

The Creation Narratives in the Western and Greek-Orthodox Theology of the 20th Century

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*The Book of Genesis offers not only to Israel but also to its neighbors the reason for their existence¹. In western theological thought, W. Eichrodt's *Theology of the Old Testament* and Cl. Westermann's *Commentary on Genesis* are two of the most important works, which are distinguished because of their method and the expression of their theological perspectives on the topic "creation narratives". In contrast to Western theologians, Greek-Orthodox Theologians inherited their tradition of interpretation from the Church Fathers. Eastern Theology has seen the topic of interpreting the Bible as an unbreakable whole, containing God's word and action for the salvation of humankind. Any differences between them are caused by another perspective and ecclesiastical tradition.*

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1. Introduction and the purpose of the paper

1.1. W. Eichrodt and Cl. Westermann are two of the most important scholars in this field. They have left a great body of work on the topic "the world's and man's creation". This paper attempts not only to shed light on their thought and method of interpretation, but also to present Greek-Orthodox theological thought on it, which is closely connected to the thought of the Church Fathers.

1.2. The goals of this article are: a) to present the mainly western theological aspects of the 20th century concerning the development of the creation narratives especially of the previously referenced scholars as the most characteristic aspects on the topic, b) to indicate their reflections on the Greek-Orthodox Theology of the same period, because their work is echoed more or less in Greek-Orthodox theological thought and c) to detect where aspects of both sides, western and eastern, converge or not.

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¹ The Book became known under the Greek name "Genesis" (Γένεσις), which was used by Judaism in Diaspora and expresses the whole process of creation. It is also distinguished from the Greek term "γέννησις" (birth) derived from the Greek verb "γεννᾶν" (give birth to).

1.3. The paper begins with a presentation of the biblical narratives and an explanation of the basic terms included in them. A short analysis of their theological background is also given. The first part is dedicated to W. Eichrodt's theological opus, his method and his view of the creation narratives, which is followed by Cl. Westermann's theological thought and method. G. von Rad's thought about the doctrine of creation, which has been viewed as an independent one, is also briefly mentioned.

The second section includes a short report about the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in the Ancient Church and, especially, the typology of the historic approach by John Chrysostom. It follows the development of Greek-Orthodox thought concerning the creation narratives and presents a short analysis of important terms such as "spirit", "mind", "flesh" and "our image and likeness". Through a comparison of the main points of both theological perspectives on the topic, it is made clear that W. Eichrodt and Cl. Westermann have strongly influenced modern Greek-Orthodox theologians through their scientific works, although they remain deeply connected to the Church Fathers' thought. The paper ends with conclusions.

2. Description of the biblical text.

2.1. *The text sources.* The first and second chapters of Genesis are presented in two distinct forms: one from the Priestly source (P) concerning Gen. 1,1-2,4a and a second one from the Yahwist source (J) containing Gen. 2,4b-25². These seem to: a) bring everything into light and order (Gen. 1, 1-2, 4a)³, b) establish the frames of time and place in which man can live and act, c) speak about the creation of animals of all kinds and finally about the creation of man as God's personal action (Gen.1, 26-27; 2, 4a-7) by putting aside any other thought. With these perspectives in mind, the question of why the Creation narratives were and still are one of the basic themes of either the Christian or the Hebrew Bible is quite reasonable.

2.2. *Creation of the world.* The sentence in Gen.1,1 is of primary importance because it affirms that God is supreme and everything is his own work⁴.

² Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible, Minneapolis 1993, p. 107, where it is also mentioned that on a literary level, the P source has the main characteristics of a post-exilic period, which is widely accepted by O. Eissfeld, R. Smend and Br. Child. The J source is regarded as much older and assigned to the period of early monarchy. Behind the J source lays a lengthy oral tradition, which originates from a Syro-Palestinian setting rather than from a Babylonian one.

³ Melanie Köhlmoos, *Altes Testament*, UTB basics, Tübingen – Basel 2011, p. 264, where "justice" and "world order" have a similar meaning with the Covenant at Sinai.

⁴ "Genesis, the Narrative of", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, ed. by D. Noel Friedman, Doubleday 1992, p. 943.

The whole universe, “the heaven and the earth”, according to the Hebrew Bible⁵, was created by God, the almighty one, and not by anyone else, Deity or Daemon. The Hebrew verb “bāra”, which means “create”, always has as its subject only the word “God”, no other human being. The verb expresses the creative action in general and it does not presuppose any pre-existent matter. In other words, the phrase “God created” means that “God created order”⁶, and as a result the “formless wasteland”,⁷ earth took shape and changed into cosmos. From a particular point of view, speaking about “creation ex nihilo” in these verses is purposeless, because the question came up when Hebrew culture faced the Hellenistic one⁸.

The whole universe came into existence through God’s word. The biblical form “And God said” (Gen. 1, 3;4;9;11;14;20;24;26;29) dominates the account of the creation of the ordered universe and its inhabitants. Light and order, which were firstly created by him, are vital for vegetables, animals and human life to exist. It is obvious that the use of the “word” reflects the spirit of Mesopotamian religious literature⁹. According to the Babylonian Epos *Enūma eliš*, the world was made by the god Marduk, after his victory over Tiamat, from a giant snake whose body was divided by him. From one part the firmament was made and from the other the mountains, valleys etc were constructed¹⁰ the mountains, valleys etc. The creative “word” can be found as a feature of the Egyptian theology of Memphis¹¹. In the religious thought of Egyptians the world came into its existence since heaven and earth were divided. In this case, the world’s existence as Theogony, was combined with the world’s existence as division between heaven and earth.¹² According to ancient Near Eastern beliefs, the “word” was the image of natural and cosmic power. The “word” sprung from the mouth of God and was the creative power, which led everything into existence; that is the reason why the “word” of

⁵ See: Gen. 1,1; 2,1; 2,4a.

⁶ “Genesis, the Narrative of”, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 943.

⁷ See: Gen.1,2 according to the NAS translation of the Hebrew phrase “tö’hû wäbö’hû”.

⁸ See: 2 Macc. 7,28. Konrad Schmidt (ed.), *Schöpfung*, UTB Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2012, p. 90.

⁹ Thorkild Jakobsen, *The treasures of Darkness*, New Haven, p. 15.

¹⁰ James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edition with Supplement, Princeton 1969, p. 60-72; Otto Kaiser, *Der Gott des Alten Testaments: Theologie des AT :1 Grundlegung*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993, p. 98.

¹¹ Lorenz Dürr, *Die Wertigung der göttlichen Wortes im Alten Testament und im Antiken Orient*, Leipzig 1938, p. 21.

¹² Claus Westermann, “Genesis” Kapitel 1-3, *Biblischer Kommentar* 1/1, 4. editon, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999, p. 47, where it is mentioned that the division between heaven and earth is referred in the Kosmogony of Heliopolis.

God in the Bible must be effective, just because it is God's word¹³. The priestly narration in vv.3-25 was formed in two patterns. Immediately after the formula "And God said", followed by the command, there is the fulfillment form "and it was so"¹⁴. For the readers of the narrative it is clear, that there is an inner connection between God's word and the event. God's word is an event. A function was completed through God's word¹⁵. There is another form, which is expressed through the phrase "And God saw that it was good (vv.4,8 (LXX), 10,12,18,21,25), or "very good" (v.31) meaning that the ordered world with its inhabitants was just as it should be as it came from the "word" of God.

2.3. *The first narrative of man's creation.* Man's creation according to the first anthropological narrative (Gen.1,26-27) begins with the following words: "And God said" (v.26) and ends with "and it is so" (v.30). The phrase "let us make" indicates a *plural of majesty* and echoes the decision of the heavenly court. The word "man" (Heb. ha'ādam) means all humankind, one of the human race. God creates ha'ādam "in our image" (Heb. šelem) and "according to our likeness" (Heb. demût) (Gen. 1,26). The whole presentation of man's creation is exactly the same as the communication and the response that exists between father and son¹⁶. It is also important to emphasize that the statement in v.1, 27 is composed in "rhythmic" form: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them". From this point of view, it can also be concluded that both sexes are parts of the general term "human" or, in other words, both of them are the two sides of the term "human". The creation of humankind is the creation of male and female. Both of them receive God's blessing, just as the animals before them, which is part of their nature. Both of them receive dominion over God's created world, which is a sign of man's creation according to the "image of God".¹⁷

2.4. *The second narrative of man's creation.* The second anthropological narrative (2,4a-7) comes from the J source and speaks about God's personal care for the creation of man. "Ha'ādam" was made by "'apār" (dry dust), took his name from "ādāmā" (ground) (Gen. 2,7) and was destined to return to earth. These verses utilize the verb "yašār", which reflects the picture of the

¹³ See: Isa. 55,10-11.

¹⁴ Exceptions to this concept are the vv 6-7 in MT and the vv 20-22, where the phrase "and it was so" does not occur at all.

¹⁵ The spirit of this connection was perfectly presented by the phrase in Wis. 9,1.

¹⁶ According to Gen. 5,3 Adam begot a son "in his own likeness" (Heb. bidēmûtô) and "after his image" (Heb. bešelmo), which are the same words used in Gen. 1,26.

¹⁷ K. Schmidt (ed.), *Schöpfung*, p. 91.

potter giving shape to his own creature¹⁸. The human being is a *living being*, because he has got the “nephš hayyâ” (2, 7), as well as all the other living beings (1,20·21·24·29). Verses 2,4b-25 are the passages in which the unique narrative of woman’s creation (2,18-25) can be found¹⁹.

3. The world’s and man’s Creation in W. Eichrodt’s, G. von Rad’s and Cl. Westermann’s theology.

3.1. *W. Eichrodt’s Theology*. From 1933 to 1939 W. Eichrodt published his great theological opus under the general title *Theology of the Old Testament*. His work was published in three volumes. The first volume, *God and the people* (1933), included a study of the covenant concept, the nature of the being and activity of the covenant God, the charismatic and official leaders of Israel, and the prophetic message of judgment and salvation. This was followed by a second volume²⁰, *God and the world* (1935), where the main points are God’s creative action in the Spirit, his power over the whole of nature, human beings and the history of all mankind.²¹ The final volume, *God and man* (1939) focuses on the individual’s relationship to the other members of the human community, and his relationship with God giving special attention to morality, sin and forgiveness and immortality²². In the history of biblical theology, W. Eichrodt (1890-1978) belongs among the most important scholars, such as Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971) and Rudolph Bultmann (1844-1976), who wrote a *Biblical Theology*, specifically of both the Old and New Testament

¹⁸ Cl. Westermann, “Genesis”, p. 151.

¹⁹ The goal of this particular reference is, on the one hand, the matter that man could not tolerate to be alone and, on the other hand, that no one else could be his companion, except someone that would be like himself. The “deep sleep” and the removal of his rib are elements of the story. It is important that two points be underlined: a) the whole procedure of woman’s creation remains out of man’s reach, in other words he could see nothing of her creation, which was exclusively God’s action. The whole procedure was unknown and mysterious to man, b) the counterpart was of the same stuff as the man and there was no indication that the counterpart meant subordination. When the woman’s creation was completed, God brought her to man who recognized her with the following words: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” The Hebrew words “etsem” (bone) and “basar” (flesh) determine the equality of both. The Man gives the Woman her name as equal to him: “She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”. It must be also noticed that the Hebrew words “ish“(man) and “ishshah“(woman) make clear how near their meaning is. The text follows NAS translation.

²⁰ Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I Gott und Volk, 8. edition, Göttingen 1968, VII-IX.

²¹ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 2 and 3, Leipzig 1939, VII-VIII.

²² *Ibidem*, III-IV.

theology. W. Eichrodt, however, was the one theologian who stayed outside of the purview of historical theology²³.

3.2. *W. Eichrodt's method.* The most characteristic idea in Eichrodt's work was namely that of the covenant²⁴. He believed that the term was the most suitable to express the unique, fundamental relationship between God and Israel. But the main question was which method he could use to develop this idea. He suggested neither the purely historical nor the systematic-doctrinal way²⁵. He was in favor of taking a "cross-section of the realm of Old Testament thought"²⁶. In W. Eichrodt's thought, the approach of Old Testament theology "presupposes the history of Israel"²⁷.

It is necessary to mention that Eichrodt's term "cross-section" must be further explained, because it is the key to understanding his own method, which is distinguished by two approaches. Firstly, he rejected the use of any "dogmatic scheme" according to the arrangement of the Old Testament theology itself, which he called "the Old Testament's own dialectic"²⁸. Secondly, he did not find the use of the historical method adequate for determining theological ideas diachronically²⁹ (i.e. through time), because this would reduce the relationship between the testaments to "a thin thread of historical connection and casual sequence"³⁰.

In Eichrodt's view, if someone wanted to create a synthetic picture of Israel's faith, then he would have to dig deeply into the biblical sources and find their historical context, searching for concepts that might be common from one period to the other³¹. W. Eichrodt attempted to evaluate Israel's theology within the ancient Near Eastern background, considering the New Testament connections quite limited³².

3.3. *Creation in Eichrodt's Theology.* The structure of the 1st chapter of Genesis, concerning the Priestly source, seems to raise questions about its

²³ James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology, Issues, Methods, and Themes*, Louisville, Kentucky 2007, p. 42.

²⁴ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I, p. 30-32.

²⁵ J. K. Mead, *Biblical Theology*, p. 43.

²⁶ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I, p. 7, where he cites the works of Norman H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, 1944 and Harold Henry Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, 1936.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

²⁸ J. K. Mead, *Biblical Theology*, p. 130.

²⁹ Br. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of*, p. 13.

³⁰ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I, p. 2.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³² J.K. Mead, *Biblical Theology*, p.131, note 38.

context: the first verse refers to the initial beginning, which is followed by a series of God's actions whose priority is the creation of heaven and earth. When the creation of the universe was completed, God rested on the seventh day and blessed the Sabbath³³.

Most of the questions which are connected to Gen. 1, 1 focus upon its own syntax. The primary question is whether the sentence is an independent superscription or is a relative clause, whose apodosis follows in verse 3. The answer is closely related to knowing a) how verse 2 could be understood and b) how the presence of an uncreated state is also related to the whole process of creation³⁴.

According to the majority of modern scholars, the issue can't be resolved grammatically, because both options are possible. However, the content of the paragraph remains the main matter. Two opinions have been expressed about this: on the one hand, verse 1 has been viewed as a relative clause. This is supported by its parallel to an ancient Near Eastern, version which reflects the temporal dimension of the phrase³⁵. On the other hand, W. Eichrodt³⁶ strongly supported the case for an absolute interpretation of the phrase, when he carefully studied its related terms which clearly express an absolute origin³⁷. It is clear that the Priestly writer chose the verb "bārā" by using it as a technical term which describes God's action as creation. The verb designates an action showing God as the only permissible subject, without human analogy, who makes use of no material outside of the creation process³⁸.

3.4. *G. von Rad's "doctrine of Creation"*. In 1936 G. von Rad published his well-known essay "The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation"³⁹ in which he came to the conclusion that creation was a supplementary doctrine in relation to Israel's principal faith in a historical salvation. He expressed the belief that the doctrine of creation should never be viewed as an independent doctrine. He also recognized that creation narratives contain elements of wisdom literature, which he had a tendency to criticize strongly throughout his essay.

³³ K. Schmidt (ed.), *Schöpfung*, p. 78.

³⁴ Harry Meyer Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of Genesis 1:1-3", *BA* 46 (1983), p. 207-209.

³⁵ Br. Childs, *Biblical Theology*, p. 111.

³⁶ W. Eichrodt, "In the Beginning: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the First Word of the Bible" in: Bernhard W. Anderson, Walter J. Harrelson (eds.), *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, New York 1962, pp.1-10.

³⁷ Isa. 40,21; Prov. 8,23.

³⁸ W. Eichrodt, "In the Beginning:", p. 3.

³⁹ Gerhard von Rad, "The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation", in: *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, New York - Edinburgh 1966, pp. 131-43.

3.5. *Cl. Westermann's Commentary on Genesis.* G. von Rad's view was seriously criticized by Cl. Westermann, who opposed von Rad's opinion about his interpretation concerning the function of chapters 3-11 of the Book of Genesis and presented a continuation of the Creation narratives. According to Westermann, these chapters did not present a horizontal historical level, but they portrayed the relationship between God and man vertically. They portrayed the ontological problem of human existence as weak and limited⁴⁰ before almighty God. Weakness was first encountered by Man when he was tempted and then exiled from Eden. Since then, all human beings have experienced the bitterness of sin and the bonds of death. After Abel's murder by Cain⁴¹ God's world, which was created *very good*, suffered sin and tasted total catastrophe not only through the flood but also by the authority of evil.

4. The world's and man's Creation in the Greek-Orthodox Theology of the 20th century.

Greek-Orthodox Theologians of the 20th century, especially Old Testament Theologians, presented an important number of studies referring to themes centering on the Creation narratives. Most of these studies were articles, monographs or commentaries. Generally speaking, Greek-Orthodox biblical production could not be distinguished for its special methodological features when compared to Western biblical production. The most important characteristic of it was, and still is, its foundation in the Church Fathers' interpretational tradition. This happened because the Church Fathers focused on the presentation of the context of Christian teaching using ancient Greek Philosophy⁴².

4.1. *The Bible's interpretation in the Ancient Church.* However, it should be noted that the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in the Ancient Church was based on principles developed during the conflicts over apologetics and antiheresies arising in the major schools of Alexandria and Antioch. The theologians of Alexandria used the Middle Platonism and Philo's thought as the background for the development of their theology and the interpretation of the Scriptures. Their main representatives were Clemens and Origenes⁴³. The School of Alexandria expressed Platonic thought and the allegorical method of

⁴⁰ Cl. Westermann, "Genesis", p. 92.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

⁴² Vasilios Vellas, «Η ΑΓΙΑ ΓΡΑΦΗ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ» (The Holy Bible in the Greek-Orthodox Church), *ΕΕΘΣΠΑ* (1956-57), *Τιμητικόν Αφιέρωμα εις Βασίλειον Στεφανίδην*, Αθήναι 1958, p. 49.

⁴³ Savas Agourides, *Ερμηνευτική τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων*, (Hermeneutics of the Holy Scriptures), *Προβλήματα-Μέθοδοι ἐργασίας στήν ἐρμηνεία τῶν Γραφῶν*, ἐκδ. «Ἄρτος Ζωῆς», Αθήνα 2000, p. 157.

interpretation. In contrast, the School of Antioch was under the influence of the rabbinic method of interpretation and the spirit of Aristotle⁴⁴. Its most well-known interpreters were Theodoret of Cyrus, Theodor of Mopsouestia, John Chrysostom and others, who approached the course of history typologically.

4.2. *The example of John Chrysostom.* Saint John Chrysostom was one of the Greek Fathers. In his commentary on the Book of Genesis he connected God's word in the Old Testament with God's living word, Jesus Christ, by using the Greek terms "πνεῦμα" (spirit) and "νοῦς" (mind). In his 3rd Homily on the verses Gen. 1,1-5 he stated that reading the Holy Scripture is like opening a treasure, because when someone reads a small phrase of the Sacred Bible, he can receive great wealth of thought and immense riches⁴⁵. God's word expressed the nature of spiritual streams and was combined with Jesus' logion "If someone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. If anyone believes in me, as Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his belly", which indicated the abundance of the waters (John 7,37). Saint John, based on the previous words, proposed that whenever the Spirit sees an ardent desire and a watchful mind, he freely grants it abundant grace⁴⁶. When he interpreted the verse Gen.1,26 "Let us make a human being in our image and likeness", he referred to the fact that the word "image" indicated a parallel to this command, as did the word "likeness". According to him, the phrase meant that humanity received God's gentleness and mildness exactly as Christ said: "Be like your Father in heaven" (Mt.5,45)⁴⁷.

4.3. *Modern Greek-orthodox theology on the creation narrative.* As a modern rule of interpretation Greek-Orthodox Theology searches additional biblical sources⁴⁸ and compares their context to the teaching of the Bible without reducing its authenticity⁴⁹. Many commentaries on Genesis note Israel's religious environment concerning the world's creation. Most of them conclude that the main idea of the biblical text is to underline not only God's presence in the world and its history, but to adequately present biblical monotheism. Jahwe is the only true God who created the universe and all humankind⁵⁰.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 164-165.

⁴⁵ Thomas Halton (ed.), "Saint John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17", in: idem, *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. by R. Hill, Washington D.C. 1985, p. 39.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Αυτόθι, p. 120.

⁴⁸ See: Anastasios Chastoupis, *Θρησκευτικά Ουγκαριτικά Κείμενα*, (Religious Texts from Ugarit) *Εν Αθήναις*, 1972-1975.

⁴⁹ V. Vellas, *The Holy Bible*, p. 49.

⁵⁰ Stavros Kalantzakis, *Ερμηνεία περικοπῶν τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης*, (Interpretation of Old Testament narratives), ἐκδ. Π. Πουρναρᾶ, Θεσσαλονίκη 2005, p. 39.

Some modern Greek-Orthodox scholars catalogued the results of western research and expressed their theories about the Creation narratives, with the following points:

4.3.1. The Hebrew verb “bārā” has a special use because of its meaning. The verb indicates God’s creative action and has as its subject only the word “God”. In this type of syntax there is no comparison between God’s action and man’s activities, which are expressed with the verbs “yašār” and “‘ashah”. The verse Gen. 1,2 describes the world’s situation before its creation. This does not bear witness to a creation *ex nihilo*, because this idea did not appear until before the Maccabean period (see 2 Macc. 7,28)⁵¹. Some others agree that the verb “bārā” does not support the world’s creation *ex nihilo*, but they find it reasonable that this idea can be concluded through the whole context of the verse⁵². From another point of view, the verb means creation or construction through preexisting material.⁵³ This idea echoes Westermann’s remark that the Church expressed the tendency to keep such phrases as “God created the World from nothing”.⁵⁴ The creation *ex nihilo* is closely related to Orthodox theological thought, but not to the use of the verb “bārā”. The verb mainly means “create, build” and others. The Septuagint translation very wisely gives to the verb a general meaning.⁵⁵ The use of the verb in Gen. 1,1-24 means a creation by the word of God.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the same verb in the second anthropological narration (Gen. 2,7) has the meaning of a creation which is based on God’s action⁵⁷.

4.3.2. Some scholars interpret the word “rūāh” (=spirit) just as “wind”⁵⁸, while others as “God’s spirit”. The last phrase gives them the opportunity to speak about the hidden third person of the Holy Trinity⁵⁹, which, in the orthodox point of view, acts in all of creation at the side of God. In the verse

⁵¹ Miltiades Konstantinou, *Ρῆμα Κυρίου κραταιόν* (Lord’s strongest word), *Αφηγηματικά κείμενα από την Παλαιά Διαθήκη*, έκδ. Π. Πουρναρά, Θεσσαλονίκη 1998, p. 52-53.

⁵² K. Vlachos, *Βιβλικά Α*, (Biblica A), *Αθῆναι* 199, p. 71-72.

⁵³ Eleni Christinaki, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης ἐκ τοῦ Πρωτοτύπου*, (Old Testament Interpretation from the Original) τεῦχος Α: Ἡ Δημιουργία, Γένεση 1:1-2:4^α, Αθήνα 2006, p. 49, note 68.

⁵⁴ Cl. Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 236.

⁵⁵ Franz Delitzsch, “The first Book of Moses”, *COT* 1, expresses the same aspects as well as Cl. Westermann, who made some further notices on it, *Genesis*, p. 238.

⁵⁶ Elias Economou, *Σημειολογία καὶ ἑρμηνεία τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης ἀπό το Πρωτότυπο*, (*Semeiology and Introduction of the Old Testament Original Text*), Αθήνα 1998, p. B.123.

⁵⁷ E. Christinaki, *Interpretation*, p. 51.

⁵⁸ M. Konstantinou, *Lord’s word*, p. 53.

⁵⁹ H. Christinaki, *Interpretation*, p. 69.

Gen. 1,2 it is the Holy Spirit who moves on the surface of the Abyss and participates in earth taking shape⁶⁰.

4.3.3. Gen. 1,26-27 presents: 1. God's plan and decision for man's creation. 2. The fulfillment of God's decision. 3. God's blessing to man and to his position in the created world, and 4. God's care to man's successors⁶¹. The phrase "let us make" indicates the Holy Trinity's existence, whose presence is not so clear in the Old Testament. This will be absolutely revealed under the light of the divine apocalypse in the New Testament. Thus the plural form of the verb could signify *plural of fullness*.⁶² This happens because the creation of man is narrated in the Old Testament, but his regeneration is fulfilled in the New Testament through Christ's Death and Resurrection.

4.3.4. Gen.2, 4a-7 emphasizes that in the human being two elements exist, "basār" (=body,flesh) and "nēphēs"(=soul). This idea indicates the two-sided nature of human beings, which is quite opposite to the suggestion of the three-sided nature (i.e. spirit, soul, flesh)⁶³. Man's two-sided nature is absolutely accepted by O. Procksch⁶⁴ and W. Eichrodt⁶⁵. This assessment is the basis of approaching man's nature not only from the Old but also from the New Testament. This point is also reflected in St. Paul's anthropology.⁶⁶

4.3.5. Greek-Orthodox Theology emphasizes that man's creation "in God's image and likeness" gives him the possibility of deification "by the grace of God", so that he can fulfill his divine destination in the world⁶⁷. This

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁶¹ Nicholaos Bratsiotis, *Ανθρωπολογία της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης*, (Anthropology of the Old Testament) *Ι' Ο άνθρωπος ως θεϊον δημιουργημα, Έν Αθήναις* 1985, p. 19.

⁶² St. Kalantzakis, *Interpretation*, p. 41.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁶⁴ G. von Rad, Otto Procksch (ed.), *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Gütersloh 1950, p. 460.

⁶⁵ W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. II/III, p. 97f.

⁶⁶ 1 Cor.15,45f. See also Eduard Lohse, *Grundriss der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Theologische Wissenschaft, 5. edition, Stuttgart 1998, p. 88-89. It should be noted that Apostle Paul very often refers to the spirit, which exists into man and belongs to him. The term is used by Paul as an opposite to "flesh" (see 1 Cor. 5,5. 2 Cor. 7,1. Col. 2,5), the second part of human personality. The term "flesh" is also used as a synonym for "body". 1 Thess. 5,23 is an exception, because there the human personality is presented as three-sided. Obviously Paul has used the terms in an analogical pattern: body/flesh and soul/spirit. Additionally the spirit of man, according to Paul, is a part of man and has its origins in the teaching of the Old Testament and Judaism, Vasilios Tsakonas, *Η περί Παρακλήτου – Πνεύματος διδασκαλία του Ευαγγελιστού Ιωάννου, Υπό το πρίσμα της καθόλου Βιβλικής Πνευματολογίας (The teaching of John the Evangelist about the Paraclete-Holy Spirit)*, Under view of the complete biblical Pneumatology, εκδόσεις «Συμμετρία», Αθήνα 1994, p. 83-85.

⁶⁷ St. Kalantzakis, *Interpretation*, p. 54-55.

concerns God's imitation through a virtuous life in order to restore his communication with God. This is the only way of achieving "God's likeness". It should be noted that this idea is underlined in the New Testament, which very often repeats and uses the term in its spiritual meaning. This is the reason why St. James' Epistle refers (3,9): "With it we bless *our* Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God". According to the Church Fathers this biblical phrase grounds man's eternal predestination. The spiritual relationship between God and man and his natural connection to Him⁶⁸ is recognized in the entire phrase.

4.4. *The perspective of Christian-orthodox Bible Interpretation.* All these make clear that, according to Christian-orthodox Theology, the relationship between the Old and New Testament is determined by the fact that both of the Testaments as "word" about the divine revelation have the same authority for the Orthodox Church. Both of them are a unique and unbreakable whole. It is God Himself who speaks in both of them, because they contain God's action for the salvation of humankind. This action is manifested in the history of Israel and is completed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah is He who connects the two Testaments⁶⁹. The Old Testament's character, in all its dimensions, aims at preparing not only Israel but also the entire world to welcome the Savior and accept his word, which was exactly what Apostle Paul noticed, when he wrote to Galatians (3,24): "Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ".

5. Conclusions

5.1. W. Eichrodt tried to approach Israel's theology within its mythological environment, because, according to him, Old Testament theology "presupposes the history of Israel". Under this partial perspective there was no place left for the perspective of the New Testament. This has as a result that he saw Israel's history as the history of one's nation and not as the history of God's nation. Obviously the Old Testament references to the Israelites as "Sons of God" (Ex. 2, 24) or as "God's people" (Ex.3,7) hide God's plan to create His own nation, according to His promise to Abraham (Gen.15,5), which will be reestablished through Christ's Resurrection.

5.2. Cl. Westermann tried to present the continuation of the Creation narratives and their relation to the chapters following them (3-11). According to him they do not refer to a horizontal historical level, but they present a direct relationship between God and man. This indicates also the ontologi-

⁶⁸ See: John of Damascus, *P.G.* 94, 920B.

⁶⁹ V. Vellas, *The Holy Bible*, p. 44

cal problem of human existence, because it presents human weakness before the countenance of God. Westermann's Commentary put the topic "man's creation" on a different basis. Man's creation does not denote the creation of Israel's ancestors exclusively, but also all human generation.

5.3. Without any doubt W. Eichrodt and Cl. Westermann have strongly influenced the field of Biblical Theology, each from his own scientific aspect. Their contribution to the formation of Old Testament theology is accepted not only by the western but also by the eastern world. Each one has given his own perspective on the topic "creation" by using his own method. Some of their ideas were accepted by modern Greek-Orthodox Scholars while others were rejected. Additionally, it has to be mentioned that in Orthodox Theology the Holy Bible exists parallel to the Holy Tradition, the basis of the Christian-Orthodox faith.

5.4. It should be noted that the majority of Greek-Orthodox Theologians was influenced by the perspective of the Church Fathers, who considered the Holy Bible as a whole as God's one revealed word. This presupposition of interpretation had in view that God's creation was based on his free will, love and providence for the world and man and as a fact began in the Old and was fulfilled in the New Testament.