

Evolution and the Fall

W.T. Cavanaugh and J.K.A. Smith

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D.Th., author of *Paul Ricoeur & Living Hermeneutics. Exploring Ricoeur's Contribution to Biblical Interpretation* (2016); *From Evolution to Eden. Making Sense of Early Genesis* (2015), and many other books.

This volume comprises ten essays produced by an ecumenical group of scholars who met together off and on over a three year period – sponsored by the Colossian Forum on Faith, Science, and Culture. Core issues concerning the biblical and scientific views of human origins, questions about the fall, and original sin are addressed from various disciplines including, philosophy, history, theology, and biology. Christians, it must be underscored, need to be involved in these types of discussions, so it's good to see books like this finally being published. There may not always be answers to the questions that arise from the clash between the Bible and science, but such an interaction is necessary if the faith is to maintain credibility in our contemporary context.

Cavanaugh and Smith lead off with an Introduction that primarily deals with the question of how Christians should work with knowledge coming from sources outside (notably science), their doctrinal traditions. In light of the difficult questions facing the Christian community on these thorny issues of human origins and such, they suggest that to embrace a Galilean perspective that some propose today, with its biases towards theology and tradition would be an unhelpful direction. By contrast, in their view, it is better to look to the example of Chalcedon and its

configuration of Christology in drawing limits while facing challenges, as something that might be useful when it comes to our own controversies over evolution and theology. Thus, Cavanaugh and Smith want to affirm a certain type of 'tradition' and build off confessions and creeds as their orientation for new understandings of contemporary science and theology issues. In a brief, but valuable section, they go on to explain more fully what they mean by this.

The core of the book is divided into four parts:

- 1) Mapping the Questions
- 2) Biblical Studies and Theological Implications
- 3) Beyond "Origins": Cultural Implications
- 4) Reimagining the Conversation: Faithful Ways Forward

In Part 1, Falk, Deane–Drummond, and Smith lay out and respond to some of the biological, theological, and philosophical questions about genes, death, Adam, evolution, and what's at stake in the doctrine of the fall.

In Part 2, Middleton, Green, and Riches explore Genesis 3 and human evolution, the New Testament on the origins of sin, and a poetic apologetic account of the traditional view of Adam.

In Part 3, Waters and Wirzba examine some of the cultural implications, such as transhumanism and living in *creation*, in light of the fall.

In Part 4, Cavanaugh and Harrison analyze various historical contexts and authors, including Augustine and Locke, showing how their ideas and writings contribute to contemporary views of the fall narrative in a political or religio-scientific sense.

Each of the chapters of this book is illuminating. The disciplines represented in the volume are a strong asset for dealing with science and theology issues, which are indeed served by a multi-disciplinary approach. Several of the authors take the natural world informer seriously and then work with the biblical text in light of it. Others are more concerned with setting some kind of boundaries for the discussion of human origins, the fall, and original sin.

I highly recommend this book. While the controversies dealt with in these essays are arduous, these authors do a fine job at making their works accessible, but of also maintaining a high level of research and scholarship. Christians can no longer ignore evolution and its implications for the biblical informer, and if anything this book is a testimony to the fact that this discussion must go on.