

The Holy Trinity

WRECK-CREATION TO RE-CREATION

Genesis 1:1-2:4

The Holy Trinity

Analysis by Eric W. Evers

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

27 So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." 29 God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

DIAGNOSIS: Wrecking the Artwork

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Hoarders and Vandals*

Creation of humanity in the image of God (1:27) recalls the building of a statue of the king in the center of a city in ancient days. Erecting an image of a distant ruler showed the people the one to whom they owed homage. Humanity was created to "image," to act in representation of, God. The kind of fruitful, caring stewardship we are to exercise in our "dominion" (1:26, 28) of the world is a reflection of the generous, harmonious creating work of God. The poetry of this first creation account

evokes the beauty and order of God's creation. In what classical Christians might call "vestiges of the Trinity," the cosmos is designed for fruitfulness and multiplication, as seen in 1:12, 22, and 28 (reflecting the self-giving generosity of God to the world, and of the three Persons of the Godhead to one another). But what have we done with it? Food and water crises, of human origin, plague the developing world while we in the West continue to pollute and consume. Yes, we subdue and have dominion, but not after the image of a giving, generous Lord. Under our administration, even things like economic structures and agricultural practices that should multiply abundance are perverted to hoard more for the "haves" of the world. We vandalize the world's beauty to secure more and more for ourselves.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Polytheists and Unitarians*

What we are really vandalizing, though, is the image of God in ourselves. This is not what we were made for. We were made to be caring, prudent, fruitful stewards, honoring God by acting in his image. But instead of worshipping him alone, we turn to a constellation of created beings: money, power, pleasure, and ease could easily top the list. While in Genesis 1, the created entities of the sun and the moon were put in their place (1:16), we have put these other things in God's place. And one object of worship looms behind them all. We worship self. We love ourselves first, last, and most. While Father, Son, and Spirit pour themselves out for each other, we human persons put ourselves in solitary prominence over all others. Sadly, the cosmic damage we have done to creation is mirrored in the loss of fruitfulness in the microcosms of our lives and souls. No matter how much we hoard, we are never satisfied. Generosity, community, and connection are lost to our selfishness, and we look ever less like the Triune God.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Formless and Void*

We have wrecked the image of God in ourselves, and we have vandalized the artwork of the master Creator. As a result, we are no longer fruitful as human creatures. Nor is the creation a sphere of harmony and abundance. But eternally, the results are worse: The “formless and void” darkness of the beginning (1:2) is where we will be consigned by the God who justly condemns our violence. We will be plunged back into the eternal chaos of the deep.

PROGNOSIS: The Master Re-Creator

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Out of the Deep, into the Image*

And yet, the Spirit of God still hovers over the face of the deep (1:2), raising up new creations. The Word of God still has authority over the darkness, declaring “let there be light,” light that not even sin and death can overcome. The Father still crafts beauty out of disorder. That’s what Good Friday and Easter Sunday are all about: In the power of the Cross and Resurrection, the Son of God has plunged into the depths of sin and evil, and emerged the victor. The Triune God pulls us out of the chaos again, as newly-restored images of God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Monotheists and Trinitarian Theologians*

Saved from wrath and dissolution, we now have a right object for our worship: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all of whom are at work in our creation and re-creation. And our attention is shifted away from self, onto God and neighbor. We no longer need to pursue the hoarding that destroyed self and others, because the self-giving abundance of the Trinity has been poured into our hearts. Like proper images, our nature now derives from the original, God himself. Thus, we can worship with thanksgiving for God’s grace, pondering the mystery of the Three in One,

while considering how we can best steward the creation to serve our neighbors.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Bounded and Bountiful*

This restored relationship puts us back in the right, bounded, place. No longer hoarding in order to pretend to godhood, we can assume the role we are meant to have in the rhythms and poetry of God's creation. This means limits and boundaries. (Notice how often these come up in the poetry of the creation narrative.) But let us not picture these boundaries legalistically, like a bunch of "stop signs." Instead, let us think of them vocationally. They are the "places" where we fit. They are the roles in which we receive, and in which we give. They are the opportunities we have to rest, to serve, to produce, and to share, all according to our own particular make-up. Living into these gifts, we become fruitful again, multiplying abundance and blessing for the sake of others. Receiving life as a gift, we can give ourselves away to the neighbor in need. Thus, we become again images of the Trinity, able to show the world what God, in all his grace and generosity, is like.