

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

### **FUN WITH IMAGES**

- EDEN, lit. garden, paradise on earth, state of innocence
- not “original” stories unique to Judaism or Christianity; similar versions in other faith traditions (vis. Babylonia)
- an idyllic garden which offers an image of a perfect creation

**Out of the ground** the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**.

### **Stories of our origins**

- humanity finds a particular place in the garden, all living things (e.g. trees) are bound to the earth and its fecundity; indicative phrase “out of the ground”
- blended presence of “good and evil” assembled in the tree “of knowledge”, “priestly” writing which assumes understanding of the role of knowledge; theological question of the **theodicy (where does evil originate)**

**A river flows out of Eden** to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches.

- with land, water, four branches (four directions), ancient shorthand for ‘everywhere’

The LORD God **took the man and put him in the garden** of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall die**.”

- in the patriarchal era, life understood through the man, not acceptable or realistic in our own age; bear with the storyteller
- “man” restrained from such knowledge, but man transgresses through a series of actions; **blame the snake!**
- fundamental question, **why does knowledge kill?** The opposite seems to be the case! Paradox. EXCEPT, the correct **application of knowledge and not knowledge itself gives life**

Then the LORD God said, “**It is not good that the man should be alone**; I will make him a helper as his partner.”

- do men not make good solitaires?
- Merton/Donne “No man is an island”

So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

- The power inherent in the naming process
- a patriarchic philosophy of life - “if in doubt, get a woman!”

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

### **Story demands completion**

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the **mother of all who live**. And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

- on clothing, morality vis. adaptability

Then the Lord God said, ‘See, **the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil**; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’—

- Teilhard de Chardin “We are not human beings trying to live a spiritual life; we are spiritual beings trying to live a human life.”

. . . therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He **drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim**, and a sword flaming and turning to **guard the way to the tree of life**.

**5 Life lessons** from an “original” story:

1. You can’t go back
2. There’s good and bad everywhere
3. We came from beauty and we’re heading towards beauty (read revelation)
4. We exist, by virtue of forces and persons beyond our grasp and comprehension
5. We Anglicans call that *mystery* . . . and mystery, while sometimes unsettling, is WONDERFUL