



ORIGINAL SIN: A VIEW FROM THE EAST

Lent 2019 - March 27, 2019

All Saints' Episcopal Church, Corpus Christi

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What comes to mind when you think of “original sin” or “the fall?”

- Garden of Eden
 - Adam and Eve
 - Serpent
 - Apple
 - Sin
 - Expulsion
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- Beginning
 - Ending
 - Prescriptive
 - Descriptive



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- Lens on the human condition
 - West: legal - guilt - original sin
 - East: medical - illness - ancestral sin
 - Context: creation

CREATION: TWO STORIES

Genesis 1

- Let there be, image and likeness, good and very good
- P source, Elohim, 6 b.c.e.
- Babylonian exile
- Promise
- “Original grace”

Genesis 2

- Garden, Adam and Eve, “the fall”
- J source, Yahweh, 9-10 b.c.e.
- Davidic Kingdom (warning of imperial ambition, humble and earthly origin)
- Risk
- “Original sin”

WHERE DO WE BEGIN THE
STORY, GENESIS 1 OR GENESIS 2?

CREATIO EX NIHILO - I

- Traditional doctrine of the church - created from nothing.
- 2 c.e., Irenaeus and Theophilus.
- Creation is not eternal - has a beginning.
- Free and voluntary act of God - of the will, not the essence.
- Creation exists in relation to nothing, and can return to nothing.
- Created and uncreated - protects God, transcendent to creation.

CREATION EX NIHILO - 2

- Created nature cannot secure its own immortality. God is immortal, creation is mortal.
- Only way to transcend death is to remain in relationship with the immortal.
- Human body is made of material elements, linked to all creation, and creation has a share in humanity.

VOCATION OF ADAM

- Communion with God is the purpose of humanity's creation.
- Adam's vocation was to unite creation to God.

“THE FALL”

- Adam refused to accept this vocation. Misuse of freedom.
- United creation to himself, rather than to God.
- Fall of humanity and creation.

ROMANS 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all *because all have sinned*.

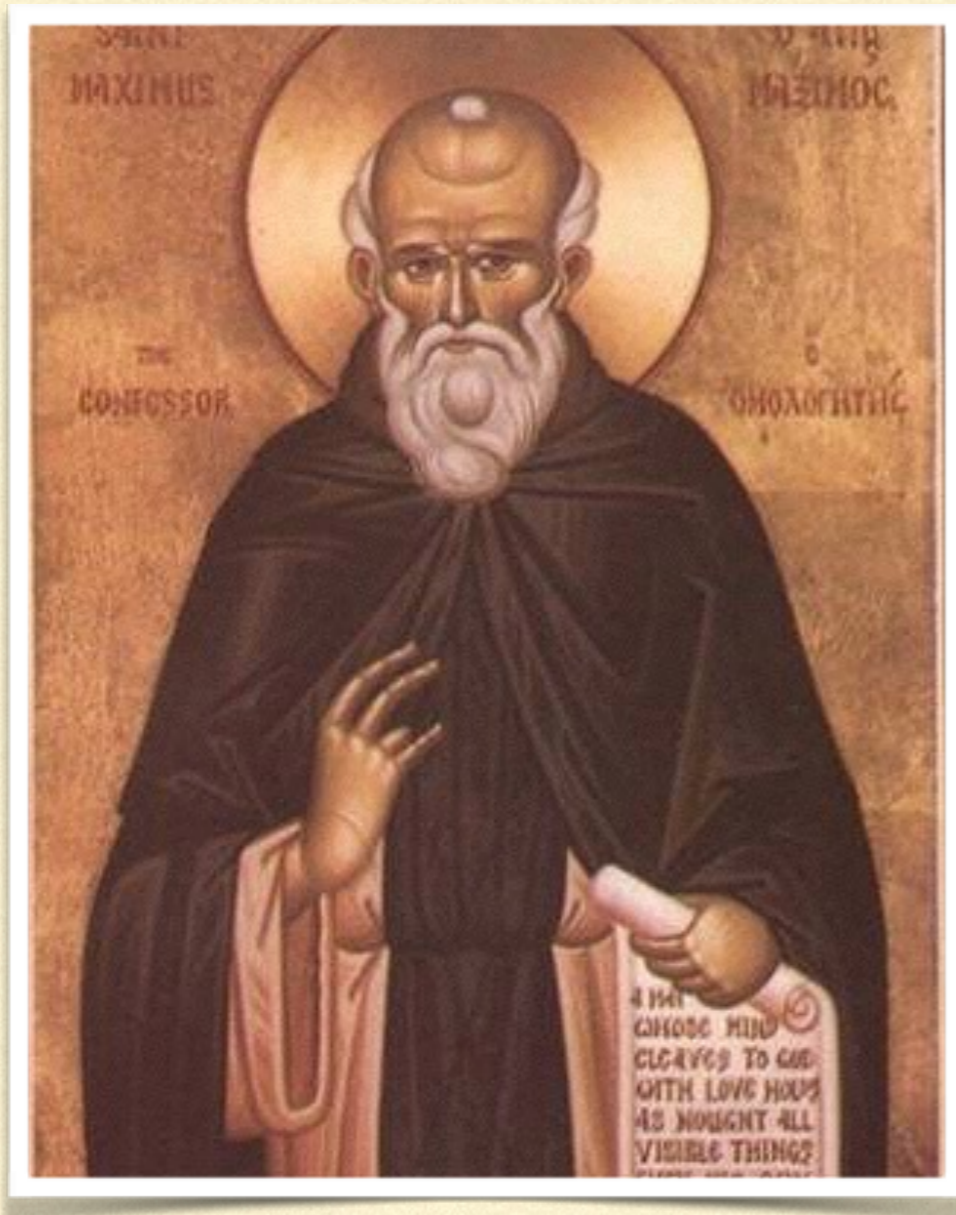
West

- “in whom [that is, Adam] all men have sinned”
- from the Vulgate - in quo
- relates to Adam

East

- because all have sinned
- eph' hō / en hō
- relates to death

ORIGINAL SIN



- Augustinian west - inherited guilt through sexual intercourse (immaculate conception).
- Orthodox east - we are born into an environment in which it is easy to sin.
- Maximus Confessor (d. 662) - sin is a personal act, not an act of nature.

DISTINCTIONS

West

- Nature
- Inherited guilt
- Infant baptism - for the remission of sins. Sinned in Adam
- Guilt or innocence
- Original sin

East

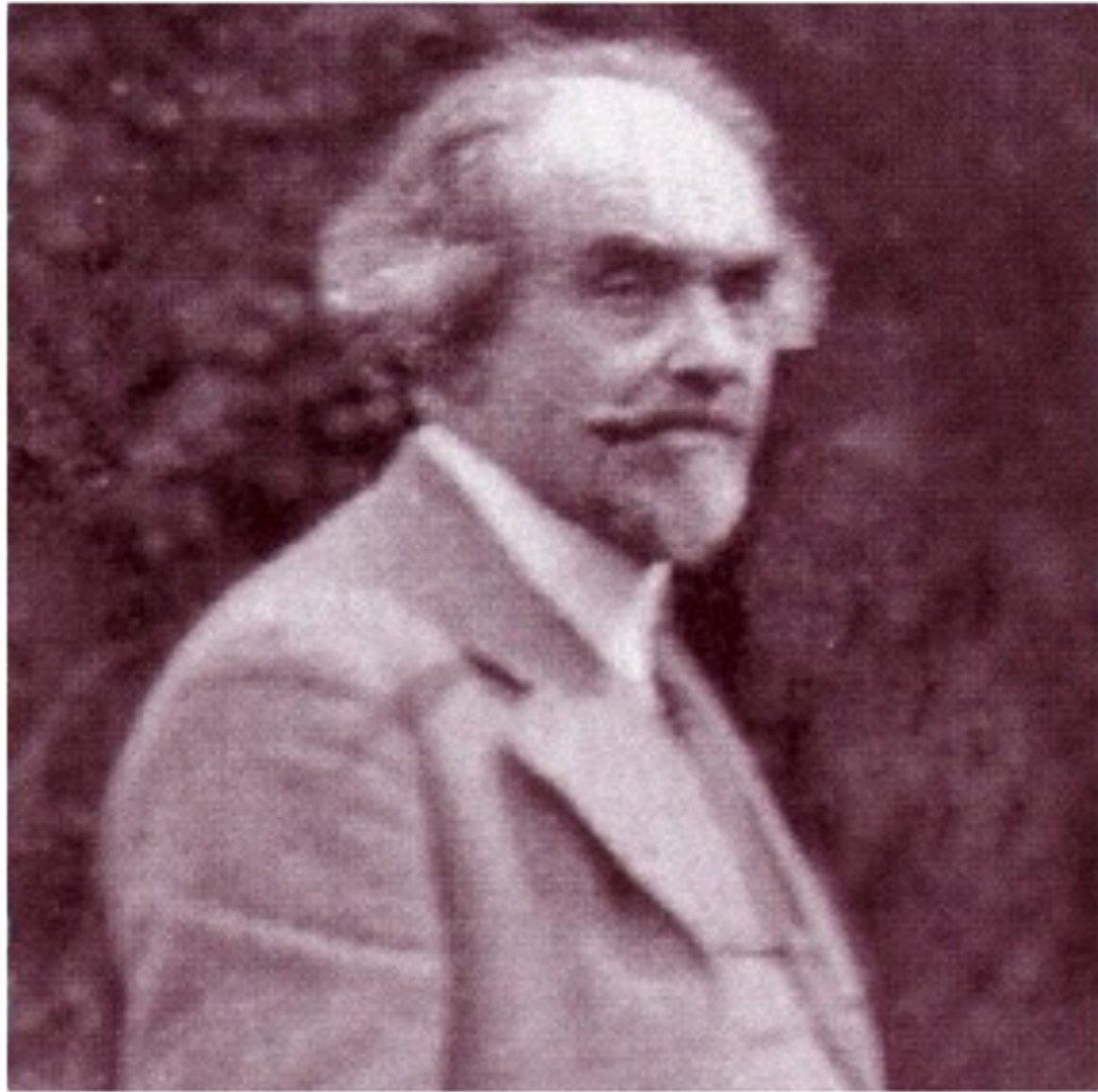
- Person
- Inherited mortality
- Infant baptism - to give a new and immortal life that mortal parents cannot give
- Death or life
- The ancestral sin

THEODORE OF CYRUS

“If the only meaning of baptism is the remission of sins why would we baptize the newborn children who have not yet tasted of sin?”

But the mystery [of baptism] is a promise of greater and more perfect gifts. In it are the promises of future delights; it is a type of the future resurrection, a communion with the master’s passion, a participation in his resurrection, a mantle of salvation, a tunic of gladness, a garment of light, or, rather, it is light itself.”

NICOLAS BERDYAEV



- 1874 - 1948
- Russian Orthodox
- Theologian and philosopher

THE DESTINY OF MAN (2009) - I

- Paradise is the state of being in which there is no valuation or distinction. It was the realm of the unconscious and human freedom was not as yet unfolded. (35-36)
- Paradise is the unconscious wholeness of nature, the realm of instinct. There is no division between subject and object, no reflection, no painful conflict of consciousness with the unconscious. (38).
- Man rejected the bliss and wholeness of Eden and chose the pain and tragedy of cosmic life in order to explore his destiny to its inmost depths. This was the birth of consciousness with its painful dividedness. (36).

THE DESTINY OF MAN (2009) - 2

- There are three stages in the development of the spirit:
 - the original paradisiacal wholeness, preconscious wholeness which has not had the experience of thought and freedom;
 - division, reflection, valuation, freedom of choice;
 - and finally, superconscious wholeness and completeness that comes after freedom, reflection, and valuation. (39)
- Preconscious, conscious, and superconscious.

THE DESTINY OF MAN (2009) - 3

- The myth of the Fall does not humiliate man, but extols him to wonderful heights. (39)
- If man is a fallen creature and if he fell in virtue of freedom inherent in him from the first, it shows that he is a lofty being, a free spirit. (40)
- The myth of the Fall is a myth of man's greatness. (40)

WHAT IF?

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- Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009) (slides 16-18).