

Adam and Eve in Christian Orthodoxy:

Evaluating Theological Models and Their Boundaries

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ABSTRACT

This paper conducts an examination of major theological interpretations of Adam and Eve within Christian orthodoxy, delineating them from heretical perspectives. Models range from historical-literal views of Adam and Eve as sole progenitors to archetypal-representative frameworks within broader populations, yet orthodoxy consistently affirms the Fall's reality, sin's human origin, and redemption through Christ. Conversely, Pelagianism, Gnosticism, radical naturalism, and purely mythological readings reject these essentials, falling outside orthodox bounds.

Through detailed biblical exegesis, historical theology, and engagement with anthropological data, this study clarifies the boundaries of faithful belief, proposing a Covenantal Image-Bearing Model that situates Adam and Eve as the first Adamic *Homo sapiens* ~100,000 years ago in the Last Ice Age Persian Gulf. Their covenantal lineage, carrying the *imago Dei*, spread through interbreeding with both archaic non-Adamic populations (e.g., Neanderthals, Denisovans, Herto Man) and pre-Adamic *Homo sapiens* (early anatomically modern humans predating ~100,000 BC).

This model integrates Scripture with scientific findings while maintaining independence from shifting anthropological timelines and materialistic assumptions underlying Neo-Darwinism. Scientific discoveries, while valuable, are interpreted theologically and do not define the model's validity. Thus, the model neither relies on fragile scientific dating nor capitulates to evolutionary naturalism, preserving orthodoxy's core: a historical Fall, the *imago Dei* as a spiritual capacity, universal sin, and Christ's atonement. This analysis offers a robust contribution to theological anthropology, bridging ancient faith and modern inquiry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The narrative of Adam and Eve, enshrined in Genesis 1–3, stands as a theological cornerstone within Christian doctrine, shaping foundational understandings of sin, salvation, human identity, and God’s redemptive purpose for creation. From the earliest reflections of church fathers such as Irenaeus and Augustine, through the medieval synthesis of Thomas Aquinas, to the Reformation insights of Luther and Calvin, and into the systematic theology of the modern era, Adam and Eve have been pivotal figures in the Christian imagination.¹ Their story is not a mere historical footnote but the opening act in a divine drama that culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ—a narrative arc that spans from the dust of Eden to the glory of the eschaton.

Yet the interpretation of this narrative has never been uniform. Contemporary pressures—scientific discoveries about human antiquity, literary analyses situating Genesis within ancient Near Eastern contexts, and philosophical shifts toward materialistic naturalism—have intensified debates over how to faithfully understand Adam and Eve within the bounds of orthodoxy.

Orthodox Christianity, in its rich theological heritage, accommodates a spectrum of interpretive models concerning Adam and Eve’s nature and role. Some theologians, adhering to a historical-literal reading, uphold them as the sole biological progenitors of

¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 5.16.2, 544; Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 14.1, 442.

all humanity, tracing every human lineage back to their creation from dust and rib² as recounted in Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22.³ Others, responding to genetic and archaeological evidence suggesting a broader ancestral population, propose that Adam and Eve were historical figures chosen by God to serve as covenantal representatives within a pre-existing human community—a view aligning with the federal headship theology articulated by Paul in Romans 5.⁴

This diversity reflects the depth and adaptability of Christian thought, yet it is not without boundaries. Perspectives that deny Adam and Eve’s historicity outright—reducing them to myth, rejecting original sin, or attributing human origins solely to natural processes devoid of divine intent—transgress the limits of orthodoxy, undermining the coherence of the biblical storyline from creation to redemption.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to survey the major orthodox models of Adam and Eve with rigorous biblical exegesis, historical analysis, and theological reflection; second, to identify and critique perspectives that fall outside these boundaries as heretical; and third, to propose a novel Covenantal Image-Bearing Model that situates Adam and Eve ~100,000 years ago during the Last Ice Age.

This model, grounded in Psalm 19’s dual revelation—the Book of Nature declaring God’s glory and the Book of Scripture revealing His law—posits that God

² D. Gene Williams Jr., *From His Side: Recovering the Meaning Behind Eve’s Origin*, accessed May 2025, <https://trinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 59–60.

⁴ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 88–89.

imparted the *imago Dei*, a spiritual capacity encompassing moral awareness and covenantal responsibility, to Adam and Eve, whether through de novo creation or selection from an existing archaic, pre-Adamic *Homo sapiens* population. Located in the now-submerged fertile valley of the Persian Gulf—then above sea level due to glacial water storage—this covenantal act inaugurates the human story as told in Scripture without requiring a rigid adherence to any particular scientific chronology.

Importantly, this model does not rely upon scientific dating as a theological foundation. Rather, it uses scientific insights as a providential context for understanding Scripture more richly. Should anthropologically estimates of human antiquity shift in the future, the theological claims of this model—rooted in the real covenantal actions of God in history—would remain unaffected. This contrasts with models dependent on a strict “*ex novo*” framework dating Adam and Eve between ~6,000–10,000 years ago, such as some forms of Young Earth Creationism.

In this model, “*pre-Adamic humans*” refers to archaic populations, including groups such as Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*), Denisovans (*Denisova hominins*), *Homo sapiens idaltu* (“*Herto Man*”), and anatomically modern but behaviorally undeveloped *Homo* populations existing prior to the impartation of the *imago Dei* (e.g., Qafzeh individuals, ~100,000 BC).

By contrast, “*Adamic humans*” refers to the covenantal lineage initiated with Adam and Eve—those uniquely bearing the divine image—who spread the *imago Dei* genealogically through both internal reproduction and interbreeding with pre-Adamic humans, particularly through archaic male to Adamic female pairings, which exhibit higher fertility rates in mammalian hybridization.

Given that hybrid fertility is often directionally dependent even at the genus level in mammals, it is plausible that early interbreeding events—although not exclusively, predominantly involving archaic males and modern human females—produced viable but selectively filtered offspring. This dynamic could explain the limited yet significant presence of archaic DNA in modern populations while preserving the theological distinction between the broader biological humanity and the covenantal lineage initiated through Adam and Eve.

Finally, this model distinguishes between two key biblical periods: while later events—such as Noah’s flood (~5,600–6,000 BC), the rise of civilizations (~4,000–3,000 BC), and the call of Abraham (~2,000 BC)—fall within a familiar 6,000–10,000-year historical window, the origin of Adam and Eve is placed much deeper within human antiquity.⁵ Thus, this framework preserves both Scripture’s theological unity and modern scientific insights without reducing the biblical narrative to either pure literalism or allegory.

This paper offers a robust, expansive exploration—eschewing conciseness for theological depth—and proposes a substantive theological anthropology that bridges ancient faith and modern inquiry.

II. Criteria for Orthodoxy

For a theological model of Adam and Eve to reside within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy, it must align with a set of core doctrines distilled from the authoritative

⁵ Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 94–96.

witness of Scripture and affirmed through centuries of church tradition. These criteria provide a robust framework that permits interpretive flexibility—whether concerning the precise mechanics of their creation, their biological relationship to humanity, or their symbolic significance within the biblical narrative—but they demand an unwavering commitment to specific theological affirmations that form the bedrock of faithful Christian belief. This model frames Adam and Eve as the first Adamic *Homo sapiens*, distinct from archaic, non-Adamic *Homo sapiens*, with their covenantal lineage spreading the *imago Dei* and fallen nature through interbreeding, particularly archaic male-to-Adamic female pairings, as a theological foundation.

The first and most foundational criterion is the reality of the Fall as a historical event. Genesis 3 narrates the pivotal moment when Adam and Eve, tempted by the serpent, disobeyed God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby introducing sin into the human condition.⁶ This act precipitated a profound rupture with God, described in Scripture as spiritual death—a state of alienation, shame, and moral corruption that later manifests in physical mortality and divine judgment. Paul’s theological exposition in Romans 5:12–21 explicates this causal link: “*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.*”⁷ Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, he contrasts Adam’s trespass with Christ’s redemptive act: “*For as by a man came death, by a man*

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 50–52.

⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 315–317.

has come also the resurrection of the dead.”⁸ The Fall is not a mere allegory but a concrete event with universal consequences and denying its historicity—whether by reducing Genesis to myth or attributing sin to natural evolution—severs the causal connection between Adam’s disobedience and Christ’s atonement, rendering the latter theologically incoherent. Orthodoxy thus demands that any model affirm a real, historical Fall as the origin of human sinfulness.

The second criterion is the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, the affirmation that humanity uniquely bears God’s image and likeness, as declared in Genesis 1:26–27: “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’*”⁹ This *imago Dei* transcends mere biological form, encompassing spiritual capacities such as rationality, moral discernment, and relational communion with God, alongside a functional vocation to exercise dominion over creation. The Hebrew terms *tselem* (image) and *demut* (likeness) suggest both an ontological reality—humanity reflecting God’s communicable attributes—and a representational role, with the preposition *בְּ* (b’) potentially translated as “as” rather than “in,” emphasizing humanity’s calling to act as God’s stewards.¹⁰ This divine imprint sets humanity apart from the animal kingdom and the broader natural order, conferring intrinsic dignity and purpose. Any theological perspective that equates humans with animals or denies this unique status—such as radical naturalism, which sees

⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1226–1228.

⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–31.

¹⁰ Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 45–47.

humanity as a product of undirected processes—fails to meet orthodoxy’s standard, stripping away the theological foundation for human worth and responsibility.

Third, orthodoxy requires the affirmation of the universality of sin, the doctrine that all humans inherit a fallen nature from Adam, not merely a propensity to sin but a pervasive condition that necessitates divine grace for restoration. Romans 5:12 establishes this: “*Death spread to all men because all sinned,*” a truth rooted in Adam’s act and affirmed across Scripture.¹¹ The early church decisively rejected Pelagianism, which posited that humans are born in a neutral state capable of achieving righteousness without grace, as heretical at councils such as Carthage in AD 418.¹² Whether understood through federal headship—Adam as humanity’s representative—or through natural descent, orthodoxy insists that sin’s reach is total, affecting every individual from birth. Models that deny this inherited condition, framing sin as solely an individual choice without a corporate origin, fracture the soteriological framework that undergirds the necessity of Christ’s redemptive work.

Finally, the necessity of Christ’s redemption stands as the capstone criterion. The New Testament presents Jesus as the “*second Adam,*” whose obedience reverses the curse initiated by the first. Romans 5:18–19 declares, “*As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men,*” while 1 Corinthians 15:22 adds, “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made*

¹¹ Moo, *Romans*, 320–322.

¹² J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: Continuum, 2000), 357–359.

alive.”¹³ In Colossians 1:15, Paul describes Christ as “*the image of the invisible God*,” the perfect embodiment of what Adam was called to be, restoring humanity’s marred *imago Dei* through His life, death, and resurrection.¹⁴ This typological connection ensures the gospel’s universal scope: sin entered the world through one man’s disobedience, and salvation comes through another’s righteousness. Any theology that severs this link—whether by denying Adam’s historical role or diminishing Christ’s necessity as the sole mediator of redemption—undermines the cosmic and personal reach of the gospel message.

III. THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

One of the most pressing challenges in contemporary theology is reconciling the Genesis account of Adam and Eve with the expansive timeline and material evidence uncovered by anthropological and scientific inquiry. A robust synthesis emerges when we distinguish between biological life and spiritual life, and between genetic humanity and theological humanity, allowing us to honor both the authoritative witness of Scripture and the observable data of human history. This framework provides a solid foundation for the orthodox models explored later, integrating theological depth with anthropological breadth.

Paul’s statement in Romans 5:12— “*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all*

¹³ Moo, *Romans*, 337–339.

¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 57–59.

sinned”—is often taken to mean that Adam and Eve were the sole biological ancestors of humanity, with “*death*” equated to physical mortality.¹⁵ Scholars like Hugh Ross contend that Adam’s unique creation and Fall account for humanity’s genetic unity and moral state, viewing spiritual separation from God as the primary consequence of the Fall, followed by physical death as a later outcome. Yet, Scripture suggests that “*death*” refers primarily to a spiritual condition—alienation from God, moral corruption, and loss of covenantal communion—with physical death as a secondary result.

In Genesis 2:17, God warns Adam, “*In the day you eat of it you shall surely die,*” but Genesis 5:5 records Adam living for many years afterward.¹⁶ The immediate consequences—shame (Genesis 3:7), fear (Genesis 3:10), and expulsion from Eden (Genesis 3:23–24)—highlight spiritual death as the primary effect, echoed in Ephesians 2:1: “*You were dead in your trespasses and sins,*” despite physical life. Thus, Romans 5:12 primarily addresses the onset of spiritual death through Adam’s sin, which later manifests in physical decay and divine judgment, providing a theological framework for engaging anthropological evidence.

Anthropologically, early *Homo sapiens* emerged ~300,000 years ago, as evidenced by fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco, which display modern cranial features.¹⁷

¹⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 315–317

¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66–68.

¹⁷ Ian Tattersall, *The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack: And Other Cautionary Tales from Human Evolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 185–187.

Recent discoveries, such as *Homo erectus* fossils dated to 163,000–119,000 years ago in a submerged Solo River valley in the Madura Strait, Java, further evidence the widespread presence of non-Adamic hominins before the covenantal act with Adam and Eve, with indications of hunting and possible cultural exchange with other Asian hominin groups (Berghuis et al. 2025).¹⁸

Emergent symbolic behaviors appear ~100,000 years ago, exemplified by early ritual burials at Qafzeh and Skhul in Israel. These early signs intensified into a key phase of behavioral modernity by ~70,000 years ago, marked by symbolic art (e.g., ochre engravings at Blombos Cave, South Africa) and the development of complex trade networks.¹⁹

This cultural shift during the Last Ice Age may correspond to a divine intervention: God imparting the *Imago Dei* to Adam and Eve—either through a direct act of de novo creation, as described in Genesis 2:7 “*Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature,*” or by selecting two individuals from the existing archaic, non-Adamic *Homo sapiens* population.²⁰

¹⁸ Harold W. K. Berghuis et al., “A Late Middle Pleistocene Lowstand Valley of the Solo River on the Madura Strait Seabed: Geology and Age of the First Hominin Locality of Submerged Sundaland,” *Quaternary Environments and Humans*, 2025, 100042, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qeh.2024.100042> (accessed June 2025).

¹⁹ Christopher S. Henshilwood and Francesco d’Errico, “The Origins of Symbolism,” in *Homo Symbolicus: The Dawn of Language, Imagination and Spirituality*, ed. Christopher S. Henshilwood and Francesco d’Errico (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), 75–78.

²⁰ Walton, *Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 35–37.

As argued in my paper “*What It Means to Be the Image of God*,” the *imago Dei* is not a biological trait but a spiritual capacity encompassing rationality, moral awareness, relational communion with God, and a functional vocation to steward creation. Archaic, pre-Adamic humans—although biologically human and capable of intelligence, tool use, and social structures—were not spiritually alive in the biblical sense until this transformative moment which reflected in their social behavior. Adam and Eve thus became the first Adamic *Homo sapiens*, uniquely endowed with the *Imago Dei*.²¹

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When God breathed into Adam and made him a living soul, He did not merely animate a biological body—He instilled a rational soul with the capacity for moral volition. This included what Maximus the Confessor called the natural will, which inclines toward the good proper to our nature. However, it did not yet entail a gnostic will. According to Maximus, the gnostic will is not part of our original nature but appears only after the Fall, as a fractured mode of willing due to moral ignorance and internal

²¹ D. Gene Williams Jr., *What It Means to Be the Image of God: A Theological and Functional Perspective*, accessed May 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

conflict. In this sense, Adam's pre-fallen state was innocent but not yet glorified—he could still fall but had not yet deliberated in error. Once he did, the gnostic will arose as a mark of fractured personhood. As Maximus the Confessor writes in *Ambigua 7*, “*The gnostic will is not of nature, but arises when the person hesitates—when the good is no longer seen with clarity.*”²²

Following the impartation of the divine image, Adam's descendants spread the Imago Dei genealogically, both through normal propagation among pre-Adamic Homo sapiens sapiens and through limited interbreeding with archaic non-Adamic groups. Although interbreeding was initially rare prior to major migration events, it nevertheless occurred. When it did, it is plausible that archaic male-to-Adamic female pairings played a significant role, consistent with patterns of hybrid fertility observed in mammals (Haldane's Rule).²³ This interbreeding mechanism helped facilitate the covenantal spread of the Imago Dei and the fallen nature introduced through Adam's disobedience (Romans 5:12). This initial spread, however, was not without complications.

It is plausible that early humanity's extended developmental delay following the Fall was partially due to interbreeding with archaic non-Adamic populations (e.g., Neanderthals, Denisovans, Herto man). While pre-Adamic Homo sapiens sapiens were

²² Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua to John 7*, in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 117. See also *Ambigua 15* and *Ad Thalassium 61* for Maximus's argument that Christ lacked a gnostic will because it arises from ignorance and deliberative hesitation, not from nature. For commentary, see Joseph Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1989), 96–104.

²³ Sriram Sankararaman et al., “The Combined Landscape of Denisovan and Neanderthal Ancestry in Present-Day Humans,” *Current Biology* 26, no. 9 (2016): 1241–1247, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2016.03.037>.

biologically prepared for covenantal life, the mixing with archaic humans—who, though biologically human, lacked the divine image—may have introduced biological and social complexities that slowed humanity’s spiritual maturation. As a result, for tens of thousands of years, humanity stumbled forward, struggling to fulfill its divine vocation until the covenantal line deepened and reemerged with greater clarity through figures like Noah, Abraham, and ultimately Christ. This perspective aligns with the archaeological record, which reveals a gradual intensification of symbolic behavior, social complexity, and cultural innovation following early symbolic milestones.

As early Adamic humans migrated out of their homeland ~60,000 years ago, major expansion events into Asia (e.g., Niah Cave, Malaysia; Tam Pa Ling, Laos) accelerated the spread of both biological and covenantal lineage. These migrations gradually achieved universal genealogical ancestry by the first century AD, ensuring that all humans bore a connection to Adam’s covenantal role.²⁴

This diffusion of the *imago Dei* predated both the submersion of the Persian Gulf region (traditionally associated with Eden), and the later regional flood recorded in Genesis 6–9, which preserved the covenantal lineage through Noah. Models such as Swamidass’s Genealogical Adam and Eve (GAE)²⁵ support the plausibility of universal ancestry even across a complex population structure.

²⁴ Erella Hovers et al., “An Early Case of Color Symbolism: Ochre Use by Modern Humans in Qafzeh Cave,” *Current Anthropology* 44, no. 4 (2003): 491–522.

²⁵ Joshua Swamidass, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 88-91.

Such pairings, exemplified by Neanderthal male contributions to early human populations, ensured the efficient transmission of the *imago Dei* and fallen nature, integrating archaic, non-Adamic Homo sapiens into the covenantal lineage.

The transmission of spiritual death from Adam and Eve to all humanity does not require genetic inheritance but can occur through genealogical descent. Swamidass introduces “*ghost DNA*,” where ancestors leave no detectable genetic trace in modern populations yet remain part of our genealogical family tree. Swamidass also presents peer-reviewed population models demonstrating that a single couple, living tens of thousands of years ago, could become the universal genealogical ancestors of all humanity by the time of Jesus, through interbreeding with other populations and processes such as migration, genetic drift, and cultural practices like Levirate marriage.²⁶

In Levirate marriage, a man marries his deceased brother’s widow to preserve the family line (e.g., Deut. 25:5–6), ensuring genealogical continuity even without direct genetic contribution, as seen in the ancestry of Jesus (Matt. 1:1–17).²⁷ In this framework, Adam and Eve’s sin introduced spiritual death, which spread not through DNA but through their covenantal lineage and influence, reaching every individual by the first century AD. This aligns with Genesis 5:3—“*When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image*”—and Genesis 9:6—“*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own*

²⁶ Swamidass, *Genealogical Adam and Eve*, 103–106

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 120–123.

image”—affirming that the *imago Dei* and fallen nature persist universally across humanity.²⁸

This theological and paleoanthropological synthesis situates Adam and Eve in a plausible historical context: the Persian Gulf valley during the Last Ice Age, ~100,000 years ago, a leading hypothesis for Eden’s location.²⁹ At that time, global sea levels were 50–120 meters lower due to glacial water storage, creating a fertile riverine oasis potentially fed by rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates (Genesis 2:10–14). Geological evidence, including ancient riverbeds visible via satellite imagery, supports a lush ecosystem that was gradually submerged ~8,000–6,000 BC as the Ice Age waned.³⁰ This submersion, distinct from Noah’s regional flood linked to the Black Sea Deluge (~7,000–5,600 BC), may have been preserved in oral tradition until recorded in Genesis, grounding the covenantal narrative of Adamic *Homo sapiens* endowed with the *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26–27).

The Persian Gulf region supports the idea of ecological continuity elsewhere, as seen in ancient clonal systems like the Pando aspen grove in Utah (~80,000 years old) and the Old Tjikko spruce in Sweden (~9,500 years old), both of which make a global cataclysm unlikely. The flood described in Genesis 6–9 was a real but regional event that impacted Adam’s covenantal line. Although many have traditionally understood the flood as global, the biblical text allows—and arguably demands—a different interpretation.

²⁸ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 76–78.

²⁹ Hugh Ross, *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist’s Journey through Genesis 1–11* (Covina, CA: RTB Press, 2014), 145–148.

³⁰ Rose, “New Light,” 849–851.

Genesis 8:5 notes that mountaintops became visible, yet in Genesis 8:7 a raven is sent out and flies back and forth seeking dry land.³¹ In Genesis 8:8–9, a dove is released but returns because, as verse 9 explains, “...*the waters were still on the face of the whole earth.*” Since mountaintops were already visible by verse 5 but dry land remained absent by verse 9, “*the whole earth*” is best understood as referring to the entirety of their known world, not the entire globe as we conceive it today.

This regional flood preserved Noah’s family, maintaining the covenantal lineage of Adamic Homo sapiens—those bearing both the *imago Dei* and the fallen nature (Romans 5:12).³²

This framework robustly preserves the core elements of Christian orthodoxy:

- A historical Adam and Eve as real individuals, whether created or chosen
- The *Imago Dei* as a spiritual and relational status, distinguishing humanity
- The universal spread of spiritual death through Adam’s disobedience
- The necessity of Christ’s redemption as the second Adam, reversing the Fall

It respects the inerrancy of Scripture, engages scientific data without capitulation, and avoids imposing modern categories onto ancient texts, providing a comprehensive foundation for the orthodox models that follow.

³¹ Christian S. M. Turney and Matthew J. Brown, “Catastrophic Early Holocene Sea Level Rise, Human Migration and the Neolithic Transition in Europe,” *Quaternary Science Reviews* 26, no. 17–18 (2007): 2036–2041.

³² William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah’s Flood*, 53–75; cf. Robert Ballard et al., “Evidence of Early Holocene Marine Transgression in the Black Sea,” *Marine Geology* 138, no. 3–4 (1997): 119–126.

IV. THE DIVINE RESET AND NORMALIZED LIFESPANS: AN APOLOGETIC FOR THE COVENANTAL IMAGE-BEARING MODEL

The regional flood of Genesis 6–9, identified here as the Black Sea Deluge (~5,600 BC), not only preserved the covenantal lineage but also marks a profound shift in the biblical narrative, reflected in the transition from extraordinary antediluvian lifespans to normalized post-flood ages. As God’s revelation unfolds through scripture and nature, per Psalm 19’s dual testimony, the period around 5,500–6,000 BC emerges as a moment of striking convergence, where inspired manuscripts, ancient intuition, and modern discovery intertwine. Far from dismissing traditional interpretations as outdated, I seek to measure new truths carefully, respecting the fidelity of those, like Young Earth Creationists (YEC), who hold a recent creation timeline. Yet, I propose that the Genesis flood narrative, with its towering pre-flood lifespans and their abrupt normalization, was divinely crafted to highlight a cataclysmic reset—a theological and historical pivot from prehistory to history. This convergence illuminates the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model, placing Adam and Eve at ~100,000 BC, offering an apologetic that harmonizes scripture, science, and theology while engaging YEC and late-Adam frameworks with charity.

The Genesis narrative sets the stage. In *Genesis: Hyperbole and History*,³³ I argue that the flood employs hyperbolic language, with “*all the earth*” (kol ha’arets) reflecting ancient Near Eastern conventions, not a global deluge. Textual clues—mountaintops

³³ D. Gene Williams Jr., *Genesis: Hyperbole and History in the Flood, Lifespans, and Language of the Ancient World*, accessed May 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

visible in Genesis 8:5, yet waters covering “*the whole earth*” in 8:9—suggest a regional event from Noah’s perspective. My model aligns this flood with the Black Sea Deluge (~5,600 BC), a geologically attested catastrophe where the Mediterranean breached the Bosphorus, flooding the Black Sea basin and disrupting civilizations.³⁴ Supported by sediment cores and submerged settlements, this event left an indelible mark, echoed in Gilgamesh, Atrahasis, and Chinese flood myths surrounding Yu the Great.³⁵ The flood is not creation’s dawn but a judgment that preserved Noah’s lineage, bearing the imago Dei and fallen nature initiated with Adam and Eve ~100,000 BC.

Lifespans amplify this focus. Pre-flood patriarchs—Methuselah at 969 years, Adam at 930, Noah at 950—exhibit extraordinary longevity, with a 99.4% improbability of age endings (0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9), indicating symbolic intent.³⁶ Post-flood, lifespans normalize: Shem at 600 years, Abraham at 175, Moses at 120, aligning with archaeological norms (average ~30–40 years, elites ~70, p. 18). Genesis 6:3 (“*his days shall be 120 years*”) may foreshadow this shift, though I interpret it as a flood countdown. I propose that pre-flood ages were divinely crafted to point to the flood as a reset, their exaggerated lengths drawing attention to divine intervention, while post-flood normalization grounds the narrative in human experience. The 12,600-year genealogy from Adam to Moses, mirroring Revelation’s 12,600 days (11:3, 12:6),³⁷ reflects a cycle

³⁴ Ryan and Pitman, *Noah’s Flood*, pg. 30.

³⁵ Williams, *Genesis: Hyperbole and History*.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ This figure refers to the symbolic interpretation of the genealogies as spanning ~12,600 years, aligning with apocalyptic cycles such as the 1,260 days in Revelation (11:3, 12:6), forming a typological arc of judgment and redemption.

of disaster and redemption, with the flood as its early fulcrum—a moment when humanity’s covenantal story hung in the balance.

Early Christian chronologists, unaware of geology, sensed this timeframe’s weight. Julius Africanus (c. AD 160–240) dated creation to ~5,500 BC using the Septuagint’s longer ages (e.g., Seth’s firstborn at 205 vs. 105 in the Masoretic Text).³⁸ Theophilus of Antioch (c. AD 180) echoed this at ~5,500 BC,³⁹ and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 260–340) adjusted to ~5,200 BC, all within a millenarian framework where Christ’s birth marked 5,500 years from creation.⁴⁰ James Ussher (1,581–1,656), using the Masoretic Text, placed creation at 4,004 BC, still within a 4,000–6,000 BC window.⁴¹ Africanus, Theophilus, and Eusebius, guided by the Septuagint, aligned their creation dates with the Black Sea Deluge, suggesting an inspired echo of the flood misapplied to Adam’s origin. Ussher’s date captures the Neolithic transition’s tail when cities like Eridu (~5,400 BC) emerged. This 4,000–6,000 BC convergence implies that God shaped the inspired manuscripts to nod at the flood, when prehistory yielded to history’s dawn.

³⁸ Julius Africanus, *Chronographiae*, fragment 1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 130.

³⁹ Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 3.28, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 120.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, *Chronicle*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (2010), 28, accessed May 2025, https://archive.org/details/EusebiusChronicle_2010.

⁴¹ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, trans. Larry Pierce and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003), 17.

This pivot resonates with known history. The Black Sea Deluge disrupted civilizations, leaving memories in Gilgamesh and Chinese flood myths.⁴² Mesopotamian flood deposits in Ur and Kish (~3,000–6,000 BC)⁴³ corroborate regional flooding, while the Neolithic transition—agriculture’s rise, Göbekli Tepe’s waning (~7,000 BC), and Eridu’s founding—marks the shift to urban societies and writing. These align with Genesis’ post-flood world (Genesis 10–11), where humanity disperses and civilizations emerge. The 12,600-year arc reflects this disaster’s theological weight, with pre-flood ages spotlighting the flood as a reset, uniting biblical narrative with historical reality.

YEC proponents, whose commitment to scripture I deeply respect, attribute the lifespan shift to a collapsed vapor canopy, claiming it shielded humanity from UV radiation until a global flood. I am sympathetic to their timeline (~4,004 BC), which seeks to honor Genesis’ authority, but this theory falters. Scientifically, no evidence supports a canopy; it would create uninhabitable heat, and human biology limits lifespans to ~120 years, as ancient records confirm.⁴⁴

Air can hold, at most, 55 grams of water vapor per cubic meter. In contrast, liquid water is at a density of 1,000,000 grams per cubic meter. The ratio of the two numbers is 1:18,000. Therefore, a flood of 1 mile thickness (which would cover only 1/5 of Mount Everest), would require 18,000 miles of canopy. Besides the problem of gravity (which

⁴² Williams, *Genesis: Hyperbole and History*.

⁴³ Leonard Woolley, *Excavations at Ur* (London: Ernest Benn, 1934), 17.

⁴⁴ Williams, *Genesis: Hyperbole and History*.

would bring the whole thing down), such a thick layer of water vapor would completely block any light from the Sun from reaching the earth.

Even a canopy of the equivalent of only 40 feet of liquid water would double the earth's atmospheric pressure, which would kill many animals, including humans. This pressure would also increase the temperature on the earth to a scorching 220°F. Most animals and plants do not survive long at this temperature.

Another problem is getting the water out of the atmosphere and onto the ground without cooking everything on the earth. Each gram of water vapor that condenses to a liquid releases 539 calories of heat. For a vapor canopy to produce a global water layer of only 40 feet deep, 6.22×10^{21} grams of water would release 3.35×10^{24} calories, raising the temperature of the earth to 810°F. Such a scenario would definitely kill all life on earth but would produce a tremendous air conditioning problem for Noah. And a 40-foot-deep flood would certainly not be global.⁴⁵

Biblically, the “*expanse*” (Genesis 1:6) aligns with ancient cosmology (sky, not a shield), and post-flood figures like Abraham (175 years) exceed the 120-year “*limit*” (p. 13). Theologically, YEC’s recent creation requires rejecting human antiquity (~300,000 BC, Jebel Irhoud), earth’s 4.54-billion-year age, and genetic diversity, creating a faith-science conflict. I believe this approach, though well-intentioned, risks imposing

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1. ⁴⁵ Richard Kresse, “Why the Vapor Canopy Theory Doesn’t Work,” richardkresse.net, accessed May 2025, <http://richardkresse.net/youngearth/canopy.html>. Kresse draws on the earlier canopy theories from Isaac Newton Vail published many pamphlets on his canopy theory, starting with *Waters Above the Firmament* in 1874. Other titles included: *The Misread Record* (also published under the title *The Deluge and Its Cause*), *Eden’s Flaming Sword*, *Ring of Truth*, *The Heavens and Earth of Prehistoric Man*, *Canopy Skies of Ancient Man*, *A Glance at Comparative Mythology*, and *Annular World Evolution*.

theological assumptions on science, telling it what to say rather than letting it speak, as Psalm 19 urges.

History teaches us that science can refine theology without dismissing Scripture. Early Christians believed the earth rested on pillars (Psalm 75:3) or had four corners (Isaiah 11:12), yet scientific discoveries clarified these as poetic expressions. Galileo's heliocentrism challenged the prevailing geocentric interpretation (e.g., Psalm 93:1), showing that theology must sometimes adjust when nature speaks clearly.

His position came at a cost: he was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church in 1633, and was placed under house arrest by the Roman Catholic Church after being found "*vehemently suspect of heresy*" for advocating heliocentrism. The Inquisition ordered Galileo to recant his support for the Copernican model.⁴⁶ He complied to avoid harsher punishment. It took over two centuries before the Church fully accepted heliocentrism—removing the ban in 1822 and formally acknowledging the error in 1992. As Galileo argued, Scripture and nature—both authored by God—cannot truly contradict; if they appear to, then our interpretation may need correction. Similarly, I propose that Genesis' symbolic ages and hyperbolic language, inspired to convey theological truths, align with science's testimony of human antiquity and regional flooding, not a recent creation or global deluge.

This brings us to the apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model, which places Adam and Eve at ~100,000 BC, coinciding with behavioral modernity—burials,

⁴⁶ Nicolaus Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* [On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres], trans. Charles Glenn Wallis (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), originally published 1543.

ochre use, and art at Qafzeh and Blombos Cave. This model offers strengths over YEC and late-Adam frameworks (e.g., ~5,500 BC):

- **Scientific Alignment**

Adam at ~100,000 BC aligns with *Homo sapiens* (~300,000 BC) and symbolic behavior, marking moral and spiritual awareness. The flood at ~5,600 BC matches the Black Sea Deluge, while post-flood lifespans (~120 years) reflect archaeological norms. This integrates faith and reason, letting science speak.

- **Theological Coherence**

A ~100,000 BC Adam reflects God's timely engagement—imparting the *imago Dei* when humanity first showed the spiritual and moral readiness for covenant. This avoids the deeper moral difficulty posed by a ~5,500 BC Adam, which would leave hundreds of thousands of years of human history without divine relationship or redemptive purpose. Instead, the flood becomes a later judgment that preserves this covenantal line, ultimately leading to Christ (Romans 5:12–21).

- **Fidelity to Inspired Scripture**

The model honors the text's symbolic nature, with the 12,600-year genealogy and pre-flood ages highlighting the flood as a reset. Accommodationism respects Genesis' theological intent over literal chronology, faithful to Psalm 19's dual revelation.

- **Apologetic Power**

The convergence of Africanus, Theophilus, Eusebius, Ussher, and the Black Sea Deluge at 4,000–6,000 BC strengthens the model's appeal. It suggests divine inspiration

that wove a historical event into the text, speaking to ancient (cosmic judgment) and modern (scientific plausibility) audiences, bridging faith communities.

This convergence is a resonance to be cherished, not a system to be forced. I am not a maverick seeking to upend tradition; I hold scripture's authority paramount and respect the old ways' devotion. Yet, as God reveals truths through nature, we must measure them carefully, as Galileo did,⁴⁷ ensuring theology listens to science without losing its anchor. The 5,500–6,000 BC period, uniting biblical narrative, early Christian intuition, and historical events, marks a divine reset where God judged corruption yet preserved His plan. The Covenantal Image-Bearing Model, with Adam at ~100,000 BC and the flood at ~5,600 BC, stands as a testament to this harmony, offering a faithful vision of humanity's origin, fall, and redemption. From Eden's dust to Christ's cross, the inspired text points to a God who speaks through ages, weaving disaster, and grace into a story culminating in the new creation.

V. CLARIFYING “ALONE” AND “MOTHER OF ALL THE LIVING”

Two verses frequently cited to argue that Adam and Eve were the sole biological progenitors of humanity—Genesis 2:18 (“*It is not good that the man should be alone*”) and Genesis 3:20 (“*The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living*”)—warrant a detailed exegetical and contextual analysis. When viewed through a theological lens informed by anthropology, these passages suggest a focus on

⁴⁷ Galileo Galilei, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany, 1615*, in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 183.

spiritual and relational roles rather than strict biological exclusivity, offering support for broader orthodox models like the Covenantal Image-Bearing framework.

Genesis 2:18 states, “*Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’*” The term “alone” (Hebrew: לֵבַדּוֹ, *levaddo*) is often assumed to imply that Adam was the only human in existence, necessitating Eve’s creation as the second human.⁴⁸ The broader context of Genesis 1–2 and the linguistic flexibility of Hebrew suggest a different emphasis. The preposition בְּ (b’) in Genesis 1:26—“*Let us make man in our image*”—can be understood both as “in” and “as,” indicating not only humanity’s ontological bearing of the divine image but also its vocational role as God’s representative on Earth. This layered reading highlights that Adam’s “*aloneness*” was not biological isolation but the absence of a covenantal partner bearing the *imago Dei*.⁴⁹

In this light, “alone” does not necessarily denote physical isolation but rather a lack of a suitable covenantal counterpart—someone capable of sharing Adam’s spiritual and relational calling as an image-bearer. Eve’s creation from Adam’s side (Gen 2:21–22) addresses this need, completing the partnership mandated in Genesis 1:28: “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.*”⁵⁰ Adam could have existed among pre-Adamic humans—both archaic and biologically modern but not yet spiritually

⁴⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68–70.

⁴⁹ Middleton, *Liberating Image*, 50–52.

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 35–37.

alive—yet been “*alone*” in his unique status as the first to bear God’s image, requiring Eve to fulfill this divine purpose relationally and functionally.

Genesis 3:20 further declares, “*The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living*” (Hebrew: *ḥayy*). Traditionally, this is interpreted as evidence that Eve was the biological ancestress of every human, implying no other progenitors existed.⁵¹ Yet the context of Genesis 3—framed by the interplay of life, death, and exile following the Fall—suggests a theological nuance. The term *ḥayy* (“*living*”) may not refer solely to biological life but to those spiritually alive, a concept echoed in New Testament language such as John 5:24: “*Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life... he has passed from death to life.*”⁵² In this reading, Eve becomes the mother of all who bear the *imago Dei*, the spiritually alive lineage initiated through her covenantal role alongside Adam. This interpretation retains the verse’s theological weight without mandating that she be the sole genetic source of humanity, allowing for the presence of pre-Adamic humans who interbred with her descendants, as posited in the Covenantal Model.

This interbreeding was particularly effective through archaic male-to-Adamic female pairings, which, consistent with higher fertility in mammalian crosses, facilitated the rapid spread of the *imago Dei* and fallen nature across human populations.

Anthropologically, this framework aligns within the Last Ice Age setting at ~70,000 years ago, when the Persian Gulf—Hugh Ross’s proposed location for Eden—

⁵¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 268–270.

⁵² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 182–184.

was a fertile valley above sea level, its rivers sustaining a lush ecosystem.⁵³ During this period, sea levels were significantly lower (50–80 meters below present), exposing land that later flooded as glaciers melted, an event potentially reflected in ancient flood narratives.⁵⁴ Adam and Eve, placed in this Gulf region, could have been surrounded by archaic, non-Adamic *Homo sapiens*, yet their unique spiritual endowment as the first Adamic *Homo sapiens* distinguished them. Their legacy—both the *imago Dei* and the fallen nature—spread through their lineage, preserved in oral tradition across millennia until codified in Genesis.⁵⁵

This exegesis and synthesis demonstrate that “*alone*” and “*mother of all the living*” emphasizes Adam and Eve’s covenantal and spiritual significance, not necessarily their biological exclusivity. Such a reading bridges Scripture and science, reinforcing orthodoxy’s flexibility while upholding its core doctrines.

VI. ORTHODOX MODELS OF ADAM AND EVE

Within the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy, a variety of theological models for understanding Adam and Eve have emerged, each adhering to the criteria of a real Fall, the *imago Dei*, universal sin, and Christ’s redemption, while differing in their historical, biological, and symbolic interpretations.

⁵³ Ross, *Navigating Genesis*, 145–148.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Walton, *Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 95–97.

Six models explored, culminating with Covenantal Image-Bearing Model.

1. Historical-Literal View

In this traditional model, Adam and Eve are specially created by God—Adam from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7) and Eve from Adam’s side (Gen 2:21–22)—as the sole biological progenitors of all humanity.⁵⁶ Dominant among early church fathers like Augustine, medieval theologians like Aquinas, and Reformers like Calvin, this view interprets the Fall as a literal historical event with global consequences, introducing sin and death to all descendants.⁵⁷

It aligns with a straightforward reading of Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s theology in Romans 5, accommodating either a young-earth timeline (6,000 years, per Ussher’s chronology) or an old-earth perspective, depending on how genealogies are understood.⁵⁸ This model robustly upholds all orthodox criteria, emphasizing Adam’s direct creation and Eve’s role as “*mother of all the living*” in a biological sense.

2. Historical-Representative Model

Here, Adam and Eve are historical individuals selected by God from a broader hominin population to serve as covenantal representatives of humanity.⁵⁹ Rather than being the sole progenitors, their disobedience introduces sin through federal headship, affecting all humans spiritually rather than genetically.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 14.1, 442–444.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), I, Q. 94, Art. 1, 482–483.

⁵⁸ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, trans. Larry Pierce and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003), 17–19.

⁵⁹ Walton, *Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 88–90.

This model draws on ancient Near Eastern motifs of a chosen figure standing for a people, harmonizing with genetic evidence of a diverse ancestral pool (e.g., Neanderthal DNA in modern humans) while preserving the Fall, *imago Dei*, and Christ's redemption.⁶⁰ It offers a middle path, maintaining historicity without requiring monogenesis.

3. Archetypal-Historical View

This approach sees Adam and Eve as real historical figures whose narrative also functions as a theological archetype, conveying universal truths about humanity's condition, calling, and fall.⁶¹ The Hebrew names— "*Adam*" (mankind) and "*Eve*" (life)—and Genesis 2–3's literary style suggest typological depth, yet their disobedience remains a concrete event.⁶² This "*both/and*" model integrates history and symbolism, affirming orthodoxy's essentials without insisting on sole biological descent, appealing to those who see Genesis as theological narrative.

4. Genealogical Adam and Eve (GAE)

Proposed by S. Joshua Swamidass, this model posits Adam and Eve as historical figures, potentially living 6,000–10,000 years ago (though flexible in timing), who become genealogical ancestors of all humans by Jesus' time through interbreeding with pre-Adamic humans.⁶³ Peer-reviewed population modeling supports this, showing a

⁶⁰ Denis Alexander, *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2014), 305–307.

⁶¹ Middleton, *Liberating Image*, 25–27.

⁶² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 40–42.

⁶³ Swamidass, *Genealogical Adam and Eve*, 103–106.

couple could achieve universal ancestry via “*ghost DNA*”—ancestors leaving no genetic trace—within millennia.⁶⁴ It preserves the Fall, *imago Dei*, and universal sin/redemption, accommodating evolutionary data while affirming a real Adam and Eve, making it a scientifically informed orthodox option.

The Tower of Babel (~4,000 BC, Genesis 11) marks a significant diffusion of Adam’s covenantal lineage, accelerating its genealogical spread as humanity dispersed linguistically and culturally, consistent with the gradual universal ancestry posited by the Genealogical Adam and Eve model.

5. Augustinian Model of Original Sin

Augustine’s framework focuses on the transmission of sin, teaching that all humans inherit both a sinful nature and guilt from Adam—whether through natural descent (*traducianism*) or by divine creation of the soul.⁶⁵ His view shaped medieval theology and much of Protestant doctrine, notably influencing Luther’s *bondage of the will*, emphasizing that humanity is “*born under sin’s reign*” and entirely dependent on divine grace for salvation.⁶⁶

It is worth noting that while the historic Western Church (Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions) affirms Augustine’s understanding of inherited guilt, the Eastern Orthodox Church maintains a different emphasis. The Orthodox view holds that

⁶⁴ Ibid., 120–123

⁶⁵ Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2.12, 240–241.

⁶⁶ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 361–363.

humanity inherits mortality and a corrupted condition, but not Adam's guilt itself. As one Orthodox theologian metaphorically explained, "*we are born into a polluted river*": not personally guilty but inevitably affected by the corruption introduced through Adam's fall.

The Augustinian model, while not specifying Adam's biological origin, complements other Adamic models by reinforcing the universality of sin and the absolute necessity of Christ's redemptive work—a cornerstone of historic Christian orthodoxy.

6. Covenantal Image-Bearing Model

Rooted in Psalm 19's dual revelation—the Book of Nature and Scripture—this model proposes God imparted the *imago Dei* to Adam and Eve about ~100,000 years ago during the Last Ice Age, either creating them *de novo* or selecting them from pre-Adamic *Homo sapien sapiens*, placing them in the Persian Gulf valley.⁶⁷ The Book of Nature reveals archaic, non-Adamic *Homo sapiens* emerging ~ 300,000 years ago, with a covenantal shift possibly marking a divine act: "*The Lord God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life* (Gen 2:7)," initiating the Adamic *Homo sapiens* lineage.⁶⁸ As I argue in "*Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Naturalism*," humans reflect God's triune nature—body (*soma*), soul (*nephesh/psyche*), spirit (*ruach/pneuma*)—per 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 147–149.

⁶⁸ Henshilwood and d'Errico, "Origins of Symbolism," 75–78.

⁶⁹ D. Gene Williams Jr., *Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Naturalism: A Study of the Soul and Spirit in Biblical and Theological Contexts*, accessed May 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

Their Fall introduced spiritual death (Gen 3:7–10), which spread covenantally through both the natural propagation of Adamic descendants and their interbreeding with pre-Adamic humans.⁷⁰ As previously noted, interbreeding—particularly involving archaic males and Adamic females, consistent with observed mammalian fertility patterns—facilitated the widespread transmission of the imago Dei and fallen nature, ensuring that Adam’s covenantal lineage ultimately achieved universal ancestry.

A non-global flood (~5,600 BC) later affected their line, preserving continuity (e.g., Pando, ~80,000 years).⁷¹ This model affirms all orthodox criteria, aligning with Ice Age geography and behavioral shifts. For a more in-depth exploration of this model, see the companion paper, *An Apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model*.⁷²

Moreover, recent findings of *Homo erectus* fossils dated to 163,000–119,000 years ago in a submerged Solo River valley in the Madura Strait, Java, align with the model’s flexibility, accommodating diverse pre-Adamic populations that could have interacted with Adamic descendants during later migrations, with evidence of hunting and cultural exchange suggesting dynamic interpopulation dynamics (Berghuis et al. 2025). This reinforces the theological independence from specific scientific timelines.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ross, *Navigating Genesis*, 150–152.

⁷¹ Rose, “New Light,” 852–854.

⁷² D. Gene Williams Jr., *An Apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model: A Companion to Orthodox Theological Reflections on Adam and Eve*, accessed May 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

⁷³ Berghuis et al., “Solo River on the Madura Strait Seabed,” 100042.

VII. NON-ORTHODOX OR HERETICAL VIEWS

While Christian orthodoxy allows interpretive flexibility concerning the historical and theological nature of Adam and Eve, it also establishes clear boundaries. Views that reject core doctrines such as the Fall, original sin, or the necessity of Christ's redemptive work fall outside these boundaries. The following models are considered non-orthodox or heretical based on their departure from the apostolic faith and historical Christian teaching.

What is the danger of holding to the Mythological Adam and Eve view?

This view treats the Genesis account as pure myth, with no historical or theological anchor in real individuals. It often arises in liberal Protestant theology influenced by higher criticism and modernist philosophy. Advocates argue that Genesis functions like other ancient Near Eastern myths, offering existential truths rather than historical claims.

However, the denial of a historical Adam contradicts the New Testament's use of Adam as a real figure in explaining sin and salvation. Paul's argument in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 depends on the typological and historical relationship between Adam and Christ. To sever that link is to undermine the foundation of Christian soteriology.⁷⁴

Pelagianism

Pelagianism, named after the British monk Pelagius, denies the doctrine of original sin. It holds that Adam's sin did not corrupt human nature and that each person is

⁷⁴ G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, trans. Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 25–27.

born morally neutral and capable of righteousness without divine grace. This view was condemned as heretical by several early church councils, including the Council of Carthage (418) and the Council of Ephesus (431).⁷⁵

Orthodoxy affirms that human nature is fallen and that grace is necessary not only to assist the will but to renew it. Pelagianism's denial of inherited sin and the necessity of grace is a direct contradiction to Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:1–5, where all are said to be dead in sin and saved only by God's mercy.

Gnostic Reinterpretations

Gnostic texts, such as those found in the Nag Hammadi Library, present a radically inverted version of the Genesis narrative. In these accounts, the serpent is a liberator who brings true knowledge, while the Creator (often identified with Yahweh) is portrayed as an ignorant or malevolent demiurge.⁷⁶

Such views are incompatible with biblical monotheism and the goodness of creation. The church fathers, especially Irenaeus and Tertullian, vigorously opposed Gnostic dualism, which denigrated the material world and subverted the narrative of sin and redemption.

⁷⁵ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 357–359.

⁷⁶ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 28–30.

Radical Darwinian Naturalism

Unlike theistic evolution, which affirms divine purpose in the evolutionary process, radical naturalism posits that human beings are the product of blind, purposeless evolutionary forces. There is no divine image, no Fall, and no need for salvation.⁷⁷

VIII. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

The question of Adam and Eve is not merely academic—it has deep theological and pastoral consequences. The way Christians understand the first humans shapes their view of sin, salvation, human dignity, and the authority of Scripture. While the Church may tolerate a range of interpretive models within orthodoxy, the stakes remain high when core doctrines are at risk.

Why does understanding Adam Still Matter?

In a cultural moment dominated by scientific skepticism and historical revisionism, some Christians may be tempted to view Adam and Eve as irrelevant or outdated. However, Scripture presents Adam not as a peripheral figure, but as central to the gospel narrative. As Paul writes, “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive*” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

This connection between the first and last Adam is not merely rhetorical—it is theological. The universality of sin and death is grounded in a real historical fall, and the

⁷⁷ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 93–95.

universality of salvation is grounded in the incarnation, obedience, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁷⁸

To jettison Adam as a theological fiction is to risk unraveling the logic of salvation history. It detaches Christ's redemptive work from the very problem it was meant to solve.

Christians need to hold strong to Unity in Essentials, Charity in Non-Essentials

Orthodox theology recognizes the difference between dogma (what must be believed), doctrine (what should be believed), and opinion (what may be believed). In the case of Adam and Eve, the dogmatic core includes the Fall, the *imago Dei*, the universality of sin, and the necessity of Christ's redemptive work. How these truths are expressed—whether through a historical-literal model or a genealogical framework—may fall into the category of doctrine or even opinion, depending on the interpretive system.

This calls for discernment and charity. As the adage often attributed to Augustine of Hippo states, “*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, charity; in all things, love.*” Sometimes expressed in Latin as “*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*”—meaning “*In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity*”⁷⁹—this principle, though debated in origin, guides the pastoral task. Churches should uphold essential truths with clarity while granting faithful believers interpretive flexibility on secondary matters. Theological rigidity over non-essentials risks division,

⁷⁸ Moo, *Romans*, 340–342.

⁷⁹ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson Jr. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958), 2.9, 43–45.

while careless openness invites heresy. Maintaining unity without compromising truth remains a core pastoral responsibility.

How to respond to Scientific and Cultural Challenges

One of the chief reasons Christians reconsider traditional views of Adam is the perceived conflict between Scripture and science. Genetic studies suggest a large population of archaic, non-Adamic *Homo sapiens*, while anthropology traces biological traits far beyond the scope of the biblical timeline, yet the covenantal role of Adamic *Homo sapiens* remains central.

Rather than retreat into denial or revisionism, the Church should engage with humility and confidence. Some models—like the genealogical Adam or representative views—offer a way to affirm both scientific credibility and theological integrity. More importantly, pastors and teachers must equip believers to distinguish between what the Bible requires us to affirm and what it allows us to explore.

Faithful engagement does not mean conceding the faith. It means showing how the Christian worldview is broad enough to accommodate mystery, diverse interpretive frameworks, and ongoing discovery—without surrendering its core truths.⁸⁰

IX. CONCLUSION

The theological significance of Adam and Eve cannot be overstated. Though Christian orthodoxy permits a range of views concerning the manner and mode of their creation, it draws firm boundaries around essential doctrines: that Adamic *Homo sapiens*

⁸⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 22–24.

are created in the image of God, that sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, that all descendants now bear the effects of that Fall, and that redemption comes only through Christ, the second Adam.

This study has shown that multiple models—historical-literal, representative, archetypal-historical, genealogical, Augustinian, and the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model—preserve these truths while offering different explanatory frameworks. These interpretations, despite their differences, remain within the circle of orthodoxy because they uphold the theological essentials rooted in Scripture and affirmed through historic Christian tradition.

In contrast, heretical views—such as Pelagianism, radical naturalism, Gnostic revisionism, and fully mythological interpretations—deny these core doctrines and thereby sever the connection between biblical anthropology and the gospel itself. Theological diversity must not become doctrinal relativism. The church is called to embrace interpretive charity without crossing into theological compromise.⁸¹

The continued relevance of Adam and Eve in Christian theology lies not only in their place at the beginning of the biblical narrative, but also in their role as the first link in the story of redemption. From Adam's dust to Christ's cross, and ultimately to the new creation, Scripture presents a vision of humanity marked by purpose, dignity, fallenness, and hope. The Church must hold fast to this vision, proclaiming a gospel that speaks to both our origin and our destiny in Christ. Go forth, then, and be faithful imagers of Christ our God!

⁸¹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 201–204.

APPENDIX A: INTEGRATED TIMELINE: COVENANTAL IMAGE-BEARING MODEL + ANTHROPOLOGICAL DATA

Timeframe	Scientific / Historical Event	Covenantal Interpretation (Your Model)
~300,000 BC	~300,000 BC: Archaic, non-Adamic Homo sapiens appear (e.g., Jebel Irhoud, Morocco)	Biological populations begin, without spiritual <i>imago Dei</i> or divine covenant.
~200,000 BC	Genetic diversification of Homo sapiens across Africa	Reflects natural dispersion, not yet a covenantal population.
~140,000 BC	~140,000 BC: Homo erectus fossils discovered in a submerged Solo River valley, Madura Strait, Java (Sundaland), dated to 163,000–119,000 years ago via optically stimulated luminescence (OSL), as reported by Berghuis et al. (2025).	Evidence of a pre-Adamic archaic hominin population in a lowland habitat, potentially interacting with later Adamic migrations; supports the presence of diverse biological humans prior to the <i>imago Dei</i> 's impartation, with signs of hunting and cultural exchange.
~100,000 BC	Early migration into the Levant (Skhul and Qafzeh)	Anatomically modern humans exhibiting symbolic behaviors, such as ochre use and intentional burials, are present at Qafzeh Cave. These behaviors suggest the presence of the <i>imago Dei</i> . This early migration attempt may reflect the initial fulfillment of God's command to “ <i>be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth</i> ” (Genesis 1:28). However, due to small population sizes and limited technological advancements, their expansion was constrained.
~70,000 BC	Emergence of widespread behavioral modernity	A significant increase in symbolic expression, art, and long-distance trade occurs. These developments, coupled with improved tools and larger population sizes, facilitate broader human expansion and the dissemination of the <i>imago Dei</i> across diverse populations.
~60,000–20,000 BC	Homo sapiens migrate worldwide (e.g., Asia ~60,000–50,000 BC, Australia ~50,000 BC, Europe ~45,000 BC, Americas ~20,000 BC)	Adam’s descendants interbreed with pre-Adamic humans, spreading <i>imago Dei</i> and fallen nature genealogically, universal by Jesus’ time (Genesis 4, Romans 5:12).

Timeframe	Scientific / Historical Event	Covenantal Interpretation (Your Model)
		This spread was facilitated primarily by archaic male-to-Adamic female interbreeding, which, based on mammalian fertility patterns, ensured efficient transmission of the <i>imago Dei</i> and fallen nature across global populations.
~8,000-6,000 BC	Persian Gulf region floods due to glacial melt (Eden submerged)	Beginning of the end for the Edenic homeland; remembered later in flood traditions.
~7,000-5,600 BC	Noah's Flood- Black Sea Deluge (regional, not global)	Divine judgment on Adam's covenantal line; Noah's family preserved (Genesis 6–9).
~5,600–4,000 BC	Noah's family repopulates the region	Adam's covenantal line regrows. Civilization develops around Mesopotamia.
~4,000 BC	Early linguistic and cultural diversification in Mesopotamia.	God confuses languages at Babel (Genesis 11), forcibly dispersing the covenantal lineage globally. This initiates the global spread of covenantal identity, completing the genealogical reach of Adam. According to the Divine Council Worldview (Deuteronomy 32:8–9, LXX/DSS), this dispersion also marks the assignment of the nations to spiritual rulers (“ <i>sons of God</i> ”), with Yahweh reserving Israel as His own inheritance. This act explains the rise of distinct religious worldviews and cosmic rebellion outside the covenantal center.
~3,000–2,000 BC	Rise of early civilizations: Sumer, Akkad, Egypt	Cultural growth post-Babel. Covenant line continues through Shem → Abraham (Genesis 11)
~2,000 BC	Rise of Sumer, Akkad, Egypt.	God reestablishes covenant in a new form—Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12)—building on Adam's legacy.

Timeframe	Scientific / Historical Event	Covenantal Interpretation (Your Model)
~1,400–1,000 BC	Exodus, Conquest, and United Monarchy (Moses to David)	Covenant narrows: national focus (Israel) to prepare for the universal Messiah.
~700–400 BC	Prophets foretell a coming Redeemer (Isaiah, Micah, etc.)	Prepares for reversal of the Fall—Adamic curse to be undone by a New Adam.
~5 BC	Historical figure in Roman Judea.	<i>Fulfillment.</i> Birth of Jesus Christ. Second Adam reverses Fall, restoring <i>imago Dei</i> (Romans 5:12–21, 1 Corinthians 15:22).

APPNDIX B: FROM BIG BANG TO NEW CREATION: DAY AGE TIMELINE

The Hebrew word *Yom*, translated as “day” in Genesis 1, can refer to both a 24-hour period and a longer, indefinite span of time, as seen in Genesis 2:4 and Psalm 90:4. This flexibility supports a Day-Age interpretation, in which each “day” of Genesis 1 represents a vast epoch. This view allows the timeline to align with scientific evidence for the age of the earth and universe while preserving the theological essentials of Genesis: God’s sovereign creation, the historical fall, and humanity’s unique calling as image-bearers.

Big bang (Precursor to Genesis Days)

- 13.787 billion years ago: Creation (*creatio ex nihilo*) - Genesis 1:1 (“*in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*”).
- 4.567 billion BC: The sun forms, initiating the solar system’s development, occurring prior to day 1 as a precursor event to Genesis 1’s earth-focused narrative.

Day 1: 4.5662 billion BC to ~2.7 billion BC - Genesis 1:1–5 (“*earth without form,*” “*let there be light*”)

- 4.5662 billion BC: Earth forms, Hadean Eon begins.
- 4.5 billion BC: Moon forms – great collider starts the Hadean Eon.
- 4.0 billion BC: Hadean Eon ends, Archaean Eon begins.
- 3.85 billion BC: Isotopic evidence for life, possibly nurtured by the Spirit’s *merachefet* (hovering) over the waters (Genesis 1:2), a term also used in Deuteronomy 32:11 where an eagle hovers over its young, suggesting God’s protective care over the earliest signs of life.
- 3.8 billion BC: Oceans become permanent.
- 3.5 billion BC: Stromatolites and microfossils appear, early microbial life under the Spirit’s care.
- 3.0–3.8 billion BC: Stable water cycle established.

Day 2: 2.7 billion BC to ~1.9 billion BC - Genesis 1:6–8 (“*expanse separates waters*”)

- 2.7 billion BC: Cyanobacteria and phototrophs appear, oxygenating the atmosphere as part of the Spirit’s ongoing work to prepare the earth.
- 2.5 billion BC: Archaean Eon ends, Proterozoic Eon begins.

Day 3: 1.9 billion BC to ~470 million BC - Genesis 1:9–13 (“*dry land appears,*” “*vegetation*”)

- 1.9 billion BC: Microscopic eukaryotic life appears (precursor to complex life).
- ~470 million BC: First land plant life appears (e.g., *Cooksonia* fossils).

Day 4: 470 million BC to ~541 million BC - Genesis 1:14–19 (“*lights in the expanse*”)

- 470 million BC to 541 million BC: Atmospheric clearing makes sun, moon, and stars visible from earth.
- 541 million BC: Proterozoic Eon ends, phanerozoic Eon begins, Paleozoic Era begins.

Day 5: 541 million BC to ~340 million BC - Genesis 1:20–23 (“*waters swarm with living creatures,*” “*birds fly*”)

- 541 million BC: Cambrian Period begins, Cambrian explosion (fish and shelled creatures).
- 485 million BC: Cambrian Period ends, Ordovician Period begins.
- 444 million BC: Ordovician Period ends, Silurian Period begins.
- 419 million BC: Silurian Period ends, Devonian Period begins.
- 359 million BC: Devonian Period ends, Carboniferous Period begins.
- 155 million BC: Earliest winged birds (e.g., *Archaeopteryx*).

Day 6: 340 million BC to ~5 BC - Genesis 1:24–31, Genesis 2 (“*land creatures*,” “*man in our image*”)

- 346 million BC: Earliest terrestrial animal fossils.
- 340 million BC: Oldest reptile fossil.
- 299 million BC: Carboniferous Period ends, Permian Period begins.
- 252 million BC: Paleozoic Era ends, Mesozoic Era begins, Permian Period ends, Triassic Period begins.
- 230 million BC: Oldest dinosaur fossil.
- 201 million BC: Triassic Period ends, Jurassic Period begins.
- 145 million BC: Jurassic Period ends, Cretaceous Period begins.
- 125 million BC: Earliest mammal fossils.
- 66 million BC: Mesozoic Era ends, Cenozoic Era begins, Cretaceous Period ends, Paleogene Period begins.
- 23 million BC: Paleogene Period ends, Neogene Period begins.
- 2.6 million BC: Neogene Period ends, quaternary Period begins, Pleistocene Epoch begins.
- 300,000 BC: Anatomically modern humans appear (biological homo sapiens).
- 200,000 BC: Genetic diversification of homo sapiens across Africa.
- **100,000 BC: Adam and Eve chosen or specially created (creatio ex novo); fall occurs; imago Dei begins; early migration into the levant (Skhul and Qafzeh).**

Day 7: Post-100,000 BC - Genesis 2:1–3 (“*God rested*”)

- 70,000 BC: Behavioral Modernity; spread of covenantal humanity.
- 60,000–20,000 BC: Homo sapiens migrate worldwide (e.g., Asia ~60k BC, Australia ~45k BC, Americas ~20k BC); Adam’s descendants interbreed with pre-adamic humans, spreading the imago Dei and fallen nature.
- 11,700 BC: Pleistocene Epoch ends, Holocene Epoch begins.
- 8,000–6,000 BC: Persian Gulf Region floods (Eden submerged).
- 7,500–5,600 BC: Noah’s flood- Black Sea Deluge (regional judgment on adamic line).
- 4,200 BC: Meghalayan Age begins.
- 4,000 BC: Tower of Babel; nations disinherited (Genesis 11, Deuteronomy 32:8–9).
- 3,000–2,000 BC: Rise of early civilizations (Sumer, Akkad, Egypt).
- 2,000 BC: Abrahamic covenant begins.
- 1,400–1,000 BC: Exodus, conquest, united monarchy (Moses to David).
- 700–400 BC: Prophets foretell a coming redeemer.
- 5 BC: Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, is born.

Day 8: AD 30–33 - New Creation in Christ ⁸²

- AD 30–33: Christ’s resurrection, symbolizing the new creation (per Early Church Fathers), transcending geological time within the Phanerozoic Eon, Cenozoic Era, Quaternary Period, Holocene Epoch, and Meghalayan Age (4,200 BC–present).

⁸² *Epistle of Barnabas* 15.9. In *The Apostolic Fathers*. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer. Edited by Michael W. Holmes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007; Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* 24–26. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885; Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 4.16.1. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885; Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata* 6.16. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.

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