hermeneutical approaches. To avoid confusion, let me briefly explain how the term "literal" can be defined and how it is defined and used in this book.

In the field of hermeneutics, a reference to a literal reading of a text is commonly understood to refer to the reading of a text according to its literary genre. In this usage, the "literal" reading of a text could be primarily "figurative" in nature. It could be allegory, prophecy, parable, or poetry—or a mixture of these. This is not without historical precedent, even in application to the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. Augustine argued that the "literal sense" of much of the text of Genesis 1 was figurative. Some modern commentators on Genesis, such as Tremper Longman III and C. John Collins, follow a similar approach, stating that they hold to the "literal" reading of the text of Genesis 1 and 2, while maintaining that much of the text is figurative. The weakness of using "literal" in this manner in relation to the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 is that it conflicts with the more common use of "literal" in the context of Genesis interpretation—both in the present and through the history of the church.

While acknowledging the varied uses of the term "literal," this book follows the more popular usage in its focus on Genesis interpretation and commentary. It stands with Luther, Tyndale, and other Reformers in defining those who maintain the "literal sense" or "literal interpretation" of Genesis 1 and 2 as those who believe sound exegesis compels one to read this passage "literally"—as a nonfigurative, detailed, historical record of events and existence narrated as they actually were. For those who hold to the "literal interpretation of Genesis," the six days are ordinary days, the sun was created after the initial creation of light, the dust was real dust, the rib a real rib, and Adam and Eve the first people, specially created on the sixth day, without any

evolutionary ancestry. Using "the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2" to represent this major stream of Genesis interpretation helpfully delineates this interpretive tradition from alternatives, almost all of which adopt a more figurative reading of the text of Genesis 1 and 2.

Engaging the Quest

The quest for the historical Adam is intimately connected to the confession and life of the church in relation to the Word of God, as well as to an accurate reading of "the book of nature." The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, divinely inspired, inerrant, and infallible—and as such authoritative and relevant; thus, the first chapter of this book gives a concise summary of Scripture passages relevant to Adam and Eve and human origins. Doing so provides the reader with God's revelation on human origins and the Hebrew to Christian understanding of the creation origins of humanity—from the first record in Genesis across the millennia of divine inscripturation to the completion of the New Testament canon.

Substantially removed from the apostolic era, we live in an era of extensive discussion and debate over hermeneutical issues and points of exegesis relevant to human origins. New books and articles appear almost monthly. However, the present quest for the historical Adam is often pursued with little attention to history—or at least little attention to historical theology. While it is in vogue to try to understand Genesis and human origins through the lenses of contemporary interpretation of pagan writings from the ancient Near East, scant attention is paid to the historical understanding of Genesis and human origins within Christianity. It is as if all that exists are discussions from the past twenty years or, at most, the last century or so. This historical amnesia obscures the fact that teaching on the early chapters of Genesis and human origins is hardly new. It has been engaged for millennia, from the Old Testament era onward. It would seem that this alone provides good reason to consider what has been said before us by those who sought to honor the true God and His Word.

Christian students of church history are (or should be) well aware that theology can (1) maintain faithful understanding of God's revealed truth, (2) develop a more full understanding of God's revealed truth, or (3) absorb error, leading to distortion and decline. The latter often occurs through the deconstruction and replacement of theology and exegesis. These realities press us to take serious stock of the history of biblical interpretation on human origins. There is a further, weighty reason to do so. Since the first century, Christ

has given pastors and teachers of the Scriptures to equip and edify His church "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:11–13). Prior to His incarnation, Christ gave prophets and teachers to do the same through the millennia of Old Testament history (see Neh. 8:8). Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the church into all truth, by the means of the Word (John 16:13). We are to search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) to see whether any given teacher's teaching is true, yet this does not diminish the reality, nor the effectiveness, of Christ's promises. The implication is that apparently "novel" interpretations or expositions of Genesis on human origins require careful scrutiny—exegetically, theologically, and historically. Being aware of the Scripture exposition of those who have gone before us helps prevent us from being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" and better enables us to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:14–15).

Chapters two through six of this book serve to recover and assess the teaching of those who have gone before us, providing a historical survey of Genesis commentary on human origins from the patristic era to the present. Reacquainting the reader with a long line of theologians, exegetes, and thinkers, these chapters trace the roots, development, and at times disappearance of streams of hermeneutical approach and exegetical insight relevant to human origins. The final chapter considers what difference it makes to hold to each of the presently offered alternatives on human origins. Welcome to the quest for the historical Adam.

1

Finding Adam and His Origin in Scripture

"Adam, where are you?" was God's call to Adam who was hiding in the garden shortly after he and Eve had fallen into sin. God called to Adam even though He knew exactly what had happened and exactly where Adam was hiding. In human terms, the situation was like a parent calling a child who is clearly visible under the dining room table to demand an account for some recent happening. In our age, interpretations of the realm of general revelation, including those on human origins, have made some Christians uncertain of who Adam was, how and when he came to be, or whether he even existed at all. The question "Adam, where are you?" echoes through the present quest for the historical Adam, though in a significantly different way than in the Genesis narrative.

So where do we begin in our quest? Undoubtedly a return to special revelation to examine what God has told us there is the best way to begin a historical and theological survey and evaluation. What does Scripture, the inerrant and infallible Word of God, say about human origins? What did the inspired authors, from Moses to the apostle John, understand regarding human origins? What did the ancient Hebrews and early Christians believe? This brief introductory overview will refresh your general awareness of key Scripture passages relevant to the origins of man, before turning to survey the postcanonical history of the interpretation of human origins, in the context of approaches to Genesis 1 and 2.

Key Passages in the Old Testament

Genesis 1–9

Genesis 1 opens with an account beginning "in the beginning": God creating the heavens and the earth ex nihilo. The revelation of God's work of creation is ordered by days, marked both by numerical sequence and by evening and

morning, darkness and light, from the first day forward. The first "solar" day, day four, is marked by the same parameters. In a sequence of structured, creative activity, God brings the cosmos into being, forms the earth, and creates an abundant variety of life on earth.

The first mention of the origin, nature, and calling of man is found within the account of the sixth day, in Genesis 1:26 and following, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'.… So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Genesis 2:1–3 closes the creation days pericope, noting that the end of the sixth day marks the completion of the work of creation. The text then describes God resting on the seventh day, blessing the day and setting it apart as holy.

Genesis 2:4–7 reiterate with greater detail and context the creation of Adam.[1] God has created the surrounding creation, but neither man nor cultivated plants yet exist: "The LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground" (v. 5). In this setting, God creates Adam, an act of creation described with intimate detail: "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (v. 7). God then plants an abundant garden, including "every tree…that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (v. 9), and places Adam there to work it and keep it. This second account expands on the Genesis 1 account where God notes that He has given Adam plants and fruit for food. Following a geographical description of the garden's location, the text returns to the garden for a third time, noting God's generous command regarding which trees may be eaten from in the garden.

This is followed in Genesis 2:18–25 by the account of Adam's need for a helpmeet, God's design of the garden, a recapitulation of God's creation of birds and beasts of the field (v. 19), Adam's naming of them, and the lack of a

1. Verses 4–6 are a point of interpretive contention. This centers in part on use of the phrase "in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens" which exegetes supportive of alternatives to the literal tradition use to argue that a "day" (Hebrew: *yom*) as used previously in Genesis 1 is not necessarily a twenty-four-hour day. However, literalist exegetes note three distinctions between the use of "day" in Genesis 2:4 and the use of "day" in Genesis 1: (1) the Hebrew word for "day" in Genesis 2:4 is prefixed with a Hebrew preposition which makes it semantically similar to the English "when"—the same form being used in Genesis 2:17. The use of the term "day" in Genesis 1 both lacks this prepositional prefix, and (2) is qualified with the terms "the evening and the morning were" as well as (3) a numerical prefix, as in "so the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

suitable helper among them.[2] In verses 21–25 the account focuses on the creation of the woman, Eve, from Adam's rib: "the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (vv. 21–22). The passage concludes with Adam's naming her, the paradigm of Adam and Eve for marriage, and their state of innocence.[3]

Genesis 3 and 4 chronicle the fall into sin, the curse and promise, and the effects on Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, along with further descendants of Adam and Eve. Genesis 5, which turns to provide the genealogy of Noah, begins in verses 1–4 with an account of the creation of Adam and Eve and a brief synopsis of Adam's life and death. In narrating the reason for the Noahic flood, Genesis 6:6–8 states, "The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth…. So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created…for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." In Genesis 9:6, after the flood, Noah is commanded: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."

Exodus 20

In giving the fourth commandment to the Israelites, Moses declares that the seventh-day Sabbath of the people of Israel is an ordinance patterned on the

2. There is some debate over the translation of the Hebrew term *yatsar* in Genesis 2:19: some argue it is better translated in English as the perfect "formed," while others argue for the pluperfect "had formed." Some proponents of figurative approaches to Genesis 1 and 2 argue that the perfect is the best equivalent to the form of the Hebrew, going on to argue that this stands as an indicator that there is a contradiction between the creation orders in Genesis 1 and 2, if they are taken literally. This becomes part of their case for a more substantially figurative approach to the text of Genesis 1. Counter to this, most current proponents of the literal interpretation of Genesis, along with others, including C. J. Collins, Victor Hamilton, and Kenneth Matthews, note that *yatsar* can be translated legitimately, and literally, as a pluperfect following principles of Hebrew syntax and grammar, when understood in the wider context of Genesis 1 and 2. There are also those, like Cassuto, who posit that the perfect is the better option but argue it indicates that at this point God formed particular specimens for the purpose of presenting them to Adam. William Tyndale interpreted the Hebrew as pluperfect in his translation, while the King James Version chose the perfect: both in the context of commitment to the literal tradition. Most modern English translations, such as the English Standard Version and the New International Version, interpret *yatsar* in Genesis 2:19 as a pluperfect.

3. In Genesis 2:23, Adam names the woman, as recorded here in Hebrew, *Ishshah*, literally translated as "this one" or "woman" or "wife." The textual chronology of early Genesis indicates that it is after the fall, the curse, and promise, when he renames her "Eve," in Hebrew *Chavvah*, meaning "life" or "living" because "she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20). Many commentators see this as an act of faith in God's promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15.

seventh-day rest of God upon completion of the work of creation: "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). The creation origins of humanity are included in this passage by implication as part of the "all that is in them." Moses reaffirms that man, along with all the rest of creation, was created by God within the space of the first six days.

Deuteronomy 4

In this passage, Moses challenges the people of Israel to consider the immense wonder of God's awesome presence with them and audible speech to them at Sinai. Calling them to see its significance in human history since the creation of man, Moses declares, "Ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard" (Deut. 4:32). The juxtaposition of Moses' use of "days" with "the day that God created man on the earth" points to the specific day, the sixth day on which man was created, and reaffirms that man was created by divine initiative and activity.

1 Chronicles 1

The historical narrative of the books of Chronicles begins with a genealogical list that spans from Adam through succeeding chapters to the returned exiles, with a particular focus on the genealogies and geographical locations of the twelve tribes and genealogies of the kings, Saul and David. The author views Adam as the beginning point of humanity, the genealogy itself as representative of God's covenant faithfulness. Consistent with the Mosaic account in Genesis, Adam is the first man.

Job 10

In this part of the book, Job laments his situation and pleads with God, echoing Genesis 2 as he recounts to God that he, as a man, is an intimate work of God: "Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me" (Job 10:8).

Job 38–40

These chapters comprise God's rebuke to Job, in which God reveals that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all, the One clothed in glory and splendor. In describing the most powerful and massive of created beasts, God notes, "Look

now at the behemoth, which I made along with you" (Job 40:15). God declares that He is the Creator not only of these beasts, but also of man.

Psalm 8

Psalm 8 proclaims God's glory revealed in His creative works from the physical heavens to man. It then turns to trace God's creative works among living creatures, from the spiritual beings, such as the angels, to man and his place and role over the rest of God's creatures and creation. "For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands" (Ps. 8:5–6). David reflects the Mosaic understanding, first recorded in Genesis, that man was specially created, distinct from the rest of the "works of [God's] hands" in purpose and role.

Psalm 89

A psalm of praise and lament, Psalm 89 recounts God's covenant love toward his people and declares God's incomparable faithfulness and power as the sovereign Creator and Redeemer. Verses 38–48 lament God's wrath and judgment and the brevity and vanity of life in the face of death. In verse 47, the psalmist cries out to God as he reflects on Him as both the Creator and Judge of man: "Remember how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men?"

Psalm 104

Psalm 104 praises God for His glory and grace, focusing on His providential sustenance of His gloriously complex and diverse creation, creation's continuing dependence on God, and His ongoing creative work flowing from the initial work of creation (cf. Pss. 102:18; 104:30). Verse 24 exalts God for His work of creation, including man (v. 23), declaring "O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your possessions."

Psalm 119

Here, the psalmist echoes the language of both Job and Genesis: "Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding" (Ps. 119:73).

Psalm 148

This psalm exalts the Lord for His glory and majesty, calling on all creation to praise Him. It calls angels, stars, sun, moon, and skies to "praise the name

of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created" (v. 5). The psalmist calls the earth, its creatures, and mankind to praise God, again recounting His exalted majesty, as well as His salvation—the inference being that the earth and its inhabitants were created at God's command.

Ecclesiastes 3, 7, 12

In speaking of the apparent futility of life in the face of death, Ecclesiastes notes that the condition of men is like that of animals: "as one dies, so dies the other…all are from the dust, and all return to dust" (3:19–20). In noting these similarities, including their formation from the dust, the passage at the same time distinguishes man categorically from animals.

The book of Ecclesiastes refers two further times to the creation of man: the first time directly, with reference to man's original state of innocence, and the second by implication of man's relationship to God. Chapter 7 verse 29 states, "God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." The familiar call to "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth" is in verse one of chapter 12.

Isaiah 40–45

Numerous passages in Isaiah reveal God's work as Creator, though the implications of this for human origins are most often by inference, rather than being explicit and direct. In Isaiah 40, the prophet contrasts God as the sovereign Creator with the idols created by men. God, speaking by His servant, declares, "'To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?' says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things…. The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary" (40:25, 28). This passage does not speak directly to the origins of man but to the created context of his existence, by inference including man who is encompassed by this creation.

Isaiah 42, a passage often referred to as one of the Servant Songs of the book, is a prophecy of coming redemption. It places the work of the redemption of God's people in the context of and being carried out by "the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it" (42:5). In chapter 43, Isaiah prophesies of the work of the Redeemer who is also the Creator, gathering His people to Himself from across the earth: "Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends