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## IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?

The relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church is quite often misunderstood. A majority of Christians speak as if the Kingdom of God will be just another name for the Church of Christ. In fact they are relatively different from each other<sup>1</sup>. The theme of the Kingdom of God is essential to a correct understanding of the genesis, nature and mission of the Church, because the Kingdom of God is a much wider concept than the Church, which is an Divine and human communion. It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at its most salient features in the Old and New Testaments, in writings of the Apostolic and Church Fathers and then compare them to the relevant elements of the Church.

The intention of this paper is to deepen the understanding of the Church. Its aim is to show the similarities and differences between the Kingdom of God and the Church, especially that they have been understood as synonyms by the ecclesiology. Patristic philosophy, both Greek and Latin, united these concepts very strongly, describing the Church as part of the Kingdom of God. In the majority of the Fathers of the Church texts we can easily find that they prove not only the existence of many elements common for those two realities, but also their clear identification. This state lasted almost until the Second Vatican Council.

**1. The Kingdom of Heaven in the Old Testament.** The specific terminology of the Kingdom of Heaven, in Hebrew *malkut yhwh* (Kingdom of Yahweh) occurs only rarely in the Old Testament, despite the fact that the notion of God's rule is fundamental throughout. As a basic idea the Kingdom of God was not exclusive to the Hebrew religion, as it is similarly found in the ancient writings of the Hindu, Syrian and Iranian religions, when referring to God's greatness, enormousness, cosmic and moral order. The same general understanding occurs in the Old Testament (e.g. Tob 13, 1; 2Kings 19, 15; 1Chr 17,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Królestwo Boże jest (i nie jest) Kościołem*, in: *Królestwo Boże a Kościół*, ed. M. Chojnacki – J. Morawa – A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2012, 83.

14; 1Chr 28, 5; Ps 45, 7; Ps 145, 11). However, in the Old Testament it also assumes a specific and entirely original character where the Kingdom of God is established in God's covenant with his chosen people. It is rooted in the special choosing of a nation by God, by means of which messianic salvation can occur<sup>2</sup>.

In relation to the evolution of the religious identity of the chosen people, one can distinguish three basic stages in the development of the idea of the Kingdom in the Old Testament: first, God's covenant with Abraham; second, the Mosaic covenant at Sinai; and third, the development of the theocratic state of Israel together with the work and words of its prophets.

The beginnings are probably rightly to be sought in the special covenant between God and Abraham: „To your descendants I give this country” (Gen 15, 18). The idea of the Kingdom, however, is more clearly developed in the covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai, where the religious-ethical and messianic character of the covenant is more explicit. There, an aspect of messianic universalism is revealed in the divine message conveyed to Moses as intermediary: „So now, if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine. For me you shall be a Kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Those are the words you are to say to the Israelites” (Ex 19, 5-6). Then eventually the notion of God's reign is consolidated in the establishment of Israel as a theocratic state where an earthly king is appointed to govern on God's behalf and execute God's will. Prophets are called by God and commissioned to anoint kings. The prophets then begin to teach that the community under God will reach its ultimate shape only in the future and will not be limited to the people of Israel, but will include all nations<sup>3</sup>.

In the later Old Testament and inter-Testamental periods, in most of the rabbinic schools the Kingdom of God had come to be understood primarily in a nationalistic sense, and the many positions in this regard can be categorized into three basic approaches. First, the Kingdom of God is a political reality, reducible to recovering the independence and material wealth and power of the nation. Second, the Kingdom of God is an eschatological reality which one day will bring about Israel's ultimate triumph. Third, the Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality the essence of which lies in religious and moral renewal<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A. Garuti, *Il mistero della Chiesa*, Roma 2004, 98-100.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ezek 36, 25; Zech 8, 3; Zeph 3, 16-17 and especially Isa 2, 2-3: „It will happen in the final days that the mountain of Yahweh's house will rise higher than the mountains and tower above the heights. Then all the nations will stream to it, many peoples will come to it and say, «Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths». For the Law will issue from Zion and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem”.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Nowicki, *Królestwo Boże*, in: *Leksykon Teologii Fundamentalnej*, ed. M. Rusecki – K. Kaucha – I. Ledwoń – J. Mastej, Lublin – Kraków 2002, 692.

**2. Jesus and the Kingdom of God.** The notion of the Kingdom of God (βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ) or Kingdom of Heaven (βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) in the New Testament Gospels does not refer to a national theocracy or geographic territory, nor does it refer to a purely spiritual reality. But what it does refer to is an order of the world in which humanity is reconciled with God. In this context the Second Vatican Council stated that:

„The mystery of the holy Church is already brought to light in the way it was founded. For the Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures: «The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand» (Mk 1, 15; cf. Mt 4, 17). This Kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ”<sup>5</sup>.

The Kingdom of God therefore made its appearance with the arrival of Jesus, who proclaimed: „But if it is through the Spirit of God that I drive out devils, then be sure that the Kingdom of God has caught you unawares” (Mt 12, 28). In the New Testament understanding, Jesus’ coming into the world as Saviour, as Messiah, occurred at a moment which was pre-determined by God, when the „fullness of time” had come. It was the moment of the realization of God’s plan of redeeming fallen humanity and giving humanity once more the dignity of God’s adopted children formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ the Son of God (cf. Gal 4, 4-5; Eph 1, 3-14; Jn 1, 14).

The Kingdom thus denotes the dynamic presence of God in the world. In proclaiming it, Jesus used numerous metaphors, allegories and parables in order to facilitate people’s understanding and to bring them closer to entering into the new reality which it constituted. He proclaimed the Kingdom as already present and as something that was still to come. This dual aspect of the Kingdom of God characterises Jesus’ teaching. He spoke of a reality already present or imminent (e.g. Lk 17, 20-21) at the same time as an eschatological reality which will only arrive when this world order ceases. Scholars sometimes distinguish these two aspects of Jesus’ exposition as „realised eschatology” and „future eschatology”<sup>6</sup>.

The proclamation of the Kingdom was central to Jesus’ message. His many parables enable one to understand the essence of what the evangelist Mark usually refers to as the Kingdom of God while Matthew prefers the more Aramaic description Kingdom of Heaven. One of its fundamental aspects is that it differs decidedly from any earthly kingdom. According to the fourth gospel Jesus said „Mine is not a kingdom of this World” (Jn 18, 36). Its essentially supernatural and mysterious character does not make it any easier to grasp its

<sup>5</sup> Cf. P. Neuner, *Eklezjologia – nauka o Kościele*, in: *Podręcznik teologii dogmatycznej*, ed. W. Beinert, treatises VI-VII: F. Courth – P. Neuner, *Mariologia. Eklezjologia*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 1999, 248-263.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nowicki, *Królestwo Boże*, p. 691.

essence. Only the privileged group of Jesus' closest disciples were „granted to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom” (Mt 13, 11). So subsequently only a Church built on the foundation of the Twelve can enjoy the fullness of understanding.

Jesus remained circumspect towards accepting the title „king” as applied by the Old Testament prophets to the Messiah (Mt 21, 4-5), in order to avoid any political associations (cf. Lk 2, 2). His Kingdom, which „is not of this World”, denoted its presence in this world through „testimony to the truth” (Jn 18, 36n). However, since the „truth” resided in the person of Jesus himself (Jn 14, 6), in order to gain access to the Kingdom one must give up everything „for his name” (Mt 19, 29; cf. Mk 10, 29). Hence Jesus identified matters of the Kingdom of God with his own person. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Christ. It is both a Kingdom of the Father (cf. Mt 13, 41-43) and of the Son because the Son will sit on the throne of the Heavenly Father (Rev 3, 21; Acts 2, 30-35), as „King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19, 16; 17, 14; cf. 1, 5).

The projected eschatological reign of the risen Christ on earth is delimited by the length of time it will take for all his enemies to „kneel at his footstool”. The period of „waiting” (cf. Heb 10, 13) for this to come about includes the whole of the Church's existence on earth. Only at the end of the world will Christ „hand over the kingdom to God the Father” (1Cor 15, 24). And only then can it be said „the kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11, 15; cf. 12, 10); and this in order that God may be „all in all” (1Cor 15, 28). In the same moment the just will „inherit the Kingdom of God” (Eph 5, 5; cf. Rev 1, 6; 3, 21).

A further aspect of the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus is that it has imperceptibly already arrived. In addressing the Pharisees, Jesus said: „The coming of the Kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, «Look, it is here! Look, it is there!» For look, the Kingdom of God is among you” (Lk 17, 20-21). Putting it this way, Jesus not only wanted his audience to understand that the Kingdom of God was already present with his arrival, but that it has a spiritual character only to be discerned by those who will repent and believe in the Good News (cf. Mk 1, 14-15). The fullness of the Kingdom exists in the person of Jesus: „The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4, 18).

This spiritual character of the Kingdom is extremely important. It is expressed primarily in the idea that it is to penetrate a person's being and dominate his thoughts, feelings and desires. The Kingdom must first conquer a person's heart so that they may subsequently avail themselves of its spiritual wealth and share that wealth with others. The propagation of the Kingdom of God is served by preaching the good news of salvation and proclaiming the beginning of God's reign (cf. Mk 1, 15; Mt 28, 19-20). In the course of time

the Kingdom, on account of its inner and outer dynamics, will spread out like the branches of an enormous tree that will reach all peoples and nations.

The Kingdom of God is open to all, but the prerequisite for entering it is repentance: „The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel” (Mk 1, 15); „Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand” (Mt 3, 2). Repentance is the first step of participation in the Kingdom. The next step is that of „following”, becoming a disciple of Jesus by imitating his attitude: „If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mk 8, 34-35; cf. Mt 11, 29). Following Jesus demands full acceptance of his teaching: he is to be the only teacher and master (cf. Mt 23, 8-10). The aim therefore is to assimilate one’s being to Jesus, the Son of God, as a child of God (cf. Jn 14, 21. 23; Mt 3, 17). This also is a condition of entering the Kingdom: „In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 18, 3-4; 1Jn 3, 1-3).

God’s reign begins inside a person’s heart, and in order that this can happen it is necessary for a person to open up to the gospel, that is the word of God as proclaimed by Jesus. Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a seed which, when it falls on rich soil may then produce a good crop (Mt 13, 3-8. 18-23). In another parable the Kingdom was compared to a mustard seed which, although inconspicuous, „the least of seeds”, can grow into a large tree (cf. Mk 4, 30-32). The parable perfectly pictures the development of faith in a person, which is able to achieve great things: „If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, «Be uprooted and planted in the sea», and it would obey you” (Lk 17, 6).

It follows from Jesus’ words that the growth of the Kingdom depends on attentive „listening to the word and understanding it” (Mt 13, 13). God’s word contains the power to change a person’s heart as if with „yeast” (Mt 13, 33). The human heart is like a repository from which a good person brings out good, and an evil person brings out evil (Mt 15, 19). The proclamation of the Kingdom and its reception is meant to prepare the hearts of people so that they might receive God’s blessing: „Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God” (Mt 5, 8).

The Kingdom of God, according to Jesus’ teaching, will be inherited by those who live the spirit of poverty (cf. Mt 5, 3), those adopt the attitude of a little child (Mt 18, 1-4; 19, 14), those who actively seek the Kingdom and its righteousness (cf. Mt 6, 33), those who patiently bear persecution (cf. Mt 5, 10; Acts 14, 22; 2Thes 1, 5), those who renounce everything that can be possessed (cf. Mt 13, 44), and those who are marked by a greater righteousness than that of the Pharisees and scribes (cf. Mt 5, 20). And the same will hear at the Last Judgment: „Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the World” (Mt 25, 34).

Ultimately, the Kingdom is God's gift, God's reward, a treasure that is worth giving up everything one owns to attain (cf. Mt 13, 44-46). But it cannot be won purely by one's own effort. Its winning involves the fulfillment of certain conditions laid down by God, since only he – as Jesus explained in one of his parables – hires workers for his vineyard and rewards them according to his discretion (cf. Mt 20, 1-16). Although the invitation to work in the Lord's vineyard concerns all people, not all of them wish to respond to it. Such people will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1Cor 6, 9n; cf. Gal 5, 21; Eph 5, 5; Rev 22, 14-15).

**3. The Church Fathers and the relationship the Kingdom of God to the Church.** How we could see, with the call of Abraham, God introduced a new form of theocratic administration. He instituted the *Abrahamic Covenant* that promised Abraham a land, seed, and blessing. Throughout the Old Testament – through that expanding covenant program – God administered His theocracy here on earth. The Kingdom program was developed with the nation Israel through the several covenants God made with them: the Abrahamic (Gen 15, 18), the Davidic (2Sam 7, 14), the New (Jer 31, 31-34), and the Palestinian (Deut 28-30). These eternal, absolute, irrevocable covenants determined the ultimate form of the Kingdom of the God on earth.

For the Apostolic Fathers it seemed so obvious that the Church of Christ is a natural extension of the Kingdom of God, which ultimately came true in words, gestures and actions of Jesus. This belief reinforced the belief in the imminent arrival of the end of the world and the imminent Second Coming. Church in its works has clear eschatological character. This is confirmed by *Didache* (ca. 80-100).

The first of the notable Apostolic Fathers was Clement, bishop of Rome. He has literally identified the Church with Israel, so the natural thing was to understand the structure of the Church as a theocratic. Clement of Rome represents the historical-redemptive ecclesiology. The Church creates new people whose salvation is achieved by the service of God and good conduct. By doing good deeds in the Kingdom of Jesus it is possible to enter the Kingdom of God. Clement distinguished the Kingdom of God from the Kingdom of Christ which is the Church in its visibility<sup>7</sup>.

Polycarp (69-155), bishop of Smyrna, and Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (also known as *Theophorus* from Greek Θεοφόρος) developed transcendental ecclesiology. Church on earth is an archetype and a reflection of the heavenly Church. The Kingdom of God is achieved in the unity of Church. In his *Letters* Ignatius treats Church as the catholic by understanding it as all the people of God linked together to create one body. And the Church hierarchy are bishops,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. P. Szczur, *Królestwo Boże i Kościół w pierwszych wiekach chrześcijaństwa. Zarys problematyki*, in: *Królestwo Boże a Kościół*, p. 34-41.

priests and deacons. The Catholic Church is where the Christ is as opposed to the local Church<sup>8</sup>.

However, Hermas in his work *Shepherd*, dating from the years 140-150, compares the Church to the tower. In this literary piece the Kingdom of God and the Church are closely linked. Another image of the Church of Hermas is an old woman<sup>9</sup>.

The quite interesting and illuminating writing is Justin Martyr's *Conversation with Trypho the Jew*. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165), an early Christian apologist, was the great theologian, who has presented God's plans in four parts: Creation, the Fall of Man, Redemption in Christ, Final Judgment and Consummation. Justin has believed that the purposes of God's relationship with Israel was the coming Messiah, who would establish His Kingdom, which is now the Church of Christ. Consequently, the true Israel is for him the Church. So true synagogue is made by those who believe in Christ<sup>10</sup>.

In his two works *Unmasking and refutation of the false gnosis (Adversus haereses)* and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching (Demonstratio praedicationis apostolicae)* Irenaeus (ca. 140-202) presents the Church as the guardian of revealed truth. His oral teaching – Tradition received from the Apostles – identifies as the rule of faith. He wrote:

„For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth”<sup>11</sup>.

The Kingdom of God and the Church join in Irenaeus in the Spirit of Truth. In the work of Origen (185-254) we meet a lot about intertwined kingship of God and the kingship of Christ and the relationship between them. Since the Church is both clean and polluted (harlot Rahab and Mary Magdalene), it can not be fully identified with the Kingdom of God. In the *Homily on Leviticus* Origen also raised the issue of the common priesthood of the faithful, eager to demonstrate the universality of the purification of the Church, which must be washed by the blood of Christ all the time<sup>12</sup>.

The separation from the Church of God's Kingdom which appeared in the partially preserved writings of Origen absolutely clear which was marked by Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315-386). The doctor of the Church shows the diversity of the earthly Church as the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. In his *Cat-*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ignatius Antiochenus, *Epistula ad Smyrnaeos* 8, 2; see also J.N.D. Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, transl. J. Mrukówna, Warszawa 1988, 146.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hermas, *Pastor* Vis. II 4, 1; Vis. III 5, 1; see Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 147-148.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 63, 5; see Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* III 24, 1, SCh 211, 474; transl. A. Roberts – W. Rambaut, in: *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts – J. Donaldson – A. Cleveland Coxe, Buffalo NY 1885, 458; see Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Origenes, *In Leviticum hom.* 9, 1; see Szczur, *Królestwo Boże i Kościół*, p. 51-60.

*echeses* he describes the Church as a spiritual community, established for the existence of God, in order to replace the Jewish people, who did not recognize their Messiah<sup>13</sup>. For the Greek bishop of Jerusalem, the Church is the bride of Christ and the mother of all, possessing many children. In the Catholic Church, people are allowed into the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Because of the many schisms and heresies the unity of Church is an important feature<sup>14</sup>. This way of thinking we can also find in John Chrysostom (ca. 350-407), who gives it a quite strong pneumatic and eschatological accents<sup>15</sup>.

In his *De civitate Dei*, Augustine (354-430) describes the Kingdom of God as a mystical state of God. But for the Bishop of Hippo the Church in its social dimension is the visible kingdom. That is why, the fallen Rome, without its morality, will be replaced by the Christian community, leading the spiritual and virtuous life<sup>16</sup>.

It seems that the ecclesiology of the Fathers of the East (Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria) – firmly based on the theology of Paul the Apostle for whom the Church is the mystical Body of Christ (cf. Ro 12: 4-5; 1Cor 12, 12-31) – reached a greater depth of Christology. That is why in the works of the Greek Fathers, there is no identification of the Kingdom of God and the Church of Jesus Christ<sup>17</sup>.

It is possible to conclude that in the works of the Apostolic Fathers and the Fathers of the Church there is no common opinion about the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church. However, it seems that most of them carry a fairly clear dividing line between these two quantities. It is, however, a large group of the Church Fathers that are convinced that the Kingdom of God not only is existing in the Church. Moreover, they think that the Church is the God's Kingdom on earth. In their works from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century to the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century we can find easy conviction that the implementation of the Kingdom of God in its reality – the visible and invisible structure. This is due to extra strong eschatological emphasis, associated with the belief of the imminent end of the world.

We must also remember that on the one hand the first communities still partly stuck in on the part of Judaism and its apocalyptic, on the other hand the ancient Church tries to create its structures. Therefore, the Church should not be discussed as an institutional organism but rather as a charismatic structure. Gradually, in the areas of ecclesial consciousness – the worship, preach-

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catechesis* 18, 25; see Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 298.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catechesis* 18, 26; see Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 298.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. K. Journet, *Kościół Chrystusowy. Teologia o Kościele*, Poznań – Warszawa – Lublin 1960, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Szczur, *Królestwo Boże i Kościół*, p. 62-64; A. Eckmann, *Dialog św. Augustyna ze światem pogańskim w świetle jego korespondencji*, Lublin 1987, 201-208.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, p. 298-312.

ing, diakonia, intellectual disputes and monasticism – matures and solidifies the Church<sup>18</sup>.

**4. The Church is already and not yet the Kingdom of God.** Jesus' parables about the growth of the Kingdom of God – about the sower, the mustard seed, the bread leavening, the wheat and darnel, and the dragnet (cf. Mt 13, 1-52) – point to a certain period of time which must elapse from the moment of the Kingdom's arrival on earth to its full realization. The end of this period will coincide with Christ's return at the *parousia* (cf. Acts 1, 11; Mt 25, 31n). It is a time for bearing witness (cf. Acts 1, 8; Jn 15, 27), after which the Kingdom of God will arrive in its fullness (cf. Lk 21, 31). An expression of this fullness will be an eschatological feast, a gathering of the righteous from all parts of the world, who will then sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God (Lk 13, 28-30; cf. 14, 15; Mt 22, 2-10; 25, 10). The Church is therefore a visible and transient face of the Kingdom of God on earth. Its earliest expression was the "little flock" of Jesus disciples who were compared to the good seed mixed up in the soil with weeds (Mt 13, 24-30) or to the mustard seed (Mk 4, 30-32) or the yeast in the bread (Mt 13, 33). However, before the Kingdom appears at the end of history, the faithful will not cease from waiting and longing for its arrival as they continuously repeat that phrase contained in the Lord's Prayer: „may your Kingdom come" (cf. Lk 11, 2)<sup>19</sup>.

Therefore the present time is the time of the Ecclesia, the Church. The Church is an institutional and temporary expression of the Kingdom of God in its earthly realization. The Church's two-fold visible and invisible structure – visible in its episcopally organized hierarchical system, and invisible in its relation to Jesus Christ as its head, and to the Holy Spirit – forms „one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element"<sup>20</sup>. From the very beginning of its existence to its end the Church does not cease to be a visible sign of the Kingdom of God on earth, engaged in Christ's mission to transform and renew humanity by love, that all may become worthy children of God and heirs of an eternal inheritance (cf. Col 3, 24; Heb 9, 15; 1Pet 1, 4).

While there is this certain affinity between the Church and the Kingdom of God, there are also essential differences. The relationship of the Church to the Kingdom of God has been discussed in the 1964 *Constitution „Lumen gentium"* of the Second Vatican Council<sup>21</sup> and in the *Declaration „Dominus Iesus"* published in 2000<sup>22</sup>. Considering the various biblical references already

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Gott-menschliche Gemeinschaft. Katholische integrale Ekklesiologie*, Frankfurt a. M. – Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – Wien 2011, 169-183.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. S. Dianach – S. Noceti, *Trattato sulla Chiesa*, Brescia 2005<sup>2</sup>, 110-114.

<sup>20</sup> Concilium Vaticanum II, *Constitutio dogmatica „Lumen gentium"* 8, AAS 57 (1965) 11.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 5-7; 20; 35-36.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Declaratio „Dominus Iesus"* de Iesu Christi atque Ecclesiae unitate et universalitate salvifica 18-19, AAS 92 (2000) 759-761.

examined, together with the teaching of the Magisterium, several distinctions can be made.

The Kingdom of God is eternal, whereas the Church is temporal: the Church has its beginning and its end. The Kingdom of God is invisible, whereas the Church is both invisible and visible: the Church is at one and the same time a visible hierarchical community and the mystical body of Christ. The Kingdom has an entirely spiritual (supernatural) nature, whereas the Church is both spiritual and material. The Kingdom of God is therefore holy, while the Church is both holy and sinful: the Church is holy because of the indwelling of Christ, yet sinful because it consists of humans tainted by original sin. In his teachings Jesus emphasized the absolute value of the Kingdom. It is the most precious treasure, a pearl of great price that one should sell everything to gain (cf. Mt 13, 44-46). Elsewhere he said: „of all the children born to women there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than He” (Mt 11, 11).

In contrast, the value of the Church is a relative value. The Christian community is on a way forever and it increases and renews constantly in its interior faith and in its visible and social structure. As a result the Church is obtaining evidently its development and progress from age to age<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, the Kingdom of God has a universal character: it encompasses all people, because God is the Creator of everything that exists. As created beings all humans are children of God. The point here is the universality of creation. The Church, on the other hand, does not encompass everyone; persons belong to it through faith. When we speak about a universal Church we speak not a universality of creation, but a universality of salvation, which is not the same thing. The Church is universal as a sacrament in Christ, as a sign and instrument of inner unification with God and the unity of mankind. Being a sacrament of the inner unification of people with God is the Church's primary task; and since real communion between people is based on their unification with God, the Church is also a sacrament of the unity of mankind<sup>24</sup>. This means that no one is excluded from the gift of salvation. However it comes to everyone only by way of Christ's Church, even if they do not belong to it (see Acts 4, 12). God's will to redeem mankind, indeed the whole of creation, is universal, but it is brought about through the Church as the chosen instrument of God's saving grace in Christ. In one sense the unity referred to exists already in the Church in so far as it is gathering people „from every nation, race, tribe and language” (Rev 7, 9). But at the same time the Church must still function as a sign and instrument of the full realization of that full unity of mankind with God and with each other which yet has to be fulfilled<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Reforma i rozwój Kościoła. Duch Boży i instytucja*, Kraków 2012, 201-279.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Concilium Vaticanum II, *Constitutio dogmatica „Lumen gentium”* 1, AAS 57 (1965) 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae* 775, Città del Vaticano 1997.

In summing up the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church, we should note the conclusions made by P. Neuner and H. Fries, in which seven observations are made which in some way complement what has already been said above. Point one: the Church is not the Kingdom of God. Point two, the Church grows out of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Point three, the Church cannot pretend to subordinate the Kingdom of God. Point four, the Church does not exist for itself but for all humanity. Point five, the Church is „ecclesia semper reformed”. Point six, the Church is not building the Kingdom of God, because the Kingdom of God is a gift already given. Point seven, the Church is nevertheless charged with the task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God<sup>26</sup>.

### CZY KRÓLESTWO NIEBIESKIE TO KOŚCIÓŁ JEZUSA CHRYSYTA?

(Streszczenie)

Zamierzeniem niniejszego artykułu jest pogłębienie rozumienia Kościoła, poprzez wykazanie podobieństw i różnic między królestwem Bożym a Kościołem, tym bardziej że jeszcze do niedawna eklezjologia katolicka utożsamiała wręcz te pojęcia. Myśl patrystyczna, zarówno grecka jak i łacińska, łączyła niekiedy te rzeczywistości, opisując Kościół jako część Królestwa Bożego. U większości Ojców Kościoła odnajdujemy z łatwością takie teksty, potwierdzające nie tylko istnienie wielu elementów wspólnych dla tych dwóch rzeczywistości, lecz nawet ich identyfikację. Wydaje się jednak, iż eklezjologia Ojców Wschodu (Atanazy, Grzegorz z Nyssy, Grzegorz z Nazjanzu, Cyryl Aleksandryjski), mocno oparta na teologii Pawła Apostoła, dla którego Kościół to mistyczne Ciało Chrystusa (por. Rz 12, 4-5; 1Kor 12, 12-31), osiągnęła większą głębię chrystologiczną. I dlatego w dziełach Ojców greckich nie dochodzi do utożsamiania Królestwa Bożego i Kościoła Jezusa Chrystusa, większość z nich natomiast przeprowadza dość czytelną linię podziału między tymi dwoma rzeczywistościami. Dopiero jednak Sobór Watykański II i teologia posoborowa dokonały poważnego rozróżnienia między tymi dwiema wielkościami, pogłębiając tym samym rozumienie istoty i misji Kościoła.

**Słowa kluczowe:** eklezjologia, Królestwo Niebieskie, Kościół, tożsamość, rozbieżności.

**Key words:** ecclesiology, Kingdom of Heaven, the Church, identify, divergences.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Neuner, *Eklezjologia – nauka o Kościele*, p. 264-267; H. Fries, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Graz – Wien – Köln 1985, 363.

