

CREATION AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY. A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE¹

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity has never been indifferent to the issue of natural environment degradation. The care for the environment condition is expressed by different Christian denominations. In recent decades, representatives and structures of the Catholic Church in the contemporary world have been also taking it into consideration. Despite that, an undoubtedly great event is the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical titled *Laudato si*,² commonly referred to as the „first ecological encyclical”. It was received positively not only in the Church circles, but also in the circles which have little in common with Christianity. That document has a huge potential and indicates possible areas of a dialogue and cooperation on a wide field of activities supporting ecology. On the other hand, the exceptional character of that document consists also in the fact that until now popes' statements on ecology-related topics have not been included in such a concise document. The *Laudato si* encyclical constitutes a direct inspiration for this study, which, due to its limited volume refers only to one issue, namely, to relations between the biblical theology of creation and ecology, as it is understood by Francis. The term „integral ecology”, used by the Holy Father,

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¹ This text refers to the article in Polish, see M. Karczewski, *Biblijna teologia stworzenia jako źródło ekologii integralnej*, *SE XVII* (2016), p. 135–146.

² Franciszek, *Encyklika Laudato si. W trosce o wspólny dom*, Kraków 2015 (continue as *Laudato si*).

is closely related to the biblical concept of God, the human being and the created world. The goal of this article is to present an outline of the pro-ecological potential included in the biblical theology of creation. That is why, the topics relating to biblical creatology have been presented from this perspective.

The article outline is as follows. Firstly, the assumptions of the integral ecology concepts have been discussed. Secondly, there is a brief reference to biblical texts relating to creation in terms of their possible links to ecology. The texts from the Old and New Testament were divided, assuming that their theology of creation, although linked to some extent, is totally different, owing to Jesus. The last part of the article is an attempt at accentuating biblical pro-ecological texts, which are practical in their nature.

I. INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Integrity, in principle, means possibly the most complete and balanced perception at the issues being discussed. The postulated ecological integrity concerns different levels of theoretical reflections and practical activities aimed at preserving the natural order existing in the world of nature.

The most recognisable feature of integral ecology is the extension of the scope of reflection and ecological activities with an anthropological element.³ Not only the world of animals and plants, not only water and air, but also the human being is subject to ecology.⁴ In this way, the traditional perception of ecology is overcome, which is fashionable, but narrowed down, excluding human beings or treating them in isolation from the rest of the natural world.⁵

From the perspective of a multidisciplinary analysis, integrity is expressed in going beyond a simplified view of ecology only from the stance of natural or social sciences, since the so-called eco-philosophy⁶ and eco-theology⁷ with a clear ecumenical potential have been developing for many years. It is worth noticing that in its relation to the society, integral ecology is not only treated as a part of social sciences.⁸ The term „integral ecology” includes also a reference to the issue of social injustice and suppression of the human being.⁹

³ See *Laudato si*, 137–162, p. 90–104.

⁴ See *Laudato si*, 3–6, p. 6–8.

⁵ See M. Wyrostkiewicz, *Spór o człowieka w ekologii*, in: *Spór o człowieka – spór o przeszłość wszechświata. Od bł. Jana XXIII od Jana Pawła II*, ed. J. Nagórny, J. Gocko, Lublin 2004, p. 217–222.

⁶ See Z. Hull, *Filozofia ekologii jako nowa dziedzina filozofowania*, in: *Filozofia i bioetyka. Materiały VI Zjazdu Filozoficznego w Toruniu 5–9 września 1995. Sekcja Bioetyki i ekofilozofii*, ed. W. Tyburski, Toruń 1996, p. 9–29; H. Skolimowski, J. K. Górecki, *Zielone oko kosmosu. Wokół ekofilozofii w rozmowie i esejach*, Wrocław 2003; J. M. Dołęga, *Ekofilozofia – nauka XXI wieku*, *Problemy ekorozwoju* 1 (2006) 1, p. 17–22.

⁷ See A. J. Najda, *Początki ekologii w Biblii*, *Studia Ecologicae et Bioethicae* 2 (2004), p. 143–149. By eco-theology we mean the whole of scientific theological reflection concentrating on ecology.

⁸ See *Ochrona środowiska społeczno-przyrodnicznego w filozofii i teologii*, ed. J.W. Dołęga, J.W. Czartoszewski, Warszawa 2001.

⁹ See S. Jaromi, *Ecologia Humana – chrześcijańska odpowiedź na kryzys ekologii*, Kraków 2004.

An integral ecological perception covers also religious inspirations. Neutrality from religion in case of ecology becomes overcome.¹⁰ After all, apart from certain exceptions, it is difficult not to notice some possibilities dormant in the currently existing religions to build inter-religious pro-ecological awareness.¹¹

In the religious order, Christianity, which is one of the largest worldwide religions, occupies a special place. The Bible, a holy book of Christianity and, in case of most of the texts in the Old Testament also Judaism, constitutes an important source of inspiration about an extremely clear pro-ecological potential.

In the Catholic theology, ecological reflections appear more and more often.¹² It concerns also biblical studies, which, to more and more extent, account for an ecological aspect as well.

II. TEXTS ABOUT CREATION AND THEIR ECO-THEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Among numerous groups of biblical texts, which can be referred to as biblical sources of integral ecology, the most important role is certainly played by those which are dedicated to the work of creation. Below, there is a short list of basic theological and biblical topics relating to biblical creatology, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. Theology of creation in the Old Testament

The Old Testament theology of creation is included in different biblical books, sometimes very different in terms of the wording and literary character. It covers three basic references: to God as the Creator; to the human being as the fruit of creation and to the announcement of the eschatological world renewal.

1.1. God as the Creator

A theological image of God as the Creator appears in many texts in the Old Testament. Obviously, in the first place we should mention both descriptions of human creation included in the Book of Genesis (Gen 1:1–3:24).¹³ Above all, the first

¹⁰ See J. Życiński, *Naturalistyczne a chrześcijańskie interpretacje ewolucji*, FT IX (2009), p. 41–53; M. Wyrostkiewicz, *Dialog ewolucjonizmu z kreacjonizmem – możliwości, potrzeby, konsekwencje*, FTeol IX (2009), p. 101–116.

¹¹ See J.W. Czartoszewski, *Zagadnienie światopoglądu w edukacji ekologicznej*, *Studia Ecologicae et Bioethicae* 1 (2003), p. 505–518.

¹² See M. Heller, *Sens życia i sens wszechświata. Studia z teologii współczesnej*, Lublin 2002; M. Wyrostkiewicz, *Ekologia ludzka. Osoba i jej środowisko z perspektywy teologicznomoralnej*, Lublin 2007.

¹³ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11*, NKB ST I/1, Częstochowa 2013, p. 135–238.

description, attributed to the Priestly source (Gen 1:1–2:4a), is something more than a schematic relation about a chronological order of creation. Quite rightly, it is referred to as a poem in the honour of God the Creator. For a long time, it has been perceived as an intentionally built literary structure. God creates by separating the elements of chaos one from the other.¹⁴ He puts limits to the elements, causes that life the beginning of which He is Himself, is transmitted both in the world of plants and animals (cf. Gen 1:7:11:20:24). Also, man is a part of the world created by God and has his share in God's gift of transmitting life (cf. Gen 1:26–28; 2:24). Yet, the references to biblical creatology go beyond the above-mentioned descriptions. Admiration for God's creative power appears very often in prophetic texts, in biblical poetry, and in texts of wisdom (see e.g. Is 5:1–7; Ps 8; Ps 104; Ps 148; Jb 10:1–22; 40:15–32; Wis 6:22–25; 13:1–9; Prov 8:22–31; Eccles 3,18–22; Sir 16:24–17:14, etc.).¹⁵ It is worth emphasising that the meditation of the beauty of creation and the order in it constitutes one of basic ways to learn God's greatness (cf. Ps 136:6).¹⁶ It seems that theoretical speculations about the presence and omnipotence of God are not important to the Israelite. He recognises God's traces in the world of nature, a small part of which he is. God is an inexhaustible source of life, which is present in the whole world. In the sapiential reflection, meditation over magnificence and order of creation leads to the conviction that the human being is unable to understand entirely the mechanisms occurring in nature, because they prove God's wisdom. God created the world and still keeps it in existence.

From the eco-theological perspective, talking about God, the only source of life, is of utmost importance. Following the line of thought of biblical authors, one should come to the conclusion that creation requires respect, due to its Creator.¹⁷ Ethical questions appear, which are caused by the contemporary situation of the social environment degradation. Destroying of the natural environment has to be perceived as transgression against its Creator, i.e. as a sin.

1.2. Man and woman as the crown of creation

Both descriptions of creation and other numerous texts in the Old Testament emphasise the uniqueness of the human being. Man is created as the last one (Gen 1:26). Man carries in himself similarity to God.¹⁸ It differentiates him from the rest of the created world (Gen 1:27). From the perspective of the biblical anthropology, only a marriage between man and woman constitutes a part of God the Creator's

¹⁴ See M. Karczewski, *Oddzielanie jako działanie Boga Stwórcy w Rdz 1,1–2,4a*, *FTeol IX* (2009), p. 5–16.

¹⁵ See H. Witczyk, *Psalmy – dialog z Bogiem*, Attende Lectioni XIX, Katowice 1995, p. 188–191; B. Poniży, *Księga Mądrości. Od egzegezy do teologii*, Uniwersytet A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu Wydział Teologiczny Biblioteka Pomocy Naukowych 17, Poznań 2000, p. 164–170.

¹⁶ Cf. *Laudato si*, 72, p. 49.

¹⁷ See M. Wojciechowski, *Pochodzenie świata, człowieka, zła. Odpowiedź Biblii*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 33.

¹⁸ See *Jan Paweł II, Wierzę w Boga Stworzyciela*, ed. S. Dziwisz, J. Kowalczyk, T. Rakoczy, Città del Vaticano 1987, p. 257–262.

plan (Gen 1:27–28). Man and woman, together and on equal terms, constitute the crown of all creatures. Only their relationship can lead to giving birth to offspring. On the other hand, inability to have a child is regarded as an extremely dramatic reality. In the second description of creation, the so-called Jahwist one, human uniqueness is underlined from the beginning of the narration (see Gen 2:4b-7). A special relation between God and the first people in Eden is also visible. God prepares the garden just for humanity (Gen 2:8). It is the man who names particular animals (Gen 2:19). The woman is perceived as the closest man's friend, having the same nature (Gen 2:21–23). Only with her can he become fully one flesh (Gen 2:24).¹⁹

Human sexuality is thus also incorporated within the scope of expected pro-ecological behaviours. Relying community of life on a natural way of realising sexuality, on the basis of a natural rhythm of the woman's body, should be considered a pro-ecological attitude. Any artificial interference into the intimate community of life is a form of disregarding the natural order, planned by the Creator.

1.3. Human being as a gardener

The human being is not only the crown of creation, but he is also called to take responsibility for it (cf. Gen 1:28–30).²⁰ He is a gardener responsible for the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15).²¹ At the same time, it is obvious that he is not totally the owner of the creation, since somebody else gave him life. As a part of creation, the human being is loyal to the rest of living creatures and, with the help of the human being, God saves them from the Flood (see Gen 6:17–20). As carrying a similarity to God the Creator, he surpasses the creation, but, at the same time, he is responsible for it. Human relation with the creation, according to the texts of the Old Testament should be expressed in the image of a shepherd and a leaseholder. In different branches of the Old Testament theology, one can also notice consequences of those relations in the social perspective.²² The earth is a special God's gift and it remains His property. Any Israelite working on it has to remember about those who are weak, due to different life experiences, or have a limited access to its fruits, and thus, share with them (Deut 24:19–22; Lev 19:9–10).²³ Also, following the development of the idea of monarchy in Old Testament texts, one may see some links with the theology of creation. King is a kind of a shepherd of his nation (cf. Ezek 34).²⁴ Finally, only Messiah can fulfil that mission perfectly, since he remains in a special relation with God the Creator and the Lord of history (Ezek 34:23–24).²⁵

A pro-ecological message of the theology of creation seen in the integral context covers His relation to the creation in general, but it also concerns, in a fundamental

¹⁹ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11*, p. 234–237.

²⁰ See J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11*, p. 168.

²¹ J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11*, p. 229–230.

²² See *Laudato si*, 71, p. 48–49.

²³ See A. Tronina, *Księga Kapłańska, NKB ST III*, Częstochowa 2006, p. 285.

²⁴ See R. Rumianek, *Księga Ezechiela. Tłumaczenie i komentarz*, Warszawa 2009, p. 273–276.

²⁵ R. Rumianek, *Księga Ezechiela*, p. 281–288.

way, the social dimension of human life.²⁶ The other human is worth respect and protection. Unjust social relations are a sign of inappropriate use of God the Creator's gifts.

1.4. Man as a sinful and passing creature

The story about man's fall in the paradise includes an unusual analysis of the stage when the human being begins to disobey God the Creator (see Gen 3:1–24).²⁷ Man is trying to take God's place (Gen 3:5).²⁸ In consequence, he stands naked and is expelled from Eden. The serpent, which, together with the development of Satan's idea in the Old Testament, becomes identified with him, is the one which effectively misleads and leads to destruction.²⁹ As it were, due to man's disobedience, the earth becomes infertile and full of thistles (Gen 3:17).³⁰ Those metaphors include the truth about contamination, which affects the created world because of the sin. It is done when the human being destroys the creation thoughtlessly and, instead of being a caretaking gardener, becomes a ruthless robber. The issue of taking God's place has a number of ethical references nowadays. It regards not only destroying of the world of nature, pillaging of mineral resources, industrial fishing or killing endangered animal species.³¹ Taking Creator's place may be also a more and more common interference in the space of human procreation. It happens when the boundary of respect for life and human dignity is crossed, when activities relating to genetic manipulation or eugenic behaviours appear.³² Abortion, i.e. depriving a human being of life before he/she is permitted to be born, is irreconcilable with an integral vision of ecology.³³

An integral approach to ecology cannot be neutral to natural rights, which govern the world of nature. The human being cannot be perceived as an individual totally detached from it. It concerns also the dimension of procreation and care of human life, both before and after birth.

²⁶ See *Laudato si*, 65, p. 43–44 also 93–95, p. 61–63.

²⁷ See M. Karczewski, *Reinterpretacja Księgi Rodzaju w Apokalipsie św. Jana*, Biblioteka Wydziału Teologii Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego 55, Olsztyn 2010, p. 88–90. 118–123.

²⁸ J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11*, p. 240–245.

²⁹ Cf. T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative. A Literary and Religio-historical Study of Genesis 2–3*, Winona Lake 2007, p. 80–83.

³⁰ Cf. *Laudato si*, 66, p. 44–45.

³¹ See *Laudato si*, 70, p. 47–48.

³² See *Laudato si*, pkt. 117, p. 77–78; also 136, p. 89. On genetic manipulation see *Ósmy dzień stworzenia? Etyka wobec możliwości inżynierii genetycznej*, ed. M. Machinek, Olsztyn 2001.

³³ *Laudato si*, 120, p. 79.

1.5. Eschatological new creation

In the Bible, the story of the first man's fall already includes the so-called proto-evangelium, or the promise of liberation from its consequences (cf. Gen 3:15).³⁴ Also, announcement of creation renewal relates to the topic of victory over evil. God, who is the Creator of everything, does not stop to create. He creates continuously and lets its creation last as long as He wants. Yet, the idea of new creation relates to a wider context of eschatological and messianic expectations, namely, prophetic announcements of the final God's victory over all manifestations of evil (see Is 11:1–9; 25:6–12; 65:17; 66:22; Ezek 47:1–12, etc.).³⁵ That special moment is perceived as the day of final justice and recompense (see Is 27:1–2; Zeph 1:1–18). However, at the same time, it is the time of returning to God, repentance and learning the truth about Him (cf. Zeph 3:9–20). It is worth noticing that, when looking at the relation of man towards the created world before and after the sin, subtle connections can be perceived in some prophetic texts of eschatological and messianic nature. Eschatological times are associated with the human's returning to the condition from before the fall again to the paradise.

From the religious pro-ecological perspective, waiting for the new creation combines different kinds of truth. God is the Creator. A human sin destroys the relation with God and other people; it disturbs the harmony in the human being himself/herself. The whole universe is subject to renewal. The promise of new creation reminds of a possibility of rectifying those relations. That possibility is something new vis-à-vis pessimist climates occurring in the context of non-religious reflections and ecological actions. Yet, it is closely related to faith in the existence of God the Creator, referring to biblical promises.

2. Jesus Christ as the Intermediary of creation

The uniqueness of the New Testament relates inextricably to Jesus Christ, whose redemptive sacrifice opens a completely new perspective. It regards, first of all, the human being, but also creation perceived as a whole.

2.1. Jesus Christ, creation and its renewal

One of fundamental features of the theology of the New Testament is its Christocentrism. Jesus Christ constitutes an absolute centre of the whole message of the New Testament. In the space of the theology of creation, Jesus Christ introduces a new and extremely important content.³⁶ Jesus, by taking human nature, becomes an intermediary between God the Creator and people. At the same time, in the light

³⁴ See M. Karczewski, *Reinterpretacja Księgi Rodzaju w Apokalipsie św. Jana*, p. 122–123.

³⁵ See C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kapitel 40–66*, *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* 19, Göttingen 1981, p. 324. 339; R. Rumianek, *Księga Ezechiela*, p. 370–374.

³⁶ *Laudato si*, 99, p. 65.

of theology expressed in the Prologue to Gospel according to St. John, Jesus as the God's Word is the One through Whom all things were made (John 1:3).³⁷ God the Father creates through His Son. Jesus is the image of invisible God (see John 14:9; Col 1:15–17). Thus, it is obvious that, in the Christian understanding, the relation to the creation cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. This regards the creation in the perspective of the whole universe, and also in the social dimension. Jesus Christ's teaching very often refers to images taken from the world of nature (see Mt 13:31–32).³⁸ Jesus reminds about the care God the Father takes of the creation (cf. Mt 6:25–34; Luk 12:6).³⁹ He confirms and completes the conviction appearing in the Old Testament that God's „speech” is audible in the created world. Jesus, as a man, experiences everything which is connected with pain and mortality.

Redemption accomplished through His death and resurrection is yet the reality of extraordinary importance. Owing to this, the world created can be freed from the consequences of the sin and renewed (cf. Col 1:18–20; Rev 3:14). Resurrected Jesus is the creator of new creation (cf. Rom 5:12–21). His first feature is immortality, or a possibility of unlimited share in the life of the Creator Himself (see 1 Cor 15:35–49). In this way, the theology of creation, from the Christian perspective, is inseparable from the truth about the new creation in Jesus Christ (see Rom 8:18–22). That truth is the subject of reflection in numerous New Testament texts and it constitutes a very important original feature of the Christian theology and it should be accounted for within the scope of the Christian pro-ecological reflections.

2.2. Church and new creation

Plunging in the death and resurrection of Christ taking place at the moment of baptism seals every Christian's faith and makes him a new man (cf. Gal 2:19–20; Eph 1:13–14; 4:5). The Holy Spirit revives and directs him in such a way that he lives in harmony with God (cf. Rom 8:14–17). It is obvious that the authentic Christian faith excludes egoistic and destructive treatment of the natural environment. A Christian living in a vital relation with God the Creator cannot be deprived of sensitivity to the creation suffering and degradation. It concerns not only flora, fauna and the world of plants, but, in the very first place, humans.⁴⁰ Such sensitivity regards also the community of believers in Christ. Church is supposed to be a community based on the principle of fraternal love (see 1 John 3:17; 4:20). The principle of sacrificial love concerns everyone in Church, with no exception. The most important feature of the new life, i.e. Christian life, is vocation to love (cf. 1 Cor 13:1–13). This concerns marriage, family, people in need, and also those who think differently. Although, the New Testament does not refer directly to the issue of

³⁷ See I. de la Potterie, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, Dabar 4, Genova 1992, p. 31–57. 316–331; S. Medala, *Chrystologia Ewangeliu św. Jana*, Kraków 1993, p. 166–167.

³⁸ See *Laudato si*, 96–97, p. 63–64.

³⁹ See A. Paciorek, *Ewnagelia według świętego Mateusza. Rozdziały 1–13*, NKB NT I/1, Częstochowa 2004, p. 294–300.

⁴⁰ See *Laudato si*, 48–52, p. 32–36.

care for the created world, it is obvious that the admiration for the work of God the Creator is present in Christian spirituality to the same degree as Old Testament texts adopted by Christianity. However, they constitute a prelude to the reflections about the one who manifests the whole God's wisdom, is the Word of God and through Whom are all things. Jesus Christ is the beginning of the new creation and, at the same time, the Head of Church (cf. Eph 1:22).⁴¹ Following Him, the community of believers finds its share in His divine, renewed existence, deprived of the sin and its consequences (cf. Rom 8:11).⁴²

From the ecological perspective, it is obvious that Church as a community of believers has as its task, not only to take care of the created world entrusted to people, but it becomes a prophetic sign of its final renewal.

2.3. New earth and new heaven

The topic of the eschatological world renewal, present in the Old Testament, resounds wholly in New Testament texts (cf. Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 1:10; Gal 4:26; 2 Pet 3:13, etc.).⁴³ In the clearest way, it was depicted in the only prophetic book: Revelation of St. John. The image of new earth and heaven in Revelation relates closely with the expectations of some Old Testament prophets (Rev 21:1–8).⁴⁴ It is a world deprived of destructive influence of the evil, redeemed from death, living in full harmony with God and the Lamb.⁴⁵ As wholly renewed, creation achieves its final fullness.⁴⁶ The announcement of the final elimination of evil and renewal of creation is closely related to Resurrected Jesus Christ and His Second Coming (Rev 1:7–8).⁴⁷ The final world renewal is the effect of unlimited creative power of God, the same that gave the beginning of creation and keeps it in existence (cf. Rom 8:18–30). It is worth underlining that among visions in Revelation there are descriptions of huge cataclysms and unusual phenomena affecting the human world. They manifest, first of all, invariable God's hegemony over creation. It is not available to the human being, who will never be able to equal God. From the theological perspective in Revelation, cataclysms frequently aim at affecting earth's inhabitants to

⁴¹ See H. Langkammer, *List do Efezjan. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz*, Lublin 2001, p. 22–23.

⁴² See H. Langkammer, *List do Rzymian. Tłumaczenie, wstęp, komentarz*, Lublin 1999, s. 105–106; pron, *List do Efezjan*, p. 39–40; W. Chrostowski, *Między Synagogą a Kościołem. Dzieje św. Pawła*, Kraków – Żabki 2015, p. 312.

⁴³ See H. Langkammer, *List do Rzymian*, p. 108–110; pron, *List do Galatów. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz*, Lublin 1999, p. 77–78.

⁴⁴ See F. Mickiewicz, *Wizja nowego nieba i nowej ziemi w Ap 21,1–22,5*, *Communio* 20/4 (2000), p. 20–39; P. Prigent, *L'ultime prophétie (Ap 21,1–22,5)*, *Graphe* 14 (2005), p. 29–40; M. Wojciechowski, *Apokalipsa świętego Jana. Objawienie a nie tajemnica*, NKB NT, t. XX, Częstochowa 2012, p. 372–377.

⁴⁵ *Laudato si*, 243–244, p. 151,

⁴⁶ *Laudato si*, 100, p. 65–66.

⁴⁷ See P. Podeszwa, *Paschalna pamięć o Jezusie. Studium egzegetyczno-teologiczne wyrażenia he martyria Iesou w Apokalipsie św. Jana*, *Studia i Materiały Wydziału Teologicznego UAM*, Poznań 2011, p. 329–368.

turn away from the evil (Rev 9:20–21; 16:11). Yet, nothing like that happens. Some gestures of the symbolic dragon figure can be interpreted as a form of imitating God.⁴⁸ The dragon, which evokes the forces of chaos, is identified with Satan (Rev 12:9). He tries to imitate the Creator, but his action is ineffective and destructive, in consequence (Rev 12:4a. 15–16).⁴⁹

In the biblical context of integral ecology, it is worth paying attention to the fact that the renewed world expected by the believers does not come in an automatic way and without their participation (see Rev 2:1–7, etc.). The time of Jesus Christ's Second Coming is unknown. However, it is obvious that conscious waiting for His coming requires intense vigilance and taking up a fight with Satan (see 1 Pet 5:8). It is also wondering about the issue of a destructive impact, inspired by hubris and a desire for self-deification (cf. 1 John 2:15–17). Denial of the Law of God may not be left without negative effects. The way to a true creation renewal leads through conversion to God. Turning to God, who is the source of the whole life, constitutes, from the Bible perspective, an optimum attitude of the human being, waiting for the final renewal of the universe. Therefore, in essence, a believer is a person filled not only with love to the creation, but also hope that for God nothing is impossible. The sperate dimension of Christianity regards also actions to the benefit of the creation. For a believer, God can do everything.

III. BIBLICAL PRACTICAL POSTULATES

The above-presented theological and biblical reflection would be incomplete without pointing out practical postulates. They include the postulate to use renewed hermeneutics, the postulate of enhancing the importance of eschatology and indicating the necessity to assuming co-responsibility for the creation.

The above study only outlines possible interpretations of biblical texts from the pro-ecological stance. It seems that in the light of scientific exegetic research as well as theological and biblical discussion, the reality of the relation between the message of the Bible and the issue of natural environment protection is still treated suspiciously.⁵⁰ However, Pope Francis indicates the necessity to interpret the Bible from the perspective of its connection with the surrounding reality. Isn't it so that just the believers in God the Creator should play a leading role in pro-ecological activities?⁵¹ It is impossible to sing psalms dedicated to meditation and glorification of great works of the Creator and, at the same time, not to develop one's sensitivity to the issue of creation protection. A great chance for integral ecology is its multi-dimensional character and the scope adjusted in relation to the traditional ecology. It is impossible to remember about trees and animals, and at the same time, to be

⁴⁸ See M. Karczewski, *Reinterpretacja Księgi Rodzaju w Apokalipsie św. Jana*, p. 123–136.

⁴⁹ See U. Vanni, *L'opera creativa dell'Apocalisse*, Roma 1993, s. 53; M. Karczewski, *Szatan w Apokalipsie św. Jana*, Olsztyn 2013, p. 38–43; M. Wojciechowski, *Apokalipsa świętego Jana*, p. 272.

⁵⁰ *Laudato si*, 217, p. 136.

⁵¹ See *Laudato si*, 209–214, p. 131–135.

indifferent to the concept of marriage and social injustice. Such ecology, from the biblical perspective, is incomplete. Respect for God, the Source of Life requires holistic comprehension of His creation, while remembering that care for human beings should be in the first place.

The involvement of Church in favour of natural environment protection is a fact in many places on our globe. However, it requires continuous search for inspiration in the Word of God. From the theological and biblical perspective, pro-ecological actions of Church are not tantamount to the operations of one of many pro-ecological movements, since it has a clear vertical dimension.⁵² Church operating in the ecological-integral space worships God the Creator, points out the necessity of bringing back the original order, shaken by the human sin and action of personal evil. Church may not stop showing Jesus Christ as a new Adam, God-Man. The whole creation exists in Him and attains the eschatological renewal.⁵³ Christians' involvement in an integral ecological approach to the issue of married life, respect for life of the unborn and elderly people is the effect of faithfulness to the truth of the Gospel.⁵⁴ Devoted support to the weak is the basic integral ecological action and an obvious vocation of Christians. Christians should be free from any pro-ecological behaviour based on violence or ideological aggression. Working to the benefit of the world in which they live, they expect its total renewal in the final time.⁵⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The contemporary world puts forward new challenges to the followers of Christ. They include an urgent need for initiating cooperation to protect the natural environment around human beings.⁵⁶ The theological perspective is shown in biblical texts of both Old and New Testament. In the theological and biblical outline presented above, a possible list of main ideas has been offered, which, in the understanding of this article author, relate to the so-called integral ecology. Apologies to those who were looking here detailed exegetic analyses here. The goal of this study was different. It was to indicate basic pro-ecological elements in the biblical theology. Certainly, this list of ideas is subjective, in a sense, and perhaps it requires some corrections or supplements. However, it seems that the ecological theme becomes more and more valid and especially persons involved in deep theological reflections should not be indifferent to it.

⁵² *Laudato si*, 221, p. 138.

⁵³ *Laudato si*, 235, p. 145–146.

⁵⁴ See *Laudato si*, pkt. 122–123, p. 80–81.

⁵⁵ See R. Müller-Frieberg, *Literarische Rezeptionen des „neuen Jerusalem“ (Off. 21f) als Impuls für Theologie und Praxis*, *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 13 (2004), p. 33–42.

⁵⁶ *Laudato si*, 164–200, p. 105–127.

STWORZENIE I EKOLOGIA INTEGRALNA. PERSPEKTYWA BIBLIJNO-TEOLOGICZNA

STRESZCZENIE

Encyklika papieża Franciszka *Laudato si* wywołała niemałe poruszenie w środowisku naukowym. Jednocześnie, w środowisku teologów i filozofów katolickich większego znaczenia nabrały pytania o związek wiary i ekologii. Wobec panującej, często uproszczonej wersji ekologii, nierzadko powiązanej z areligijnymi i lewicowymi nurtami społecznymi Franciszek proponuje spojrzenie na ekologię adekwatne do otaczającej współczesnego człowieka rzeczywistości. Akcent pada na integralność ekologii. Integralność ta polega przede wszystkim na uznaniu, że celem działań ekologicznych jest nie tylko świat roślin czy zwierząt, ale również człowiek. W prezentowanym artykule podejmuje się refleksję nad biblijną koncepcją stworzenia, która dla chrześcijanina stanowi istotne źródło realizowania postaw proekologicznych. Biblia, jako święta księga chrześcijan wskazuje jasno, że pierwszym powodem, dla którego osoba religijna powinna szanować stworzenie jest szacunek dla jego Autora, czyli Stwórcy. Jednocześnie w kluczu ekologicznym, czyli zgodnym z naturalnym stanem rzeczy, autorzy biblijni postrzegają sporne dzisiaj kwestie, jak np. małżeństwo mężczyzny i kobiety, szacunek dla nienarodzonych i chorych, opiekę nad osobami wykluczonymi ze społeczeństwa. W odróżnieniu od wąsko pojętej ekologii tradycyjnej, znaczonej specyficznym pesymizmem i napięciem, ekologia integralna wiąże się z szansą radykalnej odnowy stworzenia, która dokona się przez Jezusa Chrystusa. Wrażliwość ekologiczna jest współcześnie szeroko akceptowana i rozwijana. Podkreślanie integralności ekologii jest właściwą drogą do usuwania sprzeczności, które istnieją w przestrzeni refleksji i praktyki ekologicznej. Jednocześnie jest oczywiste, że „nawrócenie ekologiczne” jest dla chrześcijanina tożsame z nawróceniem do Boga Stwórcy i do Jezusa Chrystusa.

SCHÖPFUNG UND INTEGRALE ÖKOLOGIE. EINE BIBLISCH-THEOLOGISCHE PERSPEKTIVE

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der vorliegende Artikel trägt den Titel: Schöpfung und integrale Ökologie. Eine biblisch-theologische Perspektive. Das Konzept der integralen Ökologie taucht seit einigen Jahren in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion auf. Es wird auch in der Enzyklika von Papst Franziskus *Laudato si* (2015) thematisiert. Die biblische Theologie der Schöpfung kann eine der Quellen für integrale Ökologie sein. Aus biblischer Sicht betrifft die integrale Ökologie den Menschen und die Schöpfung. Der integrale Ökologe fragt nach der Würde des Menschen vor seiner Geburt und nach der sozialen Ungerechtigkeit. Aus der Sicht der biblischen Theologie spielt Jesus Christus eine wichtige Rolle. Er ist der Beginn einer neuen Schöpfung. In der Eschatologie führt er die ganze Schöpfung zur Vollendung. Christen sollten zugunsten der Ökologie arbeiten, weil die Welt vom Gott geschaffen wurde und von Jesus Christus eine Erneuerung erfahren hat. Außerdem sollte die Kirche eine Gemeinschaft der brüderlichen Liebe sein. Jeder sollte den gleichen Zugang zu den Gütern der Natur haben. Die biblische Wahrheit über die Schöpfung kann eine wichtige Quelle für Umweltaktivitäten sein.

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