

REV. MAREK JAGODZIŃSKI

## DOES THE QUESTION OF “INTERGENERATIONAL FORGIVENESS” EXIST?

**Abstract:** “Intergenerational forgiveness” is actually a prayer for intergenerational forgiveness, and its purpose is “healing of the family tree” or to achieve “intergenerational healing”. It appeared in connection with diseases and sufferings of the people and the need for pastoral care of them. Doubtful, however, is already the biblical context of this phenomenon and interpretation of related biblical texts require mature biblical hermeneutics. Difficult to avoid are also dogmatic problems, mainly related to the efficacy of the sacraments of baptism and penance. All these circumstances suggest the need to completely abandon this concept in theory and practice.

**Key words:** sin, sacrament of baptism, sacrament of penance, forgiveness of sins, inner healing, deliverance from sins, biblical context, hermeneutics.

The term “intergenerational forgiveness” in fact stands for praying for intergenerational forgiveness and its goal is to “heal the family tree,” or reach “intergenerational healing.” It has appeared recently in connection with diseases and suffering, as well as the prospective need for pastoral care that stems from the authority of Jesus Christ’s words: “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do” [Mk 2:17].<sup>1</sup> It is worth keeping in mind that what immediately follows these words is: “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” [Ibid.]. What results from this is that Jesus’s

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MAREK JAGODZIŃSKI – Catholic priest, associate professor at the Chair of Orthodox Theology in the Ecumenical Department of the KUL’s Faculty of Theology, contact: [ksemjot@tlen.pl](mailto:ksemjot@tlen.pl)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sławomir Płusa, “Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe. Spojrzenie teologiczno-praktyczne,” *Duchowość w Polsce* 16 (2014): 101. The author notes (Ibid., 101-4) that Doctor Kenneth McAll, surgeon, missionary and psychiatrist, is the initiator of this approach. He points out the article by Mieczysław Piotrowski, [“Uzdrowienie międzypokoleniowe. Terapia według dr. Kennetha McAlla,” *Milujcie się* 1 (2004): 9-11, [https://archiwum.milujcieszcie.org.pl/nr/temat\\_numeru/uzdrowienie\\_miedzypokoleniowe\\_terapia\\_wg.html](https://archiwum.milujcieszcie.org.pl/nr/temat_numeru/uzdrowienie_miedzypokoleniowe_terapia_wg.html) [July 21, 2015] as the source of information about him. McAll gave account of his experiences in his book *Healing the Family Tree* (London: Sheldon, 1982). Cf. also <http://www.miesiecznikęzorcysta.pl/na-naszyc/item/696-nie-dziedziczymy-grzechu-przodkow> [July 21, 2015], [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,14943095,Nowa\\_moda\\_w\\_kosciele\\_uzdrawianie\\_miedzypokoleniowe.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,14943095,Nowa_moda_w_kosciele_uzdrawianie_miedzypokoleniowe.html) [July 21, 2015].

primary intention is not a therapy in a broad sense, but the salvation of sinners.<sup>2</sup> According to Sławomir Płusa's information, the issue of "healing the family tree" has been present in the practices of deliverance and internal healing.<sup>3</sup>

Without downplaying the noble intention to help the suffering, theologian will always be most interested in the Biblical context, proper hermeneutics of the cited Biblical texts, theological tradition of the Church and theological issues that ensue.

### 1. THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT OF THE PRESUMPTIVE "INTERGENERATIONAL HEALING"

Advocates of such a practice most often refer to the excerpt from the Book of Exodus 20:5f.: "For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation, on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments." S. Płusa rightly notes that for the people of that times transgressing the covenant would bring punishment to the entire family.<sup>4</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* points out that the word "impassioned" instead of "jealous" with reference to God would be more appropriate. "Yahweh is passionately committed to Israel; he will see to it that all sins are punished even if the punishment is borne by the children of the parents who have committed the sin; the people consists of more than one generation. 'Sin' in the Bible often denotes at once the act and the consequences of the act. The consequences or the plight one gets into by one's sins are sometime described as directly sent by God and sometimes as the natural result of human actions. In this text, divine initiative is strongly stated."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The text from the Gospel of Mark combines here sinners and tax collectors. "Sinner, in the Old Testament sense, are impious, immoral people (evil-doers, murderers, frauds). According the lists made by the Pharisees, who was considered a sinner was e.g. the gambler, dice player, lender, organiser of pigeon races, as well as the shepherd, tax collector, welder, weaver, shearer, bleeder, bather, tanner, doctor, sailor, carter, camel seller and butcher. Therefore, for the Pharisees "sinner" is a broader term that comprises such people as tax collectors. Moreover, the Pharisees called sinner those who did not obey their laws." Hugolin Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Marka. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz* (Poznań-Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1977), 112.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Płusa, "Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe," 104-5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>5</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 52.

Sawomir Płusa also justly adds that what is meant here is not inheriting personal guilt for the ancestors' sins, which is clearly said in Ezek 18:2-4: "What is the meaning of this proverb that you recite in the land of Israel: 'Fathers have eaten green grapes, thus their children's teeth are on edge'? As I live, says the Lord God: I swear that there shall no longer be anyone among you who will repeat this proverb in Israel. For all lives are mine; the life of the father is like the life of the son, both are mine; only the one who sins shall die."<sup>6</sup> Quoting Bishop Andrzej Siemieniewski's reflection that rightly presents inaccurate interpretations of the above text, he remarks that he has left off other fragments crucial to understanding the issue under scrutiny – the already mentioned Ex 20:5f, Bar 3:1-8<sup>7</sup>, as well as the text from Mt 23:35f. that is parallel to Lk 11:49-51<sup>8</sup>: "So that there may come upon you all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the righteous blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Amen, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."<sup>9</sup> These Jesus's words pertained to the current generation.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Józef Homerski, *Księga Ezechiela. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2013), 149.

<sup>7</sup> "Lord Almighty, God of Israel, afflicted souls and dismayed spirits call to you. Hear, O Lord, for you are a God of mercy; and have mercy on us, who have sinned against you: for you are enthroned forever, while we are perishing forever. Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear the prayer of Israel's few, the sons of those who sinned against you; they did not heed the voice of the Lord, their God, and the evils cling to us. Remember at this time not the misdeeds of our fathers, but your own hand and name: for you are the Lord our God; and you, O Lord, we will praise! For this, you put into our hearts the fear of you: that we may call upon your name, and praise you in our captivity, when we have removed from our hearts all the wickedness of our fathers who sinned against you. Behold us today in our captivity, where you scattered us, a reproach, a curse, and a requital for all the misdeeds of our fathers, who withdrew from the Lord, our God."

<sup>8</sup> "Therefore, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute' in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood!"

<sup>9</sup> Zechariah's murder is described in 2 Chr 24:20-22. In Mt 23:33f. Jesus says about the persecution of His disciples. "As if to underline that the Pharisees and scribes will not evade eternal punishment, Jesus says that He has sent and will be sending ... 'prophets, wise men and scribes' – all kinds of preachers of His teaching, just like in the Old Testament. They will meet with various forms of persecution. Jesus mentions four: they will 'kill, crucify, scourge' them [10:17] and 'pursue from town to town.' ... The persecutions of Jesus's disciples on the part of religious leaders fulfil the measure of injustice and crime that were present in the Chosen People. Following Holy Scripture, Jesus starts with mentioning about the innocently shed blood of Abel [Gen 4] and finishes with the murder of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada [2 Chr 24:20-22]. ... God will absolutely justly hold the old Israel in the persons of its current leaders ('this generation') responsible for

However, He did not allow for the use of this principle to a particular man, whose illness used to be interpreted as the consequence of a sin committed by someone: “‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him’ [Jn 9,2f].<sup>10</sup>

Making reference to Lk 11:49-51, a usual biblical commentary states: “The second threat [47-51] heeds the attitude of scribes to prophets. The ones who build prophet’s tombs praise the conduct of those who killed the prophets. The people represented by the scribes is so demoralized that also now they are ready to kill prophets and other God’s messengers, including Jesus. God will hold them responsible for the blood shed; however, so that the measure of the wickedness of this people may be fulfilled, He will still send the Apostles and they will go and proclaim the Word of God. What is already known is that Jews will first pursue them, and then kill them. Thereby, the unfaithful people may be the ones to render an account for the blood of all the prophets. Luke mentions Abel – the first victim that Scripture speaks about [Gen 4:8], as well as a very popular prophet Zechariah [2 Chr 24:20-23]. The blood of both of them cries to God for vengeance, and Jesus, speaking about the decision of God’s wisdom, confirms it Himself, making the prediction that “this generation will be charged.”<sup>11</sup> It turns out that the mentioned “charge” that will be demanded of “this generation” will not necessarily be caused by the guilt of their ancestors, but an equally malicious attitude of the generation of Jesus’s times toward the Apostles.

Issues necessary to an adequate evaluation of the problem have also been provided by *An Opinion of the Theological Committee about the So-Called “Gate Confession”* published by the Department of Theology at KUL.<sup>12</sup> It concerns the “gates” that a personal or “generational” sin opened before satan, giving him in a way some authority over a man [cf. no. 1].<sup>13</sup>

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everything [36], because they are not only sons of murderers, but they themselves consciously persecute and kill God’s messengers” (Józef Homerski, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2004), 308.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Płusa, “Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe,” 107f.

<sup>11</sup> Feliks Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2007), 232f.

<sup>12</sup> <http://episkopat.pl/decyzja-kep-w-sprawie-tzw-spowiedzi-furtkowej/> [July 21, 2015]. What is interesting is that the article does not mention the members of the committee. Why the mystery?

<sup>13</sup> “This reasoning suggests that children should be kept responsible for the sins of ancestors, which would allude to the Old Testament conviction of collective responsibility. It finds its confirmation in the proverb: ‘Fathers have eaten green grapes, thus their children’s teeth are on edge’ [Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2]. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who both quote it, agree unanimously

## 2. THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE RECALLED BIBLICAL TEXTS

The mentioned text and usual biblical commentaries do not even mention a possibility or necessity of the “intergenerational healing.” Evocative expressions about God’s “jealousy” or “passion” are anthropomorphic images of His uncompromising attitude toward sin that are undoubtedly of great rhetoric value. It also does not negate the truth about social consequences of sin. It might seem that having read Ezek 18:2-4, or especially Jn 9:2f., there should not be any possibility of thinking about any personal intergenerational burdens.<sup>14</sup>

We may start to feel that opting for them in the light of the texts from Scripture is the result of seeking biblical foundations for a therapy used in psychiatry. It may as well stem from specifically “spiritual” reading of the Bible that is characteristic of the “protestant” hermeneutics (of origin and nature), which puts emphasis on its subjective and personal understanding affected by the conviction that it is the gift of God, who speaks to a concrete person directly. What is essential in this perspective is the fact that the authors of the books about this subject matter do not generally evoke biblical commentaries, written by experts, to substantiate their claims, as though the specialist scientific knowledge had nothing to say in the matter.<sup>15</sup> In a burst

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that the principle of collective responsibility is, nonetheless, wrong and should not be used [Jer 31:31; Ezek 18:3-4]. No one is held responsible for the ancestors’ guilt. Although it is true that the history of the people, the whole nation, is the history of sin, but it is the attitude of each individual in a given situation that decides on either death or spiritual life [Cf. Lev 24:16]. In the spirit of individual responsibility everyone is personally responsible for his or her conduct before God. The New Testament confirms it fully as we do not come across a single instance of referring to the sinful past of ancestors in order to account for the present circumstance of demonic oppression” [Ibid., no. 3].

<sup>14</sup> And yet, in the case of Kenneth McAll, a psychiatric “syndrome of being possessed,” analysis of the history of the lives of the patients and their families, interpersonal relations – between the living and dead alike – “have all led him to claim that the source of a number of illnesses may lie in the lack of forgiveness, various occult practices, inheritance of unamended evil, injustice and harm. ... The power of evil – the cause of various kinds of human suffering – is intensified and inherited from generation to generation. ... [He] would draw a family tree of the family of the sick person and seek the reasons for the illness in bad relations between the patient and his deceased relatives or living members of the family. Because pharmacotherapy proved inefficient, he would make his patients aware that it is necessary to break the bonds with evil powers through prayer and develop a personal contact with God.” (Płusa, “Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe,” 103).

<sup>15</sup> In a very well-written PhD thesis by Sebastian Kowal [*Modlitwa o uwolnienie w misji Kościoła katolickiego. Studium krytyczno-teologiczne* (Szczecin: MS, 2013)] that I have reviewed, only one academic biblical commentary was cited in the chapter dealing with the biblical foundations of the prayer for deliverance.

of the subjectivisation and individualisation of religion, such actions may come across as more authentic, profound and perspicacious. A very important opinion has been voiced by the renowned exegete, Bishop Wilhelm Egger: “By means of ‘spiritual reading of Scriptures’ one cannot understand, as has been often suggested, a reading directed only at edification, but as a reading from within the Church, which has been given the promise of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission entitled *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) in the chapter dedicated to the interpretation of Bible in the life of the Church also speaks about the necessity of its actualisation: “The work of actualization should always be conscious of the complex relationships that exist in the Christian Bible between the two testaments, since the New Testament presents itself, at one and the same time, as both the fulfillment and the surpassing of the Old. Actualization takes place in line with the dynamic unity thus established. It is the living tradition of the community of faith that stimulates the task of actualization. This community places itself in explicit continuity with the communities which gave rise to Scripture and which preserved and handed it on. In the process of actualization, tradition plays a double role: On the one hand, it provides protection against deviant interpretations; on the other hand, it ensures the transmission of the original dynamism. Actualization, therefore, cannot mean manipulation of the text. It is not a matter of projecting novel opinions or ideologies upon the biblical writings, but of sincerely seeking to discover what the text has to say at the present time.”<sup>17</sup> The document also mentions the psychological and psychoanalytic approach to the Bible that facilitates its understanding, but the interdisciplinary dialogue should have critical character, “respecting the boundaries of each discipline.”<sup>18</sup>

The potential danger of the correctness of the argumentation made by charismatic environments is also the inclination to base it in reality solely on “inbred literature” – i.e. originating in the very charismatic environments in question (the danger of inbreeding is perilous not only in the field of genetics!). It is obvious that charismatic organisations employ their own

<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm Egger, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament. Einführung in linguistische und historisch-kristische Methoden. Dritte, durchgesehene und aktualisierte Auflage* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1996), 222. Cf. *Metodologia Nowego Testamentu*, ed. Hugolin Langkammer (Pelplin: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (April 23, 1993), IV, A, 1, [http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC\\_Interp4.htm](http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp4.htm) [November 7, 2016].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I, D, 3.

“charismatic theologians and leaders” to work out their own stance.<sup>19</sup> However, without leaving this circle, the perspective may get narrowed down, or impoverished, if not distorted.

Another disconcerting issue in this matter is that theology and the teaching of the Church has remained silent about any sort of “intergenerational forgiveness.” One might go as far as to claim that an important discovery of spiritual life aspect has come about.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it also resembles the time of the struggle with iconoclasm. Answering a letter by emperor Leo II, the originator of the whole confusion, Pope Gregory (715-731) warned him not to regulate the issues of the faith by introducing innovations that maim the entirety of the ancient doctrine of the Church. Out of a number of defenders of icons of that period we should bring up the figure of a relatively unknown monk, John of Jerusalem, who, in reply to an accusation that Jesus did not order to create images, would say that there were many other things that He did not explicitly mention, but they nevertheless made their way to the Church thanks to the discernment of the Apostles and the Fathers. Making reference to the Tradition, he specifically took into account its Conciliar trend and wrote that it was beyond him that all the previous Councils, which had thus far been held in temples adorned with images, should have overlooked this idolatry – had it really been idolatry.<sup>21</sup> By analogy to that situation, it seems difficult to assert that for two thousand years the Church has not noticed the problem of the “intergenerational healing.”

If, however, we consider patristic theology: “The comments of the Fathers display a certain amount of discrepancy, but they do not confirm the theology of the intergenerational heritage of demonic oppressions or possessions<sup>22</sup> ...

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<sup>19</sup> Michelle Moran, “Foreword,” in Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, (Locust Grove: NSC Chariscenter, 2012), 5. My reservations do not obviously concern this document.

<sup>20</sup> “Rybno, a small village in the Sochaczew District ... . It is the place where a group of pious priests of the charismatic movement, associated with the so-called circle of mercy, has come up with a new bizarre religious practice. They work by a tiny religious congregation – the Community of Sister Servants of Divine Mercy – and cause confusion among the Church authorities. A gate confession combines the ordinary confession with a kind of ‘amateurish psychology.’ It has an anti-demonic nature that borders on exorcisms, says Rev. Krzysztof Mądel” (<http://natemat.pl/137153,ma-giczne-praktyki-we-wsi-pod-sochaczewem-ksieza-lacza-spowiedz-z-amatorska-psychologia-przepytuja-o-grzechy-przodkow> [July 21, 2015]).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Tadeusz D. Łukaszuk, *Ty jesteś Chrystus, Syn Boga żywego. Dogmat chrystologiczny w ujęciu integralnym* (Kraków: Papieska Akademia Teologiczna, 2000), 316-20.

<sup>22</sup> Andrzej Siemieniowski, <http://www.frona.pl/a/uzdrowienie-miedzypokoleniowe,37679.html> [June 21, 2015].

Their usual teaching states that the text from Exodus 20:5 (and the parallel ones) refers to the situation from before baptism, whereas other passages from the Bible should be attributed to the baptised Christian, especially Ex 18:2-3. According to St Augustine, it is not possible that the spiritual effects of sin should live on after baptism, as they have been drowned in the baptismal water. Before baptism man used to live “under the Law,” and afterwards – in grace. Augustine taught that spiritual punishments for the ancestors’ sins were borne, only if we repeated their sins. St John Chrysostom with all authority fought against the idea of spiritual consequences of sins committed by descendants. ... Even the punishments that the Bible says last up until the third or fourth generation are, according to both Augustine and Chrysostom, but social consequences. For instance, after the Exodus from Egypt, everyone faced the consequences of the sins of some (and died in the desert). ... St Thomas Aquinas many times dealt with the issue of punishment to the third or fourth generation in *Summa Theologica*. His conclusions may be summed up in a sentence: Children never suffer the consequences of the sins of their ancestors (*Sth* I-II, q 81, a. 2). They may, however, bear social consequences (all society suffers because of the faults of the past generations) and the consequences of having been brought up in a family of negative influence (inheriting pathologies).. ... On the one hand, we have thousands of people resorting to retreats and prayer sessions about the intergenerational healing; on the other, there are rather feeble, if not dubious, foundations for this practice – Scripture and the Catholic Tradition do not recognise it.”<sup>23</sup>

### 3. DOGMATIC PROBLEMS

Sławomir Płusa informs us about the theological research and reservations that stem from it as for the views of the English psychiatrist Kenneth McAll.<sup>24</sup> One of the most important ones include: a dead person’s inability to torment a living person and putting end to this torments thanks to healing (deliverance) of the living one. The Church only teaches that the consequences of one’s sin may disturb the life of another person [CCC 1459], and that penance, expiation and prayer improve the relationship between the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Płusa, “Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe,” 108. The author points to the work by Beata Zimmermann [*Heilung der Familienstammbaums* (Frankfurt, 2012)].



living and help the dead to receive the fullness of salvation [cf. CCC 1031f.].<sup>25</sup>

A great deal of useful material concerning “intergenerational healing” is provided again by the aforementioned *Opinion of the Theological Committee about the So-Called “Gate Confession.”* It expresses the classical teaching of the Church that “the sources of man’s oppression may vary. They are not necessarily of demonic character. ... According to the Biblical witness, the first and most basic source of oppression is sin (*hamartia*). It does not consist solely in disobedience to God, but also the power that enslaves man and possesses him: ‘Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin’ [Jn 8:34; Gal 4:3]. This overbearing power of sin cannot be equated with the power of an evil spirit. The Bible shows a relationship between it and sin, but it is not a prerequisite (if the rite of baptism speaks of satan as ‘father of sin,’ it refers to the *actual* order of salvation). Man could have sinned without satan. The actual source of sin does not lie beyond man, but in himself. It is his freedom – the only gate through which evil has access to him: ‘sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master’ [Gen 4:7]. It is wrong then to call sin ‘a gate’ through which satan surreptitiously slips into man’s life and turns into a silent director. Such a vision may become a dangerous strategy of casting the blame on others, or even of perceiving oneself as a victim: ‘The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it’ [Gen 3:13]. As a result, demonisation of the reality may lead to the habit of talking oneself out of responsibility for the evil that is caused by our personal decisions and deeds. In the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, man is granted the chance to be truthful with oneself and thereby experience the liberating power of God’s mercy. Still, however, we are left with the ‘tinder of sin’ (*fomes peccati*) that the Council of Trent also called ‘concupiscence’ (*concupiscentia*). These terms point out a certain inclination of human will toward evil. It results from original sin and remains in the man justified by Christ as well – i.e. after baptism. It coincides with various natural inclinations, whose sources are found in concrete biological, social and cultural conditions. Hurt of various kinds in both mental and spiritual spheres that often reaches to the deepest layers of human personality plays its part too” [no. 10].

Citing the A. Siemieniowski’s assertion that no demonic powers can live on after the bath of baptism, S. Płusa opines that demonic oppressions cannot

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<sup>25</sup> Other, completely different relationships between the living and the dead are found in the observations and reflection by Lucjan Balter, *Eschatologia współczesna dla duszpasterzy i katechetów* (Kraków: Homo Dei, 2010), 226-37.

be mixed with the grace of baptism, because the reception thereof is preceded by an exorcism. In his opinion, this exorcism is necessary, precisely due to the fact that baptism does not cleanse and protects from the consequences of the work of evil spirits in man's life for ever.<sup>26</sup> What needs to be firmly stressed here, however, is the fact that the exorcism in question is the baptismal exorcism directly preceding the liturgy of the sacrament.<sup>27</sup> The goal of baptismal exorcisms was to make people aware that they cannot overcome sin with their own power.<sup>28</sup> In the face of historical research, it is possible that in the primitive Church the majority of believers did not only do without further exorcisms, but also even the sacrament of penance.<sup>29</sup> The above cited *Opinion* asserted in regard to the so-called 'gate confession' that we are dealing here with, as in the case of the claim of the necessity of intergenerational forgiveness, "with a kind of syncretism, which consists in combining the sacrament of penance with some elements of psychotherapy and exorcism. These three parts should be explicitly separated, since they constitute three different layers of providing help to man. Their transgression equals in the majority of cases the transgression of boundaries of one's own competence, which may lead to serious mental and spiritual harm of the penitent" [no. 2].<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Piłusa, "Przebaczenie międzypokoleniowe," 109.

<sup>27</sup> The full texts of the prayer and exorcism: "Almighty and ever-living God, you sent your only Son into the world to cast out the power of Satan, spirit of evil, to rescue man from the kingdom of darkness, and bring him into the splendor of your kingdom of light. We pray for this child: set him (her) free from original sin, make him (her) a temple of your glory, and send your Holy Spirit to dwell with him (her). We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen." Or: "Almighty God, you sent your only Son to rescue us from slavery of sin, and to give us the freedom only your sons and daughters enjoy. We now pray for this child who will have to face the world with its temptations, and fight the devil in all his cunning. Your Son died and rose again to save us. By his victory over sin and death, cleanse this child from the stain of original sin. Strengthen him (her) with the grace of Christ, and watch over him (her) at every step in life's journey. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen." ([http://www.ibreviary.com/m/preghiere.php? tipo=Rito&id=103#exorcism](http://www.ibreviary.com/m/preghiere.php?tipo=Rito&id=103#exorcism) [November 3, 2016]).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bogusław Nadolski, "Egzorcyzm," in Bogusław Nadolski, *Leksykon liturgii* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2006), 370. In the post-Vatican II rite of baptism, the exorcism has a new form of depreciative prayer, which replaced the former imperative form [cf. *Ibid.*].

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Josef A. Jungmann, *Liturgia pierwotnego Kościoła do czasów Grzegorza Wielkiego* (Kraków: Tyniec, 2013), 375.

<sup>30</sup> On top of that, the *Opinion* stresses: "The introduction in the rite of the sacrament of penance the prayer for deliverance is a serious misuse. The text thereof taken on the form of a solemn exorcism. An additional prayer undermines the efficacy of the absolution that has just been given. We should have in mind that the confession itself is an exorcism and release from guilt is the fruit of experiencing an absolute justification, given in the absolution" [no. 4].

We cannot agree with a claim that the consequences of sin should be of mainly psychosocial character, and the spiritual consequences of sin, which were to be faced by a few generations in a family, consist in a concupiscence "we are left with to combat."<sup>31</sup> Also, we cannot concur with the statement that CCC 1264 says so. CCC 1475 clearly asserts that the communion of saints guarantees a lasting link of love and rich exchange of goods. However, it emphasises greater benefit of the exchange of sanctity than the bad influence of sin. It also confirms that "recourse to the communion of saints allows the contrite sinner to be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin." S. Płusa nonetheless notes that the intergenerational influence of evil would be its logical completion. In the history of theology, it has turned out many times that such logic of completion is often deceptive.

The *Opinion* adds: "We have recently come across excessive emphasis of satan's role in the lives of individuals and all communities. Even the expression 'generational evil' has cropped up. Its destructive force is said to stand the waters of baptism. It is not difficult to see here some dualistic tendencies that are absolutely unsubstantiated by the Christian vision of God, man and the world. Since the very beginning, the Church has preached that all creation is good, because God – the absolute Goodness – is its source [cf. Gen 1:18, Wis 1:14, Acts 11:5-10]. Therefore, there is no evil energy (either spiritual or material) that would transcend reality and may be used with either good or bad intentions (e.g. by means charms or dowsing). Satan is also ontologically good and the evil he does results from the freedom of his decision. Evil is the absence of good (*privation boni*), hence it can be neither a substantial being nor a positive state of affairs (all that is is good, "*ens et bonum convertuntur*"). Otherwise, we would have to agree on the existence of two principles – sources of good and evil – which is contrary to the Christian teaching about creation. If we sometimes speak of the 'metaphysical evil' [Leibniz], we only convey the existential and essential limitation of the being compared to the absolute being. Christian theology does not in fact exclude satanic or demonic acts, but it does not accentuate them. A Christian is aware of the fact that Christ have overcome satanic powers and that His victory is *final* and *ultimate* [cf. Jn 12:31, Eph 1:20-22, Col 2:15, Rev 12:9]. In no way is satan an enemy on a par with God. He is not entitled to any power over man either. Owing to Christ's victory on the

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Płusa, "Intergenerational foregiveness," 109.

cross, man regained lost freedom and may participate in the kingdom of God. This liberation of man is liberation ‘from,’ as well as ‘toward.’ It is the liberation that allows for the work towards the salvific union with God that show Christ’s victory on the cross to the world” [Ibid., no. 11].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, we have to agree and stress that the discussed relations and social influences of sin require spiritual struggle and, above all, evangelisation. Nevertheless, we must protect Christian faith from implementation of convictions and practices that spring only from piety, desires to help and attempts of logical deduction that have not been confirmed by the theological Tradition of the Church and are only seemingly useful in the field of spirituality and evangelisation, because they frequently threaten the integrity of the teaching of the Church about the efficacy of the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation. It is Jesus Christ Himself who works through sacraments. Therefore, their efficacy lacks nothing and Christ’s Spirit transcends everything with no exception. Any kinds of limitations of the effectiveness of this action come from people who are often unwilling to open up to God fully and surrender their lives to His salvation in a perfect way. Thus, there is an urgent need for intensified evangelisation. The theological Tradition of the Church has known the prayer for healing and deliverance, even though not in the intergenerational dimension. For this reason, the category of “intergenerational healing” ought to be given up and forgotten. The present teaching of the Church has an unambiguous stance on this matter. CCC 1263: “By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam’s sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.” CCC 1468: “The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.’ ... the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true ‘spiritual resurrection,’ restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.”

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