

THE GARDEN OF EDEN: CREATION AND CATHOLICISM

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Abstract

The Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis 1-3 is the sacred narrative of the creation of the world, the man and the original sin. The Paradise is the primal mystic ground for Catholicism latent with the seeds of spirituality: the Garden of Eden, apparently closed, has opened the complexities of consciousness and still blooms in manifold aspects in the life of the faithful. The paper revisits the Biblical myth to understand the configuration of the world, unearth the roots of Catholic religion and, on the personal level, the consciousness regulated by the sacramental life, which goes back to the symbolic events in the Garden of Eden, as creation is continually manifests in the believer.

The creation myth is an initiation into life. The events of the fabled beginning continue to grow into contemporary complexities. It is characteristic of the Biblical myth of creation that it contains certain seeds of Catholic spirituality which the faithful still live onwards on the parochial and personal levels. Creation myth presents the contents of the natural world and the primordial images of consciousness.

STRUCTURE OF CREATION

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) has summarized the Biblical myth of creation in symmetrical halves of three days each: the primitive chaos, the three principal constituents of creation, namely the darkness, the waters and the earth (Genesis 1: 2), the days of distinction (Genesis 1: 3-13) and the days of adornment (Genesis 1: 14-31). The works of creation, distinction and adornment, according to *Doctor Angelicus*, are as follows (O'Connell, 1956, p. 123):

Creation	Days of Distinction	Days of Adornment
Darkness	Day One Day – Night	Day Four Sun - Moon
Waters	Day Two Sea – Sky	Day Five Fishes - Birds
Earth	Day Three Land - Land under above	Day Six - Animals &

	water water	Man
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In the revealed doctrine, God is the efficient and the final cause of the corporeal creatures, which He has produced immediately without the help of angels.

GENESIS CHAPTER ONE

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1: 1). Hell also gets added in the religious view of creation. It is elementary that psychology of man is much determined by the ideas of heaven and hell. Even though we do not teach about heaven and hell to our students of psychology, many believe in them in order to modify and rectify our earthly behaviour based on such deep-seated primordial ideas. If not the heaven and the holy life, the hell, unconsciously, is pretty prevalent in our understanding and speech.

“And God said...” (Genesis 1: 3).

Christians believe that their God is a ‘Speaking God’; a God who is always speaking in many ways through the medium of scripture, prayers, dreams, visions, events and people. The Christians not only believe in the ‘Risen Lord’, they worship God who is always waiting to reveal Himself—“And He said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream” (Numbers 12: 6).

The Ark of the Covenant mentioned in the Old Testament was the sacred instrument to receive God’s communication: “I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25: 22).

The “ephod” (I Samuel 23: 9) was worn by the High Priest to consult God.

Lectio Divina, reading the Holy Writ, is believed to be the Living Word, which is to be read listeningly and to be understood in historical, symbolical and contemporary sense.

It is by virtue of the belief in the ‘Speaking God’ that we still have the prophecy ministry since the days of the Prophets in the Old Testament. United States has the council of prophets. We still believe and have prophets for the nations. Furthermore, besides the Word of God in scripture or prayer or vision, singing, another form of speech, is prominent way in praise and worship practice continuing the legacy of the Psalms. Even Church humour/jokes are widespread and plentiful.

In Judeo-Christian religion, it is believed, that God has personal relation with His people. Such an intimacy is rooted in the archetypal image of man.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness...So God created man in His own image...” (Genesis 1: 26-27). Males and females are archetypal manifestations of God. “Us” is referring to the belief in the Holy Trinity. Since man is in the divine image and likeness,

he has an archetypal exemplar to regulate his thoughts and actions. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (St. Matthew 5: 48).

GENESIS CHAPTER TWO

Man becomes a living soul when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2: 7). If Philemon tried to teach Carl Jung that objectivity of his thoughts are not his own even though he owns them, Biblically speaking, our breath is not entirely due to one’s physiological make up; breath of life comes from and goes back to God.

Blessed to replenish and subdue the earth, and have dominion over sub-human species (Genesis 1: 28; Genesis 2: 19-20), every beast of the field, every fowl of the air and every fish of the sea are adornments of creation, and like people in a room, unconsciously and symbolically, they are images of thoughts, in the view of Philemon (Jung, 1989, p. 183), that we experience. Creation is not merely separated from the individual as a mythological-religious past; creation brings home everything under the sun as contents in the human *psyche*. The world is not only out there, it is abundant with man’s consciousness.

The quaternary structure of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2: 10-14) represents the primordial image of man’s stream of consciousness with potency to flow in all directions to fill the earth with habitation and fruitfulness. “The four always expresses the coming into being of what is essentially human, the *emergence of human consciousness*. Thus, the alchemical process also begins with such a division into the four elements, by which the body is put back into its primordial state and so can undergo transformation” (Harris and Woolfson, 2016, p. 255).

Garden is a natural symbol of human consciousness because, as opposed to the jungle, it is creatively selective, well-ordered wildness, requires preservation and perseverance, and is purposeful and contained.

Planted in the East portion of Eden (Genesis 2: 8), it means that man stands on the ground of fulfilment of his earthly desires, employ application of his thoughts and is destined to experience death. Man’s eastward position in creation makes him experience hermaphroditism within; man is the consequence of the union of the pairs of opposite qualities. It is out of the primordial pairs of opposites—good/evil (Genesis 2: 17) and male/female (Genesis 2: 21-23)—that man’s consciousness has emerged.

Placement in the East of Eden is symbolically correlated with chaste nudity (Genesis 2: 25) of man and woman, and consequently their sanctified intimate relationship—“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24). Blessing to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1: 28) is indicative of the sacrament of matrimony. It could be hypothesized that matrimony is the primal sacrament which necessitates baptism—which in turn begets anointing of the sick, especially at the hour of death/extreme unction, meaning the final anointing—confirmation and reconciliation, to re-establish primordial/paradisal relationship with God, the mystic union (between God and man), which is also celebrated in the Holy Eucharist. Diverging from the sacrament of matrimony is an alternative way of social and spiritual living: the Holy Order. Thus we have the logical unfolding

of the seven sacraments, rooted in the sacrament of matrimony that marks growth in consciousness and social living in the spiritual sense. This is the Catholic story of man's lifespan.

GENESIS CHAPTER THREE

In psychology, we speak of intra and inter-psychic conflicts, behavioural problems, *etc.* but we never mention sin. Sin is a comprehensive term for many of our wilful behavioural problems, some of which could break the laws of the land.

The story of sin is the birth of human consciousness, knowing good and evil like the gods (Genesis 3: 5). God did not want man and woman to eat of the tree in the midst of the Garden because it was the fruit of mortality (Genesis 3: 3).

Disobedience on the part of man and the fruit of mortality are the same in meaning, in the myth, as it makes the individual spiritually dead. "The penalty for violating the commandment was death...instant spiritual death and progressive physical death" (MacDonald, 1995, p. 34). The sacrament of reconciliation, traditionally, is also known as the sacrament of the dead. We become spiritually dead the more we commit sins.

Sin in the sacred narrative of the fall of man is directly linked to the serpent. "The serpent stands for trust in the bodily sense and for thinking out of such a trust...One who trust more in philosophy based on reasoning from things in the material world than in Divine Revelation is deceived by the serpent" (Pitcairn, 1967). The serpent in Genesis is believed to be Satan; the same creature is the symbol healing in the wilderness (Numbers 21: 7-9).

Sin is an archetypal experience with the imprint of the 'original sin' in man's *psyche* and its probabilities in behaviour is one's 'actual sin'. The myth in the Book of Genesis directly connect sin to mortality, loss of Paradise, Satan, hell, and differentiation of consciousness into good and evil. Besides the creation being good, one could also envision life through sin facilitating our understanding of and emphasis on virtues and goodness.

While sin is represented as opening up of the eyes, realization of nakedness and putting on the garments of fig leaves (Genesis 3: 7), the inner healing from the sin is symbolized by the coats of skins (Genesis 3: 21). Nakedness (Genesis 2: 25) in pre-sinful state of being is immaculate and innocence; nakedness (Genesis 3: 21) in the post state of fallen grace... is lasciviousness which needs to be covered.

In the Indian creation myth, Brahma, upon seeing His own daughter, the first woman, Usha, desires for her. Out of the primal desire of Brahma arose Kama Dev. The Lord of desires wounded Brahma with His flowery love-darts. The desire to copulate populated the world as Usha in the process of escaping takes the form of various creatures and Brahma keeps becoming the corresponding male. Erotic proclivity is ingrained in creation.

Libidinous behaviour is indicated along with fear of God in conscience (Genesis 3: 7; 10) as the first and most primitive realizations of being human in the Biblical creation myth. While the fig leaves were used as aprons to cover nakedness by the first man and woman (Genesis 3: 7), God

clothed the first couple with coats of skin (Genesis 3: 21). Coats of skin, to elaborate a bit, require killing of the animals. Coat of skin is suggestive of the blood sacrifice for the atonement of sin. Blood sacrifice—Crucifixion—and *Agnus Dei* in the sacrament of Eucharist is the way of expiation for sin: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrew 9: 22). The institution of the Holy Eucharist as central to Catholic way of life is symbolically present in the beginning of time.

SYMBOL OF COMPLETION AND CONTINUITY

The primitive chaos diverges into the *Opus Distinctionis* (the work of distinction) and the *Opus Ornatus* (the work of adornment). The darkness, which seems like the Biblical ‘Veil of Negative Existence’, divides into day and night on the first day and are adorned by the heavenly bodies on the fourth day. Water becomes the realm of divergence for the sea and the sky on the second day, and the land under water and the land above water on the third day: the birds decorate the sky, and the birds of the aquatic region (the fishes) adorn the sea on the fifth day. The animals and the man adorn the land above the water on the sixth day.

Myth as the sacred-transcendental time is an archetypal participation in the *Opus Distinctionis*: Day One makes us live the ebb and the flow of growth, decline and re-growth in everyday life. Just like the rising sun, as Jung writes, man “wakes each morning out of the depths of sleep, i.e., out of an unconscious condition” (Jacobi, 1949, p. 22). Jung in his naturalistic view of human life believed that “Our life is like the course of the sun” (Jacobi, 1949, p. 110). Myth having a living character reveals to man the world that “speaks” (Eliade, 1964, p. 141) through myths and symbols. “Through the myths and symbols of the Moon man grasps the mysterious solidarity among temporality, birth, death and resurrection, sexuality, fertility, rain, vegetation, and so on” (Eliade, 1964, p. 141). Waxing and waning, becoming and passing away, are the luminous intensities, intensification and deterioration of the contents of life as we live in the flow of time each day and each season. Time of the day and the season of the year regulate man’s life, and also the market, in manifold manner. In the natural course, in time and in season, man lives the first half and the second half of life. Day Two is the measure of height, depth and movement from one place to the next. We cannot exist without such a sense and cognitive mapping. Man and his extensions *via* machines should be sea and sky worthy in order to navigate through nature. Day Three is the measure of fullness and depletion, fortune and misfortune, fruitfulness and deprivation in life.

The Biblical *Hexahemeron*—the six days of creation—forms the fundamental configuration of our awareness of the world. The seventh day in Genesis marks the completion and the holiness in the natural cycle of time (Genesis 2: 2-3; Exodus 20: 11; Deuteronomy 5: 14-15).

The *Opus Distinctionis* and the *Opus Ornatus* envelope us and makes our objective and subjective realities. The *Opus Distinctionis* regulates our general behavior. The *Opus Ornatus* determines our instinctual life. We live by the *Opus Distinctionis* and continue to contribute to the *Opus Ornatus*.

Creation becomes complete in continuity, and it remains a process. Carl Jung’s *credo* about Christianity, as expressed by Marie-Louise von Franz in the introduction to the Zofingia Lectures

(Jung, 1983, p. xxiv-xxv), is that it should be avowed and the Christian myth should be “dreamt on”...

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