

CREATION AND FALL

Creation *ex nihilo* — not clearly stated in Genesis, but implied. Its first clear statement: “Behold the heavens and the earth, and seeing all that is there, you will understand that God has created it from nothing” (2 Maccabees 7:28). (ἐκ οὐκ ὄντων — “from things that did not exist” — according to the Septuagint translation. Maccabees are among the books not found in Hebrew scriptures; found only in Greek version of Old Testament, the LXX, as usually abbreviated.)



Hubble Ultra-Deep-Field View
Literally, the edges of creation

Genesis ch. 1 The Six Days of Creation St. Basil the Great wrote the *Hexaemeron* — a beautiful example of patristic attempts to understand creation in light of then-current knowledge while honoring Scripture at same time.

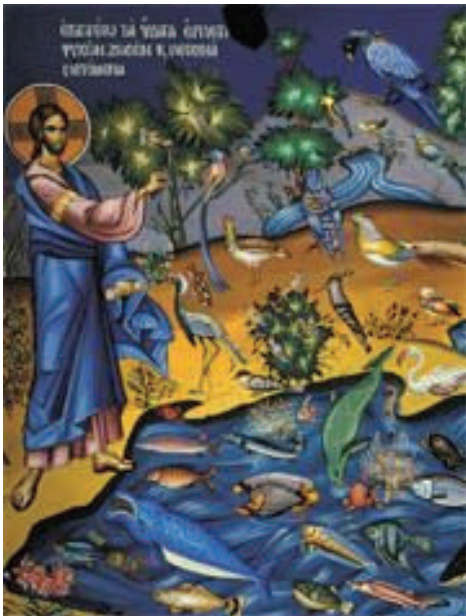
Orthodox theology is not “creationist”!



Metaphor and allegory form strong defense against literalism and creationism! Icons play role in this.

Creation is a free act of God – not a necessity of the divine being.

Creation is the work of the Trinity: Father is “creator of heaven and earth,” the Son is the one “through whom all things were made,” the Holy Spirit is “creator of life,” ζωοποιόν. St. Irenaeus called the Son and the Spirit “the two hands of God.” The Son brings the desire of God into existence; the Spirit completes and perfects it in goodness and beauty.



When speaking of the work of God, the fathers of the church prefer to speak of the Word rather than Son. The Word manifests the Father;

God creates by the Word. And so, every created thing has its *logos*, its divinely ordained essence, meaning and purpose. “Can anything exist which does not lean on the divine Logos?” (St. Gregory)



Each day of creation begins with “Let there be...” and ends with the words, “And God saw that it was good.”



Third day of creation: Creation of grass and herb-yielding seed (Genesis 1:12)
Decani Monastery in Serbia (early 14th century)



Fifth day of creation: Creation of living creatures in the sea and the birds (Genesis 1:21)
Decani Monastery in Serbia (early 14th century)

Tone of Genesis narrative in chapter 1 changes at climax of 6th day: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” (**Genesis 1:26**). The human being is a personal being, so the personal aspect of God is invoked. The human being is made in *image and likeness* of God – thus, the goal of human existence is the same as what forms the basis of Trinitarian life: communion and love.

Genesis 2 offers different vision of man’s creation. Whereas in ch. 1 man is the *summit* of creation, in ch. 2 man is the *reason* for creation! Everything exists in *relation* to man. Here man is made by God’s own hands from the dust of the earth and receives God’s own breath to become a “living soul.” Animals are created as man’s companions and are named by man. Thus, the world is created to be enjoyed, cared for and perfected by man! Man as priest. Man as *microcosm*. (*St. Maximus the Confessor*)



God's uncreated energies — a fundamental aspect of Orthodox theology as developed in the 14th century by St. Gregory Palamas, but rooted in earlier patristic thought.



Creation of Adam
Decani Monastery in Serbia (early 14th century)



Creation of Eve — Decani Monastery in Serbia (early 14th century)
Eve is created from side of Adam as bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.
No inferiority of woman is implied!



“And God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (**Genesis 1:31**) The goodness of creation is a fundamental aspect of Orthodox theology and is reflected in our sacramental and liturgical practice. Modern Orthodox theology has recaptured the sacramental vision of the world that infused early Christian thought and practice. This sacramental

vision is reflected not only in the sacraments, but also in great feasts like Transfiguration and Epiphany.



THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

ST. JOHN
THE BAPTIST

IC XC



Concluding Portion of the Prayer of the Great Blessing of Water, January 6th

Therefore, O loving King, be present now as then by the descent of Your Holy Spirit, and hallow this water. *(3 times. Each time the people respond, AMEN.)* Make this water a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a destruction of demons, filled with angelic might, so that all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for the cleansing of their souls and bodies, for the healing of all passions, for the sanctification of their dwellings, and for every purpose which is acceptable before You. For You, O God, renewed us through water and the Spirit. You drowned sin in the days of Noah. You freed the Hebrew nation from the bondage of Pharaoh through the parting of the sea in the days of Moses. You cleaved the rock in the wilderness and the waters gushed out, the streams overflowed, as You satisfied the thirst of Your people. You, O God, by water and fire through Elijah brought back Israel from the error of Baal.

Do You Yourself, O Master, sanctify this water by Your Holy Spirit! *(3 times. Each time the people respond, AMEN.)* And grant to all your people sanctification, blessing, cleansing and health, so that in this You may be glorified, now and forever and to the ages of ages. *AMEN.*

Peace be with you all. Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

O Lord, who were baptized in the Jordan and sanctified all the waters, hear us as we bow our heads to You, and bless us. Fill us with Your sanctification, through the partaking and sprinkling of this water and may it be unto us for health of body and soul. For You are the sanctification of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer glory, thanksgiving and worship, together with Your Father who is from all eternity and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. *AMEN.*

“God created man like an animal who has received the order to become God.” (*St. Basil, as quoted by St. Gregory*) God created man by his will alone, but God cannot deify man by his will alone. Man is called to join his will to God’s will. But man is free to refuse. God does not constrain. **Genesis 3** is the story of man’s refusal; hence the Fall of Man.

The Fall disrupted the communion that existed between man and God, but also between human beings. St. Methodius of Olympus (c. 300) wrote that when a human being loves another, he can say, “Here is my *alter ego*, another me.” But as soon as he ceases to love the other, he says, “Here is *ego*, and there is my *alter*.” We see this immediately in how Adam and Eve referred to each other after their disobedience. The above fresco from Decani Monastery shows Adam and Eve outside the closed doors of Eden lamenting their expulsion.



The Fall made death a reality in human existence. Does this mean humans would have lived forever if they hadn't sinned? This is a theoretical question and it has been approached in different ways by church fathers and theologians.

Key verse from New Testament, **Romans 5:12**. “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned...” διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον... The last part of the above sentence, eph ho pantes hemarton, was translated and interpreted by St. Augustine in a way that led to a particular theology of “Original Sin” that is not shared by the Orthodox Church. Some Orthodox fathers and theologians have even translated the above as “As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men; and *because of death*, all men have sinned...” This interpretation of Romans 5:12 is one of the key differences between East and West and informs the understanding of baptism, for example.

The Fall was man’s decision to attain deification by his will alone! This defiled the image and likeness in man, but did not erase it. Hence, it remained possible, at least in theory, for a human being to be virtuous after the Fall. This was most perfectly realized in Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is thus called the New Eve. There is no need in Orthodox theology for an Immaculate Conception.