

Creativity  
Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Genesis 2:4b-25

As you have seen, here we have two stories – yes two, even though much of Christianity has tried to conflate these 2 tales of origin into one, grand, be-all-end-all history of Creation. In fact Biblical scholars even know that the story from Genesis 2, with its very different order and manner of creation, is the earlier version (perhaps written up to 4 centuries before the “In the Beginning” account). Even more confusing to Bible readers is the fact that BOTH of these pieces – which make up the very first words of Jewish and Christian scripture – were written long after other parts of the Bible.

Fascinating! Stories about creation,  
the process of the creation of our current Bible,  
and the theme of “Creativity” as a whole.

Not only are the stories about God’s creative energy and the subsequent creation of all life, but the imagination of the people trying to figure out the purpose of existence; the culture that looked at the world around them and used the scientific principles available in their time reveal wonderful creativity in the construction of these two stories.

This is what continually inspires and excites me when I read these texts from Genesis.

People thousands of years ago – just as today – wanted so much to understand the world and their place in it. People – then and now – experience the inspiration of a Divine companion, and therefore have the ability to *create*.

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But let me step back a moment. As much as I appreciate these passages, they come with a bit of baggage. The stories of Creation in Genesis are sometimes hard for progressives to enter without heavy critique.

For example, literary historians know that there are creation myths (*Sumerian Enuma Elish*) from cultures very near to ancient Israel, and that these “pagan” myths share many characteristics of the Genesis accounts. The Judeo-Christian stories aren’t exactly original, except in the profession of One God.

There is also the challenge of science.

Thanks to Darwin, we now know about evolution;

but the beautiful imagery of a human made from dust may still be understood from a metaphorical stance.

And the calling of creation into being by a Word perhaps becomes a spiritual understanding more than in opposition to natural law.

As thinking Christians we sometimes get frustrated when schools continue to debate the teaching of “Creationism” or “Intelligent Design” as a viable scientific option. So we *take care* in talking about Creation by God.

We also struggle with the interpretations of these texts

that validate women’s subordination to men

and support marriage as between one man and one woman.

There is a lot to frustrate us if we stress literalism in these spectacularly sculpted words.

But that’s not the point from which most of us start.

I personally engage Genesis from the wonder  
of the creative act.

Creation is the realm of God.

Existence *is* because of something greater than ourselves.

You and I did not initiate the grand cycles of life and death and life.

And yet we are a part of them, and we can bring into being *aspects* of life.

We can create expressions of our thoughts,  
our emotions or our physical selves.

Today's art show offers just a small glimpse into this reality.

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Creativity is a response to experience, thought, visual stimulus.

It is an inherent response to God and God's creation.

We create sound – music with voice or instrument.

We create the written word in poetry or prose.

We create our own styles with clothing and accessories.

And we create expression in our home environment, through gardens or interior decoration.

Made in the image of God, we feel the urge to be creators also,  
co-creators with the Divine to build up this world.

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At Claremont School of Theology I couldn't help but be influenced by a form of thought called Process Theology. Process Theology uses a relational model of existence.

"The process is dynamic, ever giving rise to new relations, new integrations, new realities"<sup>1</sup>

Creativity is a key term in Process Theology because

*change pervades all existence,*

and change is a function of the creative process.

Marjorie Suchocki is one Process Theologian who was also my professor of theology at Claremont.

I want to share a part of a "Process" sermon she wrote on Genesis 1.

She preaches:

*"God's creation from the very mists of time  
is nonetheless in the midst of time.*

*Now! Now! Now is the time of God's creating,*

*'as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be!'*

*So long as there is a world, God is creating.*

*The very activity of God at the 'beginning'*

*is the same activity of God here, now.*

*.... Is it not the case that God is always Creator? And always creating?*

*... God [calls into being], creates humans with all sorts of wonderful powers ....*

*Calls us to develop our minds, to think and probe and wonder and  
guess, learning and teaching all the while! ...*

*Calls us to develop our affections,*

*most specifically developing the capacity to love with the whole of who we are ...*

*Calls us to develop these marvelous bodies we are, to whatever capacity is possible for us ....*

*God did not create us as passive, but as active respondents,  
so that in and through our answer to God, creation continues".<sup>2</sup>*

**Through our response to God (and God's world), creation continues.**

Now, some of you may be wondering where Christ fits in to this creative process we find ourselves in.  
God's creative call comes in many ways,

but for Christians it is especially strong in Jesus Christ.

Through Christ we are called once more,

reminded to respond to God in creative ways,

called to create justice, kindness, humility;

called to walk in the Way and the Truth and the Life;

called to live the great commandments of

loving God and one another –

including all of creation.

He was one man who inspired each of us here today.

And, in turn, our creative efforts inspire others.

...Just look at the art in the Fellowship Hall, and I dare you NOT to feel the inspiration.

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One creative act that I think should be mandatory for all adults, is to read at least one good children's book each year. And because I know some of you won't take me up on this challenge, I am going to bring one to you, this morning.

The book is titled

*Does God Have a Big Toe? Stories About Stories in the Bible.*

The author, Marc Gellman, comes from the Jewish faith,

and therefore is familiar with the ancient tradition of Midrash –

telling stories about stories in the bible to help

better explain or fill-out some passages.

I will be reading to you from the prologue entitled "Partners".

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Is Creation finished yet? You decide.

Amen.

- <sup>1</sup> Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*, p. 11.
- <sup>2</sup> Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Whispered Word: A Theology of Preaching*, p. 86-88.
- <sup>3</sup> Marc Gellman, *Does God Have a Big Toe? Stories About Stories in the Bible*, “Partners”, p. 1-3.