

Model Creation Stories To Aid In Our Understanding of *Genesis 1*

The following are fictional creation stories intended to express a philosophically and factually true understanding of God and his relationship to created reality. While these accounts are philosophically true and factually true, they are *not literally* true. The genre in which they are written is not a genre that intends for each individual statement to be a literal description of what actually occurred.

JAC’s Creation Story #1

In the beginning, God created the whole of created reality. He created everything that exists.

Before God’s act of creation, there was nothing. Blank, sterile, empty, shapeless nothingness. But then God conceived a story—a long, involved, intricately inter-connected set of individual stories that told one grand overarching story. But that story needed a stage and a cast of characters. So, at the beginning, God created the stage and the cast of characters.

Looking to the north God thought, “There must be time, for everything will occur in time and will be measured by time.” And just as he thought it, time came into being.

Looking to the south God thought, “There must be space, for everything that exists will exist in space and must be located in space.” And just as he thought it, space came into being.

Looking to the west God thought, “Now there must be everything that will occupy space and time. Everything that will populate the stories I will tell, they must come into being. And everything that is to occur, it must all occur.” And everything that he had conceived to be part of his creation before the beginning of created reality, it came to be just as he had willed it to come to be. Every single thing in God’s creation came to be because he willed it to be there; and there was not one thing that God willed to come to be that did not come to be.

Then, looking to the east, God thought, I must sit on a throne and reign over all that I have created. And as he conceived it, God took up his place on his throne. Therefore, from the very beginning, whenever a man chooses to bow in obeisance to God, he faces east.

JAC’s Creation Story #2

In the beginning, God created the whole of created reality. He created everything that exists.

Before God’s act of creation, there was nothing. Blank, sterile, empty, shapeless nothingness. But then God conceived a story—a long involved intricately inter-connected set of individual stories that told one grand overarching story. But that story needed a stage and a cast of characters. So, at the beginning, God set the stage for the story to be realized.

God set out seven boxes. One was red, one was orange, one was yellow, one was green, one was blue. one was indigo, and one was violet.

God looked into the red box and he imagined time and time came into being. He imagined space and space came into being. He imagined all of the abstract realities that order the universe and all those abstract realities came to be—good and evil, love and hate, justice and injustice. Every abstract reality that gives order, structure, and meaning to all that exists, it came into being. And finally, he imagined every invisible immaterial reality and they all came into being. Light and gravity and force and energy and every immaterial created element of the universe, they all came into being.

God looked into the orange box and he imagined all the tiny little beings made of matter and energy that exist in the universe. He imagined molecules and atoms and all the sub-atomic particles that exist. And all these things came to be just as he imagined and conceived of them.

God looked into the yellow box and he imagined every material thing that forms the environment in which ordinary existence takes place. Land and sea, clouds and sky, sun and moon, stars and planets, mountains and valleys—God imagined each and every non-living, visible material reality that exists and each and every one of those realities came into being.

God looked into the green box and he imagined every living thing that cannot be seen with the eye. He imagined all the tiny, invisible plants, animals, and other living organisms. And just as he imagined them, they are came into being.

God looked into the blue box and he imagined every living thing that can be seen, every living thing that populates ordinary, everyday existence. He imagined each and every plant, each and every animal, and every other living organism that there is. He imagined each and every one of them and they came into being just as he imagined them.

God looked into the indigo box and he imagined a whole realm of invisible persons. There were angels and demons of as many different kinds as he imagined, and just as he imagined them, they came into being.

And, finally, God looked into the violet box and he imagined the whole vast group of visible persons whom we call human beings. And just as he imagined each human being to be, that human being came to be.

Now, whenever we see a rainbow, we can remember the source and origin of everything that is in created reality. Each band of the rainbow represents a different segment of all that is. And we are reminded that each and every segment of all that is was willed into existence by the one and only God who is the author and origin of all that is and of all that occurs.

JAC’s Creation Story #3

Before the beginning, before anything existed at all, when there was nothing but a great big patch of empty, black nothingness, God commenced to think up a story—a story that he thought would be worth telling.

It took him two full years to think it up. In the first year God decided on the main parts of his story and on how, basically, he wanted the story to go.

He started thinking about it in January. In that first month, God dreamt up time, dreamt up space, and decided that his story would take place in time and space. He also dreamt up all the important things that don't exist in space and time—things like right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice, love and hate, and things like beauty, pain, pleasure, and all the other things that would make reality what it is but would never exist concretely in time and space. So, by the last day of January, God had finished designing the nature of time and space, and of all the invisible things that would never exist in time and space.

In February, God invented the idea of matter—the stuff that things would be made of, if they did exist in space. And God decided that things made of matter would not last forever. Things made of matter would always be falling apart, dying, or dissolving, and would eventually just cease to be altogether. He decided that, for the first part of his story, the reality that he would create would not be eternal. It would come to an end. So, by the last day of February, God had finished dreaming up matter, the stuff that things would be made of in the initial part of his story.

In March, God dreamt up all the different sorts of things he wanted to be made out of matter. He thought up all the various things that would exist in time and space. From viruses, algae, and neutrons to whales, redwood trees, and galaxies—he decided all the different things that he wanted to exist in the space-time universe that he would create. So, by the last day of March, God had finished imagining all the different sorts of material things he wanted to make—everything in time and space that he wanted to play some role in his story.

In April, God dreamt up all the immaterial things that would not exist in space. He thought up every sort of angel, every sort of spirit or demon, and every other thing that, while it would exist in time, would not occupy space. So, by the last day of April, God had finished thinking up all the different sorts of immaterial beings that he wanted to make in order to play a part in his story.

In May, God invented the idea of a human being. He decided that human beings would, on the one hand, be like animals. But, on the other hand, they would be like God. Like animals—and like the world that they would live in—human beings would die; they would not live forever. Like God—and very unlike animals—human beings would be persons, who could be either good or evil. They would be beings who could be blamed when they were bad and rewarded when they were good. So, by the last day of May, God had finished planning what he wanted a human being to be.

In June, God thought up the idea of eternal life. The life that he would initially give human beings would be made to come to an end. So God dreamt up a way that human life could be recreated and transformed into something that would never end. He dreamt up a way for human existence to be set free from death and decay. So, by the last day of June, God had finished planning how human beings could be made to have eternal life.

In July, God figured out what desires and behaviors would make a human being good, and what desires and behaviors would make a human being evil. And, furthermore, God decided that—for the sake of the story he wanted to tell—every ordinary human being that he made, he would make to be evil. No ordinary human being would be good. So, by the last day of July, God had

finished imagining what good and evil would look like in a human life and had decided that he would create every ordinary human being to be evil.

In August, God figured out what the just response would be to human beings who were evil. He decided that he would be punish each person for the evil that he had done, and then, afterward, to let him be finally and completely destroyed by death. But God also decided that—for the sake of the story he wanted to tell—he would choose a special group of human beings for whom he would do a really good thing. Instead of punishing them and letting them go to death and destruction—like they deserved—he was going to give them the eternal life that he had previously planned to make possible—even though they didn’t deserve it. These people would be called “the chosen of God.” So, by the last day of August, God had finished planning how evil people would be punished and how he would pick out for himself a special group called “the chosen of God,” who would be given eternal life instead of punishment and destruction.

In September, God conceived of yet another special group. This group of people would be known as the Jews. They would have a unique history, identity, and religion, and they would have a special role to play. God would promise them good things that were especially for them. And he would place obligations upon them that were theirs and theirs alone. They would be called “the people of God,” for God would make them his special people. For the sake of the story he wanted to tell, God would make his people—the Jews—to be persistently unrighteous and stubbornly rebellious. Then—to give expression to the profound depths of his own merciful character—God would script history so that in the end, in an act of great mercy, God would give to the Jews every good thing that he had ever promised them. So, by the last day of September, God had finished thinking up the idea of a stubborn and rebellious people who were special to him, and how, at the end of the first part of created reality, he would show them great mercy by giving them all the good things that he had promised them throughout their history.

In October, God decided that his story would come in two parts. The first part of the story would take place in an initial created order that was subject to decay, death, and destruction. The second part of the story would take place in an entirely new and different created order—an eternal created order that was not subject to death and decay and would never end in destruction. This new created order would be the eternal dwelling place for every human being who was a member of the “chosen of God.” God imagined and designed the nature and character of the eternal existence that his chosen ones would enjoy in this new created order. So, by the last day of October, God had finished designing the nature of created reality in the final everlasting age and the nature of the everlasting existence of his chosen ones.

In November, God decided to divide the first part of his story into several different ages. He decided the number of different ages, and then he imagined what the distinctive character of each and every age would be. Then God decided that the final age of the first part of his story—an age that he would call the kingdom of God—would be a special and distinctive time when God would fulfill all the promises that he had made to his chosen people the Jews throughout the entire span of their history. In that final age of the initial created order, he would grant to them every good thing that he had purposed to give them. So, by the last day of November, God had finished designing the nature and character of each and every age of the first stage of created reality.

In December, God decided to have a main character in his story. He would be known as Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus would be the centerpiece of everything that happened in God’s story. Everything that existed in his story and everything that happened in it would find its meaning and significance in relation to Jesus. Jesus would be at the center of God’s plan to rescue his chosen ones from their condemnation to death and destruction. Jesus would be at the center of God’s plan for the Jews; he would be the agent who would bring it about that all of God’s promises to the Jewish people were fulfilled. He would reign as king in the promised Kingdom of God during the final age of the first stage of created reality. He would serve as God’s most important prophet, revealing God’s purposes to the world. He would function as the priest whose intercession would obtain mercy for all those chosen of God. This Jesus, therefore, would be the most important, the most exalted, and the most honored individual in all of created reality. God decided to make this man, Jesus, to reflect the exact image of his own invisible person. He would make Jesus the unique representative of himself within the story of created reality. Jesus would be the very individual person of God himself translated into the medium of a human life. The story that God wanted to tell would feature Jesus. The entire story was for him, about him, with a view to him, and intended to honor him. So, by the last day of December, God had finished determining the nature and character of his Son Jesus and the nature of his role and status in created reality.

Now, since it was in December that God conceived the idea of creating his Son, the Messiah, to be the primary character in his story, it is in December that we celebrate the entrance of God’s Messiah into history. Every year, on December 25th, we celebrate the fact that the Messiah was introduced into God’s story. The Son of God—the most exalted being in all of reality, the very stamp of God’s own individual identity, the visible image of the invisible God, the hero and rescuer of all who belong to the chosen people of God—entered into history when Jesus was born over two thousand years ago. We celebrate that fact whenever we celebrate Christmas.

That was the end of the first year of God’s planning.

In the second year of God’s planning, God determined each and every particular detail of his entire story. He planned out and conceived every detail of every story of every created being that would ever come to exist in the reality that God would bring into being. Every detail of every story was planned so that it conformed to and was in harmony with the primary elements and the broad outline of the story as he had conceived it during the first year of his planning. And, most notably, every detail of every story was created with a view to the the central and exalted role of the Messiah, the unique one around whom the whole story was meant to turn. So, at the end of the second year, God had designed a complete, detailed plan of everything that would ever be and of everything that would ever occur throughout the whole course of the story he wanted to bring into being.

That was the end of the second year of God’s planning.

Then, at the very beginning of the story—on January 1 of Year One of this present created reality—God said, “Let the plan become reality,” and the plan began to become real. God began to make real each and every detail of all that he had conceived in his plan. And everything that now

is, and everything that now occurs, is exactly what it is, because it is part of the preconceived plan of God.

To him be glory forever and ever and ever. Amen.

Notes on the Distinctive Characteristics of These Stories

All of the following statements can be made about all of the model creation stories above:

- A. The order in which things come into existence is arbitrary. The order is not intended to be chronologically accurate. In fact, it is not even intended to be rationally coherent.
- B. The groupings of things that come into being along with other things is arbitrary. It is not intended to reflect any literal ordering of creation.
- C. The created entities that are mentioned in the account are not intended to be exhaustive. The account is not meant to be an absolutely exhaustive account. Rather, the account is only intended to communicate the breadth of God's creative act as a way of suggesting the larger truth that God is the creator of absolutely everything that is.
- D. The assignment of each particular created thing or of each sort of created thing to a particular direction, box, or month is totally artificial. (It is dictated by a subsidiary purpose of the account, not by the primary purpose of the account.) This assignment is not intended to reflect any truth whatsoever about the nature of created reality nor about the nature of God's creative act. For, as already suggested, the groupings created by such assignments are completely arbitrary.
- E. The creation of each and every story has a subsidiary purpose. Not only is the purpose of each story to take a philosophical position on the nature of God and his relationship to reality (it is exactly the same philosophical position in all three creation stories mentioned in the paper), but each story has its own unique subsidiary purpose: namely, to justify some hypothetical religious practice or perspective (bowing to the east, the attribution of meaning to the rainbow, the celebration of the Son of God in December).
- F. None of these stories is intended to describe *how* or *when* created reality came into being. Their sole purpose is to maintain that every aspect of everything that is and of everything that occurs is the result of God willing it into existence. Everything that is comes about simply because God has conceived of it and willed it to be.
- G. All of these stories have *a certain fanciful "feel" about them*, because they all express a philosophical truth through the medium of a fictional, unrealistic, and somewhat fanciful story. It would be a huge mistake to allow the fanciful "feel" of the account to distract me from the earnestly serious philosophical statement that is being expressed.

If the model creation stories above successfully imitate the nature and character of the creation account in *Genesis* 1 (and I maintain that they do), then all of the above statements apply to the creation account in *Genesis* 1 just as surely as they apply to the model creation stories offered above.
