



CREATION & THE FALL



"Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.' God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27, NABRE)

Creation & The Fall

Creation

Genesis chapters 1 to 3 present foundational narratives in the Bible, outlining the creation of the world and humanity, and the subsequent Fall of humanity. Here are the key elements:

Creation (Genesis 1-2):

In Genesis 1, God creates the world and everything in it in six days:

- **Day 1:** Creation of light and separation of light from darkness.
- **Day 2:** Creation of the sky and separation of waters above from waters below.
- **Day 3:** Separation of land from sea, creation of vegetation.
- **Day 4:** Creation of the sun, moon, and stars to govern day and night.
- **Day 5:** Creation of sea creatures and birds.
- **Day 6:** Creation of land animals and humanity.
 - God created mankind, male and female, in His image.
 - Endowed them with faculties beyond all other creatures.
 - Infused them with intellectual instincts, **free will**, reasoning, and in friendship with God.
 - Mankind was **created in a state of holiness and original justice to share in the Divine Life**.
 - They share in the very essence of God – Perpetual (Eternal) Life.
 - God gave them dominion over all creatures.
 - God gave them full authority over the use and management of all His creation.
- **Day 7:** God rested. He blessed the 7th day and made it holy because he rested

Genesis 2 provides a more detailed account of the creation of humanity:

- God forms Adam (meaning "man") from the dust of the ground and breathes life into him.
- God places Adam in the Garden of Eden to till and keep it.
- God creates animals and birds and brings them to Adam to name, but no suitable helper is found for him among them.
- God causes a deep sleep to fall on Adam, takes one of his ribs, and forms Eve (meaning "mother of all the living") from it.

Key theological points include:

- **Imago Dei:** Humanity is created in the image and likeness of God, signifying dignity, rationality, and moral responsibility.
- **State of Holiness:** Humanity was created in a state of holiness and original justice before the fall
- **Stewardship:** Humanity is tasked with caring for creation and cultivating it responsibly.

The Fall (Genesis 3):

Genesis 3 recounts the Fall of humanity where Adam and Eve succumb to temptation from the deceiver, referred to as the devil, Satan, or the father of lies.

- The serpent questions God's command, asking Eve, “*Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’*” (Gen. 3:1, NABRE)
- He then deceives her further, asserting, “*You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.*” (Gen. 3:4-5 NABRE)
- Doubting God's word, Eve eats the forbidden fruit and shares it with Adam.
- Their choice to prioritize their desires over God's will introduces sin into the world—a sin of disobedience.
- With their eyes opened, Adam and Eve realize their nakedness, leading to shame and the sewing of fig leaves for cover.
- When God confronts them, Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent.
- God pronounces consequences: the serpent will crawl on its belly,
- Eve will endure pain in childbirth, and Adam will toil for sustenance from the ground.
- They are expelled from the Garden of Eden to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life and living eternally in their fallen state.

Through the Fall, harmony within humanity and creation is disrupted. They lose paradise and its gifts, and death and suffering become part of human experience.

This event is known as Original Sin, a deprivation of the original holiness and righteousness with which humanity was created.

Importantly, in **Genesis 3:15**, God addresses the agents of the Fall, promising enmity between the serpent and the woman, and foreshadows redemption: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel*” (Gen. 3:15 NABRE). This passage is often seen as the Protoevangelium, the first announcement of the Gospel, signifying God's plan to restore humanity to friendship with Him through a future Redeemer.

Key theological points include:

- **Original Sin:** The disobedience of Adam and Eve introduces sin and its consequences (death, suffering, and estrangement from God) into the world.
- **Promise of Redemption:** God's promise of a future Redeemer who will overcome sin and restore humanity's relationship with God (Genesis 3:15, often seen as the Protoevangelium, the first Gospel proclamation).

These chapters serve to establish the theological framework of creation, the dignity of humanity, the reality of sin, and the hope for redemption through Christ. They also lay the groundwork for understanding the Church's teachings on original sin, the sacraments, and the significance of Christ as the New Adam.

Why two different accounts of Creation?

Genesis contains two distinct creation accounts—Genesis 1 and Genesis 2—each offering unique insights into God's relationship with the world and humanity.

Different Literary Styles and Purposes:

- **Genesis 1:** This account is formal and structured, using a poetic style that emphasizes the grandeur and order of creation. It presents a chronological sequence of creation over six days, culminating in humanity's creation on the sixth day and the sanctification of the Sabbath on the seventh. This highlights God's sovereignty and power as the Creator.

- **Genesis 2:** In contrast, this account has a narrative style focused on the intimate creation of humanity. It details how God forms Adam from the dust and creates Eve from Adam's rib, emphasizing the personal and relational aspects of creation and God's care for human beings.

Theological Emphasis:

- **Genesis 1:** This account underscores God's authority and the goodness of creation, culminating in the declaration that humanity is made in God's image (imago Dei).
- **Genesis 2:** Here, the focus is on the relational nature between God and humanity, highlighting themes of companionship and the sacredness of marriage.

Complementarity:

The two accounts are complementary rather than contradictory. Genesis 1 offers a broad overview of the cosmos, while Genesis 2 zooms in on the creation of humanity and their specific role in the created order. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of God's creative work.

Historical Context:

Scholars suggest that these accounts reflect different sources or traditions within early Israelite society. The Documentary Hypothesis indicates that Genesis 1 likely derives from the Priestly source (P), emphasizing order and ritual, while Genesis 2 comes from the Yahwist source (J), focusing on the personal relationship between God and humanity. This diversity illustrates the richness of Israelite religious thought and the various ways of understanding God.

These creation narratives together reveal the complexity and depth of God's creation, highlighting both the cosmic scope of His work and the intimate relationship He shares with humanity.

Elohism and Priestly Sources

The Elohist and Priestly sources are two of the hypothesized origins of the texts found in the Pentateuch, and they offer different theological perspectives that shape the creation narratives in Genesis.

Elohist Source (E):

- **Characteristics:** This source uses "Elohim" to refer to God and focuses on themes such as prophecy, revelation, and the moral relationship between God and humanity. It often emphasizes the role of intermediaries, like angels or prophets.
- **Influence on Creation Accounts:** While not primarily responsible for the creation narratives, the Elohist source's influence is evident in the stories of the patriarchs that follow Genesis 1 and 2. It underscores God's transcendence and highlights the importance of covenant relationships, reflecting His sovereign plan for humanity.

Priestly Source (P):

- **Characteristics:** The Priestly source is characterized by a formal, structured, and ritualistic style, often using "Elohim" to refer to God. It emphasizes genealogies, religious laws, and conveys a sense of order and divine sovereignty over creation.
- **Influence on Creation Accounts:** The Priestly source primarily shapes Genesis 1, presenting creation as a deliberate and orderly act of God over six days, culminating in the Sabbath as a day of rest. This account emphasizes the goodness of creation and humanity's role as stewards of it.

Complementarity of the Sources: While the Elohist and Priestly sources have distinct focuses, they complement one another rather than contradict each other. The Elohist's emphasis on moral living and prophetic leadership enriches the Priestly focus on ritual and order in worship.

Historical Context: These sources reflect the historical and social contexts of their communities. The Priestly source likely emerged during or after the Babylonian Exile, a time when the community was focused on maintaining identity and religious practices. The Elohist source may have originated in the northern kingdom of Israel, showcasing a more personal view of God.

Understanding the Elohist and Priestly influences on the creation narratives deepens our appreciation of the Bible's complexity. These distinct theological perspectives contribute to the overarching narrative of salvation history. This additional knowledge enhances their understanding of creation, the dignity of humanity, and the ongoing relationship between God and His people. It lays a foundation for exploring how these themes develop throughout Scripture, ultimately leading to the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ.

Social Justice

The Catholic Church emphasizes the interconnectedness of creation and humanity's responsibility toward it, as articulated in various papal encyclicals and teachings of the Church. The following encapsulates essential elements of Catholic social teaching regarding the environment and social justice:

- **Dominion Over Creation (Genesis 1:28-31):** The concept of dominion bestowed upon Adam and Eve signifies humanity's responsibility to care for and steward the earth rather than exploit it. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) notes that humans are called to act as stewards of creation, which includes a moral obligation to protect the environment and promote social justice by ensuring equitable access to its resources for all people. This principle aligns with the Church's call for ecological responsibility, as highlighted in documents such as *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis.
- **Creation as "Very Good":** The declaration of creation as "very good" emphasizes the inherent value and dignity of all aspects of creation. Catholic theology teaches that humans must respect the integrity of creation, which is linked to social justice through the moral and ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship. The destruction of the environment disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable, making it a social justice issue. The Church recognizes that ecological problems often lead to social injustices, such as poverty and displacement, thus intertwining environmental ethics with social justice concerns.
- **Understanding of Dominion:** The three ways of understanding dominion reflect a nuanced approach to stewardship:
 - **Not a Right but a Privilege:** This perspective emphasizes humility and responsibility rather than entitlement, encouraging a just and equitable use of resources.
 - **Dominion of Service:** This aligns with the notion that stewardship involves serving creation and future generations, promoting a just relationship with all living beings.
 - **Moral Duty:** The duty to preserve and promote creation is inherently linked to social justice, as it includes ensuring that all people, especially the marginalized, have access to the resources necessary for a dignified life.

The awareness of environmental destruction and unsustainable consumption highlights the urgent need for action. In Catholic social teaching, caring for creation is seen as a moral imperative that goes hand in hand with promoting the common good. The call to manage and conserve the earth's goods for future generations aligns with principles of social justice, as it addresses the rights of all people, including those yet to be born.

In summary, the points you raised encapsulate essential elements of Catholic social teaching regarding the environment and social justice. They urge a holistic approach to stewardship that respects both creation and

the dignity of all people, fostering a just and equitable world for current and future generations. This alignment with social justice is evident in the Church's ongoing advocacy for responsible environmental practices and sustainable development.

References:

Genesis 1-3:

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