

# THE EARLY WORLD

## The Second Creation Story

Genesis 2:4-25

### INTRODUCTION

#### ***Why are there two accounts of Creation?***

The first account of Creation (Gen 1-2:4) gives us a general and objective account of the creation of this universe, which God has given to man. It teaches us the following:

- a. In the beginning, God alone existed. He alone is eternal.
- b. God is the sole creator of all things. He created the visible and invisible worlds *out of nothing*.
- c. Everything God created has a beginning in time. God alone is the beginning and origin of all things, the *Principal Cause*, the *Uncaused Cause*. All that exists outside of God, was in its whole substance, produced out of nothing by God.
- d. God transcends all His creation.
- e. God was moved by His Goodness to create the world. He created freely, without any exterior compulsion or interior necessity.
- f. Everything that God created is good.
- g. All of God's creation manifests order, harmony, goodness and beauty.
- h. All creation reveals God Divine plan, His will, design, purpose, and final goal.
- i. Man was created last, in God's image and likeness, as the crown and summit of all visible creation.
- j. God sustains and governs all things, and He is leading all history towards its final fulfillment.

The second account of Creation (Gen 2:4-25) is more specific and subjective. It focuses on the creation of man and the subjective experience of our first parents. According to John Paul II, Chapter 2 of Genesis is "the oldest description and record of man's self-understanding and, together with Chapter 3, it is the first witness of human conscience and consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Did Adam and Eve really exist?***

In one word, yes! Other biblical writers believed it! (*See Tobit 8:5, Acts 17:26, and Romans 5:12*). The Church also gives us some guidance.

In 1909, the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued a decree interpreting the first chapters of Genesis as history, not myth; "certain type of history," but history,

<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, translated by Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them – A Theology of the Body* (Pauline Books & Media: Boston, 2006), p. 137.

nevertheless. Regarding Genesis 1-3, the Commission declared that certain truths must be held no matter what the latest scientific theories claim to the contrary. These inarguable truths are the following:

- 1) God created all things at the beginning of time
- 2) Man was specially created
- 3) God created man male and female
- 4) All humans descend from a single original race
- 5) Our first parents lived in a happy state of justice, integrity, and immortality
- 6) God gave them a command to test their obedience
- 7) Our first parents disobeyed the divine command at the instigation of the devil, who took on the form of a serpent
- 8) Our first parents fell from their state of innocence
- 9) They were promised a future Redeemer.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden is not just a children's tale or something to be taught in religious-education class. It is loaded with truths that help us know God and ourselves, truths which will help us understand why we are here and how to make choices, trusting God even when this is difficult. Read on and let the story take root in your heart. It is not just the story of two people, Adam and Eve. It is also our own personal story.

In the 1950's, in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII once again confirmed that the human race proceeds from one original pair. In this document he says the following:

“The faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains that after Adam, there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all; or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents. Now it is no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own” (cf. Romans, 5:12-19; Council of Trent, Session V, Canon 1-4). (HG 37)

### ***What about the theory of evolution?***

**The first man was created by God (*de fide*).** The spirit-soul of the first man was created immediately by God out of nothing. This was dogmatically defined at the Fourth Lateran Council and the First Vatican Council (Denzinger 428, 1783).

As regards to the body, it is possible that God formed it immediately from inorganic matter, “of the dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7). However, this cannot be maintained with certainty.

Fundamentally, the possibility exists that God breathed the spiritual soul into organic material, that is, an originally animal body, which was formed “of the dust from the

ground” (Genesis 2:7) over a period of time. It is important to note that a genetic connection does exist between the human body and the highest forms of the animal kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to evolution, the Church rejects a *materialistic theory of evolution*, which proposes that both the human body and soul developed progressively from the animal kingdom, over a long period of time. According to this materialistic theory, the first human beings appeared in various places on earth, sporadically, and then the human race proceeded from several original parents.

With respect to the origin of the human body, the Church is open to a *divine theory of evolution*, which agrees with the teaching of the Church and Holy Scripture. God may have formed the human body “of the dust of the ground” (Gen 2:7) by a process of evolution, over a long period of time, even a whole age. He formed an appropriate animal body, directing every step of the evolutionary process. Then, at the appropriate time, He created the first human spirit-soul immediately, out of nothing, and breathed it into the body that He had formed, creating the first living man: spirit, soul and body.

The Holy Scriptures do not teach evolution; nor does it say anything to oppose the possibility of bodily evolution. A divine theory of the evolution of the human body could fit the story as told in the Bible, provided that we understand evolution to be a process directed by God, not by random chance. Divine Revelation makes it very clear that the souls of Adam and Eve were directly created by God, and that Adam and Eve were uniquely created by God as the first human pair, from which proceeds the whole human race.

## STUDY AND REFLECTION

### ***Man was Formed from the Dust of the Earth (Genesis 2:5-7)***

*The second story of Creation describes a time when no plant or herb was yet in the earth, “for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground” (Gen 2:6). What do these words, “and there was no man to till the ground” tell us about the relationship between man and the earth and all that shall grow upon it?*

In the first story of Creation, land appeared on the third day (Gen 1:9-13). It was also on the third day that herbs and grass and all forms of vegetation appeared and covered the earth.

In relation to the first story, the second story of Creation begins in the context of the third day, with the appearance of land, “when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up” (Gen 2:5). The story focuses only on the creation of the first man and woman. Why? Because author wants to tell us something important about the relationship between mankind, the earth and the vegetation that eventually covers it.

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<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Ott, edited in English by James Canon Bastible D.D., Translated from German by Patrick Lynch, PhD, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* B. (Herder Book Company: St. Louis, Missouri, 1958), 94-95.

God will form the human body using “the dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7). And so, as God looks upon the ground and the mist that waters, He is already thinking about man, whom He plans to create.

Since man will arise from the earth, he will be closely connected to the earth. He will be called by God to be a steward of the earth, “to till and to keep it” (Gen 2:15). The earth will provide food for mankind, and man will bring order, meaning and purpose to the land.

In some way, we can say that the earth and all its vegetation look forward with great expectation to the creation of man, for without him, the land is incomplete and unable to fulfill its ultimate purpose.

*The fact that the ground of the earth was still bare and watered by a mist, with no plants or herbs to cover it as yet, emphasizes the fact that the first man was formed from the ground.*

*What percentage of the human body is dust (earth) and what percentage is water?*

The human body is composed of water and various elements of the earth. Both are important in fashioning a body for man. Over 90% of the human body is water.

*In John 9, Jesus healed a man who was born blind. Do you remember what Jesus did to heal that man of his blindness?*

Jesus spat on the ground and made clay from the spittle. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, and said to him: “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (John 9:7). When the man went and washed, he came back seeing.

The message here is this: Jesus is the Son of God, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. “All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). Since He is the One Who fashion the human body from the moist earth in the first place, He is able without any difficulty to fashion new eyes for the man born blind. Ultimately, Jesus has come to re-create man and to restore him to his former glory.

*At some point, after forming the body of a man from the dust of the ground, the Lord God breathed the “breath of life” into his nostrils (or “face” in the Greek Bible); and man became a living human being. What does this mean? What is the “breath of life”?*

The text does not give us any indication how much time God took to form the first human body. God may have done it in a few seconds, a few days, or even over the course of a million years.

The text also does not tell us how God did it. Did He form the body directly from the earth, or indirectly from the earth, using a long process of evolution? Either is possible! As mentioned last week, the purpose of Scripture is not to give us scientific facts about how Creation came about, but spiritual truths about why God created.

At some point in time, by means of whatever process chosen, God formed a body for the first human being. When everything was ready, He created something completely

new, unique and wonderful. He created the first living human being. This was done by breathing the “breath of life” into the nostrils of the body that was prepared. The Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) uses the word “face” instead of “nostrils.” God “breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7 SAAS). The face is a symbol of the human person. By receiving the “breath of life” (spirit) on the face, the entire body becomes the visible expression of the human person: to be not a mask but a face.<sup>3</sup>

The Hebrew word *ruah* and the Greek word *pneuma* can mean *breath, wind or spirit*. So, when God breathed into the body, we know that the “breath of life” is the Holy Spirit. God the Father creates all things through His Word, the Son, and by means of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Life” (Romans 8:2) and the “Giver of Life” (Nicene Creed). It is by the action of the Holy Spirit that the first human being is created with an immortal soul.

The “breath of life” may also refer to the human spirit as being the “spirit of life.” Two passages in the New Testament indicate that man is a triune being (a trinity) composed of **spirit, soul, and body**. “I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23). “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of *soul* and *spirit*, and of the joints and marrow (*body*), and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

According to Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, the spirit is understood to be the heart of the soul, the source, and the spiritual intellect (in Greek, *nous*). The spirit is inseparable from the soul. However, the spirit is source of immortality. So, when God created the first man, He breathed into his body an immortal spirit-soul. At that moment, man became a living human being, a human person – spirit, soul and body – created in the image and likeness of God and destined to live forever.

### ***Man is Placed into Paradise (Gen 2:8-17)***

*Where was the Garden of Eden? What two important trees grew in the middle of the Garden of Eden? How was this Garden watered?*

According to Genesis 2:8, the Garden of Eden was located somewhere in the East.

*There are two important trees mentioned in the text. They are: the “Tree of Life” and the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”*

The second story of Creation tells us that a river flowed from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided to make four streams: *Pishon, Gihon, Tigris* and *Euphrates*. What seems to be implied is that the river flows from a spring located in the center of the Garden of Eden, to water the entire garden and all that is beyond. It is very possible that the river, here, springing up from one source, is symbol of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, “who proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26).

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<sup>3</sup> Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 82

Note that St. John also speaks of a river, the “River of Life,” in his vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, he writes the following:

“Then the angel showed me *the river of the water of life*, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Rev 22:1-2)

*God put the first man into the Garden of Eden. What was man’s first vocation? What was he called to do? How is that true today?*

**Man was called to be a steward of God’s creation upon the earth.** He was placed in the Garden of Eden “to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Stewardship implies *accountability*. As a steward of God’s creation, man is called not only to take care of it, but to cultivate it, develop it, bring forth a good yield for the Master, and then return it, offering to God the land with all the fruit and the yield that has been produced. (*Remember the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Vineyard and the Wicked Tenants? See Mt 25:14-30 and Mk 12:1-12*).

Thus, man is also called to fulfill a **priestly role**. The basic meaning of priesthood is simply this: to see everything as gift from God, and to receive it in thanksgiving and praise; to offer everything back to God as gift, in the spirit of worship, praise and thanksgiving.

This vocation continues to this today. Man continues to be a steward of God’s creation, to till the earth and to keep it. He is also responsible for looking after all the living creatures upon the earth.

The priestly role of man is fulfilled specifically by the Church, the Body of Christ. All baptized members of the Church form the Royal Priesthood. They are called to see everything as a gift from God, and in worship, praise, and thanksgiving, to offer everything back to God, through the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. “*You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...*” (1 Peter 2:9).

Reflect on the meaning of the Great Entrance during the Divine Liturgy. The diskos represents all of God’s creation, seen and unseen. Upon it is placed the Lamb and the entire Body of Christ, those in Heaven, on Earth and in Hades. The gifts are brought out among the faithful from the sanctuary (which represents heaven), as a reminder that everything is a gift from God, to be received; then the gifts are carried from among the faithful (in behalf of the faithful), into the sanctuary (heaven) and placed upon the altar, as a sign that all shall be offered back to God as gift. During the Anaphora, which means “lifting up,” in the spirit of worship, praise and thanksgiving, all is lifted up offered to the Father, through the sacrifice of His beloved Son.

The stewardship and priestly role of mankind will be competed and fulfilled by Christ Himself at the end of time, who will subject all things to Himself and then offer all to God the Father, so that God shall be all in all. *“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).*

*The man was free to eat of any tree in the Garden of Eden he might choose, except for one: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Why did God allow this tree to grow in the Garden of Eden? What was the purpose of this tree? What does it represent?*

The purpose of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is to mark the boundary of man and his nature, as a finite being created in the image of God. It is there to remind man that he is not God. It marks the boundary of the human spirit and the gift of free will. Man is capable of knowing God personally; and the gift of a free will allows him to love: to make choices, decisions, to choose what is good or to reject it. But man is not the one who decides what is good and what is evil. Only God, in His infinite Goodness, determines what is good and what is evil.

To eat of the tree of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to cross the boundary of what it means to be a human being. It would be an attempt to grasp something that belongs only to God, to be God.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil represents rejection of God. To partake of it is to rebel against God; to reject the gift of eternal life with Him, in exchange for something infinitely less – a temporal life here on earth, and the experience of death.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil also represents a fallen human nature. Evil does not exist on its own. It is only the corruption of what is good. In the state of original innocence, the human nature of Adam and Eve was perfect and whole (holy). Thus, they only had knowledge of what is good. To eat of this tree was to accept evil - the corruption of human nature. In the state of corruption, Adam and Eve would come to know both good and evil.

According to several Fathers of the Church, the tree of knowledge represents contemplation of the world, the possibility of knowing the world in God. Adam and Eve would not have been able to approach it except after long preparation. They needed to mature, to grow faith, love, detachment, and trust in God. St. Gregory Nazianzen writes the following:

*“God had not planted it (the tree of knowledge) originally for the undoing of man and it was not out of jealousy that God forbade him to go near it... no, it was of His goodness, if this prohibition be understood rightly. For the tree was, to my mind, the tree of contemplation, which only those could enter into without harm whose spiritual preparation had reached sufficient perfection. On the other hand, that tree could only be a source of misfortune for souls as yet too coarse, endowed with too bestial an appetite, just as solid food is harmful to babies who still need milk.”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 45, For Easter*, 8 (PG 36,850).

*What is the Tree of Life? What does it represent?*

The Tree of Life is a symbol of God and eternal life with Him.

“The tree of life is God in person, the Creator of the universe. The tree of knowledge is our nature and our human abilities. The human being is in fact, the one who has the ability to know good and evil” (*Niceta Stethatus, 1005-1090 AD*).

### ***Naming of Animals and the Original Solitude (Gen 2:18-20)***

*In Gen 2:19, God forms all the animals of the earth and allows man to name them. What does the first man become aware of when he names the animals? What does he realize?*

By naming the animals, the first becomes aware of the fact that he is different. There is no one else out there who is like him.

By his self-consciousness and self-determination man realizes that he is a person. His “personality” (who I am as a person) is defined by his relationship to God, to his creatures and creation.

The first man realizes that he is able to think in an abstract way and to reason; he is able to grasp concepts, make decisions, identify things and name them. He gains knowledge and understanding; and is capable of creativity.

There is also a deep desire within him to love – to be a “self-gift” to God and to another human being, and to live in community. However, there is no other human being out there to whom he can be a self-gift, no one who in turn could be a self-gift to him, no one with whom he can live with in community. Pope John Paul II calls this experience the “*original solitude*”.

*What does “the naming” tells us about man and his relationship with to all living creatures on earth?*

To name the animals implies authority and responsibility over them. By naming the animals, the first man becomes aware of his power over them. They have been provided by God for his use, but man, as God’s chosen steward, is also responsible to take care of them.

*What does the man realize about himself?*

In the process of naming the animals, the first man becomes aware of the fact that he is unique and very much alone upon the earth. In his Theo

### **The Creation of the First Woman (Gen 2:21-23)**

*God promises to give the man a helper fit for him (Gen 2:18). He causes a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, God took one of his ribs, closed up its place with flesh, and from the rib he formed the first woman.*

*How do you understand “deep sleep”? What could this mean?*

This falling sleep is almost like a death; almost like a return to non-being; a temporary loss of self-consciousness and awareness of being.

*What do we mean when we say, “I feel it in my bones?”*

What we mean is that we have an intuition that comes from the depths of our very being. We “know” something, not because of our thinking and reasoning, but because the insight is coming from the very core of our being.

*What symbolic meaning is associated with the human rib?*

As a bone, the human rib is a symbol of the core of our being. Thus, when the first woman is created from the rib of Adam, what is implied here is that she is created by God from the very depths of the first man, from the very core of his being.

*Where did Jesus fall into a “deep sleep”? What was formed from His opened side?*

It was on the cross that Jesus, the NEW ADAM, fell into a “deep sleep”, the sleep of death. From his opened side, pierced by the lance, blood and water flowed out as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was from his pierced side that the “NEW EVE” – THE CHURCH – was formed.

*When the Lord God had brought the woman to the man, the man exclaimed, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). This is a very powerful statement! What truth is being proclaimed here?*

The man is acknowledging that he is not alone upon the earth. The woman, from the depths of her very being, has been created with the same nature as his own. They both share the same human nature, from the very core of their being. They are individual persons created male and female, both equal in dignity, sharing the same vocation to be stewards of God’s creation upon earth. They alone, as male and female, are unique and different from all that God has created. The image and likeness of God is found in both of them individually, but also in both of them together, as male and female.

***God’s Plan for Marriage and the Original Innocence (Gen 2:24-25)***

*In Gen 2:24, God tells us something very important about marriage. What is He saying?*

Marriage was intended by God to be an indissoluble communion of two persons, male and female. In marriage, husband and wife become one body, yet remain two distinct persons. The bond is not just physical, but also emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. The human family thus becomes an icon of the Trinity itself.

*The last verse of the second Creation Story says that, “the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed.” What does this mean? What is the spiritual insight given to us?*

The “nakedness” reminds us that our first parents were in the state of pure innocence. They were completely “pure of heart”. There was no selfishness, or selfish desire within them (concupiscence), only self-giving love. They see themselves and each other only as God sees them.

If you call to mind the beatitude that says, “Blessed are those who are pure of heart, for they shall see God.” It is with the purity of the heart (the spirit, the eye of the soul), that Adam and Eve were able to see God, who visited them in the Garden of Eden and spoke to them.

It is also with the purity of the heart that they looked upon each other. They saw each other fully, intimately and spiritually, not just with the physical eyes of the body, but with the peace of their interior gaze. “The man and the woman were not ashamed seeing and knowing each other in all the peace and tranquility of the interior gaze.” (*The Theology of the Body, John Paul II*)

In their innocence, they saw each other as a true image and likeness of God, a gift from God to be received, and a gift to be offered to God, in the spirit of worship, praise and thanksgiving.