

# ***The Cycle of Goodness and Diversity***



**A seven-fold reflection by Rev David Coleman,  
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For use with a 7-stage labyrinth. Bible text: NIV, with tweaks.**

[Graphic: 'And God saw that it was good' - by Yvonne Bell, used with permission]

***In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.***

***3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he 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.***

Right from the outset, [or at least from verse 2], God recycles, reshapes, repurposes, brings beauty out of chaos. Unpacking and re-arranging as God alone knows how. And even though there's a separation, all the bits belong together. Light needs darkness to be good. Ask a theologian, and they'll go on and on about "Creation out of nothing". No need to argue about that. But read Genesis 1 and just a heartbeat of God later, you won't find you're dwelling on that, but rather what to do with what we see and what we're becoming. The glory of remaking, sustaining, reshaping. With nothing thrown away. Nothing single-use. Because that's not "what God said". And right from this first day, the transition times (evening and morning) frame everything else.

***6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the***

**vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.**

Look up, wherever you are. If you're outside, you see this vault, this dome. There's nothing primitive or obsolete about the experience of how the heavens appear to us in this way, curving gently towards a horizon in every direction. Maybe it has rained today, maybe it has dried up. The cycles are built in, and Day 2 reveals the circulation of goodness without which there's no life at all. The Water cycle, which Isaiah would go on to mention in the same breath as the powerful Word of God: not single-use, not throwaway. Water is eternal. You washed with water, you drank water, you are water. And you breathe, sweat and pee. No living creatures, let alone people in Day 2, **but** the heart of the Earth is beating....

**9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.**

God's powerful word recycles once more, rearranges once more. This is what it means to be 'Creator'. For God, it's a job for life, not done and dusted. The ancient writer hadn't heard the Christian insight of God as Trinity, as Creative Community. And yet without any threat or competition to God's in-charge-ness, teamwork is what God chooses. The Earth is called - actively employed in the enterprise of Creation - to move things on. Starting up those cycles and recycles of seed-time and harvest. Which will not just come to a halt without further intervention. The poetry calls this “a day”. But it's a day that's still going on!

**14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the Earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.**

Day 4, we embrace as **the way things look; the way they feel.** This story is a story told by someone with their feet on the ground. You can tell it too, without need for advanced technology, but simply with the senses of humanity. It's experiential, terrestrial, pedestrian. And that's how the Bible continues, from here on in. It isn't primitive, obsolete or out of date. But it has a perspective.

Is the creative activity here the giving of jobs, the forging of relationships? And yet again, in establishing the illumination and governance of Day and Night, God's glory and power is amplified by delegation. And never mind what we might have discovered they do far out in space: the light they give, when it reaches this Creation of Sky and Soil, still brightens our sky. The Sun and the Moon are still in charge of Day and Night. Those longer spaces stretched out between the times of transition, 'evening and morning', which remind us that nothing is open-ended. Day and night are disciplined by the transitions of evening and morning. The nature of **being** is to be amenable to be remade. Disrupt this, hold on to the moment, and life is endangered.

**20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to their kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.**

Biodiversity is the will of God. Teemingly abundant, sharing and always interacting. That beautiful phrase again "according to their kind". Which should help us respect difference whilst cherishing common ground of feeling, of language, of need, between diverse creatures and 'peoples'. Perhaps this is the place to note that the Bible doesn't have a word for "animals" distinct from the "living beings" that humans also are. Our English translations here begin to lose their grip on the emerging personalities of 'who', rather than merely 'what' emerges as the cycle of Days continues. We need something more respectful than "it" For God continues to speak, not into a void, but **to** creatures with whom, in that speech, relationship is established. Creation is conversation, negotiation. And that's glorious.

**24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."**

**27**

**So God created humankind in God's own image,  
in the image of God, God created them;  
male and female God created them.**

**28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."**

**29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.**

There’s a lot to cram in to Day 6. Perhaps slow down to take it in, bit by bit. More delegation: co-creation by the ‘land’, or the Earth, with diversity respected and celebrated at every step. unsurprisingly, with all this activity, there’s more we lose in translation. There are two words for the Earth, with nuanced differences. ‘Land’ and ‘Soil’. We can read ‘Everyone who creeps on the ‘Soil’ [verse 25] But then discover our species is Soil-kind. An integral part, not detached, not made of something other than the Earth as a whole. We are not foreign but part of the family. Science can confirm what the ancient poetry already discerned. We **are** a relationship; we are Earth reshaped responsibly to serve the relationships. Yes, to intervene, even robustly, for the good of the whole. For that we are called into being - verse 31 - is subservient to the shaping of that *unified* and interactive Creation of sky-and-soil. The story is not of the “Creation of humans”, but of the “Heavens and the Earth in all their vast array.” We belong here. According to our kind. And dependent on the Earth’s fruitfulness from week 1 on.

**2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.**

Stop! Pause! Breathe! Rest! The cycles re-cycle on the Seventh Day. Rest and Refreshment, rather than the creation of humanity are the holy pinnacle of this Creation story. Without the Sabbath, it all comes to an end. Without Day 7, Creation is throwaway, single-use.

Activity is not the only priority for life to exist. And what a challenge that represents to our global-north colonial heritage.

Let’s not get into silly discussions about whether or not God **“needed”** to rest. God did. That’s good enough. So to be “in God’s image” involves letting go, now and then. Letting be. Not “doing everything”. Recognising we’re not ‘in control’. God says ‘stop’. Before you do anything else. Stop, in order that life may continue.

Stop before you **do** next week.

And evening came and morning came.....

