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ORIGINAL SIN ACCORDING TO THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

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Introduction

Teaching on the subject of original sin, as it was developed mostly by the Greek Fathers in the Orthodox tradition, noticeably differs to the equivalent teaching of the Latin Fathers and especially to that of St. Augustine. This is understandable, because the principles existing in the two traditions for theological deliberation on this subject, as well as the challenges which led to the development and the formation of this teaching, were different in East and West. Apart from the fact that the Latin Fathers had judicial and not ontological principles for the development of their teaching, there was never such a challenge in the East as the one posed by the heresy of Pelagianism, which the Latin Fathers, and mainly St. Augustine, had to deal with. Although this heresy was condemned in the East, indeed ecumenically, during the council of Ephesus (431), it did not occupy on a wide scale the theological thought of the Greek Fathers, which had been mainly absorbed for many centuries by the Christological problem.

Nevertheless, the Greek Fathers were not indifferent to the essence and the consequences of original sin. Only, they were occupied with these subjects not independently and systematically, but in the context of their effort to deal with numerous heresies such as Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism and Monothelitism, which basically forged the Church's soteriological teaching and experience. Their main concern was to raise against those heresies, on the one hand Christ's salvific work, and on the other the reality of human salvation

and deification. From this point of view, the teaching of the Fathers on original sin does not constitute, in orthodox tradition, an autonomous and systematic dogmatic teaching which deals with an isolated and independent soteriological challenge. It is a teaching inherently and functionally connected to the bulk of orthodox dogmatic teaching, especially to Cosmology, Anthropology, Christology and Soteriology.

Certainly, due to the diversity of the heretical challenges and the different chronological periods of their occurrence, and because of the lack of any systematic development of this teaching, in many cases there are diversities among the Greek Fathers on certain aspects of it. We have to draw attention, though, to the fact that there is a '*consensus patrum*' in orthodox tradition on the basic points of this teaching and this is fundamentally due to the common theological principles of Greek patristic Theology.

Thus, before we go into the actual examining of our subject, firstly let us briefly look at what these common theological principles are, which determined the development and the formation of the teaching on the side aspects of original sin in orthodox tradition.

1. Theological principles

The first fundamental principle is the concept in which the Greek Fathers comprehend the relationship between God and the world¹. For them only God is uncreated, unchangeable and immortal by nature, whereas the world is created and changeable, having come into being "out of not being" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων) by God's energies². Already

¹ See J. S. Romanides, *Τὸ προπατορικὸν ἀμάρτημα*, ed. Δόμος, Athens ²1992, pp. 39 ff.; N. A. Matsoukas, *Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Β΄* (Ἐκθεση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης πίστεως), ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1985, pp. 202 f.

² See characteristically John Damascene, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως* 2-3, PG 94, 792 C - 797 A. See also G. D. Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον. Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορικοδογματικὴν διερεύνησιν τῆς περὶ οὐσίας καὶ*

the world's origin, from not being into being, suggests change and alteration³, which makes it be drawn continuously towards nothing, from which it originated. This is the reason why, the dependence of the created world on the cohesive energy of God is necessary, in order to remain in the state of being. Otherwise it will once again return to nothing and nonexistence. In other words, the created world cannot live on its own independently from its operational relationship with God. Discontinuation of any relationship and communion with God will necessarily lead to nothing and death. From this point of view man, being created, is also inherently changeable and mortal. In order to achieve immortality, which is a natural attribute only of uncreated God, man has to be in continuous communion with Him. Death and immortality constitute the only two possibilities open to him, which are exclusively dependent upon his relationship with God. It is this relationship with God or its interruption that determines whether he will be driven to immortality or fall to death⁴.

In this context we should make it clear that when the Greek Fathers speak of death and immortality, they comprehend these situations not only in their biological but also in their spiritual meaning. Death for them does not only mean the separation of the soul from the body, but also the separation of the soul from God, who constitutes the source of life. The same applies to immortality. It is not comprehended only as man's survival as a unity of body and soul, but also as the enlivening of the soul by the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit⁵.

ἐνεργειῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ διδασκαλίας τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki ²1993, pp. 15 f., 91 ff.

³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου* 16, PG 44, 184 CD; *Λόγος Κατηχητικὸς ὁ Μέγας* 6, PG 45, 28 D; John Damascene, loc. cit., 3, PG 94, 796 A.

⁴ Concerning this matter see N. A. Matsoukas, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ κακοῦ. Δοκίμιο πατερικῆς θεολογίας*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki ²1986, pp. 36 ff., 113 ff.

⁵ See characteristically Irenaeus of Lyon, *Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως* 4, 38, 1, PG 7, 1106 AB· 5, 2, 3, PG 7, 1127 BC; Gregory of Nyssa, *Λόγος Κατηχητικὸς ὁ Μέγας* 8, PG 45, 36 B; *Κατὰ*

The second fundamental principle, connected to the previous one, is that sin, according to orthodox tradition, is not understood only as a violation of one of God's commandments or, even more, as an offence to divine justice, but as an unhealthy psychosomatic situation which originated from the discontinuation of communion and relationship with God, who is the source of life. Thus unavoidably man is driven to death⁶. For this reason sin and death are unbreakably connected and sometimes are considered as identical to one another⁷. St. Gregory of Nyssa, expressing the unanimous opinion of the other two Cappadocians on this point, characteristically remarks "*Sin is the alienation from God, who is the real and the only life*"⁸. Therefore sin is not simply a legal incident which disturbs the divine judicial order with the consequence of God's punishment to violator man, but it is an existential fact which disturbs the ontological relationship between God and man. It has the consequence of discontinuation of this

Εὐνομίου 8, PG 45, 797 C - 800 A; Mark the Hermit, *Απόκρισις πρὸς τοὺς ἀποροῦντας περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ Βαπτίσματος*, PG 65, 1017 CD; Isidore of Pelusium, *Ἐπιστολὴ 252, Δωροθέῳ λαμπροτάτῳ*, PG 78, 932 B; John Damascene, loc. cit., 4, 27, PG 94, 1220 A; *Εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ παράλληλα 1*, 12, PG 95, 1160 A; 2, 4, PG 95, 1269 D; Gregory Palamas, *Ὀμιλία 16, Περὶ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἰκονομίας καὶ τῶν δι' αὐτῆς κεχαρισμένων τοῖς ἴσιν ἀληθῶς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύουσι· καὶ ὅτι πολυτρόπως ὁ Θεὸς δυνάμενος τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου τυραννίδος λυτρώσασθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἰκότως ταύτη μᾶλλον ἐχρήσατο τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ*, PG 151, 196 ABC.

⁶ See also J. Karawidopoulos «Das paulinische Sündenverständnis bei den griechischen Kirchenvätern», in: *Κληρονομία 2*, 1 (1970), pp. 45, 49.

⁷ See Clement of Alexandria, *Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἑλληνας 11*, PG 8, 233 B; *Παιδαγωγὸς 1*, 2, PG 8, 253 B; Basil the Great, *Εἰς τὴν μάρτυρα Τουλίτιαν 9*, PG 31, 260 A; Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος 18, Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν πατέρα, παρόντος Βασιλείου*, 42, PG 35, 1041 A; John Chrysostom (disputed), *Εἰς τὴν παραβολὴν τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστὰς*, PG 62, 755; Mark the Hermit, loc. cit., PG 65, 1017 C. See also J. Karawidopoulos, loc. cit., p.48: «Sünde und Tod bilden eine Einheit im theologischen Denken der KV, nicht nur im Sinne von Ursache und Folge, sondern in dem Sinne, daß die beiden Begriffe dieselbe Situation der Entfernung der Menschen von der Quelle des Lebens ausdrücken. Diese Situation wird als Θεοῦ ἀλλοτριώσεις bezeichnet».

⁸ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Κατὰ Εὐνομίου 2*, PG 45, 545 B. Cf. Basil the Great, *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἷτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ Θεὸς 7*, PG 31, 345 A; 8, PG 31, 348 A; *Περὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος 16*, 40, PG 32, 141 BC; Gregory the Theologian, *Ἐπη ἠθικὰ 8*, 184, PG 37, 662 A.

relationship with God, which leads man unavoidably to illness, decline and death. In this sense death is not understood as a punishment inflicted by God himself, but as a natural consequence of sin which is, as we have said, the discontinuation of communion with God. God being the source of all that is good cannot be regarded as responsible for death⁹. As St. Irenaeus characteristically emphasises, *"To those who keep friendship with God, He grants His own communion. And God's communion is life and light and pleasure of His goods. Those who withdraw from communion with God according to their own will, He brings upon them separation from Himself. But separation from God is death, as separation from light is darkness; separation from God is therefore rejection of all His goods"*¹⁰. This is exactly the reason why salvation in orthodox tradition is understood not as restoration of a judicial relationship between God and man, but as healing and deliverance from the dominion of decline and death.

2. Man's original state and fall

Although the Greek Fathers sometimes describe man's original state in different ways, there are very many common points among them which constitute the starting point and the basis for an orthodox understanding and interpretation of the event of the fall.

Man before his fall, created in the image and likeness of God, was - as they emphasise - in communion with the persons of the Holy Trinity. Adorned with the grace of the Holy Spirit he was participant of the divine glory and had knowledge of the divine truths. His life was free from anxiety, calm and impassible, and he was in complete harmony with the whole creation, without running the risk of disturbing his relation to it

⁹ See Basil the Great, *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἴτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ θεὸς* 7, PG 31, 345 A. See also J. S. Romanides, loc. cit., pp 19 f., 160; J. Karawidopoulos, loc. cit., p. 49.

¹⁰ Loc. cit., 5, 27, 2, PG 7, 1196 AB.

or much more of being endangered by it. Fear of death and carnal desire did not exist in him. However, being created and changeable in his nature, it was not possible for him to be immortal and utterly perfect by nature¹¹. Besides, if he had been created perfect from the beginning, he would have been deprived of the most essential feature of his existence, i.e. the freedom of his will. Something like that though, would be extremely inconsistent to the notion of creation of man, because, according to the Greek Fathers, freedom of will, or in other words the free and sovereign will (αὐτεξούσιον), which is inseparably connected to the rational (λογικὸν), is what constitutes the essence of man¹². Therefore according to them, the purpose of man's creation was to enable man, who is a reasonable creature possessing free will, in communion with triune God, to achieve immortality and deification through his moral and spiritual perfection¹³. Besides, according to patristic tradition, this is the deeper meaning of man's

¹¹ See characteristically John Damascene, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως* 2, 12, PG 94, 921 A - 924 A; 2, 30, PG 94, 976 A - 977 C, where the previous patristic tradition on this matter is summarized, and Gregory Palamas, loc.cit., PG 151, 204 A, 220 A. See also the studies cited below, where there is abundance of related patristic references: A. Gaudel, «Péché originel», in: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 12, 1, col. 318 ff., 322 ff., 340, 343 f., 347 ff., 350 f., 429 f.; M. Jugie, «Péché originel dans l'Église Grecque après Saint Jean Damascène», in: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 12, 1, line 610; J. S. Romanides, loc. cit., pp. 121 ff., 156; J. Gross, *Entstehungsgeschichte des Erbsünderdogmas (Von der Bibel bis Augustinus)*, Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, München - Basel 1960, pp. 76 ff., 86 ff., 109 f., 125 ff., 140, 143 f., 148 ff., 168, 170 f., 182, 209 ff.; A. V. Vletsis, *Τὸ προπατορικὸ ἀμάρτημα στὴ θεολογία Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ. Ἐρευνα σὺς ἀπαρχὲς μιᾶς ὀντολογίας τῶν κτιστῶν*, ed. Tertios, Katerini 1998, pp. 227 ff.; Ch. Filiotis - Vlachavas, *La creation et la chute de l'homme dans la pensée de Cyrille d'Alexandrie selon ses oeuvres d'avant la querelle nestorienne* (Thèse de Doctorat), Strasburg 2003, pp. 122 ff., 163 ff.; Y. Spiteris, «Il peccato originale nella tradizione orientale», in: *PATH (=Pontificia Academia Theologica)* 3 (2004), pp. 338 ff.

¹² See N. A. Matsoukas, *Κόσμος, ἄνθρωπος, κοινωνία κατὰ τὸν Μάξιμο Ὁμολογητή*, ed. Grigoris, Athens 1980, pp. 123 ff.; A. V. Vletsis, loc. cit., pp. 191 ff.; G. D. Martzelos, *Ὁρθόδοξο δόγμα καὶ θεολογικὸς προβληματισμὸς. Μελετήματα δογματικῆς θεολογίας Β'*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 2000, pp. 107 ff.

¹³ See characteristically Theophilus of Antiochia, *Πρὸς Αὐτόλυκον* 2, 24, PG 6, 1089 C - 1092 A; Irenaeus of Lyon, loc. cit. 4, 38, 3, PG 7, 1108 ABC; Athanasius the Great, *Κατὰ Ἑλλήνων* 2, PG 25, 5 C - 8 A.

creation "in the image" (κατ' εικόνα) and "in the likeness" (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) of God. According to the majority of the Greek Fathers, the creation of man "in the image" of God is related to the rational and to the free and sovereign will, which man was endowed with¹⁴, whereas man's creation "in the likeness" of God is related to the possibility of him becoming like God, that is his deification, after a free course of spiritual maturity and moral progress, with the contribution of the Holy Spirit¹⁵. According to orthodox tradition, man's fall occurred during this moral and spiritual progress from the "in the image" to the "in the likeness" situation. Although it overturned God's initial plan and definitely constitutes a tragic event for man, it is seen as nothing more than an episode in the whole history of Divine Economy¹⁶.

Let us look at how orthodox tradition understands original sin as an incidental occurrence and mostly what its tragic consequences are to fallen man. Besides, as it has aptly been remarked also by Roman Catholic theologians, the Greek Fathers insist on these ontological consequences and are mostly

¹⁴ See characteristically Athanasius the Great, *Λόγος περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου καὶ τῆς διὰ σώματος πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπιφανείας αὐτοῦ* 3, PG 25, 101 B; 6, PG 25, 105 C; Basil the Great, *Εἰς τὸν 48 ψαλμὸν* 8, PG 29, 449 BC; *Εἰς τὸ 'Πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ'* 6, PG 31, 212 BC; *Περὶ εὐχαριστίας* 2, PG 31, 221 C; *Ὑμιλία ἐν λιμῷ καὶ ἀύχμῳ* 5, PG 31, 317 A; *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἷτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ Θεὸς* 6, PG 31, 344 BC; *Ὅροι κατὰ πλάτος* 2, 3, PG 31, 913 B; *Ἐπιστολὴ* 233, *Ἀμφιλοχίῳ ἐρωτήσαντι*, 1, PG 32, 864 C; Gregory of Nyssa, *Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου* 11, PG 44, 156 B; 12, PG 44, 161 C; 164 A; 16, PG 44, 184 B; 185 C; *Λόγος κατηχητικὸς ὁ μέγας* 5, PG 45, 24 C; 21, PG 45, 57 CD; *Περὶ παρθενίας* 12, PG 46, 369 C; Κωνσταντίνου διακόνου, *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους ἐνδόξους καὶ πανευφήμους μάρτυρας τοὺς ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀθλήσαντας* 14, PG 88, 496 C; Maximus the Confessor, *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πύρρου*, PG 91, 304 C; John Damascene, loc. cit., 2, 12, PG 94, 920 B. See also G. D. Martzelos, loc. cit., pp. 109, 121 f.

¹⁵ See characteristically Clement of Alexandria, *Στρωματεῖς* 2, 22, PG 8, 1080 C; Methodius of Olympus, *Συμπόσιον τῶν δέκα παρθένων ἢ Περὶ ἀγνείας* 1, 4, PG 18, 44 C - 45 A; Gregory of Nyssa, *Εἰς τὰ τῆς Γραφῆς ῥήματα 'Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ ὁμοίωσιν'* 1, PG 44, 273 ABCD; John Chrysostom, *Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν* 9, 3, PG 53, 78; John Damascene, loc. cit., PG 94, 920 B.

¹⁶ See also N. A. Matsoukas, *Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Β' (Ἐκθεση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης πίστεως)*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1985, pp. 203 f.

interested in them in order to develop their teaching on Christ's salvific work¹⁷.

As we have mentioned, God, already from the beginning of man's creation, set as purpose for man's existence his moral and spiritual perfection and deification, which could be achieved only through his communion with God and obedience to His commandments. Man, though, instigated by the devil, desired equality with God (ἰσοθεΐα) and deification by his own means, bypassing the divine plan and violating the commandment of his creator¹⁸. This is how orthodox tradition basically interprets the biblical passage relating to the violation by Adam and Eve of God's commandment not to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil¹⁹. The only exception to this seems to be the view of St. Clement of Alexandria who, using the allegorical method of interpretation of Holy Scripture, identifies original sin in the premature and therefore unlawful connection between Adam and Eve by carnal relations²⁰. However, the Greek Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, obviously facing abstinent views of Platonic, Gnostic and Manichaean origin²¹, based exclusively on the

¹⁷ See M. Jugie, «Le dogme du péché originel dans l'Église Grecque», in: *Recherches Augustiniennes* 16 (1910), p. 166 ; A. Gaudel, loc. cit., col. 360 f., 381.

¹⁸ See Athanasius the Great, *Περὶ τῆς σωτηριώδους ἐπιφανείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ κατὰ Ἀπολλιναρίου* 2, 9, PG 26, 1148 B; Basil the Great, *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἴτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ θεὸς* 8, PG 31, 348 B; Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος 38, Εἰς τὰ θεοφάνια, εἴτουν γενέθλια τοῦ Σωτῆρος*, 12, PG 36, 324 BC; *Λόγος 39, Εἰς τὰ ἅγια φῶτα*, 13, PG 36, 348 D; John Chrysostom, *Πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους καὶ Ἕλληνας αἰρετικούς· καὶ εἰς τὸ Ἑκλήθη Τησοῦς εἰς γάμον*, PG 48, 1078; *Εἰς τοὺς ἀνδριάντας* 11, 2, PG 49, 121, 269; *Περὶ προνοίας καὶ εἰμαρμένης* 2, PG 50, 754; *Εἰς τὸν τίμιον καὶ ζωοποιὸν σταυρόν, καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν πρώτων ἀνθρώπων παραβάσεως*, PG 50, 820; *Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν* 16, 3 - 4, PG 53, 129 - 130; 18, 2, PG 53, 150 - 151; *ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Ἀπόστολον καὶ Εὐαγγελιστὴν* 9, 2, PG 59, 72; *Ὁμιλία λεχθεῖσα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ ἐπὶ Παύλου, Γότιθων ἀναγνόντων, καὶ πρεσβυτέρου Γότιθου προσομιλήσαντος* 3, PG 63, 505; John Damascene, loc. cit., 2, 25, B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1973, pp. 74 f.

¹⁹ See Gen. 2, 16-17· 3, 1-7.

²⁰ See Clement of Alexandria, *Στρωματεῖς* 3, 14, PG 8, 1193 C - 1196 A; 17, PG 8, 1208 AB. See also G. J. Mantzarides, *Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1991, p. 300.

²¹ See for example Clement of Alexandria, loc. cit., 3, 13, PG 8, 1192C - 1193 B; 17, PG 8, 1205 A - 1208 A.

biblical narrative of *Genesis*, clearly and categorically reject the identification of original sin with Adam and Eve's connection by carnal relations²². Tracing the cause of the fall not only in man's voluptuousness but also in his vainglory²³, they particularly stress the spiritual dimension of original sin essentially regarding it as an act of disobedience and rebellion of man against God's will.

As it is stressed by the Fathers, by means of this disobedience Adam and Eve tore apart their relation and communion with God. This had the consequence of them being deprived of the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit and falling into the dominion of the devil, sin, decay and death. They lost their holiness and their childlike innocence, their mind was darkened, their rational and their free and sovereign will, which constitute their situation "in the image" of God, were blackened, and their previous knowledge of God was driven away²⁴. Creation from now on has become hostile towards man with the effect of him feeling intensely the threat of death posed by it. Man and creation have now found themselves in a hostile and competitive relation to one another, man's goal being the neutralization and the exceeding of the threat of death which originated

²² See Athanasius the Great, *Εἰς τοὺς Ψαλμοὺς*, 50, 7, PG 27, 240 CD; John Chrysostom, *Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν* 15, 4, PG 53, 123: «Μετὰ... τὴν παράβασιν τὰ τῆς συνουσίας γέγονεν». 18, 4, PG 53, 153: «Μετὰ τὴν παρακοήν, μετὰ τὴν ἐκπτώσιν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ παραδείσου, τότε τὰ τῆς συνουσίας ἀρχὴν λαμβάνει»; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ἐρανιστιῆς ἡτοι Πολύμορφος* 3, PG 83, 245 D - 248 A; John Damascene, loc. cit., 4, 24, PG 94, 1208 A.

²³ See characteristically Mark the Hermit, loc. cit., PG 65, 1017 C; 1020 D; *Συμβουλία νοδς πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν* 5, PG 65, 1108 D - 1109 A.

²⁴ See characteristically Athanasius the Great, *Κατὰ Ἑλλήνων* 3-4, PG 25, 8 B - 9 D; John Damascene, loc. cit., 2, 12, PG 94, 977 C - 980 A; 3, 1, PG 94, 981 A. See also the following cited bibliography where there is abundance of more related patristic references: A. Gaudel, «Péché originel», loc. cit., col. 318 ff., 322 ff., 340 ff., 343 f., 348 f., 351, 429 f.; J. S. Romanides, loc. cit., pp. 156 ff.; J. Gross, loc. cit., pp. 79 f., 82 ff., 89 f., 110 f., 127 f., 140 f., 144 ff., 151 ff., 168 f., 171 f., 182 ff., 212 f.; A. V. Vletsis, loc. cit., pp. 256 ff.; M. Filiotis - Vlachavas, loc. cit., pp. 262 ff.; Y. Spiteris, loc. cit., pp. 339 ff.

from nature²⁵. This is how orthodox tradition understands the fact that after the fall, not only man but also the whole of creation "laments and suffers pain together" with him (Rom. 8, 22) and "creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but because of the one who subjected it" (Rom. 8, 20)²⁶. In this context, the disturbance of the ecological balance and the appearance of the ecological problem, which we particularly face nowadays, undoubtedly have their roots in man's fall to sin, decay and death.

At this point we should stress that for the Greek Fathers who are based on the Holy Scripture on this matter²⁷, man's fall to decay and death does not constitute a punishment imposed by God, but a natural consequence of original sin by which his existential communion and relation with the source of life was cut²⁸. Besides, the biblical passage "on the day you eat of it you shall most surely die" (Gen. 2, 17) is understood in orthodox tradition not as God's threat concerning the punishment He would impose on Adam and Eve if they violated His will, but as a loving warning towards them, aiming to protect them from the danger brought about by the

²⁵ See characteristically Theophilus of Antioch, loc. cit., 2, 17, PG 6, 1080 BC; Symeon the New Theologian, *Ἠθικὸς λόγος* 1, 2, Sources Chrétiennes 122, p. 190. See also A. Kesselopoulos, *Ἄνθρωπος καὶ φυσικὸ περιβάλλον*. Σπουδὴ στὸν ἅγιο Συμεὼν τὸ Νέο Θεολόγο, ed. Domos, Athens 1992, pp. 93 ff.; S. J. Balatsoukas, *Οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ τὸ φυσικὸ περιβάλλον*, ed. «Mygdonia», Thessaloniki 1996, pp. 50 ff.

²⁶ See John Chrysostom, *Εἰς τοὺς ἀνδριάντας* 10, 5, PG 49, 117; *Εἰς τὴν γενέθλιον ἡμέραν τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* 6, PG 49, 360; *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολὴν* 14, 4-5, PG 60, 529 - 530. See also J. Galanis, *Ἡ σχέση ἀνθρώπου καὶ κτίσεως κατὰ τὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη*, Thessaloniki 1984, pp. 89 ff.; Idem, «Τὸ καινοδιαθηκικὸ ὑπόβαθρο τῶν σχέσεων ἀνθρώπου καὶ κτίσης κατὰ τὴ λατρευτικὴ πράξη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας», in: *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίδα Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης (Τιμητικὸ ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Ὀμότιμο Καθηγητὴ Κωνσταντῖνο Καλοκύρη)*, Thessaloniki 1985, pp. 385 ff.

²⁷ See *Wisdom of Solomon* 1, 13: «...ὁ Θεὸς θάνατον οὐκ ἐποίησεν, οὐδὲ τέρεται ἐπ' ἀπωλεία ζώντων»· 2, 23-24: «...ὁ Θεὸς ἐκτίσεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπ' ἀφθαρσίᾳ καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ἀϊδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν· φθόνῳ δὲ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον».

²⁸ See Theophilus of Antioch, loc. cit., 27, PG 6, 1093 B - 1096 A; Basil the Great, loc. cit., PG 31, 345 A; Nemesius of Emessa, *Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου* 1, PG 40, 513 B - 516 A; John Damascene, loc. cit., 2, 28, PG 94, 961 BC; *Εἰς τὰ ἱερά παράλληλα* 4,2, PG 95, 1352 A.

violation of the divine commandment²⁹. Certainly, even death itself was allowed by God for reasons of love towards man, "so that evil does not become immortal"³⁰. So the rational and possessing free will creature of God, which was created for immortality and deification, was suddenly found under the dominion of the devil, decay and death because of its disobedience and bad use of its freedom.

Although original sin, according to the Greek Fathers, was not an act of necessity on the part of Adam's changeable nature but an act of his free choice³¹ it did not remain limited to the level of will. It also extended to the ontological bearer of will which is nature. Because of original sin, human nature in the face of Adam became ill, was ontologically eroded and, having been cut from the source of life, unavoidably ended in decay and death³². The Greek

²⁹ See Athanasius the Great, *Λόγος περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου καὶ τῆς διὰ σώματος πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπιφανείας αὐτοῦ* 3, PG 25, 101 ABCD; John Chrysostom, *Κατὰ Τουδαίων* 8, 2, PG 48, 929; *Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν* 14, 2, PG 53, 114· 18, 1, PG 53, 147; Gregory Palamas, *Κεφάλαια φυσικὰ* 51, PG 150, 1157 D - 1160 A.

³⁰ See Maximus the Confessor, *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον τὸν ὀσιώτατον πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἡγούμενον περὶ διαφόρων ἀπόρων τῆς Θείας Γραφῆς* 44, PG 90, 417 A. See also Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος* 38, *Εἰς τὰ Θεοφάνια*, *εἴτουν Γενέθλια τοῦ Σωτῆρος*, 12, PG 36, 324 D: «Κερδαίνει (i.e. ὁ Ἀδὰμ) μὲν τι κἀνταῦθα· τὸν θάνατον καὶ τὸ διακοπῆναι τὴν ἀμαρτίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθάνατον ᾗ τὸ κακόν· καὶ γίνεται φιλανθρωπία ἢ τιμωρία. Οὕτω γὰρ ἐγὼ πείθομαι κολάζειν Θεόν». Cf. Basil the Great, loc. cit., PG 31, 345 A. See also J. S. Romanides, loc. cit., p. 157.

³¹ See Athanasius the Great, *Κατὰ Ἑλλήνων* 4, PG 25, 9 BC· 7, PG 25, 16 AB; Basil the Great, *Εἰς τὴν Ἐξαήμερον* 2, 5, PG 29, 40 AB; *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἴτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ Θεὸς* 3, PG 31, 332 C - 333A; 5, PG 31, 337 D - 340 A; 6, PG 31, 344 BC; Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος* 14, *Περὶ φιλοπτωχείας*, PG 35, 892 AB· *Λόγος* 38, *Εἰς τὰ Θεοφάνια*, *εἴτουν Γενέθλια τοῦ Σωτῆρος*, 12, PG 36, 324 BC· *Λόγος* 45, *Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πάσχα*, 28, PG 36, 661 BC; Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Κατὰ αἱρέσεων (Πανάριον)* 1, 3, 42, PG 41, 776 D - 777 A; Gregory of Nyssa, *Λόγος πρὸς τοὺς πενθοῦντας ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος βίου πρὸς τὸν αἶδιον μεθισταμένους*, PG 46, 521 D - 524 B; *Ἐξήγησις ἀκριβῆς εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστικὴν τοῦ Σαλομῶντος* 2, PG 44, 637 D - 640 A; John Chrysostom, *Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν* 16, 5, PG 53, 132; John Damascene, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως* 2, 12, PG 94, 924 AB; 30, PG 94, 977 ABCD; 4, 13, PG 94, 1137 A. Generally sin, according to the Fathers, has its cause not in nature but in man's free will, namely his intention. (See for example Nemesius of Emessa, loc. cit., 40, PG 40, 769 B; Theodoret of Cyrus, loc. cit. 1, PG 83, 40 D).

³² See characteristically Cyril of Alexandria, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολήν*, PG 74, 789 B: «... ἠρρώστησεν ἡ ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἐν Ἀδὰμ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τὴν φθοράν».

Fathers regard exactly this unhealthy situation of decay and death, in which Adam fell, as a sinful situation, not only because decay and death are the fruit of sin, but mainly because they constitute the source and the cause for the birth of sin in Adam's life after the fall. They maintain that by his fall to decay and death, passions, carnal pleasures and sin in general, dynamically invaded his life³³. This is exactly why sin, decay and death are for them, as we have seen, unbreakably related to one another. Although we will later refer to the causative relation between sin and the unhealthy and mortal human nature, we have to stress at this point the fact that Greek patristic tradition regards the mortality of human nature not only as the result but also as the cause and the root of sin. And it is exactly this patristic perception which is the key for understanding not only the significance of original sin in orthodox tradition, and especially its tragic and incidental character, but also orthodox anthropology and soteriology in general.

3. The passing on of the consequences of original sin

On the basis of these data concerning the consequences of original sin, the answer given by the Greek Fathers to the question of how sin was passed on to the whole of humanity by Adam's fall, so that all men became sinners and are regarded as such, according to what St. Paul writes in his *Epistle to the Romans*, is noticeably different to the Western and especially the Augustinian view.

In contrast to St. Augustine, Greek patristic tradition unanimously underlines that what Adam's descendants inherit is not his own personal sin and guilt for it, but his diseased and mortal

³³ See John Chrysostom, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολήν* 13, 1, PG 60, 507; Cyril of Alexandria, loc. cit., PG 74, 789 AB; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ἑρμηνεία τοῦ Ν΄ Ψαλμοῦ* 7, PG 80 1245 A.

nature³⁴. Adam's personal sin and guilt burdens only himself, not his descendants. St. John Chrysostom notes that the fact that Adam was made mortal because of his personal sin, and consequently all his descendants were made mortal, is something understandable and justifiable. But for someone else to become sinful because of Adam's disobedience, that would be unjust and unreasonable³⁵. This is why the Holy Father, expressing Greek patristic tradition unanimously, considers that subjection of Adam's descendants to sin, and their designation as sinners, is comprehended exclusively as their submission to death³⁶. And this, as we have already seen, is because death, in orthodox tradition, generally constitutes not only the consequence but also the source and cause of sin. Therefore, according to Greek patristic tradition, Adam's descendants are designated by St. Paul as sinners, not because they are regarded as taking part in Adam's personal sin and guilt, but because they inherit from him their ailing and mortal nature from which inevitably, sin is born³⁷.

As J. Meyendorff has already pointed out, it is very characteristic that two Greek Fathers of the fifth century, contemporaries of St. Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus, despite the fact that they belonged to different hermeneutical schools and opposite sides during the Christological disputes of that

³⁴ See characteristically John Chrysostom, loc. cit. 10, 1, PG 60, 474; 2-3, PG 60, 477; Mark the Hermit, *Απόκρισις πρὸς τοὺς ἀποροῦντας περὶ τοῦ θείου Βαπτίσματος*, PG 65, 1017 CD: «Οὐκοῦν τὴν παράβασιν προαιρετικὴν οὖσαν, καθὼς ἀποδέδεικται, οὐδεὶς ἐξ ἀνάγκης διεδέξατο· τὸν δὲ ἐκ ταύτης θάνατον ἀναγκαστικὸν ὄντα διεδεξάμεθα· ὅς ἐστι Θεοῦ ἀλλοτριώσις...Οὐκοῦν οὐ τὴν παράβασιν διεδεξάμεθα, ἐπειδὴ κάκεινον ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐκράτησεν, ὃς ἐβασίλευσε καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδάμ»; Cyril of Alexandria, loc. cit., PG 74, 789 AB: «Νενόσηκεν οὖν ἡ φύσις τὴν ἀμαρτίαν διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνός, τουτέστιν Ἀδάμ· οὕτως ἀμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὐχ ὡς τῷ Ἀδάμ συμπαραβεβηκότες, οὐ γὰρ ἦσαν πώποτε, ἀλλ' ὡς τῆς ἐκείνου φύσεως ὄντες τῆς ὑπὸ νόμον πεσοῦσης τὸν τῆς ἀμαρτίας». See also N. A. Matsoukas, loc. cit., p. 206.

³⁵ See *ibid.*, 2, PG 60, 477.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, 3, PG 60, 477.

³⁷ See also J. S. Romanides, loc. cit., pp. 162 ff.; J. Karawidopoulos, loc. cit., pp. 46 ff.

time, show a remarkable consensus on this matter concerning Adam's sin and its consequences for humanity³⁸.

Indeed, independently of their different interpretations of the much talked about phrase of St. Paul "*for that all have sinned*" (Rom. 5, 12), they both absolutely agree that sin is born in Adam's descendants by their corruptible and mortal nature which they inherited from their forefather³⁹. This is the theological principle on which mainly Cyril of Alexandria explains analytically and thoroughly how it happened that "*by one man's disobedience many were made sinners*" according to St. Paul (Rom. 5, 19). That is to say, they were made sinners not as Adam's co-transgressors and as heirs of his guilt, but as heirs of his ailing and mortal nature from which their personal sins are necessarily being produced. What he writes on this matter in his *Explanation of the Epistle to the Romans* is very interesting and representative of orthodox tradition: "*But one would say; yes Adam slid away and by disregarding the divine commandment he was condemned to decay and death; and then how were the many made sinners because of him? What do his faults have to do with us? And how have the ones not yet born been wholly condemned together with him...? So what would be the way for us to be excused? ...But we have become sinners through Adam's disobedience in such a way: he was created for incorruption and life, and his life was holy in the paradise of delight, the whole mind was*

³⁸ See J. Meyendorff, «*Εφ' ᾧ* (Rom. 5,12) chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie et Théodore», in: *Studia Patristica* 4 (1961), p. 158 : «Leur unité dans l'exégèse de Rom. 5, 12 indique que nous nous trouvons devant un consensus de la pensée du V^e siècle sur le péché d'Adam et de ses conséquences. En gros, on peut dire que ces Pères considèrent que ce qui est hérité d'Adam, ce n'est pas le péché lui-même, mais la mort ; le péché d'Ancêtre a eu pour conséquence de rendre mortelle la race adamique tout entière». See also idem, *Byzantine Theology. Historical trends and doctrinal themes*, New York 1974, p. 145: «There is indeed a consensus in Greek patristic and Byzantine traditions in identifying the inheritance of the Fall as an inheritance essentially of mortality rather than of sinfulness, sinfulness being merely a consequence of mortality».

³⁹ See J. Meyendorff, «*Εφ' ᾧ* (Rom. 5,12) chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie et Théodore», loc. cit., pp. 158 f.

*always in vision of God, the body was in a state of calmness and tranquillity, and all disgraceful pleasure was at rest; for in him there did not exist any disturbance of inordinate movement. But because he fell under sin and slid away into decay, henceforth pleasures and impurities ran into the nature of flesh, and the angry law in our members sprang up. So nature became ill with sin through the disobedience of one person, that is Adam; in this way the many were made sinners, not as having transgressed together with Adam, because they had not yet come into being, but as having his nature which is fallen under the law of sin"*⁴⁰.

Following these, although original sin was, according to orthodox tradition, the fruit of Adam's free will, it had painful and irreversible consequences for human nature. Since Adam's disobedience, sin has passed from will, which is regarded in orthodox tradition as a syndrome of man's nature⁴¹, to human nature itself; not as guilt but as an unhealthy situation which has infected as an epidemic the whole of humanity.

The connection of sin to nature and not only to the will of man after the fall, not only underlines the ontological bases with which the Greek Fathers comprehend the concept and the significance of original sin, but also reveals the philosophical and psychoanalytical depth of their thought and their whole reflection concerning the origin of sin. St. John Chrysostom, specifically connecting the origin of sin to the mortality of human nature, notes suitably that together with death, which followed Adam's fall, human nature was invaded by "*also ...the crowd of passions. Because when the body was made mortal it also necessarily received desire, and wrath and grief and all the other (passions)*". As the Holy Father points out, these things certainly do not in themselves constitute

⁴⁰ Ibid., PG 74, 788 D - 789 B.

⁴¹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Κατὰ Εὐνομίου* 1, PG 45, 388 A; *Ἀντιρρητικὸς πρὸς τὰ Ἀπολλιναρίου* 31, PG 45, 1192 B; Cyril of Alexandria, *Περὶ ἀγίας τε καὶ ὁμοουσίου Τριάδος* 2, PG 75, 780 B.

the essence of sin, but they are transformed into sin due to man's excessive and unbridled behaviour⁴², which is apparently due to the fact that man, as he stresses, "consents to everything so as not to die"⁴³. Theodoret, moving a step further from St. John Chrysostom's thought, underlines that human nature after the fall is ruled by the instinct of self-preservation and therefore has various needs, the selfish satisfaction of which gives birth to sin on a personal level⁴⁴. This is indeed how he understands how "sin reigned in death" according to St. Paul's words (Rom. 5, 21)⁴⁵. J. Meyendorff notes that Theodoret's thought on this matter is impressively related to several modern views, as those of M. Heidegger concerning the relation between death and the instinct of self-preservation⁴⁶.

Besides, it is not at all by chance that in orthodox tradition the three sinful inclinations of the soul, love of pleasure, love of glory and love of money, which constitute the foundations of human sinfulness⁴⁷, are regarded as the self-centred and egoistic reaction of fallen man against the threat of death⁴⁸. Egoism and self-

⁴² See John Chrysostom, loc. cit. 13, 1, PG 60, 507 - 508.

⁴³ See John Chrysostom, *Ερμηνεία εις την προς Εβραίους Επιστολήν* 4, 4, PG 63, 41.

⁴⁴ See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ερμηνεία της προς Ρωμαίους Επιστολής* 5, 12, PG 82, 100 AB.

⁴⁵ See *ibid*, 21, PG 82, 104 C: «...ή άμαρτία, τεκοῦσα τὸν θάνατον, ἐν τοῖς θνητοῖς ἐβάσιλευσε σώμασιν, εἰς ἀμετρίαν ἐκκαλουμένη τὰ πάθη».

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴⁷ See Athanasius the Great (Actually it is probably a work of Basil of Seleuceia. See B. Marx «Der homiletische Nachlass des Basileios von Seleukeia», in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 [1941], p. 365), *Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πάσχα καὶ εἰς τοὺς νεοφωτίστους τῷ Σαββάτῳ τῆς Ἀπολυσίμου* 7, PG 28, 1089 BC; John Chrysostom (disputed), *Εἰς τὸ Πάσχα* 5, 2, PG 59, 736; Mark the Hermit, *Περὶ νόμου πνευματικοῦ* 107, PG 65, 917 D; *Συμβουλία νοδς προς την εαυτοῦ ψυχήν* 2, PG 65, 1104 D - 1105 A; John Climacus, *Κλίμαξ* 8, PG 88, 836 A; 26, PG 88, 1024 A; Dorotheus of Gaza, *Διδασκαλία* 13, *Περὶ τοῦ ἀταράχως καὶ εὐχαρίστως ὑποφέρειν τοὺς πειρασμούς*, 8, PG 88, 1769 C: «... φιληδονία, φιλοδοξία καὶ φιλαργυρία, ἐξ ὧν συνίσταται πᾶσα ἁμαρτία». See also J. Kornarakis, *Μαθήματα Ποιμαντικῆς μετὰ στοιχείων ποιμαντικῆς Ψυχολογίας*, Thessaloniki 1969, pp. 51, 54 ff.

⁴⁸ See characteristically John Chrysostom, *Ερμηνεία εις την προς Ρωμαίους Επιστολήν* 13, 1, PG 60, 507 - 508. *Ερμηνεία εις την προς Εβραίους Επιστολήν* 4, 4, PG 63, 41; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ερμηνεία τοῦ*

centredness which are displayed in these three sinful inclinations constitute, in the framework of the fall, man's only possibility for psychological balance opposite the threat of death. This orthodox patristic perception has, as we can understand, great psychoanalytical significance, because it throws abundant light to, and fully interprets, the psychological operations of fallen man -that is the empirical man-, based not only on one, but on all three basic sinful inclinations which essentially converge towards his selfish satisfaction and self-justification⁴⁹. From this point of view, we believe it gives a more complete picture of the basic psychological inclinations and processes and is greatly superior to the psychoanalytical theories of S. Freud, A. Adler and C. G. Jung which are based only on one of these psychological inclinations and constitute only one-sided attempts to explain the behaviour of the human soul⁵⁰.

However, we should stress that, in orthodox tradition, viewing fallen human nature as the cause of sin does not mean irresponsibility by Adam's descendants for the sins they commit. And this is because, although sin derives from corruptible and mortal human nature, it is displayed with the free consent of human will. Without that, according to the Greek Fathers, there is neither sin nor responsibility for committing it at a personal level. This is the reason why both Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus, each in their own way, unanimously underline the fact that personal death of the descendants of Adam is not directly due to their forefather's sin but it is due to their own personal sin which is born through their corruptible and mortal nature⁵¹.

N' Ψαλμοῦ 7, PG 80, 1245 A· Ἑρμηνεία τῆς πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολῆς 5, 12, PG 82, 100 AB.

⁴⁹ See also I. Kornarakis, *loc. cit.*, pp. 59 f.

⁵⁰ See also *ibid.*, pp. 52 f.

⁵¹ See Cyril of Alexandria, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολὴν*, PG 74, 784 BC; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς πρὸς Ῥωμαίους*

4. Removing the consequences of original sin

According to the Greek Fathers, Adam's fall to sin, decay and death led the whole of mankind in a vicious circle from which it could not be released: Original sin brought about as an immediate consequence to humanity the unhealthy situation of decay and death, this situation in its turn gave birth to sin again, which had as a consequence decay and death, etc. etc... This vicious circle constitutes the essence of the tragedy of fallen man according to the Greek Fathers.

Man after the fall could not by his own means succeed in being released from sin, nor in being morally and spiritually perfected, nor in restoring his relationship with God, as long as he remained under the rule of decay and death. Death had to be abolished so that man could be released from the cause of sin and that a treatment could be found for his diseased nature. As the Greek Fathers unanimously stress, this is exactly what the incarnate Word of God took upon Himself with His salvific work. With His death on the cross and His resurrection He defeated and abolished death which is the source and cause of sin and of the devil's power over mankind. Fear of death, which kept men enslaved to sin and the devil, loses now its power with Christ's resurrection⁵². In this way, man is released and saved truly, because, as St. John Chrysostom aptly remarks "He who is not afraid of death is outside the devil's sovereignty"⁵³.

Επιστολῆς 5, 12, PG 82, 100 B: «Οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὴν τοῦ προπάτορος ἁμαρτίαν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἕκαστος δέχεται τοῦ θανάτου τὸν ὄρον».

⁵² See characteristically John Chrysostom, *Κατηχητικὸς εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πάσχα*, PG 59, 723 - 724. *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους Ἐπιστολὴν 4, 4, PG 63, 41 - 42; Gregory Palamas, Ὀμιλία 16, Περὶ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἰκονομίας καὶ τῶν δι' αὐτῆς κεχαρισμένων τοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύουσι: καὶ ὅτι πολυτρόπως ὁ θεὸς δυνάμενος τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου τυραννίδος λυτρώσασθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἰκότως ταύτῃ μᾶλλον ἐχρήσατο τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ, PG 151, 209 AB, 212 A - 213 A.*

⁵³ See *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους Ἐπιστολὴν 4, 4, PG 63, 42.*

From this point of view, Christ's resurrection is regarded in orthodox tradition as the chief salvific event in the history of divine Economy. Besides, this is why it is celebrated in the Orthodox Church with particular splendour, as an event with which man's release from the monocacy of death and the benefit of a new life released from the sovereignty of sin and the devil, are achieved. "*Christ has risen from the dead, trampling upon death by death, and giving life to those who were in the graves*"⁵⁴, "*We celebrate the death of death, the destroying of Hades, the beginning of another life, the eternal one*"⁵⁵ chant the faithful during the Easter period. It is therefore an event with which the passing over (Jewish: Pasha) in Christ from death to life is completed. And this passing over from death to life is what according to orthodox tradition constitutes the meaning and the essence of man's salvation.

At this point we have to stress that the salvific significance of Christ's resurrection is not limited to man only. It is extended through man to the whole of creation, having as a result the restoration of the disturbed relationship between the two. Man and creation from now on are related to one another and operate harmoniously, free from death's destructive force, in the light of Christ's resurrection. This event is underlined in a very elegant way by St. John Damascene in a troparion of his Easter Canon: "*Now everything is full of light, both the heavens and the earth and also the underground. Therefore, let all creation celebrate Christ's resurrection, in which it has been established*"⁵⁶.

On the basis of these facts is now easily understood why, in spite of the tragedy of the event of the fall, already from the beginning we

⁵⁴ See Apolytikion of Easter.

⁵⁵ See troparion of the 7th ode of the *Easter Canon*.

⁵⁶ See troparion of the 3rd ode of the *Easter Canon*. Cf. the troparion of the 1st ode of the *Easter Canon*: «Οὐρανοὶ μὲν ἐπαξίως εὐφραινέσθωσαν, γῆ δὲ ἀγαλλιástῳ, ἑορταζέτω δὲ κόσμος, ὁρατός τε ἅπας καὶ ἀόρατος, Χριστὸς γὰρ ἐγήγερται, εὐφροσύνη αἰώνιος».

have mentioned the incidental character of original sin in orthodox tradition. Christ as new Adam with His resurrection opens new ontological perspectives not only for humanity, but for the whole creation. Free from the dominion of decay and death man can now achieve the purpose for which he was created, namely he can gain incorruption, immortality and deification. The only thing man needs, as opposed to old Adam, is to show faith and obedience to Christ, keeping His commandments and existentially participating in His death and resurrection. Here exactly the particular significance of the sacrament of Baptism in orthodox tradition is made eminent.

With Baptism the faithful is being buried with Christ, stripping off the old man of sin, decay and death, and is being resurrected with Him, putting on the new man *"who is being constantly renewed in knowledge in the image of his creator"*⁵⁷. In this way, existentially and mystically taking part in Christ's death and resurrection, he is spiritually reborn into a new life, released from the fear of death and the power of sin. Baptism is for the Christian the very beginning of the new life in Christ, which grows and is preserved with the other two important sacraments of the Church, Chrism and Holy Eucharist⁵⁸.

Based on these facts, it is made clear that Baptism in orthodox tradition does not simply aim for the remission of sins, which of course is one of the basic gifts of Baptism but does not exhaust the richness of its saving gifts. The Greek Fathers unanimously stress that through Baptism, apart from the granting of forgiveness of sins, the nature of man, which is worn out by sin, is ontologically renewed, and the Christian, being rendered a participant of Christ's death and resurrection, receives his new substance, becomes a participant of the gifts of the Holy

⁵⁷ See Col. 3, 10.

⁵⁸ See Nicholas Cavasilas, *Περὶ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς* 1, PG 150, 504 A.

Spirit, and God's son and heir by grace⁵⁹. This is the only way in which the consequences of original sin are removed. In other words, the issue of removing the consequences of original sin, according to orthodox tradition, is not simply remission of sins but man's deliverance from the rule of the devil and death, healing and renewal of his fallen nature. Moreover, Christ's salvific work, generally in orthodox tradition, is comprehended as based not on the judicial shape "sin- remission" but on the ontological shape "death- life" or "illness-healing". And exactly this passing from death to life or from illness to healing is what takes place in Baptism. And this is the reason why, as Theodoret points out, the Church accepts infant-Baptism, although infants have not committed any personal sins⁶⁰. Again, as St. Nicholas Cavasilas (14th century) stresses on this matter, Baptism as birth into the new life in Christ, constitutes a gift of God and as such does not presuppose man's willing participation. In the same way that God creates us without our own will, he also recreates us in Christ without our own willing collaboration⁶¹. There might not be a more concise and clear patristic stance in orthodox tradition than this one, which is the theological basis for infant-Baptism.

Conclusion

After all that we have said, it has been made clear that orthodox tradition, regarding original sin on the basis of ontological and not judicial principles - like western tradition and especially St. Augustine -, considers it as a tragic episode in the whole history of Divine Economy and is not troubled at all about the

⁵⁹ See characteristically Theodoret of Cyrus, *Αἰρετικῆς κακομυθίας ἐπιτομή* 5, 18, PG 83, 512 AB. See also N. A. Matsoukas, loc. cit., pp. 475 ff.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, PG 83, 512 AB.

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 2, PG 150, 541 C. See also N. A. Matsoukas, loc.cit., pp. 477, 479.

guilt caused by original sin nor about the obliteration of this guilt. It is mainly and especially interested in its consequences on human nature, as well as in the removing of these consequences by Christ's salvific work. Apart from that, according to orthodox tradition, what is inherited by Adam's descendants is not their forefather's sin and guilt, but the ontological consequences of original sin, namely the human nature's decay and death, from which sin is born on a personal level.

From this point of view, abolition of death for removing the consequences of original sin and for the deliverance of mankind from the dominion of sin and the devil is, according to orthodox tradition, a one-way road. And it is exactly this road, which Christ came to open with His death and resurrection, abolishing death and its dominion and inaugurating the new life of incorruptibility and immortality for the whole of humanity. Man, in order to be able to walk on this road, has to be buried and resurrected with Christ. This takes place existentially and mystically in Baptism which constitutes the gate of entrance to this new life, away from death, sin and the devil. This is the only way in which, according to orthodox tradition, man is not only restored to his former beauty but he can also succeed in fulfilling the primal aim of his existence, namely his deification.