5 Unity in the Stoic Sense

Although it is impossible to establish with utmost certainty what were the philosophical sources of the teaching of any of the Fathers, in the case of Tertullian and Ambrose it is commonly accepted that they drew from the Stoic current. It is very probable that despite its materialism Stoicism exerted a much greater impact on the thoughts of the first Christian than it is commonly believed. It could have been direct or indirect impact through Neoplatonism, which, after all, was derived from the combination of Platonism and Stoicism. Both those philosophical systems accepted that the entire nature constitutes oneness because it was formed from a single matter (Stoicism) or derives from the One (Neoplatonism). The conviction of the natural, virtually physical unity of the entire humankind and even the entire universe is particularly strongly voiced by Tertullian and Ambrose. It may not be excluded that their conviction did not come from their fascination with philosophy but from Irenaeus and his concept of *plasmatio Adae*, and most probably it had not one but several sources. The title of this chapter is not meant to exclude other possibilities: it should rather to lead to thinking about the natural physical unity which in the first place is associated with the Stoic thought.

5.1 Tertullian

The idea of the unity of mankind in Adam undoubtedly is neither a major nor even a distinctive concept in Tertullian’s work. Nonetheless, we do have several fragments which must not be omitted and which may be interpreted as stating that all people took part in Adam’s transgression. Usually *De anima* 40 is quoted as the most important text:

*Ita omnis anima eo usque in Adam censetur, donec in Christo recenseatur; tamdiu immunda, quamdiu recenseatur: peccatrix autem, quia immunda, recipiens ignominiam ex carnis societate.*

Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ; moreover, it is unclean all the while that it remains without this regeneration; and because unclean, it is actively sinful, and suffuses even the flesh (by reason of their conjunction) with its own shame.292

Invoking that excerpt Scheffczyk acknowledges that Tertullian sees the affiliation of every man with Adam and takes this as the basis of his understanding of the

292 Tertullian, *De anima* 40; PL 2, 719, CSEL 20, 367; transl. ANF 3, 220.
communion of Christ with the humanity.\textsuperscript{293} This is undoubtedly a significant statement but without the context of entire Tertullian’s teaching this sentence cannot be interpreted that far. Therefore, we should start with the Stoic roots of Tertullian and his conviction about the physical unity of the entire human nature.

Accordingly from the one (primeval) man comes the entire outflow and redundance of men's souls—nature proving herself true to the commandment of God, \textit{Be fruitful, and multiply} (Gen 1:28). For in the very preamble of this one production, \textit{Let us make man}, man's whole posterity was declared and described in a plural phrase, \textit{Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea} (Gen 1:26). And no wonder: in the seed lies the promise and earnest of the crop.\textsuperscript{294}

Tertullian’s realistic historical description of the primal state of Adam includes also consideration of the idea of the unity of mankind in Adam. He reveals here the propensity to realistic thinking which in his case is marked by cosmological ideas of Stoicism and points to the biological origin of unity.\textsuperscript{295} In such context the preceding text on regarding every soul as \textit{being in Adam} takes on different hues since Tertullian recognizes that all people — both as regards the body and the soul — physically descend from Adam.

Referring to the above fragment Kelly expresses a conviction that for Tertullian all souls that actually or potentially exist were contained in Adam since all have to be ultimately separated particle of the soul given to him by God. Therefore, Tertullian

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{293} L. Scheffczyk, \textit{Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde}, 95.
\bibitem{294} Tertullian, \textit{De anima} 27; PL 2, 696, CSEL 20, 346; transl. ANF 3, 208.
\bibitem{295} L. Scheffczyk, \textit{Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde}, 94.
\bibitem{296} Tertullian, \textit{De anima} 19; PL 2, 681-682, CSEL 20, 331; transl. ANF 3, 200.
\end{thebibliography}
speaks about the quasi-physical identity of all souls with Adam. It seems to me, however, that this interpretation goes too far and is based on a specific translation of the following fragment of De testimonio animae:

Satanam denique in omni aversatione pronuntias, quem nos dicimus malitiae angelum, totius erroris artificem, totius saeculi interpolatorem, per quem homo a primordio circum ventus, ut praeceptum Dei excederet, et propterea in mortem datus, exinde totum genus de suo semine infectum, suae etiam damnationis traducem fecit.

In expressing vexation, contempt, or abhorrence, thou hast Satan constantly upon thy lips; the very same we hold to be the angel of evil, the source of error, the corrupter of the whole world, by whom in the beginning man was entrapped into breaking the commandment of God. And (the man) being given over to death on account of his sin, the entire human race, tainted in their descent from him, were made a channel for transmitting his condemnation.

Kelly translates the phrase de suo semine, translated above as “in their descent from him”, as “by his seed”, which seems grammatically dubious. Tertullian speaks here rather of the entire race coming from his seed. Williams claims that since in Tertullian both the body and the soul come from the parents as if a sapling from a tree it leads us to Irenæus’ and Origen’s theory on seminal identity, according to which Adam is the sum total of his descendants. Since all souls are the severed particles of the first soul (Adam) they all must have sinned in Adam and are responsible for the fall. Ménard goes even further acknowledging that Tertullian professes the Gnostic teaching about a superior Adam, comprising the entire human race, whose limbs are currently scattered but will be gathered again together in Christ, a second Adam.

It is hard to find any confirmation of this theory in Tertullian’s writings. He undoubtedly speaks about the physical descent of all people from Adam and - what is interesting, as Alès notes, specifically from Adam and not from the first couple because Adam is the principe of all bodies and all souls. This descent is somehow the source of our participation in Adam, in his transgression and punishment for it, which Tertullian declares very explicitly:

297 J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 175.
298 Tertulian, De testimonio animae 3; PL 1, 613, CSEL 20, 138; transl. ANF 3, 177.
299 J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 176.
300 N.P. Williams, Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin, 236-237.
301 J.E. Ménard, Le péché originel, 70.
302 A. d’Alès, La théologie de Tertullien, Paris 1905, 136.
As we have borne the image of the earthy, let us also bear the image of the heavenly (1Cor 15:49). We have indeed borne the image of the earthy, by our sharing in his transgression, by our participation in his death, by our banishment from Paradise. 

However, we shall not find in Tertullian any attempt to provide a detailed explanation of the basis upon which we were included in that community of transgression, death and banishment from paradise.

**5.2 Ambrose of Milan**

**5.2.1 The Unity of All Creation**

For Ambrose of Milan the idea of the unity of mankind with Adam arises from his conviction of the unity of all creation. As François Szabó explains Ambrose took over Stoic ideas from Philo, which the latter had already dematerialized (spiritualized): God as the soul of the world and Logos as Pneuma which interconnects everything. The Word unites the cosmos just as the soul unites all parts of the body. 

It will suffice to quote an excerpt from *Hexaemeron* to see how Ambrose combined the Stoic conviction of the unity of the entire universe with the biblical teaching on creation:

Diem primum, vel potius unum, maneat enim ei prophetici praerogativa sermonis, ut potuimus, absolvimus; in quo conditum coelum, terram creatam, aquarem exundantiam, circumfusum aerem, discretionem factam lucis atque tenebrarum Dei omnipotentis, et Domini Jesu Christi, Spiritus quoque sancti operatione cognovimus. Quis ergo non miretur dissimilibus membris disparem mundum in corpus unum assurgere, et insolubili concordiae charitatisque lege in societatem et connexionem sui tam distantia convenire, ut quae discreta natura sunt, in unitatis et pacis vinculum velut individua compactione nectantur? Aut quis haec videns, possibilitatem rationis infirmo ingenio rimetur? Quae omnia vis divina,

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303 Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis* 49; PL 2, 866, CSEL 47, 102; transl. ANF 3, 582.
304 F. Szabó, *Le Christ et Monde selon S. Ambroise*, Roma 1968, 350.
incomprehensibilis humanis mentibus, et ineffabilis sermonibus nostris, voluntatis suae auctoritate connexuit.

should be tied together in the bonds of unity and peace as if by an indivisible compact? Or who in a moment of weakness would, on beholding this, question the possibilities of order or plans? All these elements a divine power incomprehensible to human minds and incapable of being expressed in our language has by the might of His will woven closely together.305

The unity of creation has its source in the unity of God. The closer a creature is to God, the more perfect and better is this unity. This indicates a prior special position of man, who thanks to his moral choices may decide to be closer to God or not:

Et praecepit Dominus Deus Adae dicens: 
Ex omni ligno quod est in paradiso ad escam, edes: de ligno autem quod est scientiae boni et mali non editis. Qua die autem manducaveritis ex eo morte moriemini. Qua ratione, ubi praecepit ex omni ligno edendum, singulariter dixerit, Edes: ubi autem de ligno scientiae boni et mali pluraliter, Non edetis, dixerit, non otiosa quaestio. Verum si diligenter intendas, Scripturarum auctoritate absolvi potest. Quod enim bonum, hoc est faciendum: quod autem bonum et faciendum, consonans et adhaerens: quod vero turpe, hoc dissonans, incompositum, atque discretum est. Et ideo Dominus unitatem semper intendens, secundum unitatem praecepit. [...] Ergo ubi bonum praecepit, tamquam ad unum praecepit dicens, Edes. Unitas enim praevvari caper potest. Ubi vero de ligno scientiae boni et mali, dicit non esse gustandum, quasi ad plures dicit, Non edetis. Quod enim prohibitiorium est, tamquam pluribus imperatur.

And the Lord God commanded the man thus: from every tree of the garden thou shalt eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for the day you eat of it you shall die (Gen 2:16-17). Why did He use the singular thou shalt eat when He bade them eat of every tree, and, again, when He bade them eat of the tree of good and evil, why did He use the plural You shall not eat? This is no trifling question. This problem can, in fact, be solved by the authority of the Scriptures if you study them carefully. Scripture refers to something good and something that should be done. What is good is naturally associated with what should be done. On the other hand, what is base is separate and unrelated to what should be done. And so the Lord, aiming always at oneness, gave orders in accordance with this principle. [...] When He prescribes a good, therefore, He does it to one person, saying, Thou shalt eat, for the oneness cannot be gainsaid. Where, however, He says that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil should not be tasted, He speaks as if to several people: You shall not eat. What has been prohibited as if applies to several people.306

Human nature not only constitutes oneness in itself if it is close to God but somehow unites itself with the entire universe, with all creatures. Ambrose claims that the consequences of Adam’s sin affected the entire material world – including all creatures:

305 Ambrose, Hexaemeron II 1, 1; PL 14, 145, CSEL 32/1, 41; transl. J.J. Savage, 45-46.
306 Ambrose, De paradiso V 26; PL 14, 285, CSEL 32/1, 282-283; transl. J.J. Savage, 304-305 with alterations.
Non enim ita circa illum sicut circa te soluta est sententia. Nam Christi gratia quae te resolvit, illum astrinxit. Manet enim maledictio directa in serpentem propter tuam deceptionem. Sic enim dictum est ad eum: Maledictus tu ab omnibus pecoribus terrae. Omnium enim communis inimicus est, qui fuit hostis bonorum, et pro iis damnatur quos adhuc non laeserat; quoniam qui hominem laesit, cui illa omnia subjecta sunt, laesit omnia.

The sentence was not relaxed in his regard as it was in yours. The grace of Christ, which has freed you, has bound him, and the curse directed against the serpent by reason of his deception of you endures. For thus it was said to him, Cursed are you from all the beasts of the earth (Gen 3:14). For he who was the enemy of the good is the common foe of all, and he is condemned on behalf of those that he still has not harmed, since he who has harmed man has harmed all things, for they are all subject to man.  

Scheffczyk sees here the influence of the Stoic teaching on the unity of nature and the central role of man. This conviction of Ambrose is also confirmed by the following text in which he suggests that thanks to the birth of saints the entire earth is transformed:

Solemnis autem laetitia est in ortu et generatione sanctorum; sanctus enim non solum parentum gratia, sed etiam salus est plurimorum. Unde admonemur hoc loco sanctorum generatione laetari. [...] Vernet in Dei laudem terra, quia colitur: mundus, quia cognoscitur.

There is something quite special about the joy experienced at the conception and birth of a saint. This is because a saint not only brings joy to his parents, but also he brings salvation to a great many people. This passage teaches us how we should rejoice at the birth of saints. [...] Let earth be radiant in praise of God and be thankful that it is cultivated; let the world rejoice because God is known.

Man is a part of the universe, in a special manner belongs to the community of rational beings that rejoice when human nature, represented by one sheep, returns to the higher world.

Dives igitur pastor cujus omnes nos centesima portio sumus. Habet Angelorum, habet Archangelorum, Dominationum, Potestatum, Thronorum, aliorumque innumerabiles greges, quos in montibus dereliquit. Qui quoniam sunt rationabiles, non immerito hominum redemptione laetantur.

He must be a very rich shepherd, if we form only one percentage of His inheritance. He possesses innumerable flocks of angels, archangels, dominations, powers, thrones, and many others. All these He leaves on the heights. Since these are rational beings they think it right to rejoice over the redemption of the man.  

307 Ambrose, De fuga saeculi 7, 41; PL 14, 588, CSEL 32/2, 195; transl. M.P. McHugh, in: Seven exegetical works, 312.
308 L. Scheffczyk, Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde, 185.
309 Ambrose, Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam I 29-30; PL 15, 1545-1546, CCL 14, 21; transl. Í.M. Ni Riain, 18-19.
310 Ambrose, Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam VII 210; PL 15, 1756, CCL 14, 287; transl. Í.M. Ni
The unity underlays the beginning of creation and is the destination we aim for:

Itaque si in hac vita tres mensurae in eodem fermento manserint, donec fermententur, et fiant unum; ut aequalitatum nulla distantia sit, nec compositi ex trium diversitate videamur, erit in futurum diligentibus Christum incorrupta communio: nec compositi manebimus; nam et qui compositi nunc sumus, unum erimus, et in unam substantiam transformabimur.

So long as the three measures can remain, in this life, leavened by the one yeast; so long as they all rise together so as to form one loaf, there will be - in the life to come, incorruptible union for those who love Christ. The three measures must become so perfectly one that there will be perfect equality. And when incorruptible union is attained, we shall no longer be three elements that are put together - as we now are - but we shall be one, we shall be transformed into one unique substance.\(^{311}\)

Ambrose wrote the above text in the context of the ultimate unification of Israel and pagans and the consequent levelling of all differences among people.

5.2.2 The Participation of Mankind in Adam's Sin

Turmel is of the opinion that Ambrose’s teaching follows a dual track: on the one hand he believes in the pre-existence of souls and Adam would be there merely a symbol of the fall in pre-existence,\(^{312}\) and on the other hand he speaks about Adam’s heritage that consists of passions.\(^{313}\) Therefore, Ambrose – in Turmel’s opinion – believes after Origen that upon birth we carry along the guilt from the earlier life. Following the tradition, he also believes that we inherit passion as Adam’s sin, but he does not perceive the need for unifying those two contradictory views.\(^{314}\) However, it is impossible to find any statement of Ambrose which would confirm such interpretation; first of all, he says nothing about the pre-existence of souls.

Thanks to his practical and pastoral approach Ambrose focused his attention not on ontology but on anthropological issues; among other things he posed himself a question about original sin.\(^{315}\) All of his teaching on this subject is based not on philosophical or theological concepts which he knew of course, but on the teaching of St. Paul.\(^{316}\) Adam was mysteriously the human race, but Ambrose does not use the

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\(^{311}\) Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* VII 194; PL 15, 1751-52, CCL 14, 282; transl. Í.M. Ní Riain, 253-254.

\(^{312}\) J. Turmel, *Histoire des dogmes*, vol.1: *Le péché originel. La rédemption*, 64.

\(^{313}\) *Ibid.*, 66-67

\(^{314}\) *Ibid.*, 69.

\(^{315}\) L. Schefczyk, *Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde*, 177.

\(^{316}\) J. Huhn, *Ursprung und Wesen des Bösen und der Sünde: nach der Lehre des Kirchenvaters*
categories of Platonic realism but teaches in the spirit of Paul: Adam was the head of the race in a manner similar to Christ.\textsuperscript{317}

\begin{verbatim}
Nempe omnes in primo homine peccavimus, et per naturae successionem, culpae quoque ab uno in omnes transsusa successio est. In quem ergo peccavi, in Patrem, an in Filium? Utique in eum qui mihi creditit, quod non servando peccavi. Mandatum est homini, ut ab omnibus gustaret quae erant in paradiso, sed lignum scientiae boni et mali non tangeret. Adam ergo in singulis nobis est. In illo enim conditio humana deliquit, quia per unum in omnes pertransivit peccatum.
\end{verbatim}

Without doubt we all sinned in the first man and the inheritance of guilt was transferred from one onto all through the heritage of nature. Against who did I sin: against the Father or the Son? Of course, I sinned against Him who trusted in me, by betrayal. Man was commanded to eat everything that was in paradise except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, Adam is in each of us. It was in him that the entire human nature transgressed because through one sin passed onto all.\textsuperscript{318}

Williams claims that in the above text we for the first time see the well elaborated form of the seminal identity theory which sublimes the concrete individual Adam into the abstract universal humanity and acknowledges that the latter somehow sinned.\textsuperscript{319} Williams further suggests that identification of mankind with Adam ceased to be merely material or seminal but becomes logical or metaphysical. Ambrose seems to think about Adam as the Platonic idea of man, as the hypostasis of human nature, \emph{contitio humana}.\textsuperscript{320}

Without doubt Ambrose, like Irenaeus, recognized the solidarity of the entire human race in Adam.\textsuperscript{321} However, James Mara correctly notes that everything that Ambrose says about the unity of human nature was more or less a paraphrase of Paul. Therefore, he did not try to explain his idea of the solidarity with Adam either in the categories of seminal identity or in the categories of universal ideas.\textsuperscript{322} However, he is very clear as regards our share in Adam’s fall:

\begin{verbatim}
Ambrosius, Padeborn 1933, 101.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{317} J. Mara, \textit{The Notion of Solidarity in Saint Ambrose’s Teaching on Creation, Sin and Redemption}, Roma 1970, 39.

\textsuperscript{318} Ambrose, \textit{Apologia altera prophetae David} 12, 71; PL 14, 915, CSEL 32/2, 406-407; transl. MP.

\textsuperscript{319} N.P. Williams, \textit{Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin}, 305.

\textsuperscript{320} \textit{Ibid.}, 306.

\textsuperscript{321} A. Gaudel, \textit{Péché originel}, 366.

\textsuperscript{322} J. Mara, \textit{The Notion of Solidarity in Saint Ambrose’s Teaching on Creation, Sin and Redemption}, 21 and 23.
Laetatur autem pater, quia filius perierat, et inventus est: mortuus fuerat, et revixit. Ille perit qui fuit; non enim potest perire qui non fuit. Itaque gentes non sunt, Christianus est, juxta quod supra dictum est: Quia elegit Deus quae non sunt; ut quae sunt, destrueret. Potest tamen et hic in uno accipi species generis humani. Fuit Adam, et in illo fuimus omnes. Periit Adam, et in illo omnes perierunt. Homo igitur et in illo homine qui perierat, reformatur: et ille ad similitudinem Dei factus et imaginem divina patientia et magnanimitate reparatur.

The father rejoices that the son who was lost is found, and that the son who was dead is restored to life. Had he not existed, he could not have died. For no one can die unless they first exist. Therefore the Gentiles do not exist, but the Christian does. As was said further back: God has chosen that which is not to destroy that which is (1Cor 1:28). But you can see in that one the image of the entire human race. Adam was, and in him we all were; Adam died and in him all died. The man is, therefore, restored and renewed in the very man who had perished. He who was made in the image and likeness of God is patiently mended by the excessive kindness of God.323

This solidarity is expressed even more explicitly by the following text in which – as Gaudel suggests – Ambrose speaks about the solidarity not only in punishment but also in guilt:324

Non est ergo gravis subeundus moeror secundum naturam; ne aut excellentiorem aliquam naturae exceptionem nobis arrogare videamur, aut communem recusare. Etenim mors aequalis est omnibus, indiscreta pauperibus, inexcepta divitibus. Et ideo licet per unius peccatum, in omnes tamen pertransivit; ut quem generis non refugimus auctorem, non refugiamus et mortis: et sit nobis sicut per unum mors, ita per unum etiam resurrectio; et ut perveniamus ad gratiam, ut perveniamus ad gratiam: Venit enim, ut legimus, Christus salvum facere, quod perierat et ut non solum vivorum, sed etiam mortuorum dominetur. Lapsus sum in Adam, de paradiso ejectus in Adam, mortuos in Adam; quomodo revocet, nisi me in Adam invenerit, ut in illo culpae obnoxium, morti debitum, ita in Christo justificatum?

Therefore, in accordance with nature, excessive grief must not be yielded to, lest we should seem either to claim for ourselves either an exceptional superiority of nature, or to reject the common lot. For death is alike to all, without difference for the poor, without exception for the rich. And so although through the sin of one alone, yet it passed upon all; that we may not refuse to acknowledge Him to be also the Author of death, Whom we do not refuse to acknowledge as the Author of our race; and that, as through one death is ours, so is also the resurrection; and that we should not refuse the misery, that we may attain to the gift. For, as we read, Christ is come to save that which was lost (Lk 19:10), and to be Lord both of the dead and living (Rom 14:9). In Adam I fell, in Adam I was cast out of Paradise, in Adam I died; how shall the Lord call me back, except He find me in Adam; guilty as I was in him, so now justified in Christ.325

323 Ambrose, Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam VII 234; PL 15, 1762, CCL 14, 295; transl. Í.M. Ní Riain, 265-266 with alterations.
324 A. Gaudel, Péché originel, 366.
325 Ambrose, De excessu fratris sui Satyri II 6; PL 16, 1316-17, CSEL 73, 254; transl. NPNF II 10, 174-175.
In still another place, Ambrose speaks about Adam’s sin in order to identify it immediately with our fall:

Hiericho enim figura istius mundi est, in quam de paradiso, hoc est, de Hierusalem illa coelesti ejectus Adam praevactionis prolapsione descendit, hoc est, de vitalibus ad infirma demigrans: cui non loci, sed morum mutatio naturae suae fecit exsilium. Longe enim mutatus ab illo Adam, qui inoffensa beatitudine fruebatur, ubi in saecularia peccata defluxit, incidunt in latrones: in quos non incidisset, nisi his mandati coelestis devius se fecisset obnoxium. Qui sunt isti latrones, nisi angeli noctis atque tenebrarum, qui se nonnumquam transfigurant in angelos lucis, sed perseverare non possunt? Hi ante dispoliante quae acceperimus indumenta gratiae spiritalis, et sic vulnera inferre consuerunt; nam si intemera quae sumpsumus indumenta servemus, plagas latronum sentire non possimus. Cave ergo ne ante nudemis, sicut Adam ante nudatus est, mandati coelestis custodia destitutus, et exutus fidei vestimento, et sic lethale vulnera accepit: in quo omne genus occidisset humanum, nisi Samaritanus ille descendens, vulnera ejus acerba curasset.

Jericho, you see, stands for the world. Adam, when, because of his sin, he was chased out of paradise - the heavenly Jerusalem - descended to Jericho. That is to say, he left what is strong and went down to what is weak. But his exile caused of his nature was not so much a matter of moving from place to place; rather it was a change of habits. Ah, how changed he was from the Adam who enjoyed undisturbed happiness. But once man plunged into the sins of this world he met up with the thieves. He would not have met them if he had not put himself in their way by straying from the heavenly commandments. And who are these thieves? They are the dark spirits of the night and of the shadows, demons who sometimes transform themselves into angels of light, but cannot play the part for long. First they tear off from us the clothing we were given of spiritual grace, and that is how they are able to inflict such blows upon us. If we could keep intact the clothing that is ours, we would not feel the buffetting of the thieves. Take care not to be stripped, as Adam was; for after abandoning the heavenly precepts, stripped of the garment of faith, he received a deadly wound. In him the whole human race would have been killed only that the Samaritan came down to heal him of the cruel injuries inflicted on him.326

The expression *human nature* itself comprise the idea of the mysterious unity between Adam and all people.327 Adam’s sin was the sin of all of his progeny; in some way it was the sin of nature. As explained by Josef Huhn, for Ambrose the universality of original sin arises from real embracement (*Einbeschlossenheit*) of all people in Adam. Therefore, all people shared Adam’s sin because they were all contained in him. Ambrose did not wonder how was it possible if human souls did not exist yet – such a problem was raised only in the course of the Pelagian controversy.328 Indeed, when Ambrose ponders over the origin of sin in us he actually leaves the problem open.

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326 Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* VII 73; PL 15, 1718, CCL 14, 238-239; transl. Í.M. Ní Riain, 213 with alterations.
327 J. Mara, *The Notion of Solidarity in Saint Ambrose’s Teaching on Creation, Sin and Redemption*, 20.
328 J. Huhn, *Ursprung und Wesen des Bösen und der Sünde*, 133-134.
Ecce, inquit, in iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in delictis peperit me mater mea. Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis: et omnes iniquitates meas dele. Ne projicias me a facie tua, et Spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me. Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae.

Antequam nascamur, maculamur contagio; et ante usuram lucis, originis ipsius excipiimus injuriam, in iniquitate concipimus: non expressit utrum parentum, an nostra. Et in delictis generat unumquemque mater sua: nec hic declaravit utrum in delictis suis mater pariat; an jam sint et aliqua delicta nascentis. Sed vide ne utrumque intelligendum sit. Nec conceptus iniquitatis exsors est, quoniam et parentes non carent lapsu. Et si nec unius diei infans sine peccato est, multo magis nec illi materni conceptus dies sine peccato sunt. Concipimus ergo in peccato parentum, et in delictis eorum nascimur. Sed et ipse partus habet contagia sua, nec unum tantummodo habet ipsa natura contagium.

Behold, – he says – I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps 50:5). Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities (Ps 50:9). Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me (Ps 50:11). Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation (Ps 50:14). Even before birth we are stained with contagion; before coming out to the light we accept the contagion of the very origin, we are conceived in iniquity, although he did not explain whether it was our parents’ or our iniquity. Everyone is born by one’s mother in sin: and here it is not clear whether the mother gives birth in her sins or there already exist some sins of the newborn. But consider whether both eventualities should not be accepted. Also the conception is not free from iniquity because the parents are not sinless. And even if a one-day-old infant is not without sin, how much more without sin are not the days of this motherly conception. We are conceived in the sin of our parents and are born in their transgressions. But also the birth has its flaws and nature itself has more than one contagion.329

Scheffczyk draws the conclusion that for Ambrose there is no conception without sin and Adam’s sin is passed on through propagation. He admits, however, that in Ambrose the idea of the unity of human nature in Adam is more explicit than the idea of propagation. The formal basis for the participation of everyone in Adam’s sin is that the entire human nature is contained (Enthaltensein) in Adam. Therefore, one may speak about the sin of nature, although not in the Manichean sense.330 Ambrose himself treats the problem curtly and does not go into details:

Denique peccatum ab Adam: ex illo culpa, ex quo et Eva: ex illo praevaricatio, ex quo et humana conditio.

Sin comes from Adam; guilt comes from the same one as Eve; transgression from the same one as human nature.331

Apart from that, in confrontation with Manicheism Ambrose emphasized voluntariness of sin and hence he distinguished our passions from the wound inflicted on Adam by the serpent.

329 Ambrose, Apologia prophetiea David 11, 56; PL 14, 873-874, CSEL 32/2, 337, transl. MP.
330 L. Scheffczyk, Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde, 191.
331 Ambrose, De Tobia 23, 88; PL 14, 792, CSEL 32/2, 570, transl. MP.
In die judicii timere quid possum, nisi forte calcanei mei iniquitas mihi sit abluenda? Alia est iniquitas nostra, alia calcanei nostri, in quo Adam dente serpentis est vulneratus, et obnoxiam haereditatem successionis humanae suo vulnere dereliquit, ut omnes illo vulnere claudicemus. Unde Dominus discipulis pedes lavit, ut lavaret venena serpentis.

What can I fear on Judgement Day? Only this, that the iniquity of my heel will have to be washed off. Our own iniquity is one matter, that of our heel is another matter. Adam was wounded by the tooth of the Serpent and left the whole human race affected by this wound. We have all been lamed by that wound. That is why the Lord washed his disciples’ feet. He wanted to wash off the Serpent’s venom.

Scheffczyk underlines that Ambrose speaks here about the participation of mankind not in Adam’s guilt but in his punishment. Nevertheless, the entirety of his teaching on original sin shows that he acknowledged the participation of mankind in Adam’s sin. After all, that same Scheffczyk writes that certain expressions of Ambrose may be understood as the confirmation of the participation of mankind in Adam’s sin. Mara concentrates on the idea of human nature and points out that when Ambrose says that Adam is in each of us he means that human nature is in each of us. Human nature was so real in Adam that the entire human race is subject to death. In turn, André Loiselle claims that the first man is for Ambrose the type of humanity which constitutes a model indicating how everyone should look like and what everyone should strive at. Tennant maintains that Ambrose is as explicit as Augustine in his teaching that we were all in Adam. Adam’s sin is our sin because it was not strictly a personal sin but Adam was human nature so his transgression was the first transgression of human nature.

The above interpretations are actually unverifiable because Ambrose nowhere provides any ontological explanation of his – otherwise very significant – statements. The only thing that is unquestionable is his adherence to the belief in humanity’s solidarity with Adam. The effect of this solidarity is — as Gross underlines — the evil of passion as a wound or poisoning of human nature, which does weaken it moral force but absolutely does not paralyse or destroy it. The natural ability to follow the path of virtue remains in the progeny of Adam, although it is difficult after the serpent’s bite in paradise.

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332 Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmorum* XII 48, 8; PL 14, 1158, CSEL 64, 365; transl. Í.M. Ní Riain, 289.
333 L. Scheffczyk, *Ursrand, Fall und Erbsünde*, 177-178.
334 *Ibid.*, 186.
335 J. Mara, *The Notion of Solidarity in Saint Ambrose’s Teaching on Creation, Sin and Redemption*, 31.
336 A. Loiselle, *Nature de l’homme et histoire du Salut. Étude sur l’anthropologie d’Ambrôe de Milan*, Lyon 1970, 74.
337 F.R. Tennant, *The Sources of the The Fall and Original Sin*, 342.
338 J. Gross, *Geschichte des Erbsündendogmas*, 263.