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Article

"Adam and Eve in Paradise" by Lucas Cranach, via Wikimedia

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Adam & Eve, Apologetics, and Christian Witness



By **Dennis Venema**

on December 14, 2015

- [Apologetics](#)





We've come a long way in this series, covering both the scientific evidence that humans descend from a population, rather than a pair, as well as the responses to these lines of evidence by two leading Christian apologists. As we have seen, however, those responses have not stood up to scrutiny. Indeed, in several cases the arguments we have examined are based on a significant misunderstanding of the relevant science.

As a Christian and a scientist, I have long been perplexed by the desire that many Christians have for apologetics arguments made by those without training or expertise in the area under discussion. Unfortunately, most Christians don't know enough about evolutionary biology or population genetics to know if the apologetics they are reading is sound. One of the reasons for this series, as well as my previous series, *Evolution Basics*, is to try to help reverse that trend. Once one understands the relevant science, one is in a much better position to evaluate an apologetics argument as helpful or misguided.

We've all had the experience of reading poor arguments proffered by atheists against Christianity, and here we easily see the problems and rightly point them out. (That is not to say that there are not also thoughtful arguments against Christianity, mind you, but for the purposes of this illustration I need to use a poor one). I came across an example just the other day on Facebook. I have a very diverse "friend" list on Facebook, ranging from dedicated young-earth creationists to dedicated atheists, with everything in between. With that diverse group, my Facebook feed never fails to entertain. This particular post described the recent discovery of a notebook belonging to Samuel Ward, one of the translators of the King James Bible. This notebook showed, among other things, Ward working through drafts of one section of the Apocrypha, with notes on his word choices and so on.

While this very interesting news story was covered responsibly by most news sources, one of my Facebook friends posted a link to this article. Under the headline "Handwritten draft of King James Bible Discovered; Reveals no Divine Powers" the author goes on to say, among other things:

“ The earliest known version of The King James Bible, perhaps one of the most influential and widely read books in history, has been discovered mislabeled inside an archive at the University of Cambridge. The find is being called one of the most significant revelations in decades. It shows that writing is a process of revising, cutting, and then more rewriting. The Bible is no different in this regard, even though some conservative Christians claim it is the divine word of God himself. Perhaps God, then, is a revisionist. This find certainly seems to suggest that... While this finding certainly doesn't disprove God, it does show that the translators of the Bible didn't get a finalized product the first go around — it wasn't a walk in the park with an angel over their shoulder telling them what to write.

This is, of course, an appallingly bad argument against the inspiration of Scripture. The mistakes are so basic, they reveal that this individual does not have even an elementary understanding about what he is writing about. He apparently thinks that Christians believe that translations of Scripture are divinely inspired, and that the process of inspiration (or translation?) means that no revisions will ever be made. Beyond that, the text in question is from the Apocrypha, which "conservative Christians" – the target of his article – do not hold to be divinely inspired at all, even for the original manuscripts. All the author has done is demonstrate his profound ignorance of the subject at hand, and by doing so, he has only *undermined* his case against Christianity, not strengthened it.

Face, meet palm.

Before we as Christians get too smug about things like this, however, we need to recognize that we, as a group, do the exact same thing when it comes to evolution. In fact, we do it more thoroughly, and more frequently than atheists do. Evangelical Christianity has an entire complex of ministries, publishing houses, apologetics speakers, museums, and so on that all argue against evolution with arguments so breathtakingly bad – unfortunately there's not a softer way to put that and retain accuracy – that anyone with even a basic understanding of evolutionary biology can see through them as easily as the average Christian could refute that article I saw on Facebook.

The penchant Christians have for anti-evolutionary apologetics is of course a barrier to faith for anyone outside the church who is knowledgeable about evolution. I have many non-believing colleagues who are extremely well-versed in evolutionary biology and population genetics, for example. If I was to tell them that they needed to reject everything they knew in this area in order to come to faith it would be on par with telling them they needed to reject any other well-established area of science, such as atomic theory or the chromosomal theory of inheritance. It would put a needless, almost insurmountable barrier in place.

Similarly, problems arise for those within the church who learn about evolutionary biology and come to accept it as solid science. Not only can this shift produce a crisis of faith, it can often lead to doubts and questions in other areas – after all, if Christians are so wrong on origins, what else might they be wrong on? This exact issue was recently raised by a new commenter on our [discussion board](#) – and it's an unfortunately common problem. It too is also an entirely unnecessary barrier.

If we as Christians choose to support our faith with apologetic arguments that are easily demonstrated to be false, then it should come as no surprise that many people, both within the church and outside it, will reject not only those arguments but also Christianity as a whole once the truth comes to light. We as a church can do better – and we must do better – both for those within our ranks who appreciate science, and for those outside our ranks who are not willing to deny what they know in order to join us.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, some years from now, if evangelical Christians became widely known, among Christians and non-Christians alike, as a reliable source of information about the natural world? I genuinely hope one day we might get there. After all, the natural world is one of God's two books, and proclaiming the message of both books – creation and Scripture – as accurately as possible is a form of worship and service to their Author.

Previous in Series



ArticleAdvanced

By **Dennis Venema**

Genetics and the Historical Adam: A Response to William Lane Craig

William Lane Craig argues that it is possible to hold to Adam and Eve as the unique progenitors of all of humanity - but do his arguments hold up?



About the Author

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Dennis Venema is professor of biology at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia. He holds a B.Sc. (with Honors) from the University of British Columbia (1996), and received his Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia in 2003. His research is focused on the genetics of pattern formation and signaling using the common fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster* as a model organism. Dennis is a gifted thinker and writer on matters of science and faith, but also an award-winning biology teacher—he won the 2008 College Biology Teaching Award from the National Association of Biology Teachers. He and his family enjoy numerous outdoor activities that the Canadian Pacific coast region has to offer.