

What the story of creation teaches us

How does God reveal himself? He has revealed himself by calling particular individuals that he has graced with divine inspiration. God had spoken to the great patriarchs and prophets in order to reach other people and has given particular signs to accompany that revelation such as when God says,

“When I took you out of Egypt with signs and wonders.” Deut. 26:8.

The apostles preaching was accompanied by signs and wonders.

Miracles are constantly happening. God still gives signs of his presence, but in particular he gave miraculous signs to those that he called by whom he issued his prophecy.

Faith is our response to this. St. Paul's definition of faith is, “Faith is seeing through a glass darkly.” (1 Cor 13:12) We have a vision into something, but that vision is imperfect.

Genesis 1-3

We begin at the beginning. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and this is the beginning of the Bible (Genesis). From the beginning God provides us with a doctrine that we refer to as *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. God creates out of nothing. **He is the source of all being.**

Looking at other worldviews, in their creation myths you find preexisting matter. In Jewish and Christian theology, when God creates, he does not use any sort of preexisting matter.

Why does God create?

God is eternally happy and blessed in himself from all eternity to all eternity, why does he bother creating us problematic, broken, sinful, imperfect beings?

We can begin to answer that question by thinking about the nature of the Trinity.

In the Godhead itself we find a pattern that clues us in to why God creates in the first place, and this is what we refer to as *exitus-reditus*.

This is Latin for **going out and returning**. We find this pattern of *exitus-reditus* in the Godhead itself. Technically we're not monotheists, we're Trinitarians.

The Son and the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father. We see being going out from God the Father. This is an *exitus* pattern. The Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father.

Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, **eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, **who proceeds from the Father and the Son.** With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

What does all this have to do with Genesis one and creation?

Creation, the whole universe coming forth from God reveals what we see in the Trinity.

Just as the Son and Spirit proceed forth from the Father, in a similar way all of creation proceeds forth from God.

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that the exitus of the persons in the **unity of essence** is the cause of the going out of creatures in the **diversity of essence**.

So, why does God create? Because God's being is such that it involves a giving forth of being, this generative power, this gift of being, within the Godhead itself, where the Father gives himself fully to the Son, and then the Son gives himself fully back to the Father, and that procession of being, from the Father to the Son, and from the Father and Son to the Holy Spirit, is the cause of creation.

So while the persons of the Trinity go forth in a unity of essence (i.e., the Son is fully God and the Holy Spirit is fully God), we as creatures along with giraffes and unicorns and far distant planets and stars exit forth from God in diversity of essence.

Think about love.

If you think about loving another person, you long to give yourself to the other, to pour yourself out for the other or somehow become one with them in a complete and total way (think marriage). But in our created life here on earth there's always a limit. We can't actually fully communicate ourselves. Something always remains uncommunicated. But in God, that's not the case. In God, we find the perfection of communication, where the Father fully gives the entirety of his divine essence to the Son and Spirit.

The difference with what's going on with us as creatures and what's going on with God is that God proceeds from God with the whole divine essence. But we as creatures, while we do have our exitus from God, we don't receive the whole divine essence. Rather, we **participate** in God.

In Catholic theology, **participation** is an important idea. Protestants have a hard time accepting this participation for various reasons but participation is a very important category in Catholic theology.

We participate in God's being. That doesn't mean that we are God, but that we have a share in who he is.

All of this is to show that the whole process of creation has a way of revealing what's going on in the Trinity.

Back to that original question: **Why does God create?**

A related question: Is creation necessary? Did God have to create?

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life." Catechism, 1

No. Creation is not necessary. We are unnecessary. We don't need to be here, and there's something beautiful about that. Think about the "unnecessary" things in life: music, art, theater. Beautiful things are unnecessary. Even philosophy, you don't have to do philosophy to live. Our being in the universe is a gift of beauty. We are God's art.

So there's a way in which our being here is **not necessary**, and yet it is **fitting** because it's patterned after the procession in the Trinity.

What is the reditus in the Trinity?

What is our ultimate end? God is our ultimate end. The purpose of the going forth of the Son and the Spirit in the created order is so that we might be saved and redeemed by the Son and the Spirit and brought back into unity with the Father. That we might share in the life of the Trinity, in the blessed life of the Trinity. Recall that blessed means happy,

The Son proceeds forth from the Father in order that he might love the Father and that he might return to the Father in unity.

The mission of the Spirit (who dwells within us through baptism) is to bring us to the Son. The mission of the Son is to bring us to the Father.

When you hear that still small voice whispering in your heart, repent, come back to church, go to confession, believe in the gospel, that's the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in your heart to bring you back to the Son that you might experience redemption in order that you might be unified with the Father.

It's a circular motion, a going out and a returning from God.

God pours forth his whole being into the Son and then the Son pours himself back into the Father and the bond they share is the Spirit.

Creation follows this Trinitarian pattern. God pours forth being, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Why? In order that we might return to him in unity. Not just so that we can experience our own uniqueness and individuality. This is a lesson that our world needs to learn. Our happiness is to be found in being the last of all and servant of all, in pouring out our lives in love.

We have two different creation stories in Genesis chapters one and two. Genesis chapter one gives us the big picture of the seven days, and then Genesis chapter two zeroes in on the creation of Adam and Eve. These stories are not contradictory but complimentary. The second story reveals the end of the first story. Genesis 1:27:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."

Genesis 2 explains what's going on there.

Recall that there's seven days in creation. What happens on the seventh day? God rests on the seventh day.

Many people, when they read the creation story, they get through chapter one and think "Creation is about me, because the goal of creation seems to be the creation of man and woman in the image of God." This is an error.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them, and on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done." Genesis 2:1

If we are not the goal, the pinnacle, of God's creation. What is?

Does the creation of human beings on the sixth day constitute the high point of creation? Perhaps surprisingly, the answer is decisively no. The pinnacle of creation is nothing other than God's own rest. We might imagine God's "rest" on the seventh day as if God, worn out from his labors, were relaxing in an easy chair with a cool lemonade, freshly squeezed from the lemons he had made on day three. But, in fact,

God's "rest" is his supreme holiness, his infinite wisdom and being. God's "rest" is himself. The dynamism of creation continues beyond creatures to include the goal or purpose of creation. The goal of creation, the culmination toward which the whole universe (by God's power) is mysteriously tending, is that "rest," the seventh day.

Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering,
Holy People, Holy Land – A Theological Introduction to the Bible,
Brazon Press, 2005, p. 28.

There's the reditus. As creation reveals the procession out (exitus) from the Father and the Son, the seventh day reveals to us what the reditus, returning to be one with God in his rest.

The whole biblical story is a search for the seventh day.

The whole biblical story is pointing us back to Genesis 2:2, God's own rest. That is what we hope for and hope to have a share in. That's what the "Holy Land" the "Promised Land" is all about, that we might enter into God's own rest.

This is the origin of the commandment regarding the Sabbath. Why do we have to keep the Sabbath Day holy? Why do we have to rest on the seventh day? To honor the structure of creation as God intended it. To recognize our dependence upon him as creator, and to look forward to our final end, to be reunited with him in love for all eternity in the final rest of the blessed of those in heaven.

It is our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord God, Almighty Father.

The opening words of the Preface to every Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

This is why when we put RIP on a tombstone, pointing to the reality of the seventh day.

So Adam and Eve, living in the garden, have a relationship with God.

They have a married life. Adam and Eve don't have children until Genesis 4, but they are called to be fruitful and multiply, implying that they could have children and have a family life with God.

But they also have work. Adam is told by God to "work" until the garden. And we get two Hebrew words are important here, **shamar**, which means to **guard**, and **evod**, which means to till or to **work**, but evod can also mean to **worship**. Adam has a role as the guardian or custodian of the garden and of his family, and he's supposed to guard and keep the garden, but he's also supposed to till the garden, to make it fruitful. This reveals his relationship with God as a relationship of worship. This is Adam's participation in God.

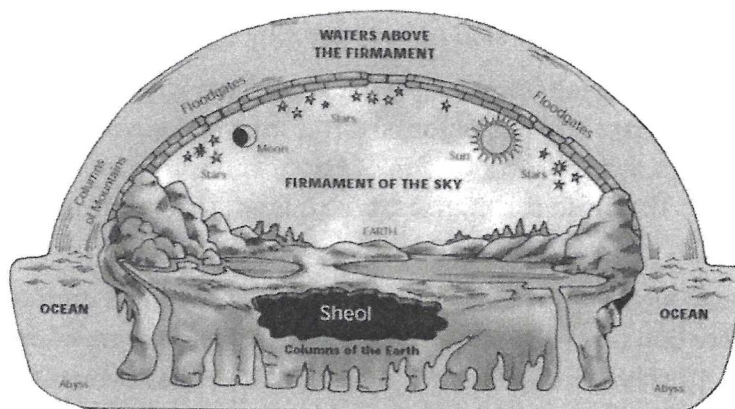
It's important to understand what gardens were like in the ancient Near East. One thing you don't have a lot of in the Holy Land is water. Water is a precious commodity. A garden in the ancient Near East would be owned by the wealthy, so a garden in the ancient Near East would typically be owned by a king.

The other key to understanding what the garden of Eden would have looked like in the imagination of the ancient writers of Genesis. A garden would have walls and a door (with a lock) to keep the riff-raff out. Only authorized persons are allowed, the king, the queen, their children and the gardener. The garden would be irrigated by springs, so the most valued gardens in the ancient Near East were gardens that were built around a spring.

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In this way a walled garden where there is a man inside practicing evod (the work of worship) should remind us of a priest, and the garden should remind us of a temple.

If you went to the temple in Jesusalem at the time of Jesus there were all sorts of decorations on the temple that are reminders of the Garden of Eden because the temple is the new garden of Eden. It was decorated with trees and pomegranates and other scenes from a garden. So the professional gardener, Adam, is like a priest in the temple that is the garden.



This helps to make sense of what happens when Adam and Eve get expelled from the garden. There's an angel who's placed at the door of the garden with a flaming sword who blocks the door to the garden. So the garden of Eden is like a microcosm of the entire universe in the same way that the temple becomes a microcosm of the whole universe.

In the Jerusalem Temple, the curtain separating the holy place from the most holy place is decorated with stars. It is supposed to represent the cosmos.

So the garden is a microcosm of the whole universe, and the way that Genesis one is structured the creation of the whole universe is as if God is building a temple. The entirety of creation is a temple with pillars with a domed arch over the top, and stars and windows and lights to light the temple.

In the garden/temple Adam and Eve enjoy **original justice**, or **original holiness**.

Yet, rather than a state of boring and static self-satisfaction, holiness is radical freedom from our selfish crimps and narrowness. The greatest ecstasy is to go out of oneself in the fire of divine wisdom and charity. Holiness is when we lose our violent pretenses to be God, and instead embrace the reality of creatureliness, of receiving everything from God. It is like being a child again in the best way; but it is also like being a mature adult in an unimaginably glorious way, because by becoming fully creatures again, children of God, we freely enter into the self-giving love who is God, and share in the full personhood of this unimaginably glorious dance of infinite wisdom and love. Holiness is not the drip of one moment succeeding another; it is the eternal and timeless fount of inexhaustible wisdom and love.

Dauphinais and Levering, page 25

In that original justice, the body is totally subordinate to the soul and the soul is totally subordinate to God. Today our soul is totally subordinate to our body.

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Adam and Eve have original innocence. In one sense they don't know what death is. They don't know what lies are. They don't know what sin is. They don't know what broken relationships are like. They live in original total harmony between man and God and man and creation and man and woman.

They also possess the **preternatural** gifts. These are gifts that are beyond our nature, such as immortality. Adam and Eve were free from death. They had integrity, impassibility and were free from concupiscence. They didn't have the same kinds of **interior temptations** that we do. They had **external temptations**, like talking snakes, but they didn't have the **internal** desires that we do that we need to kind of keep fighting against. They also had **free will**.

And they also possessed **infused knowledge, freedom from ignorance**. It's not the same as the beatific vision, but Adam and Eve possessed this infused knowledge from God. They live in the original Holy Land, which is the garden of Eden, and experienced this unity with God and with one another. They also are married, which is why marriage is the primordial sacrament.

Adam is the covenant mediator as the husband, and they have this marriage with one another, and the creation comes in a form of seven days, and seven, of course, is a sign of covenant. For Jews, to **shiva**, is two "seven" oneself or swear a covenant oath.

Saint John Paul II in Theology of the Body says that creation then comes to Adam and Eve as a wedding present, as a nuptial gift to them. The whole of creation is a wedding present.

Catechism 1604:

God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. **Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes, and this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: "and God blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'"**

The first commandment is to be fruitful and multiply.

Adam and Eve receive their being as a gift from God and then they're able to live in harmony with one another. However, there's a problem, which is the talking snake.

The devil, a fallen angel, enters the Garden of Eden in order to seek revenge against God because he cannot attack God directly but only attack him through his children.

The devil brings a lie into paradise, and since Adam and Eve were originally innocent, they had never encountered lies before. And we hear him say, Genesis 3:1,

"Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"

God didn't say that. Then Eve adds,

"Well, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. **Neither shall you touch it, lest you die.**"

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Something that God had **not** said. Here begins a layered discussion that leads away from God and into lies. The devil perverts the truth and then Eve adds a subtle perversion of the truth. The first lie brings about another lie and brings about another lie and a temptation and a fall.

Eve is tempted, but she doesn't have concupiscence, so she's not tempted from within. She's only tempted from without. It's like when Jesus is tempted in the desert, he's only attempted from without. Jesus doesn't experience concupiscence.

Eve's temptation becomes the archetype for all temptation, because three concupiscence's arise from her encounter with the devil. For her, these things are external, but for us, they're internal.

Genesis 3:6,

“So when the woman saw that the tree was **1. good for food, 2. a delight to the eyes, and 3. the tree was desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate ...” and then gave some to Adam who was hanging out nearby and he ate as well.

Three concupiscences enter the garden here:

Genesis 3:6

1. Good for food
2. A Delight to the eyes
3. To be desired to make one wise

1 John 2:16

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. Pride of Life

Temptation of Jesus in the desert following his baptism:

1. Food (stone into bread), lust of the flesh
2. Ostentation (throw yourself down from the Temple), lust of the eyes
3. Power (rule the world), the pride of life

The three evangelical councils, vows taken by most religious:

1. Lust for food and sex: addressed by vow of **chastity**.
2. Lust of the eyes: sin of curiosity, darkness, to covet: addressed by vow of **poverty**.
3. The pride of life (excessive love of one's own excellence): addressed by vow of **obedience**. The central doctrine of the Satanists is “do what thou wilt” Satanists don't worship Satan, they worship themselves.

These categories are powerful for us because they help us understand how to categorize sin and also how to combat it.

So Adam and Eve sin. Adam fails to shamar, to guard the garden, and Eve succumbs to the temptations of the enemy. And so now what happens is they suffer the curses.

The Curses – God's justice in action

1. Adam had to work before the fall, but now his work becomes toilsome.
2. Pain in childbirth. God said to Eve, I will multiply (intensify) your pain in childbirth.

Curse of serpent – head crushing. The protoevangelium of Genesis 3:15, the protoevangelium:

I will put enmity (complete, total opposition) between you and the woman in between your offspring and her offspring.

Fourfold Harmony:**Before the Fall
Harmony (Justice)**

Nature: work
 Body and soul
 One another: one flesh
 Humanity and God: Covenant Love

**After the Fall
Disharmony (Injustice)**

Toilsome work
 Concupisence
 Domination and violence
 Competition with God (CCC 400)

Our fourfold harmony breaks down into disharmony.

Catechism 400:

The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay". Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground", for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history.

God, in order for people to actually love him has to give them something very dangerous, **freedom**. We can choose him or we can reject him. We can choose to serve or not to serve. And freedom is a prerequisite for love. Without freedom it's impossible to love.

When Adam and Eve fall, they violate the covenant and break the relationship with God. Their disobedience to him breaks their communion with him and causes an internal rupture in the unity of the human person. What had been original harmony now becomes original estrangement or original sin. In justice, God curses them. They have to suffer the consequences of their sin because it's a lesson of the divine pedagogy, God's teaching style.

The judgment of God is his mercy

We often see this kind of tension between justice and mercy, God is actually teaching through judging. When God punishes people it's not to destroy them, it's to teach them about who he is and what it means to be like him.

The Final Answer: Christ fulfills, in Himself and His Church, the original calling of the first man, Adam.

Adam was created with the life of grace in his soul and made to be a child of God. Luke, calls Adam the "son of God" (Lk. 3:38). But Adam had to undergo a test, so God put him in a garden which he was directed to guard (Gen. 2:15). Unfortunately, Adam failed. The serpent got in. But how?

The "serpent" of Genesis 3 is not your typical snake. The word "serpent" in Hebrew, *nahash*, is used elsewhere to describe the dragon known as the "Leviathan" (Is. 27:1). Revelation 12 tells us this is exactly what this "ancient serpent" was: "

And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 12:3).

Adam was to guard the garden, but he failed out of fear. The devil presented a life-or-death threat to Adam. He could either confront the devil and engage him in combat to defend his bride and the garden—a battle he never could have won on his own given the immense power of this fallen angel—or he could go along with the devil’s suggestion and eat the fruit. The devil promised: if you eat the fruit, you won’t die (Gen 3:4). Adam didn’t want to die, so he just ate the fruit.

Adam fell because he loved his earthly life more than supernatural life. He refused to be a martyr. He refused to give God his own life in love. Adam had a choice: he could have life in heaven or natural life on earth.

“Like a riddle, the story of Adam and Eve operates on two levels. The drama describes, at once, the natural and supernatural stakes of the first couple’s decisions. They had to choose between two kinds of life: natural and supernatural. They had to choose between two kinds of death: physical and spiritual.”
Scott Hahn, *First Comes Love*

Out of fear of suffering, Adam chose the latter. This is what Hebrews 2:14-15 implies when it tells us that the devil brought us into bondage to sin "through fear of death."

Why was the price for heaven so high?

Why death? Couldn’t it have been a simple ? It can’t be, not if you know what heaven is.

Heaven is entering into the very life of the Trinitarian God.

“This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called ‘heaven’”
Catechism, 1024.

What does the Trinity do?

The life of the Trinity is eternal life-giving love. The Father, out of love, pours His life into the Son; the Son, the Image of the Father, gives Himself back to the Father in life-giving love; the love that the Father and Son share is the Spirit. This is why John tells us, “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:7). God is love because God is Three Persons who share all that they have, holding nothing back.

Heaven is entering into the life of perfect love. There we will experience and share in true love. This is our fulfillment.

This is why Adam had to die—because that is what total life-giving love looks like when it is offered by a human being. This is why Jesus had to die. It is not because God likes to see blood and suffering. Jesus simply did in His human nature what He does from all eternity as the Son—He pours out His life in love. Adam had to learn to embrace life-giving love because that was what he was called to to embrace in heaven. The test of the garden was meant to teach man the one lesson he needed to learn to enter heaven—self-giving love.

Offering his life in sacrificial love was Adam’s calling. This is why Genesis uses priestly terms to describe Adam’s role in the garden. God tells Adam to “till” and “guard” the garden (Gen. 2:15), giving him priestly duties. The garden is described as a sanctuary, since it is there that Adam ministers.

“Priesthood” and “sonship” are connected in the Old Testament. To be a son requires life-giving love. Instead of offering an animal, a son learns to offer his life.

Adam is also described as a “king,” having “dominion.” Adam, therefore, was a priest-king. We too are all called to be priest-kings who give to God everything over which we have dominion—our lives, our possessions, all that we are—in sacrificial love.

The Book of Revelation combines these concepts. Revelation 1:5–6 states,

“Grace and peace from Jesus Christ the faithful witness [martyr], the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father.”

Jesus is the “first-born,” who makes Himself a sacrifice as a “martyr,” freeing us by His blood, and making us a “kingdom of priests.”

Throughout the Book of Revelation, we continue to find a link between martyrdom, being a child of God, priesthood, kingship, and sacrifice.

This is what Eucharist is for us. Complete union with God, a union in which we hold nothing back. The Eucharist is an exchange of total, self-giving love between us and God. In this way, for us every Eucharist is a preparation for martyrdom.

For a Christian, martyrdom before compromise. The Book of Revelation (2:11) uses the term “the second death.” This refers to the destruction of the soul in hell, which is a fate worse than physical death.

Like Adam, we are given a choice: “What do you want, earthly life or supernatural life?” To choose earthly life means a death worse than physical death, the second death, which takes place in the lake of fire, where the wicked “shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . and the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; **and they have no rest, day or night**” (Rev. 14:10, 11).

As Christians, we must remain detached from this earthly life, keeping in mind that this is not their ultimate home. This is simply a test. We should not make worldly things and comfort our priority, but rather, hold them with a very loose grip. If there are any sins in the Bible that you can’t see yourself committing, then you don’t understand them.

Adam was created with the beasts on the sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:24–2:1). Eve was not created until later. When Adam fell into a deep sleep, she was formed from his side (Gen. 2:21). The ancient rabbis believed that this deep sleep indicated the passing of one night. They understood that it was on the seventh day that Adam awoke and found his bride, the woman. Jesus is the new Adam. When we speak about the Blessed Virgin Mary we will see that she is the new Eve, the mother of all the living.

Our words should be the words of Mary, “Let it be done unto me according to Thy will.” Or, as in the very last words we hear her say in Scripture, “Do whatever He tells you.”