

Adam and Steve

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One might say homosexual orientation—and modern day gay and queer, consciousness—derive from an Edenic state before “original sin.” In the metaphoric language of myth, you might ask: “Where were the homosexuals in the Garden of Eden?”

Well, we frequently hear Christian preachers deride gay people’s struggle for equality and fairness by joking that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

Well, maybe they’re wrong. Maybe He did.

The Book of Genesis begins with the story of how the gods, referred to in the plural as the *elohim*, created the cosmos in six days, creating human beings on the sixth day and then resting on the seventh. The story then goes on to tell how a particular God, referred to in the singular by the unpronounceable Hebrew name YHWH, who seemed in charge of sending rain, wanted a gardener for his Garden on the east side of Fertile Crescent called Mesopotamia.

This God YHWH formed a man out of the dust to be His gardener. YHWH was a strict and demanding God and set a rule for this gardener He’d made that he could eat any of the fruit in the Garden except the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And He instructed him to give names to everything in the Garden. As we know, the gardener named the Garden Eden.

What isn’t mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis is that there were other men in Mesopotamia. In fact just down the road from Eden, our creative myth tells us, there lived a cute young fellow. Let’s call him Clay. Clay was born from the dust of the Earth, just like YHWH’s gardener. But he wasn’t created by YHWH. He was created by the *elohim*. Since the *elohim* were plural, among them were masculine and feminine gods, that is powers and spirits of creativity and intellectual acuity and also powers and spirits of receptivity and feeling sensitivity.

As it says in the first chapter of Genesis, the *elohim* created man in their own image, that is, both masculine and feminine. The text in Chapter 1, line 27 says in the image of God He created him, male and female He created him. The writers of ancient Hebrew weren’t sophisticated enough to understand the distinction between gender and sex, so when they wanted to say the first man was masculine and feminine, they said he was male and female.

This was Clay, the cute young fellow who lived down the road from Eden, who was both masculine and feminine.



Modern day Scripture scholars now explain that the two different creation narratives in the first and second chapters of Genesis, first by the elohim and second by YHWH, are actually two separate traditions in the development of Hebrew Scripture. The Northern Kingdom of Israel called its God by the more abstract, philosophical plural term, while the Southern Kingdom of Juda called God by the more personal and homey YHWH. The elohim create by word and thought. YHWH, the more personal in spite of His difficult name, created by shaping dust and breathing into it; He walks in the Garden with his creation, a kindly fellow though also a strict and demanding employer.

The creation story occurs twice, the scholars tell us, not because there were two creations, but because there were two myths that got woven into one when members of the priestly clan organized the nomadic Hebrews into a single tribe with a written tradition. It's their stringing the two narratives in sequence that results in the two stories.

But those Fundamentalists—the ones who grouse about Adam and Steve—generally don't have any truck with modern scripture scholars. They dismiss all that book learning and research as unnecessary at best and the work of the Devil at worst. They don't need scholars explaining the different stories. They say you can take the Bible word for word, exactly the way God wrote it.

So it's according to that kind of literal belief in the words that we can weave our myth about the androgynous fellow who lived down the road.

We're calling him Clay. He wasn't assigned any particular job by his creators like that gardener YHWH created. (Those scripture scholars tell us that name would have been pronounced Yahweh, if anybody had dared say it aloud. Yahweh was a friendly personal fellow, but obviously a little neurotic. He didn't like anybody getting chummy enough with him to call him by his personal name.)

So Clay hung around the beautiful spot of land the elohim had given him. He played with the animals and birds and enjoyed life. He especially enjoyed having the beautiful body the elohim had given him.

He loved to look in the water and see his own reflection. The sight of his lithe body reflected in the water excited him and pleased him. It made him feel such love and wonder for the gods who created him so marvelously. And he loved to caress himself and wrap his arms around himself and squeeze and squeeze in boyish bliss. And also boy-like, he loved to excite his body. He discovered the wonderful wand the gods had given him and he loved to stimulate himself and come to orgasm, so that he felt at one with all the beautiful nature in the garden world he been given for a home. Sometimes



the gods would come to watch. They would laugh and applaud when Clay came because they were pleased they could enjoy Clay's embodiment with him.

Clay was perfectly content living down the road from the Garden of Eden.

When they were both young and fresh from their creators' hands, Clay and the gardener (whom we all know is going to get named Adam a little later) used to play together. Clay showed Adam how he could get his body to respond to touch and friction. Clay taught Adam how to kiss. And how to see his own reflection in the water. They had wonderful times together, though Adam would sometimes get very nervous and worry that Yahweh would see what they were doing and not like it. Adam enjoyed his job and especially liked walking with Yahweh in the cool of the evening, but he was always on edge cause Yahweh seemed so easily ticked off.

Well, of course, the story goes on to tell that Yahweh thought Adam should have a helper. So he cast Adam into sleep and took a bone from his side and fashioned a woman to be Adam's helper and mate. This was Eve.

Once Eve came around, Adam took to visiting Clay less often. And since he was having an adult sexual relationship with Eve, Adam didn't want to play the boyish games with Clay Clay had taught him.

Clay sometimes got lonely when Adam didn't come around. Not that he needed anybody; as an androgynous being perfectly balanced between masculinity and femininity, he never really had a bad mood. But he did miss the camaraderie.

He'd go down and visit Adam and Eve. Indeed he got to be better friends with Eve than Adam. Adam had gotten so bossy and patriarchal. He wanted his own way all the time. Eve was much easier to get along with. Clay and Eve loved to sip tea together in the morning and talk about the problems they were having with Adam.

One day while Clay was down at his own little grove, enjoying the beauty of the morning, he heard an enormous commotion over at Eden. There were lightning bolts flying and booms of thunder rolling across the countryside. Clay went running to find out what was happening to his friends.

He arrived to discover that Yahweh was standing out by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil having a hissy-fit, and stomping at a big snake curled around the foot of the Tree, while Adam was alternating begging God to calm down and whacking Eve on the side of the head, shouting, "This is all your fault!"

Suddenly another big explosion and an angel with a flaming sword came swooping down out of the sky and forced Adam and Eve to go fleeing out of the garden.

Clay ran up to his friend Eve and asked what had happened. She hurriedly told him how the snake had tricked her into tasting the fruit of the tree and it was so tasty she



got Adam to try it also. Then God had shown up and all hell broke loose. “Now he’s fired us and put a curse on us,” she said. Then added, “Look, Clay, he doesn’t have any control over you. And I know he likes you. Won’t you go back in the garden and see if you can talk Him into changing his mind.”

So Clay slipped back into Eden. When the cherubim with the flaming sword demanded to know his business, Clay reminded him he was the androgynous first creation of the elohim and the Cherubim let him pass. “For you, the two sides of the sword have no power; they are male and female; you are beyond their power to cleave for you comprise both sides in yourself.”

Clay arrived just in time to find Yahweh satisfied the snake was gone. He was still huffing and puffing, but his anger had cooled down.

When Yahweh saw Clay, he sighed loudly and exclaimed, “What’s a father to do? I gave them everything they asked for. But they couldn’t obey one simple little instruction. You tell me, Clay, what’s a father to do?”

Clay smiled, a little sheepishly and a little patronizingly, “You could forgive them.”

“Well, I am sure I will,” Yahweh answered. “But not yet. Let them stew in their own juices for a while.”

“Now, don’t be cruel,” Clay said.

“Cruel? It’s for their own good,” Yahweh retorted. “Look, Clay, if I had given all this to you and the only thing I’d asked is that you not eat the one apple, what would you have done? Yeah, tell me. What would you have done?”

“Well, Lord God,” Clay answered carefully, “you’re right. I wouldn’t have eaten the apple. There’s so much abundance here in Mesopotamia, there’s no reason to eat something marked dangerous. But, still, you’ve got to be merciful with them. They have such a hard time making up their minds because their feminine side is in Eve and their masculine side is in Adam and they have such difficulty ever figuring anything out between them.”

“You’re damn right about that,” Yahweh said, with a thunderclap to punctuate his point.

Not seeing what more he could do for his friends by imploring God, Clay left God in the Garden and went out to help the Adamses carry their stuff to town where, maybe, they could find a cheap apartment. They were unemployed now and finding housing wasn’t going to be easy. Clay offered to help with the first and last month down.

A couple of days later, Clay was back in his own grove sitting by the water side, relishing the feelings and sensuality in his body—and occasionally feeling sorry for



Adam and Eve, but also understanding it was their own fault. Though Clay liked Eve a lot, he certainly saw that the marriage had changed Adam. It was that cocksure thing that Adam did around Eve that made him distrust Yahweh's rule.

Just as Clay was getting into his morning sex ritual, the elohim arrived at his door. They tittered a little, but said they were hoping to get a look at his play. He reminded them that they were always welcome. And then they said, "Well, we have a surprise for you."

"We were talking with Yahweh and learned he'd fired his gardener and Eden is down there without anybody to tend it or keep it beautiful. We think you should take the job."

"It's a lot of work. Adam had to get Eve's help to keep up," Clay replied. "But thank you very much for the offer."

"We'll give you help too," the elohim replied with a snicker of knowing in their voice.

"Clay," they said, "look in the water. See your reflection. See how you encompass all the masculine and all the feminine traits in yourself. See how beautiful you are. Gaze upon the beauty of your reflection in the pool of time."

Clay experienced the voices of the elohim drawing him into a profound mystical experience. He sensed how, as their creation, he was a manifestation of their divinity in the stream of time. He saw his own beauty—and God's beauty—reflected back at him.

And then to his great surprise, Clay saw his reflection seem to take on flesh and to rise up out of the water.

Yahweh appeared next to him at that moment. "As a reward for your willingness not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, I pass on to you the land I'd created for my servant Adam. And I create for you a partner, an equal, a reflection of yourself, a lover beyond the duality of male and female."

So when Clay's reflection came up out of the water, he embraced himself with great love and affection, and he felt wonderful sensations of sexual pleasure rise up in his body. What a wonderful thing this is, Clay thought.

"Thank you, so much, Lord God Yahweh," Clay explained. "I wasn't expecting a reward for obedience. I just thought you must have had a good assessment about the edibility of that fruit."

And Yahweh said, "You shall always have your reflection as a helpmate. Your attraction to one like yourself is my gift to you in acknowledgement of your virtue."

Another thunderclap and Yahweh was off.

The elohim gathered around Clay and his beautiful new boyfriend. "Clay," they whispered, "what are you going to name him?"



Clay thought about a name. He'd liked Eve a lot. She was a great partner for Adam, even if Adam didn't always see it and appreciate her. Clay thought he'd name his partner for Eve. But since Eve was a woman with a woman's name, Clay chose a more manly sounding version. He called his partner Steve.

So, see, there was a Steve in the Garden of Eden. There still is.

Well, Clay and Steve moved into the garden and took very good care of it. They decorated and designed and beautified til there was just nothing more to do.

The Adams family was still living in town and Adam and Eve used to bring the children out to Eden occasionally to visit. Their teenage boys were terrors, always getting into fights with each other. Everybody in town knew they were going to come to no good.

But Adam and Eve had other children and they all came around. Sometimes Clay and Steve discovered they could see reflections of themselves in some of the kids. They weren't going to be parents themselves. They understood Yahweh's gift of living in the garden and not having to cope with the problems of original sin the way the Adamses did meant they wouldn't have their own children. But always among the children who came to visit, there were those like them. Clay and Steve always invited the cute gay boys and the sissies and the tomboy girls to come back without their parents so they could be instructed in the secrets of cultivating the Garden.

The Secret of the Garden is that we've never really left. This world, as it is, is the perfection of the Garden, the Kingdom of God on Earth. This is why the "children" of Adam and Steve can bless and forgive all the others.

That's why we're here.

Toby Johnson, Ph.D. is author of eight books: three non-fiction books that apply the wisdom of Joseph Campbell, his teacher and "wise old man," to modern-day social and religious problems, three gay genre novels that dramatize spiritual issues at the heart of gay identity, and two books on gay men's spiritualities and the mystical experience of homosexuality. In addition to his novels, Johnson is author of *In Search Of God In The Sexual Underworld*, *The Myth Of The Great Secret (Revised edition): An Appreciation Of Joseph Campbell*, *Gay Spirituality: The Role of Gay Identity in the Transformation of Human Consciousness* and *Gay Perspective: Things Our Homosexuality Tells Us about the Nature of God and the Universe* (reviewed in this issue).

