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Conditions for a Critique of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between Lutherans and Roman Catholics from the view of the Orthodox Theology

Abstract

The lutheran doctrine of justification is directly connected with anthropology and Christology through which Triadology is interpreted. For this reason, in order to make a review of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between Lutherans and Roman Catholics from the standpoint of Orthodox Theology, firstly have to be clarified the hermeneutical pressupositions for the derstanding of salvation, which on their turn are referred to the creation of man and the sin as well as to the manner of salvation by the Triune



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God. Therefore the presentation is focused upon: a) the existence of man and the salvation of being after the fall, in the context of his communion with God and not from the possibility of liberation from sin, and b) the way of realizing salvation within the Church by the Triune God.

Keywords

sin, communion, creative energy, synergy, Church

1 Introduction

On October 31, 1999, the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” was signed in Germany between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Lutheran Federation. This text is the result of a long dialogue between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans¹. However, in order to attempt to criticize this text, and in particular from the point of view of the Orthodox Church, it should be taken into consideration that the whole theology of Protestantism is based above all on Luther's teaching of justification, and especially on the Holy Bible in justifying the sinful man through faith² within in Christ's

¹ Harald Wagner, “Die Rechtfertigungsproblematik im ökumenischen Dialog. Vom Malta-Papier bis zur Gemeinsamen Erklärung”, in: *Zur Zukunft der Ökumene. Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre*, Bernd Jochen Hilberath, Wolfhart Pannenberg (eds.), Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1999, p. 59.

² “Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre 1997. Endgültiger Vorschlag Lutherischer Weltbund, Päpstlicher Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen” [=GE], in: *Zur Zukunft der Ökumene*, Bernd Jochen Hilberath, Wolfhart Pannenberg (eds.), Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1999), § 1 and § 18. About the term „justification“ and the interpretation as „salvation“, q.v. Demetrios Tseleggidis, *Sotiriology of Luther. A contribution on the study of Luther's theology from the Orthodox point of view*, (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 1998), p. 13 ff. [in Greek]

grace. That is why the teaching of justification is for the denominations of the Reformation the “highest (...) fundamental Article of all Christian teaching,” according to the *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae*³.

Therefore, Lutheran teaching is directly related to Christology and anthropology, since the salvation of the sinner is based on the history and the person of Jesus Christ, where the fundamental truth of man's relationship with God is interpreted⁴. Christology is considered to be the criterion and measure of anthropology, which, on the one hand, is based on the belief in the salvation of man, while on the other hand, it incorporates Christology as an active reality in the Holy Spirit. Thus, anthropology and Christology belong to a single interpretative space, and to the extent that the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ proclaims the truth of the Triune God, the anthropology of salvation (Rechtfertigungsanthropologie) is directly related to triadology. Justification teaching refers to all the theologies of the Reformation, and anything outside it is “a fault and a degrading medicine“ for theology⁵.”

³ *Apologie der Konfession IV, 2*, in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986¹⁰), p. 159. and Gunther Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche II*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), p. 60.

⁴ Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana, Einführung in die Hauptgedanken der Lutherischen Reformation*, trans. Eberhard Harbsmeier, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1970), p. 38 ff.; Horst Jesse, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis. Glaubenszeugnis einer Kirche*, (Augsburg: FDL-Verlag, 1981), p. 72 ff.

⁵ Gunther Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche II*, p. 60 ff. The teaching on salvation “als articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae bestimmt nicht weniger als die Mitte und Grenze evangelischer Theologie. „Mitte - das heißt: alles in reformatorischer Theologie ist auf sie bezogen; in ihr wird ja das *subiektum theologiae* zentral erfaßt. Grenze - das heißt: alles, was außerhalb des durch diese Mitte Bestimmten und Zusammengefaßten liegt, ist, „*error et venenum*“ in *theologia*“ (ibid, 62). Cf. GE. § 18.

Based on the above, one can understand the importance of the text of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification”, notably for the Lutherans, but also for Roman Catholics, in the degree that the latter approach the theology of the Lutherans on justification. However, since the Text of the Declaration does not refer to all the teaching of each side concerning the justification of man, but only to the *basic truths* (Grundwahrheiten), on which convergence⁶ has taken place among them, criticism will be limited to the context defined from this text. First of all, it is necessary to clarify the fundamental conditions on which criticism will be based on behalf of the teaching of the Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition. These conditions are summarized in the answers to the following key questions: a) *what* is sin, b) *who* is making salvation, and c) *where* and in *what way* is it realized⁷.

2 The concept of sin and the relationship between God and man

Salvation, as rightly pointed out in the Declaration, means “liberation from the dominant power of sin” and “acceptance of communion with God.”⁸ However, this determination of sin *distinguishes* sin from communion and *neglects* man's synergy to his renewal in Christ. Thus, the forgiveness of sins and the liberation of man from them is treated as an exogenous act that derives only from God⁹. Sin is interpreted as something that

⁶ GE. § 5 and § 40

⁷ Cf. Hans-Martin Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, (München: Gütersloh, 2009), p. 257.

⁸ GE. § 11 and § 22.

⁹ GE. § 26 and § 28. Q.v. Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, 264: “Auf Seiten des Menschen bleibt nichts als das, was in der scholastischen Theologie als „passive Fähigkeit“ oder „Tauglichkeit“ („aptitudo passiva“) bezeichnet wurde, nämlich sich von Gottes Geist und Gnade ergreifen und erfüllen zu lassen“; Cf. WA 18, 636, 6.

determines the person (Totalbestimmung), after the interruption of his communion with God, and leaves no room for any contribution to his regeneration in Christ¹⁰. The presentation of the Lutheran view in § 28 is characteristic: “Nevertheless, the unjust remains dependent all his life, uninterruptedly from the salvific grace of God without conditions. Even he is always under the power of sin and does not escape from her seizure.”¹¹ The Roman Catholic wording, on the other hand, though it supports the actual baptismal eradication of sin and all that is “condemned”, nevertheless accepts a tendency towards sin (concupiscentia) that comes from her and remains in man, in the extent to which the realization of sin has a “personal element” of man and remains as a “desire”¹². Thus, the transient state becomes an inherent element of human nature so that man will “not to escape from the seizure of sin”¹³ and sin either to “dwell within himself”, according to the Lutherans¹⁴, or to exist as a possibility to the remaining desire, according to Roman Catholics¹⁵. In this case, sin is not treated as a *movement*, but as a *situation* in which man lives and is determined by it¹⁶.

¹⁰ Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana*, p. 38.

¹¹ GE. § 28.

¹² GE. § 30. Cf. *Council of Trent*, 5th Session (17 June 1546), in: Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Peter Hünermann (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1991³⁷), p. 501: “Hanc concupiscentiam, quam aliquando Apostolus „peccatum“ [cf. Röm 6, 12-15; 7, 7 14-20] appellat, sancta Synodus declarat, Ecclesiam catholicam numquam intellexisse, peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est et ad peccatum inclinat”. See relevant information Konstantinos Skouteris, *The 39 Articles of the Anglican Church. In the sense of the Orthodox Symbolic tradition*, (Athens, 1982), p. 231 ff. [in Greek]

¹³ GE. § 28.

¹⁴ GE. § 29. Cf. Gunther Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche II*, p. 68 ff.

¹⁵ GE. § 30.

¹⁶ Horst Jesse, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis. Glaubenszeugnis einer Kirche*, p. 61.

Thus, sin becomes autonomous, in some way and becomes the “prison” of the fallen man, from which man is freed only by Jesus Christ¹⁷. Man, namely, is not sinful as long as he is in communion with God, but because after the fall he has interrupted communion with God, he lives within sin, and his existence is determined by it¹⁸. That is why man's justification is interpreted at the level of relations, that is, as “Wiederherstellung ... [der] Beziehung” and not on the basis of communion¹⁹.

However, sin is realized, exists, and is eliminated, according to the Orthodox patristic tradition, within the communion of man with God. Sin is not the interruption of communion with God, but the *change* of man's self-understanding through his own self and the surrounding world. Explanatory in this case is the reference of Saint John Damascene, which points out the salvific energy of the divine Eucharist-Communion for those who “*receive Holy Communion worthily*” and the disastrous consequences for those who “*partake unworthily*”²⁰. The salvation or the bane of man is the result of his positive (*worthily*) or nega-

¹⁷ Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana*, p. 38 ff.

¹⁸ Horst Jesse, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis. Glaubenszeugnis einer Kirche*, p. 61, and Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 264: “Sünde ist für ihn [Luther] wesentlich der Bruch der Beziehung zwischen Gott und den Menschen”. In this sense, sin is best attributed as “„Ursünde“, die Grundbestimmtheit, die den Menschen von seinem Ursprung her bestimmt („peccatum originale“, „peccatum originis“)” (ibid, 262). “Diese Sünde wird nicht getan wie alle andere Sünde, sondern sie ist... wesentliche Sünde, die da nicht eine Stunde oder Zeit lang sündigt, sondern wo und wie lang die Person ist, da ist die Sünde auch” (ibid, 263).

¹⁹ Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 264. What is characteristic of this is Barth's critical remark that when referring to Theosis (θεώση) in Luther, we should refer “im Sinne einer relationalen, nicht aber einer qualitativen Ontologie” (ibid, 292).

²⁰ John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei 86*, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2, ed. B. Kotter, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973) [=KOTTER], 195 (PG 94, 1148A). Cf. ibid, *Sacra Parallela*, PG 95, 1145BC.

tive (*unworthy*) communion with God and not of communion or non-communion with God.

The communion of man with God is, according to Orthodox tradition, given and clearly seen in the creation of man, who is created sinless by nature and with a will in his own power²¹. However, because of *his own power of volition*, sin intrudes, which indeed is not in the very nature of man, and therefore does not characterize his natural desire, but the freedom of his choices: “*I say sinless not because he does not accept sin (only the divine does not accept sin), but because he does not in his nature have the tendency towards sin, but of course he has it in his intention*”²². The transient, therefore, man is not himself a sinner by nature²³. Man's *way of thinking and life* is sinful, not man himself, nor his actions against his fellow human beings²⁴. That is why sin as an *ontological definition* of man as a determinant factor, which he freely chooses to define at every moment of his life, and not because that is how he is born, is distinguished from sin, which is interpreted at a relational level, that is as a relational phenomenon (*Beziehungsphänomen*)²⁵.

Sin is not a “normal” condition, to define the relationships of people, and from these relationships to define man himself. Sin is the choice of the transient human, which can be cured if man follows the natural course of the created being. That is why the Orthodox tradition refers to the *treatment* and not to the justification of the transient human nature. This treatment is assured

²¹ Ibid, 26, B. KotterII, 77 (PG 94, 924A).

²² Ibid. (PG 94, 924AB).

²³ G.E. § 29. According to Luther, man can be considered primarily good and just, but the fact that he is transiently considered to be „an image of the devil“ and that his nature is to such an extent corrupted by sin, that he can no longer do good, this proves the sinful human existence by nature. K. Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, 262 ff., and Tseleggidis, *Luther's sotirolology*, p. 28 ff. and p. 41 ff.

²⁴ John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 93, Kotter II, 221 (PG 94, 1196C).

²⁵ Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 258 ff.

by the return of the created being to its natural course, which is determined by the *will of nature* and consists in the transubstantiation of the divine energy bearer,²⁶ and has of course ontological character and can only be understood in the ontological context of the relationship between the created and uncreated, on the basis of the distinction between substance and energy²⁷. Therefore, because of this weakness of Lutheranism, to put before present the ontological relationship of man with God, and in this way to interpret sin and salvation on the basis of the ontological difference between the created and uncreated, remains bound by the fair-ethical conditions of Roman Catholicism regarding the teaching on salvation (justification-guilt), the rapporteur of which is Anselm of Canterbury²⁸, despite the clear attempt to differentiate himself from this. The difference is only found in the founding of this righteous relationship of God and man, which, for Roman Catholics, is based on the rational proof of the mystery of the divine incarnation (rationale Argumentation), for the Reformers of the profit that derives from the passion of Christ (persönlicher Einsatz Jesu Christi)²⁹.

Based on this interpretation of the salvation of the transient being, as the recovery of the communion of man with God, sin

²⁶ John of Damascus, *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus*, in: KOTTER IV, 207 (PG 95, 156CD), and Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum VI*, in: *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 6, ed. Heramnnus Langerbeck (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) [= GNO VI, 174 (PG 44, 885D-888A). Cf. Athanasios of Alexandria, *Epistola de Synodis Arimini et Seleucia* 53, PG 26, 788D.

²⁷ Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 291 ff., where the difference between the Orthodox teaching and the Lutheran conception on the deification of man is highlighted.

²⁸ More on the teaching of Anselm's satisfaction of God q.v. Demetrios Tseleggidis, *Satisfaction of the divine justice according to Anselm of Canterbury. A theological approach from an Orthodox perspective*. Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 1995 [in Greek].

²⁹ Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 268 ff.

could be interpreted as a particular ontological category between God and man. That is why we are talking about “dominated sin” (*beherrschte Sünde*)³⁰, which means the inactive but constant existence of sin. However, according to the Orthodox tradition, both sin and evil express, the voluntary negative alteration of the sinful man³¹, and do not constitute autonomous ontological categories.

Therefore, if man's sin is the result of his mistaken *choice* -that is to say, he is considered “*of becoming a weak-willed*” sinner and not “*evil out of necessity*”³² it is wrong to claim that man is “at the same time righteous and sinful (*simul justus et peccator*)”³³ or to speak of a “prevalence of dominated sin”, which presupposes the existence of sin³⁴. The coinciding existence of two opposing elements, which means the simultaneous acceptance and denial of God is not possible³⁵. Since, sin a) rests on man's own power; and (b) intrudes on his own way towards the likeness, without herself having existence, the “non-communion” and the refusal of divine and salvific grace, namely the condition of the sinful man, is not considered to be definitive. Sin, according to the Orthodox tradition, is a wound and a human disease, which can be cured by “*making God ours again and coming back to life*”³⁶. That is why Christ is called by the Church Fathers once as a bridegroom, emphasizing the loving

³⁰ GE. § 29.

³¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, 8, PG 31, 348A: “*This is evil, alienation from God*”.

³² John of Damacus, *Sacra Parallela*, PG 95, 1336AB. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, 176, GNO II, 386 (PG 45, 545D).

³³ Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana*, p. 41 ff.

³⁴ GE. § 29.

³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III*, 7, 55, GNO II, 234 (PG 45, 821BC).

³⁶ *Idem, De Infatibus*, GNO III, 2, 81 (PG 46, 176C).

movement (share relationship) of man to God, and sometimes as a physician, highlighting the repentance of man³⁷.

3 Who performs salvation

According to the Joint Declaration, salvation is the work of the Triune God³⁸. However, the work of Jesus Christ is particularly emphasized, since it is commonly acknowledged that “we are accepted by God only by grace based on faith in the healing work of Christ, and not in recognition of our own actions”³⁹ and “only in Christ we are saved. As long as due to the faith in the name of Christ we receive this salvation”⁴⁰. Salvation, however, is accomplished by the Triune God and acts through the Son with the grace of the Holy Spirit⁴¹. Therefore, salvation should in no way be limited to one of the divine persons of the Holy Trinity, in correspondence with the particular role of the divine persons in the mystery of the divine Economy. Also, the contribution of the freedom of human will, should not be rejected in the work

³⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *De spiritu sancto* 8, 18 in: *Basile de Césarée. Sur le Saint-Esprit*, ed. B. Pruche, (Paris: Cerf, 1968²), 136, (*Sources chrétiennes* 17) (PG 32, 97C).

³⁸ GE. § 15. Q.v. also GE. § 18.

³⁹ Ibid. The faith in Jesus Christ, which only she saves man, is described by Barth: “Der wahre Glaube dagegen weiß nicht nur, dass Christus gelitten hat und auferweckt worden ist, sondern dass „dies alles für mich, für meine Sünden“ geschehen ist (...). Der wahre Glaube dagegen nimmt in Anspruch, was die Passion Jesu Christi dem Menschen vermittelt hat, und führt zu Leben und Heil. (...) Rechtfertigung vollzieht sich darin, dass Christus unlösbar mit mir vereinigt ist” (Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung*, p. 274 ff).

⁴⁰ GE. § 16.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, GNO III, 1, 52 (PG 45, 129BC). Q.v. also idem, *On the Holy Spirit*, G.N.O. III, 1, 115.

of the divine Economy since this shapes the level of human healing in the degree of participation in the salvific act of God⁴². The trinitarian character of human salvation is evident, if one thinks, that the created reality depends entirely on the energy of the Triune God as the work of the trifold mode of three hypostases divinity. Creation, in other words, which “*has the cause and the power of the Being through the uncreated nature*”⁴³, is connected with God through the natural divine energies⁴⁴. Thus the salvific energy of God, like any other divine energy, does not refer to the persons of the Holy Trinity, but to the divine nature and so it is *common* for the three divine persons⁴⁵, which of course this does not mean the abolition of the particular role of every person of the Holy Trinity in the divine Economy through which God is revealed.

⁴² According to H. Jesse, the freedom of man appears in his interactive relationship with God, and above all, in the possibility of choosing between obedience or disobedience to God (*Das Augsburger Bekenntnis. Glaubenszuegnis einer Kirche*, 56 ff.). However, the writers of Confessio Augustana, taking into account the sin of man as given after the ancestral sin, counter the value and the existence of human freedom, and only mention the interminable of salvation offered by Jesus Christ to all human beings. That is why man's synergy is not required, but the boundless and unconditional confidence in the action of divine grace is required. So, “*der menschliche Wille kann Gott nicht gerecht werden. Er bedarf der Hilfe des Willens Gottes*” (ibid, p. 60 ff.).

⁴³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium I*, 271, GNO I, 106 (PG 45, 333BC).

⁴⁴ The energies are called *natural*, because they are essential movements of the power and appearances of the one divine will. Q.v. John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, 26, KOTTER II, 75, (PG 94, 920AB). Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Αντιρρητικός 1*, 7, 31, in: *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα Γ'*, P. Christou (ed.), (Thessaloniki: National Institution of Research) 1970, p. 61 ff, and Chrysostomos Stamoulis, *On light. Personal or natural operations? A contribution to the contemporary problems on the Holy Trinity in the Orthodox world*, (Thessaloniki: Το Παλίμψηστον 1999), p. 115 ff [in Greek].

⁴⁵ John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 59, KOTTER II, 144, (PG 94, 1048A): „*So energy is the drastic and essential movement of nature*“.

Salvation, therefore, is not only done by Jesus Christ⁴⁶, but by the one Triune God in the economy of the Son and of the Holy Spirit⁴⁷. Therefore, the foundation of salvation is not Christology and anthropology, but the one Triune God, as revealed and experienced in the sacramental life of the believer, which takes place within the Church which is the communion of the transformed man in Christ with the revealed Triune God.

4 Where and in what way is salvation possible

The above-described regeneration of man by the one Triune God cannot be interpreted independently from the creation of man and of course the whole world⁴⁸. Reconstruction is not the result of different energy of God, but of the one and same creative energy, which, due to the “*disobedience*” of man, as underlined by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, reforms man⁴⁹. Therefore, an essential condition for the preservation of the created nature in the Being is the continuous *movement* towards its existential cause, which is the uncreated divine energy⁵⁰, so as to be ac-

⁴⁶ Cf. Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana*, p. 38 ff. and Horst Jesse, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis. Glaubenszeugnis einer Kirche*, p. 72 ff.

⁴⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio XXXI*, 27-28, in: *Gregor von Nazianz, Die fünf theologischen reden*, ed. Joseph Barbel, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1963, p. 266 ff. (PG 36, 164C-165A).

⁴⁸ Nikos Matsoukas, „Die Theologie als kritische Autorität der Kirche aus orthodoxen Standpunkt“, in: *Scientific Annals of the Faculty of Theology of Thessaloniki*, Honorary dedication to K. Kalokyris, (Thessaloniki 1985) p. 169.

⁴⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III*, 2, 52, GNO II, 69 (PG45, 636D-637A). Cf. Nikolaos Xionis, *Essence and energies of God according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, (Athens: Gregoris, 1999), p. 169 ff. [in Greek]

⁵⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum VI*, GNO VI, 174 (PG 44 885D). Cf. idem, *Contra Eunomium I*, 271, GNO I, 106 (PG 45, 333BC) and *Contra Eunomium III*, 6, 66, GNO II, 209 (PG 45, 793C). See also Nikos Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology 2. A report of the Orthodox Faith in Confrontation with Western Christianity*, (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras) 1985, p. 174 ff [in Greek].

comblished the main orientation of every human being which is divinization (theosis). This movement, which was interrupted by the initiative of man, created sin and led to the fall of the whole visible world, due to his particular position in creation. Man, unlike the other created beings, is not created simply by the Word of God, but is made “*in the image and likeness of God*”⁵¹. This particularity of man's creation means: a) his creation in the image of the Word of God, according to Athanasios the Great⁵², and b) his *dominance* on the rest of the created reality⁵³. Thus man, through *the image and likeness* of his creation, becomes the *connection* between God and the world and through his communion with God the *sovereign and co-creator* of creation⁵⁴. This communion is *dynamic*, meaning that man is *constantly* working on it so that he can hold himself in existence and become receptive to the *worth* of his Creator's *name*. Theosis of man, the *likeness*, depends on the direction of the movement to his communion with God, which is determined, according to Saint Irenaeus, as communion with the Holy Spir-

⁵¹ *Gen.* 1: 26.

⁵² Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos III*, 10, PG 26 344A. Ioannis Kalogerou, “Christology and soteriology in connection, according to Athanasius the Great” in: *Volume dedicated to the 1600th anniversary of Athanasius the Great (373-1973)*, Georgios Mantzaridis (ed.), Thessaloniki, 1974, p. 254 ff. See also Basil of Caesarea, *In Hexaemeron IX*, 6, PG 29, 205C-208B.

⁵³ Basil of Caesarea, *In Hexaemeron IX*, 5, PG 29, 201BC. See also Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio IV*, PG 44, 136C.

⁵⁴ Nikos Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology 3. Recapitulation and Agathotopia. A report of the ecumenical character of the Christian teaching*, (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 1997), p. 193 ff. Wonderfully, Saint Irenaeus presents the creation of man by the Triune God, but also the dynamic course of man to the completion in *Contra Haereses V*, 1 (PG 7, 1120B-1123B). Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio XVI*, PG 44, 181BC and idem, *Oratio Catechetica Magne*, 6, PG 45, 25D-28A.

it⁵⁵. The ultimate choice of man to deny his communion with God, however, does not constitute a *central* event of history, that even the justified person, according to the Joint Declaration, “always be under the swoop power” of sin and not “escape from her seizure”⁵⁶, but *failure*, a wrong choice *in the process of finishing*, on the path to the *likeness*.

Thus the creation and reconstruction of man, as well as the *image* and the *likeness*, are not divergent from each other, nor are they parallel, so that they can coexist at the same time or complement *the likeness of the image* of man and the reconstruction of the creative work of God. Both belong to the same creative energy of God, while the likeness is the realization of the image, and so they both form a unity which evolves in time through specific events. This course starts from the creation in *the image* and is constantly accomplished with *the likeness*, while in the transient state, the course of realization of *the likeness* continues with the treatment of human nature in Christ and in the Church⁵⁷. It is in this very process of development of the image towards the likeness that the freedom of man contributes and synergy is considered, as far as man is not just a recipient⁵⁸ but he who knows and participates in the divine energy.

The area in which the communion of the light-giving of God occurs is, of course, the Church itself.⁵⁹ Jesus Christ, Himself delivers to His disciples the sacrament of baptism⁶⁰, which inte-

⁵⁵ John Romanidis, *The Ancestral sin*, (Athens: Domos 1989²), p. 149 [in Greek]. Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contra Haereses V*, 6 (PG 7, 1137A-1138C).

⁵⁶ GE. § 28.

⁵⁷ Nikos Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology 3*, p. 212 ff.

⁵⁸ GE. 4.1. Cf. Bernd Jochen Hilberath, “Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigung aus römisch-katholischer Sicht”, in: *Zur Zukunft der Ökumene. Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre*, p. 84.

⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum XIII*, GNO VI, 384 ff. (PG 44, 1049BC).

⁶⁰ Mt. 28:19.

grates man within the Church and through which “our perishable nature is altered into an indestructible, as the old man is being redefined according to the image of the one who created the god-form figure”.⁶¹ Since the Church does not exist in time, but before the world, prefixed in the Word of God, which reveals the Holy Trinity,⁶² she exists at the same time with creation, rather it is creation itself.⁶³ Therefore, salvation of man cannot be understood either outside of cosmology, or outside of ecclesiology, to the extent that the very creation is Church. Therefore, viewing the salvation of man only on the basis of Christology and anthropology ⁶⁴ is unilateral and different from the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

The brief presentation of the conditions of the patristic approach to the subject on salvation shows that Roman Catholics largely silenced the historical factor, while the Lutherans retreated from their basic position of sola scriptura, not for the sake of a single ecclesiastical tradition, but for the sake of the particular tradition of Roman Catholics. The regression of Rome in the language of the Second Vatican Synod with the publication of the Dominus Jesus declaration (Sept. 2000) essentially eliminates the very same content of the “Joint Declaration of Justice”. The fundamental question is whether the differentiation of Roman Catholics and Protestants should be sought at the Council of Trent or producing an interpretation of the whole ecclesiastical life, and therefore the ability of convergence should be sought in the witnessed faith in the triptych of the

⁶¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, 3, GNO II, 313 (PG 45, 468BC).

⁶² Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos II*, PG 26, p. 305C.

⁶³ Nikos Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology 2*, p. 355 ff. Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos II*, PG 26, 308A-309A and *Eph.* 1:4-5.

⁶⁴ Georg Kretschmar, “Luther und das altkirchliche Dogma”, in: *Luther et la Réforme Allemande dans une perspective oecumenique*, (Chambésy-Genève : Du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarchat Oecuménique, 1983), (*Les études théologiques de Chambésy 3*), p. 287 ff.

ecclesiastical proof of the Prophets, the Apostles, the Saints in an unbroken continuation of the revelation of the Triune God (Prophets-Apostles) and its interpretation (Holy Fathers). An approach to the teaching about righteousness with the combination of the Holy Scriptures and the ecclesiastical act would enrich the dialogue with more stable criteria, in order to actually produce a conciliatory text and not concealing the differences in a very minimalist way.

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