

Rationality of creation in Genesis 1-3 (summary)

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Keywords:

Genesis 1-3, Rationality, Creation, Cosmology, Biblical anthropology, Holy scriptures, Logos

The title of this thesis: *Rationality of creation in Genesis 1-3* aims to combine the Old Testament biblical research with one of the richest and most profound cosmological theme of the Orthodox Church: the theology of the divine reasons in creation. Genesis 1-3 has been analysed and interpreted in a variety of ways during the history of biblical exegesis, but its connection and completion with the *rationality of creation* theme has not been fully explicitated and exploited both in Romanian and international biblical literature, except for a few studies and papers that refer to certain cosmological aspects of Genesis 1-3. The biblical analysis data of Genesis 1-3, thus, is able to offer and create a holistic image of God's creative work.

Following father Ioan Chirila's proposition, I narrowed the biblical field of research to Genesis 1-3, as the three chapters of the Pentateuch that summarize and express the Old Testament core cosmological aspects. These three chapters offer both a cosmological and anthropological biblical synthesis that can be reinterpreted and combined with the patristic theology of the rationality of creation, which is also very actual and capable to express the Orthodox point of view regarding the latest scientific cosmological theories. The Orthodox patristic take on the *rationality of creation* reaches its climax in the theological works of Saint Maximus the Confessor, who, following and building on his predecessors' work, showed that the biblical cosmology can be summarized and interpreted through the connection between *Logos* and *logoi* as divine reasons imprinted in the created elements, structures and living beings.

The present thesis perceives the cosmology of Genesis 1-3 in a dynamic perspective, that is not meant only for archaeological and mythological research but represents a source of inspiration and knowledge for the reader of the Holy Scriptures. The anthropological aspect of this thesis regards, in the three chapters, the paradigm of mankind's relation with the Creator expressed by Adam's relation with his Creator in Genesis 1-3. Thus, Adam's rational and spiritual life in the

garden of Eden, understood through the scope of rationality and the purpose and landmark for Christian anthropology. This thesis will emphasize the fact that Adam perceives creation in Genesis 2,4b-25 as an open book written with divine imprints or reasons by the Divine Logos and Artisan.

The biblical teaching of Genesis 2,4b-25 assumes and continues the cosmology of Genesis 1,1-2,4b, showing that the purpose of creation is Adam's rational work expressed by three verbs: *to keep, to till* (Gen 2,15) and *to give name* (Gen 2,20-25). The fact that these verbs are used in this particular sequence has both cosmological and anthropological implications, but they are also indicative of a liturgical perspective on creation, that is common for all the three chapters.

The present thesis is divided in three chapters, with an introduction and concluding section. The first chapter offers an excursus in the history and theology of *logos*, tracing its philosophical roots to the great patristic works, among which Saint Maxim the Confessor's works are of outmost importance. The second chapter presents the biblical exegesis and textual analysis data on Genesis 1-3 with a visible emphasis on the keywords, important verbal structures and nouns from the Masoretic Text and Septuagint, as well as Jewish and patristic exegetic notes on Genesis 1-3. The second chapter of the thesis is divided in three sections: 1) Genesis 1,1-2,4b; 2) Genesis 2,4b-25 and 3) Genesis 3,1-25. The third and final chapter of the thesis offers a patristic and Jewish theological synthesis on the anthropological and cosmological aspects of Genesis 1-3 and show how the divine reasons or *logoi* are vital to understanding creation as God's cosmic sanctuary and Adam's presence in the garden of Eden and the unfortunate decadence and fall of humanity in Genesis 3,1-24. The three chapters are concluded by a brief section that presents the results of the present thesis, as well as adjacent and related themes in both biblical cosmology and anthropology.

The second chapter of this thesis, the main and most extensive of the three, shows the narrative construction distinctive features of Genesis 1-3: chiasmic structures, verbal structures and words that focus on the relation between creation and Creator and emphasize the rational framework of creation. Besides biblical exegesis, this chapter also focuses on the primordial chaos or Chaokampf theory and offers an Orthodox point of view based on biblical and patristic evidences. The first section of chapter two focuses on the creation through word as a divine prerogative and power in Genesis 1,1-2,4b, the first account of creation. This section analysis verbal structures like *iehi – va iehi, qara, bara, asah, hibdil, tselem, demut*, and their rational character in creation. Thus, the rational expressions of creation in Genesis 1,1-2,4b emphasize the

rational and intelligent design and framework of creation, intended for contemplation and human rational participation. Moreover, this section shows how the divine creative word and calling actually configures and molds the spatial and temporal framework of creation.

The second section of chapter two focuses on Genesis 2,4b-25 exegetic analysis, regarding the change of narrative perspective, which has a more anthropological and epistemic character, especially concerning Genesis 2,7 and the following verses. Firstly, I analyzed the editorial, stylistic and theological difference between the two accounts of creation and assumed a complementary understanding, empowered by the intelligent and rational framework of creation theme. Verbal expressions like *to plant, to put, to make, to take, to mold*, despite being rather anthropomorphic, have a major importance in understanding the rational and *logosic* layer of creation. The unity between the two accounts of creation is also suggested by the liturgical expressions present and pregnant in both accounts that offer the image of a cosmic dialogue between God and mankind through the elements that God created, marked with the divine *logoi* and name based on their function and purpose in creation, all of them being letters in the book that reveals Adam the purpose of creation.

The third section of chapter two refers to the distinctive features and development of the rationality of creation in Genesis 3,1-24. Genesis 3,1-24 shows the devastating and chaotic impact of an irrational and pure materialistic approach of God's creation, generated by the acceptance by Adam and Eve of the serpent's reversed and diabolic interpretation of God's commandment, that disputes the core expression of creation: the limits and boundaries that give order and purpose to each created element and structure. Genesis 3,1-24 also shows the organic relation between the stewardship and ruling power of mankind (Genesis 1,26-28) and decadence due to an *irrational* and *illogic* and opaque perspective on creation, that eventually brings chaos and death, opposed to the harmony and life of Genesis 2,4b-25. God's walk in the garden of Eden and sentence against the serpent have a cultic and liturgical dimension, which is a powerful expression of the rationality of creation. Moreover, this section presents a comparative analysis of Genesis 2,4b-25 and Genesis 3,1 as chiasmic structures that show the image of *gan Eden* but in two different perspectives: spiritual and material, rational and irrational. The first through the enlightened mind by the divine reasons in creation, and the latter through the broken lens of the diabolic action that clouds the mind of Adam and brings his spiritual presence in irrationality and material determinism.

The text analysis of Genesis 1-3 is completed by exegetic notes from Jewish and patristic literature, which offer important perspectives for understanding the cosmology of Genesis 1-3 as a rational and *logosic* representation of the dialogue between Creator and creature. The theological development around Genesis 1-3 shows the need to discover and rediscover creation as a transparent and spiritual environment that reveals the presence and work of God. Moreover, the Jewish and patristic references to Genesis 3,1-24 emphasize the rational character of creation and mankind even after the fall as Adam and Eve once evicted from the garden do not leave its sight, but have their eyes directed towards it as a sign of their eschatological expectation of redemption expressed in a prophetic form by Genesis 3,15.

The last chapter of this thesis offers a theological synthesis of Genesis 1-3, both referring to Jewish and patristic sources. The most valuable and deep theological themes focus around the garden of Eden as a paradigm for the cosmic sanctuary kept and worked by Adam as the symbol of rational and *doxological* priesthood, which is exceptionally developed by Saint Silouan the Athonite, who also regards the hesychastic character of Adam in his attempt to rediscover the spiritual and rational character of creation.

Thesis objectives

The main purpose of this thesis is to proclaim the rational and intelligible structure of the Old Testament cosmology, that is summarized in Genesis 1-3, based on the patristic theology theme of the divine *logoi* that permeate creation and are directly related to the Divine Logos, Jesus Christ. However, this thesis does not assume the existence of textual evidences for the Christological implications of the biblical cosmology of Genesis 1-3, but assumes the New Testament and patristic view that regards Jesus Christ as the Divine Logos Who embraces all creation through His divine *logoi* imprinted in creation from its very beginning. Thus, this thesis assumes the New Testament pattern for understanding creation as a rational whole created by God as an environment for revelation to the human mind. Therefore, the biblical exegesis of Genesis 1-3 reveals the rational pattern of creation that configures, orders and creates a harmonious cosmos. The biblical exegesis emphasizes, as Dumitru Staniloae states, how the divine creative word becomes flesh and is imprinted in all elements and living beings of creation.

Secondly, in close relation with the primary objective, this thesis aims to show how the God's divine will is incorporated in creation and offers interior coherence and purpose to each

element of the created world, working as the *natural law* of creation. Regarding Genesis 1,1-2,4b the rationality of creation shows how each new creature or created structure blends in the whole through *creation, separation* and *naming*. Genesis 2,4b-25 completes the *natural law* of creation by emphasizing the importance of *hypostatic presence* or *personal existence* of Adam and Eve as tillers and keepers of the garden of Eden.

The two coordinates or aspects of rationality: *natural law* and *hypostatic life* are essential to understand the rationality of creation in Genesis 1-3. Thus, the divine creative word (*iehi...va iehi*) of Genesis 1,1-2,4b defines the limits and laws of creation. The spiritual and immaterial light (Gen 1,3), the vault of the firmament, the luminaries of the skies, the vegetation and fauna, culminating to the living beings, except for human beings, are expressions of the rationality of creation through their *logosic* inherent structure. The second analysis of the account of creation (Gen 2,4b-25) will show the second aspect or rationality, that is the hypostatic life, expressed in the creation of Adam and Eve. The biblical exegesis will point out the words and verbal roots that create the rational pattern or paradigm of creation, where the hypostatic life of Adam and Eve play a key role: to understand the laws of nature that express the Creator's providence and will and, act as a keeper, tiller of creation but also as rational and spiritual beings who gives name to living beings, proving its spiritual ability to seize the divine *logoi* of creatures.

Another key objective that focuses on the relation between the first and the second account of creation is to emphasize the relation between the intrinsic rationality of creation as natural law in Genesis 1,1-2,4b and the hypostatic aspect of the rationality that is specific for Genesis 2,4b-25. Both accounts and aspects of rationality form the image of the paradigmatic cosmic sanctuary of Eden that express the rationality and *logosic* character of Adam's creative work in Eden as an expression of paradigmatic priesthood. Thus, the relation between natural law and hypostatic life expressed by the rationality of creation is explained and completed by the relation between the interior *logoi* of creation and Adam's priesthood, that is directly related to creation.

Conclusions

The biblical exegesis of Genesis 1-3 conveys two essential components for the rational perspective on creation that this thesis assumes. The rationality of creation is generated by God's spiritual and rational plan that is prior to the creation of the world. It is through the divine creative word that creation is brought into being. The divine *logoi* or reasons of Genesis 1,1-2,4b offer the

image of an ordered, beautiful and rational creation, that is the expression of God's will and providence. Genesis 1,1-2,4b makes us understand the rational setting and framework of creation as a natural law through creation by word, separation, naming and divine counsel, all offering coherence and order to creation. Thus, the first account of creation offers a whole image of God's creation that is rational and *very good* through the divine creative word. Moreover, the Hebrew verbal expression *iehi..va iehi* and the God's calling (*qara*) that attributes name to the created elements and living beings are arguments for understanding the divine word in a dynamic and active way that, besides order and harmony, creates the premises for communion and doxology in the second account of creation.

The created elements, structures and living beings of Genesis 1,1-24b have an immutable, natural rational setting through divine creation, but are also directed and oriented towards their finality that has a double character: rational and doxological. The archetypal cosmic sanctuary of Genesis 1,1-2,4b is fulfilled by the human rational priesthood of Genesis 2,4b-25. The created elements of the first creation account: light, luminaries, vegetation, living beings are incomplete in the absence of a rational subject that is capable of understanding their true nature and relation with their Creator. Therefore, Genesis 2,4b-25 is a completion and fulfillment of Genesis 1,1-2,4b and are both parts of the cosmic creation that praises its Creator.

Genesis 2,4b-25, the second account of creation, expresses the other aspect or dimension of rationality in creation, that is the hypostatic existence or life of Adam and Eve. Despite the fact that the second account of creation does not mention creation through word, it does express the relationship between the inherent reasons of creation (as natural laws) and the hypostatic life of mankind. Becoming a living being through the breath of God (Gen 2,7), Adam becomes *nepeš hayyah*, personal existence, hypostatic life, rational and intelligible, created in the image of God (Gen 1,26-28), able to relate rationally and dialogically with his Creator through creation. Genesis 2,4b-25 expresses a dynamic character of the rationality in creation through Adam's rational and conscious actions. *Abad* (work) and *samar* (till) and giving name to all living beings (Gen 2,20) prove that Adam is a real and active partner in God's creation, and he even becomes an extension and partner in the creative process by giving name, an expression of absolute rationality which reveals the true nature and purpose of living beings.

Adam's sacerdotal prerogatives and attributes are culminating in Genesis 2,20 giving name task that shows how Genesis 1,1-2,4b and Genesis 2,4b-25 are in close relation and interrelated.

Thus, the verbal structure analysis of the first creation account is completed and oriented to the hypostatic life in the second account, meaning Adam's rational being, a life and presence that shows the purpose of creation. Without the hypostatic and rational life of Adam in Genesis 2,4b-25 the meaning and purpose of Genesis 1,1-2,4b would be ambiguous and irrelevant. Therefore, Genesis 2,4b-25 revealed the fact that Adam is a rational hypostatic presence, a living being (*nepesh hayyah*) who fulfills a paradigmatic sacerdotal function, of outmost importance for the later history of Israel.

The comparative analysis of Genesis 1,1-2,4b and Genesis 2,4b-25 show how Adam's tilling, keeping and naming tasks in the garden of Eden, expressions of the personal and dynamic character of rationality in the second account, can be perceived as an echo of the divine creative actions of the first account of creation which show us how God creates, separates and calls each element and structure of creation in order to keep its uniqueness and coherence in the creation as a whole, according to the divine will.

The second account of creation offers an Adamic-epistemic perspective of creation that shows the complementarity of the ordering power of the divine word and the rational hypostatic life of Adam and Eve. The divine name *Yahweh Elohim*, shows the warm and candid tone of the narrative, characteristic of personal dialogue. Described as a Great Artisan, He offers the perfect and very good creation, that is paradigmatically symbolized by Eden, as a gift to Adam. The Edenic luxuriant and lifegiving setting is the perfect example of how mankind should use its free will and spiritual powers to live in the sight of God. The two verbs: to till and to keep, characteristic for the later priesthood of Israel are not an impersonal commandment or rule but a natural aspect of hypostatic existence, a *modus vivendi*, that is vastly developed in patristic theology especially in relation with the inner being of Adam.

The garden of Eden, however, does not represent the *punctus terminus* of God's creation. It reflects the beauty of the Creator through its luxuriant beauties and lifegiving tree but is also the battleground where diabolic and irrational temptations appear and fight with human free will and rationality in order to bring chaos and destruction. Therefore, *gan Eden* is not a closed chapter, but one that is continuously, if perceived in a spiritual fashion, a crucial moment for the relationship between mankind and God through creation. As mentioned above, the climax of the second creation account is represented by Adam's sacerdotal activity in the garden of Eden, on which rests mankind's future and communion with God. Moreover, the meaning that the two verbs which

describe this priesthood, *abad* and *samar* get in Genesis 2,4b-25 and Genesis 3,1-24 show their crucial importance for Adam and Eve's rational and hypostatic life. Just as Eucharist must be clean and pure sacrifice, so does Adam's rational offering of the *logoi* of creation must be pure and cleansed.

Genesis 2,20-25 אָרָב (*qārā*) is, perhaps, in the economy of Genesis 2,4b-25 the most crucial aspect of Adam's rational work among creation. The present thesis emphasized that the ontological error of the mankind regarding God's commandment that prohibited eating the fruits of the knowledge tree lies on understanding the *logos* and *logoi* as the purpose of created elements. An autonomous understanding of mankind's stewardship among creation leads to an authoritative ruling of the living beings that finally trespasses God's commandments, meant to bestow and maintain order and peace in creation. Understanding the fact that אָרָב (*qārā*) does not mean enslavement of creation and other living beings by Adam, but on the contrary, care and rational working and keeping offers, as this thesis concludes, the proper understanding of mankind's rational and creative destiny regarding creation. Moreover, אָרָב (*qārā*) has a relational aspect and is exclusively targeted to other living beings, capable of relationship and communion. Therefore, the present thesis gives a better understanding of the relationship between *tilling*, *working* and *naming* (giving name) inside the garden of Eden and emphasizes the imperative of an ascetic understanding of them by Adam.

The third chapter of Genesis is a turning point in the economy of this thesis as it questions the rationality of Adam and Eve and shows the intrinsic connection their rational and spiritual being and creation as the object of their care and work. The serpent's sophism and trickery offer a reversed account of creation, full of irrationality and disorder that aims to bring chaos and animosity inside creation and cast Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden and eternal life.

Genesis 3,1-24 proves offers a practical example of the fact that creation and humankind are imprinted and marked by rationality and divine *logoi* that act as guiding lights. The prohibition regarding the fruits of the knowledge tree shows the fact that even human beings must know and observe the limits of creation that offer rationality and order and need to withstand chaotic and selfish desires. All the elements presented in Genesis 2,4b-25: the garden of Eden, the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, the tasks regarding the garden: tilling and keeping, are reversed by the serpent's trickery, that interprets God's creation in a chaotic and irrational way, which only focuses on sensorial knowledge and has no spiritual depth. The fall of Adam and Eve by disobedience is

practically a rejection of a rational creation fashioned by God for a rational and spiritual subject. Moreover, it is an existential failure that is generated by Adam and Eve's refusal of their rational and creative destiny that rules and directs the entire creation towards its Creator in doxology.

The natural laws that the *logoi* of creation (the divine creative words) establish in Genesis 1,1-2,4b are, unfortunately, becoming obsolete and empty due to the failure of the rational stewardship over creation, which is paradigmatically completed in Genesis 2,4b-25. However, despite Adam and Eve's fall through disobedience and irrationality that turned their stewardship (keeping and tilling of the garden and giving name to living beings) into enslavement by the chaotic and opposing conditions in creation, the rationality of creation is not lost or canceled. The first messianic prophecy (Gen 3,15) foreshadows the coming of the Incarnated Logos, the Divine Word of God, Who will restore the rationality and transparency of creation through His ministry and will reopen the gates of Eden in front of which Adam and Eve stood and cried after they were casted out of it by the cherubs with blazing swords.

One of the topics that this thesis often mentions and regards is the paradigmatical character of the garden of Eden and Genesis 1,1-2,4b that are typological for the later sanctuaries in the history of Israel. In my opinion, the Romanian theological and biblical community would benefit from a future extensive development of Genesis 1-3 as expression for the paradigmatical cosmic sanctuary of God.

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