

A Proposition of Integral Protological Narrative: Modern Interpretation of the Fall of Man and the Original Sin

Propozycja integralnej narracji protologicznej:
współczesna interpretacja upadku pierwszych ludzi
i grzechu pierworodnego

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Abstract: The Catholic doctrine of the fall of man and the original sin seems to pose serious difficulties when confronted with the results of empirical sciences concerning the antropogenesis. To answer those issues, the author of this work undertakes an attempt at their contemporary interpretation from the perspective of fundamental theology, basing on the findings of his previous publication, in which he covered the problem of anthropogenesis in the light of Christian faith and empirical discoveries. (M. Witała, *A Proposition of Integral Protological Narrative: the Theological Criteria of Humanity and Anthropogenesis according to Empirical Sciences*, “Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 41 (2022) 1, pp. 71–93). The interpretation of the fall of man and original sin proposed in this work is based on the analysis of biblical data and the review of the doctrinal statements of the Magisterium of the Church during the ages and leads to an integral protological narrative taking into account the research of empirical sciences on anthropogenesis, according to the concept of integration of theology and science.

Keywords: protology, theological anthropology, the fall of man, original sin, transmission of original sin, anthropogeny, hamartiology

Abstrakt: Katolickie nauczanie o upadku pierwszych ludzi i grzechu pierworodnym wydaje się sprawiać poważne trudności w konfrontacji z wynikami badań nauk empirycznych o człowieku. Aby na nie odpowiedzieć, autor niniejszego artykułu podjął próbę ustalenia współczesnej interpretacji tej problematyki w perspektywie teologicznofundamentalnej, wykorzystując ustalenia

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poprzedniej publikacji poświęconej zagadnieniu antropogenezy w świetle wiary chrześcijańskiej i odkryć nauk empirycznych (M. Witała, *A Proposition of Integral Protological Narrative: the Theological Criteria of Humanity and Anthropogenesis according to Empirical Sciences*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 41 (2022) 1, s. 71–93). Interpretacja ta została oparta na analizie danych biblijnych i przeglądzie wypowiedzi doktrynalnych Kościoła, na podstawie których sporządzono narrację protologiczną uwzględniającą wyniki badań nauk empirycznych dotyczące początków ludzkości w ramach modelu integracji teologiczno-empirycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: protologia, antropologia teologiczna, upadek, grzech pierworodny, przekazywanie grzechu, antropogeneza, hamartiologia

Introduction

Blaise Pascal once stated that the doctrine of original sin is the mystery “the most incomprehensible of all.” However, as the French polyhistor noted, “without this mystery [...] we are incomprehensible to ourselves.”¹ The doctrine of the fall of man and its consequences is indeed fundamental to Catholic theological anthropology. Sociology of religion confirms that the teaching on the original sin poses significant difficulties and seems unacceptable to modern audience.² Such a situation seems to be reflected in public discourse.³

Since theologians, both in the past century and now, notice that such difficulties arise particularly in the relationship of theology to empirical sciences, and that there is a need to respond to them,⁴ the author of this work has undertaken research on the possibility of developing a contemporary theological dogmatic and fundamental interpretation of selected issues in the field of Catholic protology. Such an interpretation is intended to help present and explain the content of faith in a way that is coherent, credible, rational and comprehensible to an audience formed in an empirical-naturalistic worldview.⁵ It is therefore necessary to juxtapose the theological

¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, transl. W.F. Trotter, New York 2018, p. 121.

² See R. Boguszewski, *Kanon wiary Polaków, Komunikat z badań CBOS nr 29/2015*, Warszawa 2015, p. 10.

³ This is evidenced by the reactions, full of indignation and incomprehension, to the statement of Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, who in 2018, in the context of the clergy sex crimes scandal, explained that all kinds of preventive measures will never guarantee the absolute elimination of such offenses, due to the effects of original sin affecting humanity (see *Arcybiskup Gądecki o rozliczeniu Kościoła z pedofilii*, TVN24.pl, 13.1.2018, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/abp-gadecki-o-rozliczeniu-kosciola-z-pedofilii-ra868264-2582523> [accessed: 28.2.2023]).

⁴ See e.g. P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Wprowadzenie do życia chrześcijańskiego*, tłum. K. Waloszczyk [in:] P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Zarys wszechświata personalistycznego i inne pisma*, tłum. K. Waloszczyk, M. Tazbir, Warszawa 1985, p. 161; E. Piotrowski, *Kara wieczna a grzech pierworodny. Konieczność debaty*, “*Verbum Vitae*” 36 (2019), pp. 285–314.

⁵ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction “Donum Veritatis” on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* (1990), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/

statements with the data on the anthropogenesis provided by the specific sciences.⁶ It should be noted that we do not intend to undertake the problem with some kind of concordistic approach, but to provide a theological narrative based on the model of theological-empirical integration (harmonization).⁷ The abovementioned desiderata have been implemented by the author so far in relation to the problem of the origins of humanity as a part of the proposal of an integral protological narrative, in which the theological criteria of humanity are confronted with the data on the origins of mankind provided by specific sciences. This proposal was published in an article entitled *A Proposition of Integral Protological Narrative: the Theological Criteria of Humanity and Anthropogenesis according to Empirical Sciences*.⁸ This paper is its continuation. Therefore, a synthetic summary of findings of the previous publication will be included in one of the paragraphs.

An attempt at a modern interpretation of the fall of man (*peccatum originale originans*) and the original sin (*peccatum originale originatum*) will be conducted using an adapted theological integral method.⁹ Therefore, this study will be structured as follows:

1. In the first paragraph of this article, a synthetic overview of the biblical data on the fall of man and its legacy will be presented;
2. In the second section the most important doctrinal statements of the Catholic Church in this regard will be analyzed, along with the most important factors influencing the process of doctrine formation over the centuries;
3. In the third paragraph, our findings will be addressed from a fundamental theology perspective, and an outline of the narrative constituting the modern interpretation of the fall of man and its legacy will be presented. Also, a synthesis of the findings of the author's earlier publication will be presented beforehand.¹⁰ An attempt will then follow to answer two essential research questions:

documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html [accessed: 28.2.2023], no. 6; H. Seweryniak, *Teologia fundamentalna*, t. I, Warszawa 2010, p. 16, 52 et seq.

⁶ Cf. A. Anderwald, *Dlaczego teologa interesują inne nauki* [in:] *Teologia w dialogu z innymi naukami. Spotkania — Kontrowersje — Perspektywy*, red. D. Wąsek, Kraków 2021, pp. 11–30.

⁷ Cf. M. Heller, *Nauka i Teologia — niekoniecznie tylko na jednej planecie*, Kraków 2019, pp. 51–55.

⁸ M. Witała, *A Proposition of Integral Protological Narrative: the Theological Criteria of Humanity and Anthropogenesis according to Empirical Sciences*, "Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne" 41 (2022) 1, pp. 71–93.

⁹ See Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Priestly Training "Optatam Totius"* (1965), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html [accessed: 28.2.2023], no. 16; S.C. Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*, Wrocław 1994, p. 69; C.S. Bartnik, *Metodologia teologii dogmatycznej*, "Studia Nauk Teologicznych" 2 (2007), pp. 165–173.

¹⁰ M. Witała, *A Proposition...*, pp. 71–93.

- 3.1. Can the Catholic doctrine of the fall of man (*peccatum originale originans*), in which the fall itself is depicted as an event taking place at the dawn of mankind, be reconciled with the vision of the origins of the human species presented by empirical sciences?
- 3.2. How should the doctrine of the transmission of original sin (*peccatum originale originatum*) be explained in our modern times?

In conclusion, the findings will be recapitulated in a synthetic summary and referred to the thought of some selected contemporary theologians.

1. Biblical basis of the doctrine of original sin

The review of biblical data should begin with the first chapters of Genesis, which are fundamental to the interpretation of subsequent books of the Bible.¹¹ The story of the fall is preceded by the narrative of the Garden of Eden (see Gen 2:8ff.). Both the garden's name,¹² location¹³ and description¹⁴ convey a message about the existential optimum, destined for man by the Creator, of the opportunity to live in friendship with God and in harmony with the surrounding environment and oneself. In the focal point of Edenic narrative the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil are placed (see Gen 2:9). First of the trees determines the meaning of the whole garden, signifying the communion of men and the Creator, the gift of life and blessing received from the God and suggesting the possibility of existence in the direct and infinite relationship with God. It is also a symbol of life in an absolute and total sense,¹⁵ which is correspondingly indicated by the narrative of the last book of the Bible describing the Tree of Life in an eschatological context, constituting a narrative clamp that binds

¹¹ Cf. *Międzynarodowy komentarz do Pisma Świętego. Komentarz katolicki i ekumeniczny na XXI wiek*, red. W. Chrostowski et al. (originally ed. by W.R. Farmer et al.), tłum. M. Żurowska, Warszawa 2000, p. 264 ff.

¹² See. A. Tronina, *Drzewo życia w rajskim ogrodzie. Biblijne korzenie mistyki Krzyża*, Częstochowa 2017, pp. 30–31; S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań 1962, p. 202 ff.

¹³ The Bible places Eden in the East. That direction was connected in Middle Eastern cultures with life and the sun. It also has a special meaning in the Christian liturgy. See T. Jelonek, *Biblia a mity o raju i złotym wieku*, Kraków 2010, p. 14; M. Kunzler, *Liturgia Kościoła*, tłum. L. Balter, Poznań 1999, p. 244 ff.

¹⁴ See J.H. Walton, V.M. Matthews, M.W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, tłum. Z. Kościuk, Warszawa 2005, p. 10; J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2013, pp. 222–223.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju...*, p. 224; Z.J. Kijas, *Początki świata i człowieka*, Kraków 2004, p. 75; Jan Paweł II, *Komentarz do ksiąg Starego Testamentu*, red. M. Czekański, Kraków 2012, p. 194.

together the entire Bible (see Rev 2:7; Rev 22:2.14.19).¹⁶ The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, on the other hand, along with the strict prohibition of eating from it (see Gen 2:17), signifies that the privilege of constituting moral values is reserved only to God and a man's attempt to gain moral autonomy apart from the relationship with the Creator brings humanity to its undoing: the experience of moral evil and the menace of spiritual death.¹⁷ The depiction of the trees of paradise provides the setting for the drama of man's temptation and fall featured in the third chapter of Genesis. Alongside the first men the Satan appears, portrayed under the figure of a serpent.¹⁸ The purpose of this is to convey the truth that the temptation for man to turn away from God and become like Him (see Gen 3:5) came from without.¹⁹ The desire to become exalted without sustaining communion with their Creator leads the proto-mankind to their fall (see Gen 3:6).²⁰ Then, man and woman in the Edenic narrative begin to see their nakedness (see Gen 3:7), and considering the wordplay present in the Hebrew text, this biblical image can be read as a revelation of a tragic spiritual truth: the first humans lost the image of God in themselves by giving in to the aforementioned temptation, and became more like their tempter.²¹ The drama of Genesis 3, read according to the Middle Eastern symbolism and literary forms, can be understood as a symbol of the personalistic and moral trial faced by the first men. Their transition from the animal world required initiation into the moral life and the decision of defining their relationship to their Creator, who determined the purpose of a human being and set the universal principles of morality. The narrative indicates that a person has been given the opportunity to receive perfect, eternal life in its fullness under the condition of recognizing the primacy of the Creator as a supreme being and respecting the law and order of all creation established by God.²² It should be noted that this interpretation corresponds to the ancient Christian teaching featured, e.g., in the *Epistle to Diognetus*.²³

First humans failed the aforementioned personal and moral verification, and therefore the further Genesis narrative (see Gen 3:16–24) presents the con-

¹⁶ See A. Tronina, *Drzewo...*, pp. 121–123, 152–153.

¹⁷ See J.B. Łach, *Księgi Ludu Bożego Starego Przymierza. Pięcioksiąg, Prorocy, Pisma. Ujęcie teologiczno-praktyczne*, Poznań 2018, p. 65; Jan Paweł II, *Komentarz...*, pp. 51, 57.

¹⁸ See J.S. Synowiec, *Początki świata i ludzkości według Księgi Rodzaju*, Kraków 2001, pp. 154–156; S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju...*, pp. 213–214; T. Jelonek, *Biblijna historia zbawienia*, Kraków 2004, pp. 53–54.

¹⁹ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Komentarz...*, p. 98.

²⁰ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju...*, pp. 245–246; J.S. Synowiec, *Początki...*, p. 118.

²¹ Cf. J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju...*, p. 247.

²² See C.S. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, t. I, Lublin 2009, pp. 341–344.

²³ *Do Diogneta*, tłum. A. Świderkówna [in:] A. Świderkówna, M. Starowieyski, *Pierwsi świadkowie. Pisma Ojców Apostolskich*, Kraków 2010, pp. 339–350, XII.3–4.

sequences of this failure: denial of access to the Tree of Life (i.e. expulsion from paradise) and the loss of harmony with the world that the mankind was to live in.²⁴ The Creator, however, did not turn his back on man: this is signified by the gift of the coats of skins that the God bestows on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21.²⁵

The following chapters of Genesis show how the evil that has entered into the history of mankind through the fall of the first men is “infecting” the whole human race. The story of Cain’s fratricide (Gen 4:3–16) shows how a disruption of relationship between man and God results in a serious disturbance of interpersonal relations, even a crime of murder.²⁶ The history of violence begins. One of Cain’s descendants—Lamech—presents a barbaric penchant for cruelty (see Gen 4:17–19.23).²⁷ There are also other manifestations of the proliferation of moral evil into mankind (cf. Gen. 2:24; 6:1–3). In the end, the evil overwhelms the entire Earth, as evidenced in the Deluge narrative (Gen 6:5–8).²⁸ It emphasizes both the enormous extent of evil on Earth and the necessity of restoration, indicating humanity’s absolute dependence on the Creator and His mercy granted on humanity, e.g. in the story of saving Noah and his family from the Deluge.²⁹ Renewal through the cataclysm and the God’s subsequent covenant with Noah, which was to re-establish the originally intended relationship of man with the Creator (see Gen 8:20ff.),³⁰ did not, however, render humanity free from sin. The further narration indicates, for example, that interpersonal relations became disturbed by sin in Noah’s family after the covenant (see Gen 9:20ff.).³¹ The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–8 shows that the desire to become equal to God—to reach Heaven without His grace—sown by Satan in the hearts of the first men has not been eliminated in following generations. The individual sin of pride becomes social sin.³² The inhabitants of Sodom from the 19th chapter of Genesis are characterized by utter corruption and demoralization. Extreme sinfulness, revealed in an uncontrollable desire for homosexual intercourse with newcomers, causes them to violate even the law of hospitality, sacred in the Middle East, and brings

²⁴ See J.B. Łach, *Księgi...*, p. 72; T. Jelonek, *Biblijna historia...*, pp. 59–60.

²⁵ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju...*, p. 258; J.H. Walton, V.H. Matthews, M.W. Chavalas, *Komentarz...*, p. 13.

²⁶ See J.S. Synowiec, *Początki...*, p. 193; J.B. Łach, *Księgi...*, p. 74.

²⁷ See *Katolicki Komentarz Biblijny*, red. W. Chrostowski (originally ed. by R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy), tłum. K. Bardski et al., Warszawa 2004, p. 20.

²⁸ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju...*, p. 349.

²⁹ Cf. S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju...*, p. 276; *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, pp. 284–285; *Katolicki Komentarz...*, p. 24.

³⁰ Cf. *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 284; Jan Paweł II, *Komentarz...*, p. 194.

³¹ Cf. *Katolicki Komentarz...*, p. 26; J.S. Synowiec, *Początki...*, pp. 272–283.

³² See *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 286. Cf. S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju...*, pp. 312–313.

doom upon the city of Sodom.³³ Therefore, as it can be pointed after examination of the Genesis narrative, even the renewed covenant does not prompt humanity to reject sin. The opening chapters of the Book of Genesis prefigure the entire Old Testament great tale, in which the history of the relationship between the man and the God is intertwined with the history of sin.

The remaining books of the Old Testament contain numerous passages that can be interpreted as the foundation for the future doctrine of original sin. The inspired authors recognized the universal state of sinfulness affecting every human being (see, for example, Pss 12:2; 14:1–3; 51:7; 58:4),³⁴ which does not spare even the nation of Israel (see e.g. 1 Kgs 8:46; Jer 5:1.3; 17:1–2).³⁵ It is stated, that pride is the cause of sin (see Ps 36:2–3), and in the Wisdom Books of the Bible it is clearly indicated that the devil is a factor behind the fall of man. It is also confirmed that the narrative of the fall in Genesis 2–3 should be read as an explanation for the origin of sin that affects mankind (see Wis 2:24; Sir 25:24).³⁶ However, the definite and consistent teaching on original sin appears only in the New Testament. In the teaching of Jesus Christ found in the Gospels, a confirmation of the truth about the universality of sin and the hardness of hearts of men, that was already present in the Old Testament, is clearly stated (see John 8:34; Matt 19:5–8). The Gospel of John emphasizes the necessity to liberate humanity from this state (cf. John 8:31–32),³⁷ while the Catholic letters confirm the message about the universality of sin (cf. 1 John 1:8.10; Jas 3:2). So does Paul the Apostle in his epistles (cf. e.g. Rom 3:9–19).³⁸

In the teaching of St. Paul the Apostle, contained in the Epistle to the Romans, the most comprehensive and systematized teaching on original sin of all

³³ See C.S. Keener, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Nowego Testamentu*, tłum. Z. Kościuk, Warszawa 2000, p. 32; J.A. Greene; *Sodom and Gomorrah* [entry] [in:] *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*, ed. by B.M. Metzger, M.D. Coogan, Oxford 2004, p. 294.

³⁴ Cf. S. Łach, J. Łach, *Księga Psalmów. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz, ekskursy*, Poznań 1990, pp. 275–276.

³⁵ See L. Stachowiak, *Księga Jeremiasza. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań 1967, pp. 232–233.

³⁶ Cf. B. Poniży, *Księga Mądrości. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2012, pp. 173; H. Langkammer, *Księga Syracha. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz, ekskursy*, Poznań 2020, p. 212.

³⁷ Cf. L. Stachowiak, *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań–Warszawa 1975, pp. 245–246; J. Homerski, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań 2004, pp. 271–272.

³⁸ Cf. *Katolicki Komentarz...*, p. 962; C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, p. 318; H. Langkammer, *Komentarz teologiczno-pastoralny wszystkich listów św. Pawła Apostoła z okazji roku świętego Pawła*, t. 1: *Wielkie listy św. Pawła*, Legnica 2011, pp. 44–46.

biblical texts can be found.³⁹ In addition to the statement about the universality of sin and the necessity of justification, an extensive explanation of the origins of original sin is included. The teaching is based on the parallel between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12–15 (“Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned.”⁴⁰). The translation of the Greek expression ἐφ’ ᾧ in this fragment was of great importance for the process of shaping the doctrine of original sin in the Christian East and the West. The East, reading the Greek original, understood Romans 5:12 as follows: “...death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”⁴¹ or: “...and by sin death, and thus death spread to all men, because the condition that all sinned was fulfilled”⁴². Conversely, the West, using the Vulgate, in which ἐφ’ ᾧ is translated as the Latin *in quo*, read the problematic passage as: “...and because of sin, death; and so death passed upon all men in the one in whom all sinned”⁴³. For this reason, Eastern theologians perceived the fall of the first men as an event that caused evil to enter and spread throughout the world, and therefore death affected every person, since every person commits sins. Western theologians, on the other hand, relying on a not completely correct translation of the Vulgate and the authority of St. Augustine, stated that as a consequence of the fall, Adam’s sin passed unto all mankind, because in Adam all have sinned.⁴⁴ According to Hugolin Langkammer, the most important intention of Paul the Apostle was to prove that the fall of the first men is the reason for the state of sin in which mankind finds itself, and that God’s response to man’s sin is salvation in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ This message, regardless of the adopted version of the translation of Rom 5:12, can be described as fundamental to the Christian teaching on original sin.⁴⁶

Summing up the Biblical message regarding the problematic issues, it should be stated that not only does it correctly recognize the universal state of sinfulness that characterizes mankind, but also coherently explains the origins of this situation. The most important message of the Bible, however, is about the God’s response to man’s sin—the salvation brought by the Christ.

³⁹ Cf. G.L. Müller, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, tłum. W. Szymona, Kraków 2015, pp. 165–166, 177–178.

⁴⁰ Translation: New American Bible Revised Edition.

⁴¹ Translation: *King James Version*.

⁴² Translation based on a text included in HD II, p. 146.

⁴³ Translation: *Jubilee Bible 2000*.

⁴⁴ See HD II, pp. 146–148; cf. Z.J. Kijas, *Początki...*, p. 244.

⁴⁵ See H. Langkammer, *Komentarz...*, pp. 64–68. Cf. also John Paul II, *General Audience 1.10.1986*, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19861001.html [Italian] [accessed: 28.2.2023].

⁴⁶ Cf. G.L. Müller, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 176–179; Z.J. Kijas, *Początki...*, p. 244.

2. The most important doctrinal statements of the Magisterium of the Church on the fall of man and original sin

The earliest testimony to the teaching on the fall of man and the hereditary sin in the Magisterium's doctrinal documents can be dated as early as to 253 AD. The Synod of Carthage stressed the necessity of baptism of infants as they have been affected by the "plague of the ancient death", because, like Adam, they were born in the flesh and thus are burdened with sins that are not their own.⁴⁷ The aforementioned sentence of the synod of Carthage is a strong argument against the superficial thesis that the Catholic doctrine of the original sin is based only on the ideas of St. Augustine of Hippo.⁴⁸ Another important argument against such a thesis is almost unanimous belief by the Fathers of the Church in the unity of mankind in Adam, and the consequent conviction that the sin of Adam can be perceived as the collective sin of humanity.⁴⁹

It should be admitted that in the 5th century, St. Augustine's teaching did indeed significantly influence the development of the doctrine of original sin, which was clarified in the face of errors of the Pelagians, who claimed that the sin of the first men was merely a bad example that is imitated by sinners, while Christ was a good example to be followed by Christians. Therefore, the Pelagians negated the value of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, stating that man can achieve salvation by his own efforts.⁵⁰ Augustine became involved in a dispute with the Pelagians, defending the biblical truth about the real impact of sin of the first men on the whole mankind. Hence, his terminology influenced the decisions of the synods dealing with the Pelagian controversy.⁵¹ During these synods, the outline of the doctrine of original sin was formed, which can be summarized as follows: 1) The sin of Adam burdens the entire human race, because it affects every human being, including newborn children; 2) This sin brought death to all mankind, and the resurrection of Christ brought the possibility of resurrection and life everlasting to all mankind; 3) Sacramental Baptism is absolutely necessary for the remission of sins, including original sin.⁵²

⁴⁷ See A. Baron, H. Pietras, *Dokumenty synodów — od 50 do 381 roku*, Kraków 2006, pp. 12–15.

⁴⁸ Cf. HD II, p. 133.

⁴⁹ See M. Przychowska, *Wszyscy byliśmy w Adamie. Jedność ludzkości w Adamie w naucej ojców Kościoła*, Poznań 2013, pp. 10–11, 19–20.

⁵⁰ See G.L. Müller, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 170–171; HD II, p. 133 ff.

⁵¹ The first of those synods was held without the participation of Augustine (Carthage, 411 AD), while in the rulings of subsequent synods (Diospolis, 415; Carthage and Mileve, 416; Carthage, 418) the Augustinian terminology can be clearly recognized (see A. Baron, H. Pietras, *Dokumenty synodów — od 506 do 553 roku*, Kraków 2014, pp. 185–186, 246 ff.).

⁵² It is worth noting that the first anti-Pelagian synods erroneously taught about the immortality of Adam and Eve inherent to their nature (cf. *ibidem*).

The teaching of the anti-Pelagian synods was approved in 418 by Pope Zosimus in a document called *the Tractoria*, in which the pope used a slightly different terminology than the synods, stating that through baptism one can be freed from “the bond of death introduced into all of us by Adam and transmitted to every soul [...] [and] contracted by propagation”, because this bond was broken by Christ.⁵³ The doctrine of original sin as established during the first five centuries of Christianity was recapitulated at the Synod of Orange in 529.⁵⁴ The rulings of the synod, later approved by Pope Boniface II, gained a reverence close to that of the ecumenical councils, exerting a significant influence on the later dogmatic formulas of the Council of Trent.⁵⁵

In the Middle Ages, the original sin was the subject of theological discussions between the supporters of two tendencies: the first, identifying original sin with concupiscence (e.g. Peter Lombard) and the second, defining original sin as a state of deprivation of original justice (e.g. Anselm of Canterbury).⁵⁶ These two tendencies were harmonized in the theological thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, who stated that the “original sin is concupiscence, materially, but privation of original justice, formally”.⁵⁷ It does not seem, however, that theological discussions were a key factor in the development of content of the doctrinal documents of the time. The *Confession of Faith* of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 mentions the role of the devil in the fall of man,⁵⁸ while the bulls of the union with the Greeks and the Copts of Basel-Ferrara-Florence Council (issued in 1439 and 1442) recalled the necessity of receiving Christ’s salvation through baptism.⁵⁹

In the 16th century, the issue of original sin returned in doctrinal documents in the face of the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther. Luther’s errors, associated with his completely pessimistic view of human nature, were condemned by the pope Leo X in the bull *Exsurge Domine*.⁶⁰ The Council of Trent’s *Decree Concerning Original Sin* (Session V, 1546), in turn, recapitulated the previous doctrinal heritage regarding the eponymous issue and formulated canons that responded, *inter alia*, to the errors of the Protestant Reformers. The Council’s decree can be summarized as follows: 1) By defying God, Adam

⁵³ *The sources of catholic dogma*, ed. by H. Denzinger, transl. R.J. Deferrari, Fitzwilliam 1955, no 109a.

⁵⁴ A. Baron, H. Pietras, *Dokumenty...*, 2014, pp. 128–132.

⁵⁵ See HD II, pp. 185–187.

⁵⁶ See *ibidem*.

⁵⁷ Sth, 1a–2ae, q. 82, a. 3.

⁵⁸ See *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, t. 2: 869–1312: *Konstantynopol IV, Lateran I, Lateran II, Lateran III, Lateran IV, Lyon I, Lyon II, Vienne*, red. A. Baron, H. Pietras, tłum. A. Baron et al., Kraków 2003, p. 221.

⁵⁹ See *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, t. 3: 1414–1445: *Konstancja, Bazylea–Ferrara–Florencja–Rzym*, red. A. Baron, H. Pietras, tłum. A. Baron et al., Kraków 2004, pp. 509, 595–597.

⁶⁰ *The sources...*, no. 741–781.

lost his original holiness and justice, drawing upon himself God's wrath and indignation, and also death, falling into captivity of the devil. As a result, he was changed for worse—as to his soul as to body; 2) The consequences of Adam's sin were transmitted onto the entire human race; 3) Original sin is transmitted by propagation and can only be remitted by the merits of Christ, that can be applied to anyone through baptism; 4) Infants, who have not committed any sin on their own, should also be baptized for the remission of original sin; 5) Baptism truly remits original sin, and in the baptized only the concupiscence (an inclination to sin) remains, which, however, can be resisted; 6) *The Decree Concerning Original Sin* does not include the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁶¹ The Council's *Decree Concerning Justification* (Session VI, 1547), which emphasizes in its canon 5 that human free will was not destroyed through sin, was also directed against the Protestant Reformers' errors.⁶²

Later doctrinal statements related to the problem of the fall and its legacy concerned mostly recurring tendencies of anthropological pessimism. Certain aspects of the ancient thought of St. Augustine, subsequently interpreted radically by Luther, were further reinterpreted by Michael Baius and later by Cornelius Jansen according to their belief in the absolute destruction of human free will after sin.⁶³ Their errors were condemned respectively in Pius V's bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus* of 1567⁶⁴ and Pius VI's constitution *Auctorem fidei* of 1794.⁶⁵

Other important doctrinal statements come from the 20th century. Rapid development of empirical sciences led to many discoveries regarding the biological origins of mankind. These discoveries contradicted the literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis and resulting theological theses, such as the monogenist opinion, according to which there was a single human couple in the beginning: the biblical Adam and Eve. Pope Pius XII attempted to defend monogenism in his encyclical *Humani generis*, questioning the possibility of harmonizing non-monogenist opinions with the Catholic doctrine on original sin.⁶⁶

The most recent doctrinal statements on original sin can be found predominantly in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Council Fathers referred to the problem of original sin in the context of a complete anthropological vision, showing human destiny in the light of the salvation brought by Christ. The Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* reminds that: "Although he was made by God

⁶¹ See *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, t. 4: 1511–1870: *Lateran V, Trydent, Watykan I*, red. A. Baron, H. Pietras, tłum. A. Baron et al., Kraków 2004, pp. 235–241.

⁶² See *ibidem*, p. 313.

⁶³ See HD II, pp. 214–215.

⁶⁴ See *The sources...*, no. 1001–1080.

⁶⁵ See *ibidem*, no. 1516 ff.

⁶⁶ See BF, no. 1078–1080.

in a state of holiness, from the very onset of his history man abused his liberty, at the urging of the Evil One. Man set himself against God and sought to attain his goal apart from God.”⁶⁷

The bonds of sin that man recognizes in himself are the reason for the “rebellious stirrings in his body”, frequent errors of conscience, degradation of one’s freedom and also the experience of bodily death.⁶⁸ As the Council Fathers stated, the mystery of entire human existence, marked by sin, can be read properly only in light of Paul’s parallel between Adam and Christ.⁶⁹

A section concerning original sin is featured in the *Credo of Paul VI*, promulgated by that pope in 1968 in the *motu proprio Solemni Hac Liturgia*. The creed was actually redacted by Jacques Maritain,⁷⁰ most likely in response to the controversy over the Dutch Catechism of 1966.⁷¹ It was stated in *the Credo* that:

in Adam all have sinned, which means that [...] human nature, common to all men, [...] [did] fall to a state in which it bears the consequences of that offense, and which is not the state in which it was at first in our first parents—established as they were in holiness and justice, and in which man knew neither evil nor death. It is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothed it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death, that is transmitted to all men, and it is in this sense that every man is born in sin.⁷²

Noteworthy is the terminology concerning human nature in the context of sin, which seems to refer to the oldest patristic traditions (see *ibid.*). Simultaneously, Paul VI’s *Credo* appears to suggest a rather realistic interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) contains a relatively extensive teaching on original sin. A shortcoming of the CCC’s presentation is an evident inconsistency: certain sections indicate the necessity of interpretation of biblical symbolism, while others suggest a literal reading of the texts of Genesis 2–3, as for example, numbers 375–376, in which authors of the Catechism teach about the state of original righteousness and holiness, as well as immortality and incor-

⁶⁷ GS, no. 13.

⁶⁸ See *ibidem*, no. 13–17.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 22.

⁷⁰ See S. Magister, *The Credo of Paul VI. Who Wrote It, and Why*, transl. M. Sherry, <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/204969bdc4.html?eng=y> [accessed: 28.2.2023].

⁷¹ English translation: *A New Catechism, Authorized Edition of the Dutch Catechism with Supplement*, New York 1988.

⁷² Paul VI, *Apostolic letter in the form of Motu Proprio Solemni hac liturgia* (1968), https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19680630_cred.html [accessed: 28.2.2023], no. 16.

ruptibility of the first men.⁷³ This shortcoming aside, the teaching of the CCC is coherent. The *Catechism* emphasizes the real nature of original sin as an event occurring at the very beginning of human history, about which the Book of Genesis teaches using figurative language.⁷⁴ The authors of the CCC warn against reducing the original sin solely to “a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure.”⁷⁵ Also pointed out was St. Paul’s parallel between Adam and Christ, which the Council had previously recalled,⁷⁶ as was the idea of unity of mankind in Adam.⁷⁷ The *Catechism* teaches that the state of communion between the man and the God has been broken as a result of sin.⁷⁸ The nature of the sin of the first men was described as follows:

Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness.⁷⁹

The consequences of the fall, according to *Catechism*, are: loss of original grace of holiness, distortion of the image of God, loss of the control that soul’s spiritual faculties had over body, disruption of original unity between man and woman, and of the original harmony with the whole creation, and finally, the entrance of death into the history of mankind and invasion of sin into the world.⁸⁰ The transmission of original sin has been explained by statement that the sin of the first men affects human nature, and is transmitted by propagation, depriving human nature of its original holiness and justice. Original sin is therefore a condition, not an act, hence it is called sin only in the analogical sense.⁸¹ CCC also describes the social dimension of sin and the phenomenon of emergence of the social structures of evil.⁸²

A synthetic summary of doctrinal statements of the Magisterium of the Church concerning the fall of man and the original sin over the ages can be presented as follows: 1) Magisterium teaches that the first humans sinned, tempted by Satan, by abusing their freedom and turning away from the Creator; 2) Their

⁷³ See CCC, no. 703; cf. no. 375–376.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, no. 390.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, no. 387.

⁷⁶ See *ibidem*, no. 388.

⁷⁷ See *ibidem*, no. 404.

⁷⁸ See *ibidem*, no. 391–396.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 397.

⁸⁰ See *ibidem*, no. 399–401.

⁸¹ See *ibidem*, no. 404–405.

⁸² See *ibidem*, no. 407–408.

sin affected the whole human being, and its consequences were transmitted to the whole mankind by propagation (as every human being participates in human nature); 3) Original sin can be remitted by the merits of Christ, through sacramental baptism. Although a certain weakness—inclination towards sin—remains even in a baptized person, one can resist this inclination by God's grace; 4) The fundamental text for the Catholic teaching on original sin is the parallel between Adam and Christ from Rom 5:12ff. This text can be described as a synopsis of the Christian doctrine of original sin.

3. An integral interpretation of original sin and its transmission

From a perspective of fundamental theology, the Catholic teaching on original sin poses many difficulties. Two of them can be identified as most significant. The first arises in an attempt to reconcile the theological vision of the fall of man as an event that took place at the dawn of the prehistory of mankind with the data provided by empirical sciences on the origins of the human race. The second is the issue of transmission of original sin by propagation.

3.1. The fall of man

The pioneer of the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, stated at the end of the first half of the 20th century that:

At first glance, there is nothing more perplexing to the modern mind than a vision of the fall of man, which seems to contradict [...] the paleontology and prehistory, both of which cannot situate in time and space a real earthly paradise or fully developed pair of human beings in the beginning.⁸³

It should be stated that although the Jesuit theologian and paleoanthropologist correctly recognized the aforementioned difficulty, the solution he proposed as a part of his comprehensive historiosophical concept cannot be considered satisfactory. This is because Teilhard de Chardin has identified sin and moral evil with one's acceptance of the state of dispersion and disorganization of matter in the evolving universe, equating, in a sense, moral evil with physical evil.⁸⁴ Theology has also witnessed other attempts to solve the abovementioned issue. According to authors of some of them, the biblical message about original sin should be read exclusively as a mythical description of the truth about man's existential

⁸³ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Wprowadzenie...*, p. 161.

⁸⁴ See J. Kulisz, *Teilhardowskie rozumienie grzechu*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 34–47, 101–110.

sinfulness.⁸⁵ Authors of other propositions identified original sin with the immanent evil of the world or humanity.⁸⁶ Some other theological trends reduced sin to a psychological problem. It should be concluded, however, that none of the propositions mentioned above provided a satisfactory solution to the problem.⁸⁷

The belief in some kind of primordial disaster—the fall of man at the dawn of humanity—is clearly reflected both in the biblical message (especially in St. Paul’s anti-thesis between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12ff) and also in the Church’s doctrinal tradition, and without taking this fact into account, an attempt of interpretation of the issue of original sin is impossible. The idea of two opposites in the history of mankind—the fall and the salvation—has also been expressed in the liturgy of the Church, perhaps most pronouncedly in the Easter Proclamation of the Roman Rite (the *Exsultet*).⁸⁸ The modern interpretation proposed in this work, developed from a fundamental theology perspective, should allow for harmonization of the Catholic doctrine with the knowledge of empirical sciences on the origins of mankind. Our proposition is not intended to follow the former theological idea of concordism, which tried to seek for the knowledge about the prehistory in the content of Revelation, but is meant as an attempt to establish an integral narrative, interpreting the data of empirical science in the light of Revelation.

How can the primordial catastrophe of the fall of man be placed on the timeline of the prehistory of mankind? First of all, it is necessary to identify the subject of the fall. As stated by the Catholic teaching, only a person can be a subject of sin.⁸⁹ If such an assumption is made, and if the findings from the interpretation of the biblical data, according to which the fall of man must have taken place at the very beginning of the prehistory of mankind as a part of the emergence of proto-human beings from the animal world, are taken into account, a conclusion can be drawn. It says that “the event” of the fall has to be placed on the timeline of human history at the point in which the hominids crossed of the threshold of hominization, that is, in which the representatives of the genus *Homo* fulfilled the criteria that constitute their personal character, distinguishing themselves from the animals.

⁸⁵ C.S. Bartnik (*Dogmatyka...*, p. 356) lists the representatives of this trend: H. Junker, L. Robberechts, H. Haag, J. Gross, H. Küng, U. Baumann, J. Vermeylen and E. Drewermann.

⁸⁶ E.g.: P. Teilhard de Chardin, K. Schmitz-Moormann, P. Schoonenberg, N.M. Wildiers, C. Cuénot, H. de Lubac, R. Troisfonaines, S. Trooster, G. Blandino, A. Hulsbosch, H. Rondet, M. Hurley (*ibidem*, p. 358).

⁸⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 362–363.

⁸⁸ See *Orędzie Wielkanocne. Forma dłuższa* [in:] *Mszal rzymski dla diecezji polskich*, Poznań 1986, pp. 155–161.

⁸⁹ See e.g.: CCC, no. 397, 1849–1850; John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation “Reconciliatio et paenitentia”* (1984), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html [accessed: 28.2.2023].

In our previous paper,⁹⁰ we have undertaken the issue of the *criteria of humanity* and the *threshold of hominization*, drafting an outline of an integral protological narrative. According to this narrative, taking into account both the theological and empirical data, the most important *criterion of humanity* is the ability to enter interpersonal relationships, and most importantly into the relationship with God (*capax Dei*).⁹¹ Human relationship with its Creator, absolutely unique among other creatures, is revealed in the phenomenon of morality: human being, unlike animals, is not bound by the common principle of *maximal fitness*, according to which every living creature strives primarily to achieve a reproductive success at all costs. Unlike them, humans recognize a voice of conscience “in their hearts”, and are able to acknowledge the supernatural source of moral norms.⁹² Although it is impossible to determine exactly when the representatives of the genus *Homo* transgressed the *threshold of hominization*, paleoarchaeological findings provide material evidence for the capability of symbolical thinking and the religious life of the proto-humans. Based on those findings it can be speculated that members of at least two species of prehistoric *Homo*: *H. sapiens* and *H. neanderthalensis* fulfilled the *criteria of humanity*.⁹³

On the grounds of the aforementioned hypothesis, further speculation can be made regarding the “event” of the fall of man. Assuming that at some stage of anthropogenesis there was a burst consciousness in the proto-humans, which opened the possibility of entering into a relationship with God, one could imagine that it was at this moment that the first humans were faced with the decision to take “sides” with the Creator or to turn against Him.⁹⁴ Already at that point, negative responses to God’s invitation must have arisen, which means that mankind in its entirety did not pass the personal and moral trial, described in the symbolic language of Genesis 2–3.⁹⁵ The rejection of God by first humans and their desire to achieve their purpose apart from Him manifested in the abuse of free will.⁹⁶ Although the proto-humans surely differed from their descendants in their mental development, religiosity and morality,⁹⁷ they must have been certainly able to exercise their free will and recognize the inner voice of conscience.⁹⁸ Therefore, a thesis can be put forward that at the dawn of man a person (or many persons)

⁹⁰ M. Witała, *A Proposition...*

⁹¹ See *ibidem*, pp. 74–78.

⁹² See GS, no. 16–17; CCC, no. 1950–1959.

⁹³ See M. Witała, *A Proposition...*, pp. 78–89.

⁹⁴ Cf. C.S. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 359–360.

⁹⁵ Cf. R. Schwager, *Grzech pierworodny i dramat zbawienia w kontekście ewolucji, inżynierii genetycznej i Apokalipsy*, tłum. J. Hanusz, Tarnów 2002, p. 111.

⁹⁶ See GS, no. 13.

⁹⁷ See R. Schwager, *Grzech...*, pp. 109–110.

⁹⁸ Cf. T. Jelonek, *Biblia...*, pp. 17–18.

exercised their free will against the voice of conscience, and that act resulted in “emergence” of moral evil in the world. Indeed, modern discoveries of paleoarchaeologist document acts of moral evil (especially interpersonal violence) as a common phenomenon since the very dawn of prehistoric humanity, and not, as previously thought, only since around 12,000 BC.⁹⁹ Obviously, it is important to remember that the drama of the fall had to happen primarily “in the heart” of a person as an element of their inner life. A speculation about this first sin of human being should be limited to some general doctrinal statements of Magisterium: about the loss of the trust in God, disobedience, and the desire to become like God apart from Him.¹⁰⁰ It should be also noted that the narrative about the fall of man should not omit the significance of Satan as a crucial factor in the sin of the first men as it is strongly emphasized in the biblical data. Disregarding the role of the devil results in a risk of reducing the phenomenon of evil only to its physical dimension, and also in a risk of negating the phenomenon of sin in its moral aspect.¹⁰¹ This issue, however, cannot be elaborated in this paper, and should be explored further in another work.

Our proposition, referring to the fall as an “event” involving the primordial mankind, without specifically stating whether it was a single act of one person or perhaps a phenomenon involving the entire population, may seem to contradict some statements of Magisterium that suggested a realistic interpretation of Genesis 2–3 and the real existence of a single human couple at the dawn of mankind. It should be noted, however, that the intention of the authors of the doctrinal statements of the past ages, whose views on anthropogenesis resulted from the then state of knowledge, was not to dogmatize these views, but to dogmatize basic theological truths. For example, the fathers of the Council of Trent, when teaching about the impact of original sin on all humanity and the sacrament of baptism as a remedy for it, expressed views that were deeply rooted in the biblical parallel between Adam and Christ, and did not extend their teaching beyond this fundamental idea. As stated by the authors of the monumental work on history of the dogma, edited by Bernard Sesboüé, Magisterium of the Church was not concerned with the question of the “event” of the Fall itself, but with its consequences for humanity. Thus, it cannot be claimed that the rulings of the Council of Trent retain their proper meaning only in conjunction with a literal interpretation of the biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden and the fall of man.¹⁰² Taking into account the idea of unity of the whole mankind in Adam, expressed in the most

⁹⁹ See: P. Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, transl. J. Herman, New York 1994, pp. 139–167; *The Bioarchaeology of Violence*, ed. by D.L. Martin, R.P. Harrod, V.R. Pérez, Florida 2012.

¹⁰⁰ See GS, no. 13; CCC, no. 397–398.

¹⁰¹ Cf. C.S. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka...*, p. 485.

¹⁰² See HD II, pp. 211–213.

ancient theological traditions,¹⁰³ it should be noted that the essential part of the Catholic doctrine on original sin is the belief that every human being can recognize Adam in oneself as a symbol of both the first sinners and the whole humanity affected by the legacy of sin. Recognizing biblical Adam in oneself also implies the possibility of identifying oneself with the Christ, liberating mankind from sin and revealing to man the greatness of his supreme calling.¹⁰⁴

3.2. The transmission of original sin

As demonstrated in the first section of this paper, the biblical texts express the belief of the inspired authors in the proliferation of evil in the world as a result of the fall of man, as well as in the impact of the sin of one individual, or one human group on other people. With the exception of St. Paul's teaching, however, the biblical texts do not contain a complete lecture on the transmission of original sin. The Church's Magisterium in its past statements, however, has consistently taught about the transmission of sin by birth or by descent. In the light of the results of empirical sciences that do not confirm the limitation of the original human population to a single couple, a certain difficulty arises: how should the issue of the "inheritance" of the sin of the first humans be explained? As cited earlier, Pius XII tried to respond to this problem in 1950, in his attempt to defend the theory of monogenism (the view that the mankind originated exclusively from a single first couple). It should be noted, however, that the encyclical *Humani Generis* does not state that biological polygenism (the theory stating that mankind originated from multiple human pairs in the original population of proto-humans) is absolutely incompatible with the Catholic teaching on original sin, but that there "is no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled" with this teaching. Nowadays, there are numerous theological interpretations that allow for such a reconciliation of biological polygenism with theological monogenism.¹⁰⁵ The only question that remains is how to explain how exactly the sin of the first men is transmitted to the next generations.

It seems that the transmission of sin should be discussed rather in the context of being born into human nature, and not the biological inheritance. This issue, however, can be interpreted in many ways. For example, Joseph Ratzinger em-

¹⁰³ E.g. in the thought of Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 88.4); Origen (*Commentary on Romans*, V.4); Methodius of Olympus (*On the Resurrection*, 2.1.1), and other Christian authors of antiquity. For more on this topic see: M. Przyszychowska, *Wszyscy...*

¹⁰⁴ See GS no. 22.

¹⁰⁵ See e.g. T.B. Łukaszuk, *Związek dogmatu grzechu pierworodnego z monogenizmem w katolickiej teologii ostatniej doby*, Warszawa 1976, p. 8 ff., 144 ff.; C.S. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka...*, p. 450; G.L. Müller, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 184–185.

phasized the social aspect of human nature, stating, that “We receive our lives not only at our birth, but also every day, from other people. Being human is to be in relationships of love [...] Sin, however, means distortion or destruction of relationship.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, the ability to enter relationships, which is an important criterion of humanity, allows for the existence of the whole network of relationships, covering the whole mankind. Sin affects those relationships, therefore “with the humanity, which is good in itself, a man shares the world that is disturbed by sin.”¹⁰⁷ In this spirit, the transmission of original sin is explained also by Polish personalistic theology, according to which every man is “included in a network of interpersonal connections, being interdependent of others,”¹⁰⁸ and therefore is affected by evil, accumulated by mankind over all generations, under the influence of which he himself becomes the perpetrator of evil.¹⁰⁹

The phenomenon of transmission of the original sin cannot be reduced only to the social dimension. Although in our attempt to formulate the integral narrative undertaken in this work we tried to adopt a perspective adapted to the needs of the recipient shaped in the empiricist mentality, it seems absolutely necessary to refer to the metaphysical concept of human nature, well known from the classical views of Gregory of Nyssa, Boethius and Thomas Aquinas.¹¹⁰ Perhaps contemporary theology should also re-read the approach to the transmission of original sin proposed by Anselm of Canterbury. Benedictine of Aosta distinguished between the sins committed by an individual and sins contracted through belonging to human nature, which was “contained in Adam and Eve” and which was damaged by sin.¹¹¹ Without reference to this metaphysical concept of human nature, it is impossible to validate the idea of salvation and liberation from sin for all mankind by Christ, and especially those representatives of the human race who lived before Christ, in accordance with the ancient principle: “what has not [...] been adopted, cannot be healed, who is united with God, is saved.”¹¹² Only such

¹⁰⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Grzech i odkupienie. Czwarte kazanie wielkopostne, Monachium, 29 marca 1981 roku* [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Pochodzenie i przeznaczenie* [Opera Omnia V], tłum. J. Kobienia, Lublin 2022, p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁸ M. Antoniewicz, *Personalistyczna interpretacja grzechu pierworodnego*, “Roczniki Teologii Dogmatycznej” 59 (2012) 4, pp. 260–261.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. C.S. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 358–361.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* [in:] Grzegorz z Nyssy, *O stworzeniu człowieka*, tłum., red. M. Przyszychowska, Kraków 2006, pp. 45–149, r. XVI; Boethius, *Liber de Persona et duabus naturis* [in:] *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 64, pp. 1338–1354, r. III; STh, 1, q. 29, a. 1–2; 1, q. 30, a. 4.

¹¹¹ See Anselm of Canterbury, *Virgin Conception and Original Sin* [in:] Święty Anselm z Canterbury, *O Wcieleniu. Wybór pism*, tłum., red. A. Roslan, Poznań 2006, pp. 257–324, ch. I, pp. 260–262.

¹¹² Gregory Nazianzen, *Letters* [in:] Św. Grzegorz z Nazjanzu, *Listy*, tłum., red. J. Stahr, Poznań 1933, pp. 1–304, List 101 (CI), pp. 130–146.

a presentation of the approach to the problem of transmission of original sin that takes into account both of the abovementioned aspects of human nature—social and metaphysical—can be considered complete.

Conclusions

Our attempt at a modern interpretation of the fall of man and original sin from a fundamental theology perspective can be summarized as follows:

- 1) According to the message of the Bible, the human was destined for a harmonious relationship with the Creator. He was also endowed with free will, which is why the first men were faced with a choice: to accept this relationship or to reject God. In the faith of the Church, the belief in the existence of two polar opposites in the history of salvation is deeply rooted: the fall, at the dawn of mankind, when the first people by free choice under the influence of demonic temptation rejected the bond with God and salvation in evangelical times, brought by Christ.
- 2) It seems possible to formulate an integral narrative in which the Catholic doctrine of the fall is placed on a timeline of human history drawn up on the basis of research of empirical sciences. The author of this paper, based on the findings from previous research, hypothesized that the “event” of the fall must have occurred at the point in which the representatives of the genus *Homo* crossed the threshold of hominization, i.e. at the point in history when these beings met the criteria of humanity, of which the most important is the ability to enter a relationship with God. Material evidence provided by paleoarchaeology indicates that moral evil has been present within humanity since the beginning of its history.
- 3) Even if the intellectual, moral and religious life of the first men differed significantly from that of modern people, the original sin of the first men must have been a free choice, an act of defying one’s conscience, in which, in some way, even if imperfectly, they recognized the God’s law.
- 4) In order to explain the matter of transmission of original sin in accordance with the doctrinal tradition of the Church and without rejecting the traditional terminology, the issue of participation in human nature should be emphasized. This question ought to be examined in many aspects, especially the metaphysical and social concepts of human nature.

The interpretation proposed in this work converges in some aspects with the thought of recognized contemporary theologians. Regarding the nature of the sin of the beginnings and the “event” of the fall of man, similarities can be pointed out with the already cited Polish personalistic theology, as well as

with the thought of Archbishop Józef Życiński.¹¹³ Foreign theologians such as Karl Rahner, Gerhard Ludwig Müller, and Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer have also written about the nature of the fall in a way with which our proposal coincides. Regarding the transmission of original sin, the aforementioned authors emphasize the phenomenon of the transmission of sin through human nature in its social dimension, however, at the same time they do not seem to sufficiently appreciate the role of metaphysical human nature in this context.¹¹⁴ It is worth noting that although the issue of original sin does not seem to attract as much attention of modern theology as it deserves, there are some contemporary Polish theologians who cover this problem in their research. It seems fair to mention at least some of their latest works. For example, Antoni Nadbrzeźny comprehensively covered the most important theological interpretations of original sin in his article *Od „grzechu Adama” do „grzechu świata”. Rozwój teologicznej refleksji na temat grzechu pierworodnego* [From “the sin of Adam” to “the world’s sin”: The development on theological reflexion on the original sin].¹¹⁵ Two other works worth mentioning cover the issue of original sin in the context of the contemporary worldview in which the universe is perceived as an evolving reality. Krystian Kałuża covers this topic in the work *Grzech pierworodny w kontekście ewolucyjnego obrazu świata* [Original sin in the context of an evolutionary world picture].¹¹⁶ Wojciech P. Grygiel and Damian Wąsek, in turn, dedicated their whole book *Teologia ewolucyjna. Założenia — problemy — hipotezy* [Evolutionary theology: Assumptions—problems—hypotheses]¹¹⁷ to the challenge of the aforementioned evolutionary viewpoint and included in their work a chapter on the issue of original sin.

In conclusion, we are bound to state that due to the limitations of the volume of this work, the analysis and interpretive proposal undertaken in this paper should be perceived only as a partial contribution to the problematic issues. Nev-

¹¹³ See J. Życiński, *Grzech pierworodny jako próba ewolucyjnej autotranscendencji człowieka* [in:] *Minister verbi. Liber sollemnis excellentissimo domino Domino Archiepiscopo Henrico Muszyński Metropolitae Gnesnensi ad honorandum desimum quartum eiusdem vitae lustrum expletum dedicatus oblatusque*, red. P. Podeszwa, W. Szczerbiński, Gniezno 2003, pp. 779–790.

¹¹⁴ See K. Rahner, *Podstawowy wykład wiary. Wprowadzenie do pojęcia chrześcijaństwa*, tłum. T. Mieszkowski, Warszawa 1987, p. 98; G.L. Müller, *Dogmatyka...*, pp. 161–185; L.F. Ladaria Ferrer, *Wprowadzenie do antropologii teologicznej*, tłum. A. Baron, Kraków 1997, pp. 84–95.

¹¹⁵ A. Nadbrzeźny, *Od „grzechu Adama” do „grzechu świata”. Rozwój teologicznej refleksji na temat grzechu pierworodnego* [in:] *Teologia w dialogu z innymi naukami. Spotkania — Kontrowersje — Perspektywy*, red. D. Wąsek, Kraków 2021, pp. 89–112.

¹¹⁶ K. Kałuża, *Grzech pierworodny w kontekście ewolucyjnego obrazu świata* [in:] *Teologia w dialogu z innymi naukami. Spotkania — Kontrowersje — Perspektywy*, red. D. Wąsek, Kraków 2021, pp. 113–153.

¹¹⁷ W. Grygiel, D. Wąsek, *Teologia ewolucyjna. Założenia — problemy — hipotezy*, Kraków 2023.

ertheless, we express the hope that it will inspire further research and find a practical application in the transmission of faith to a contemporary audience and also in catechesis, as well as apologetic or formative activities.

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Abbreviations

- BF *Breviarium Fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła.*
 GS *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in Modern World “Gaudium et Spes”* (1965).
 HD II V. Grossi, L.F. Ladaria Ferrer, P. Lécrivain, B. Sesboüé, *Człowiek i jego zbawienie: stworzenie, grzech pierworodny, usprawiedliwienie i łaska, rzeczy ostateczne, etyka chrześcijańska: od „autorytetów” do Magisterium.*
 CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*
 Sth Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae.*

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