

KS. JACENTY MASTEJ

THE STAUROLOGICAL CREDIBILITY OF THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH

Traditional apologetics, developing the thesis that the Church was founded by Jesus of Nazareth – because of its socio-legal understanding – focused on those initiatives and activities that led to the establishment of visible structures, mainly apostolate and primacy. Such a single-aspect approach to the origins of the Church did not bring out too clearly its theological and historical-soteriological dimension and hence its supernatural character.

Currently, the issue of the creation of the Church of Christ is being looked at integrally. The key is the belief that Jesus Christ is the founder of Ecclesia – He wanted to set up the Church and actually did it¹. The International The-

KS. DR HAB. JACENTY MASTEJ, kapłan diecezji rzeszowskiej, kierownik Katedry Chrystologii i Eklezjologii Fundamentalnej KUL, wykładowca teologii fundamentalnej w WSD w Rzeszowie. Adres do korespondencji: ul. Ks. I. Radziszewskiego 7, 20-039 Lublin; e-mail: jmastej@kul.pl

¹ Cz. S. Bartnik, *Kościół Jezusa Chrystusa*, Wrocław 1982, pp. 58-99; S. Nagy, *Chrystus w Kościele. Zarys eklezjologii fundamentalnej*, Wrocław 1982, pp. 17-90; idem, *Ty jesteś Piotr, czyli Skala i na tej Skale zbuduję Kościół mój. Studium o widzialnym Kościele*, Częstochowa 2009, pp. 27-68; S. Piè-Ninot, *Gesù e la Chiesa*, w: *Dizionario di teologia fondamentale*, red. R. Latourelle, R. Fisichella, Assisi 1990, pp. 151-162; M. Rusecki, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, t. 1: *Z teorii teologii fundamentalnej*, Lublin 1994, pp. 238-242; idem, *Kościół*, II. *Geneza*, w: *Leksykon teologii fundamentalnej*, red. M. Rusecki i in., Lublin–Kraków 2002 (dalej: LTF), pp. 662-667; idem, *Boska geneza Kościoła*, w: *Kościół w czasach Jana*

ological Commission in the document *Selected issues of ecclesiology* stresses that “the Church is as it were the fruit of all His life”². Without minimising the Church-forming importance of the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth, one should note that the final act of the creation of the Church could take place only when the saving work of Christ was completed by His death and resurrection and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit³. Reading the message of the Gospel according to St. John, we see that both the resurrection and the sending of the Spirit is accomplished from the height of the Cross. Thus, the *mysterium Crucis* is the foundation event for the Ecclesia⁴.

The starting point for our theological reflection on the credibility of the genesis of the Ecclesia is the cross. It should be noted that the whole earthly life of the Master of Nazareth is aimed at the cross, which Jesus is aware of. In carrying out the will of the Father, the Son of Man is approaching His “hou”⁵. From the ecclesiological perspective one can see that the event of the cross is the fulfilment of Jesus’ ecclesio-genic activity. In His life and teachings His desire to form the Church is clearly evident⁶.

Pawła II, red. M. Rusecki, K. Kaucha, J. Mastej, Lublin 2005, pp. 72-78; H. Seweryniak, *Święty Kościół powszedni*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 23-42; A.A. Napiórkowski, *Geneza, natura i poslanie Kościoła*, w: *Teologia fundamentalna*, t. 4: *Kościół Chrystusowy*, red. T. Dzidek, Ł. Kamykowski, A. Kubiś, A.A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2003, pp. 71-105.

² Międzynarodowa Komisja Teologiczna, *Wybrane zagadnienia z eklezjologii*, w: *Od wiary do teologii. Dokumenty Międzynarodowej Komisji Teologicznej*, red. J. Królikowski, Kraków 2000, p. 201.

³ L. Scheffczyk, *Zmartwychwstanie*, Warszawa 1984, p. 262.

⁴ M. Rusecki, *Traktat o Objawieniu*, Kraków 2007, p. 437; idem, *Pan zmartwychwstał i żyje. Zarys teologii rezurekcyjnej*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 220-221; idem, *Kościół*, II. *Geneza*, pp. 666-667; K. Skalický, *Fundacyjne wydarzenie chrześcijaństwa: Ukrzyżowanie i zmartwychwstanie Jezusa z Nazaretu*, w: *Chrześcijaństwo jutra. Materiały II Międzynarodowego Kongresu Teologii Fundamentalnej (Lublin, 18-21 września 2001)*, red. M. Rusecki i in., Lublin 2001, pp. 27-49.

⁵ J. Losada Espinosa, *Jak Jezus tłumaczył swoją śmierć?*, w: *Tajemnica Odkupienia* (Kol-Com t. 11), red. L. Balter i in., Poznań 1997, pp. 195-210; M. Bastin, *Jésus devant sa passion*, Paris 1976; A.A. Napiórkowski, *Krzyż*, III. *Staurologiczna świadomość Jezusa*, LTF, pp. 710-714; H. Seweryniak, *Świadcstwo i sens*. *Teologia fundamentalna*, Płock 2001, pp. 314-320; T. Dola, *Teologia misteriów życia Jezusa*, Opole 2002, pp. 236-239.

⁶ M. Rusecki, *Boska geneza Kościoła*, pp. 76-77; A.A. Napiórkowski, *Geneza, natura i poslanie Kościoła*, pp. 95-98; H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła – rodziny dzieci Bożych (J 19, 16b-30)*, w: *Kościół w życiu publicznym. Teologia polska i europejska wobec nowych wyzwań*, t. 2: *Materiały spotkań sekcyjnych*, red. K. Góźdz i in., Lublin 2004, pp. 33-69; W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza pascha z Chrystusem. Zarys chrześcijańskiej teologii paschalnej*, Lublin 1987, pp. 77-85.

Fundamental ecclesiology, highlighting the credibility of the Church, shows the cross in conjunction with the entire life of Jesus and points to the realisation in these events of the Old Testament announcements. From the perspective of the history of salvation, the cross is not only the consequence of the escalating conflict with the Jewish elders of the Jesus, but the result of the consciously undertaken mission of the salvation of man. In the event of the cross we find a number of ecclesiogenic elements. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Church is born primarily “of Christ’s total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross”⁷. Patristic tradition sees the beginning of the Church in the mystery of the pierced side of Jesus. Fathers of the Church believed that blood and water flowing from the pierced side of the Redeemer (Jn 19, 34; cf. Jn. 7, 38), are a symbol of the sacraments⁸. The water is the sacrament of baptism, through which believers are born to live in God, and are included in the community of the Church. In contrast, the blood is a symbol of the Eucharist, which generates and builds ecclesial community⁹. St. Augustine teaches: “while the Lord slept on the Cross, His side was transfixed with a spear, and the Sacraments flowed forth, whence the Church was born. For the Church the Lord’s Bride was created from His side, as Eve was created from the side of Adam”¹⁰. A similar belief is expressed by St Thomas Aquinas: “the Church is said to be built up with the sacraments which flowed from the side of Christ while hanging on the Cross”¹¹. Also post-tridentine theology sees the beginning of the Church above all in the death of Jesus on the cross – the Church is born in the *mysterium Crucis* and in it has its source¹².

The purpose of this article is to show the staurological credibility of the genesis of the Church. The issue thus formulated will be dealt with in three points. The following issues will successively be presented: the ecclesial aspects of the royal dignity of Jesus (I); the ecclesiogenic nature of the events at Golgotha (II) and the Pentecostal aspect of the death of Jesus (III).

⁷ KKK 766, (http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_ess/archive/catechism/p123a9p1.htm); W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza pascha z Chrystusem*, pp. 77-80.

⁸ KL 5; S. Czerwik, *Wielki Piątek Męki Pańskiej*, w: S. Czerwik, J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Święte Triduum Paschalne. Komentarze biblijno-liturgiczne i medytacje*, Kielce 2001, p. 97.

⁹ H. U. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, Kraków 1991, pp. 312-113; W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza pascha z Chrystusem*, p. 77.

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *Exposition on the Psalms*, 127, 4.

¹¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3, (<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4064.htm>)

¹² W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza pascha z Chrystusem*, pp. 78-79.

I. Ecclesial aspects of the royal dignity of Jesus

The triumphal entry of Jesus of Nazareth into Jerusalem, interrogation by Pilate, carrying the Cross to Golgotha and the moment of the crucifixion are several components of the staurological event that reveal the royal dignity of Jesus, and thus are important for the birth of the Church and its credibility. They are exposed particularly by St. John, who in the Gospel presents Jesus as the rejected King of the Jews, who on the Cross reveals his royal dignity and dominion in the eschatic dimension.

For the credibility of the events important is the fact that the description of the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem is shared by all the evangelists (Matthew 21: 1-11, Mark 11, 1-11, Luke 19, 28-40, John 12, 12-19). With this event Christ begins the final stage of his messianic mission – solemnly enters into Jerusalem to complete the work of revelation and salvation through His Passion, Cross and Resurrection. Through His solemn Ingress into Jerusalem Jesus draws attention to His messianic-royal dignity and announces the revelation of the Messiah as a king on the cross¹³.

In presenting the entry of Jesus of Nazareth to Jerusalem, Evangelists highlight a number of messianic features of this event. A theological significance can already be found in the mention of the Mount of Olives, as in the times of Jesus the Jews entertained the belief that it was there that the Messiah would appear¹⁴. Also the entry of Jesus on a donkey, among the enthusiastic crowd, points to His messianic and royal dignity. The behaviour of the inhabitants of Jerusalem – spreading His route with cloaks and twigs picked in the fields – is an expression of great reverence for Jesus and the homage paid to the king (cf. 2 Kings 9, 13). The evangelical description clearly refers to the prophecy of Zechariah: “Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion! Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem! Look, your king is approaching, he is vindicated and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (9, 9). Jesus of Nazareth, entering into Jerusalem on a donkey, reveals himself as a humble Messiah, a king full of simplicity and poverty¹⁵. Messianic overtones can be heard in the crowds’ cheers. The words “hosanna” and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” come from Psalm 118,

¹³ F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, p. 139; J. Mastej, *Staurologiczno-rezurekcyjna wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, Lublin 2009, pp. 251-253.

¹⁴ R. Bartnicki, *Przesłanie Ewangelii*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 246-247.

¹⁵ E. Szymanek, *Wykład Pisma Świętego Nowego Testamentu*, Poznań 1990, p. 148.

which was interpreted in messianic terms. This Psalm has also a paschal dimension because it was recited during the killing of the Passover lamb¹⁶. The cry “hosanna” was used in relation to the king, and even God as a plea for help. In the time of Jesus it also contained messianic overtones¹⁷. The cry: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Samuel 17, 45, 2 Samuel 6, 18, 2 Chronicles 14, 10, Psalm 129, 8) proclaims the appearance of a messenger of God¹⁸. Jesus is therefore welcomed as a messenger of God, who is to fulfil the saving mission to the people. An even clearer messianic content can be found in the second part of the acclamation, speaking of the kingdom of David: “Blessed is the coming kingdom of David our father! Hosanna in the highest heavens!” (Mk 11, 10). The reference of these words to Jesus indicates that He is the Son of David and is heading for Jerusalem to make in the capital the inauguration of the messianic kingdom.

The behaviour of the crowds and their acclamations reveal the truth that Jesus is the messianic king. St. Luke the Evangelist presents Jesus as the King who is entering His capital. The scene is modelled on the coronation of Solomon (1 Kings 1, 38-40), and refers to the description of proclaiming Jehu king (2 Kings 9, 13)¹⁹. The figure of the king has the messianic characteristics of justice (Isaiah 11, 3-5, 45, 21-25; Jr., 23, 5, 33, 15, Ps 72, 2-3) and humility (Isaiah 52, 13-53, 12). St. John gives the solemn entry of Christ into Jerusalem royal overtones. People in crowds welcoming Jesus held palm branches in their hands and cried out: “the king of Israel” (Jn 12, 13). Entering into Jerusalem, Jesus is the king of peace; with him came the Kingdom of God.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem expresses the fulfilment of the expectations of the people for the coming of the Messiah-King who brings joy and peace, because with His coming comes the final rule of Yahweh. Evangelist John, revealing the splendour of the event, reveals the royal aspect of Jesus’ Passion²⁰. Christ is the messianic king – Son of David, but His kingdom is not “of this world”. St. John explains the enthusiasm of the crowd at the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus (12, 17). Jesus comes to the Holy City as the

¹⁶ R. Bartnicki, *Przesłanie Ewangelii*, p. 247; E. Szymanek, *Wykład Pisma Świętego Nowego Testamentu*, p. 144.

¹⁷ R. Bartnicki, *Mesjański charakter perykopy Marka o wjeździe Jezusa do Jerozolimy (Mk 11, 1-11)*, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” 20 (1973), z. 1, pp. 11-12; J. Gnilka, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Orędzie i dzieje*, Kraków 1997, p. 330.

¹⁸ E. Szymanek, *Wykład Pisma Świętego Nowego Testamentu*, p. 144.

¹⁹ R. Bartnicki, *Przesłanie Ewangelii*, p. 249.

²⁰ A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia umiłowanego ucznia*, p. 343.

conqueror of death, and the solemn nature of the entry symbolises the universal nature of His work of salvation²¹.

The second event in which Jesus reveals his royal dignity is the hearing by Pilate. All the evangelical relationships agree that the motive of Pilate's verdict was the royal claims put forward by Jesus²². Already during the hearing Jesus unambiguously confirms before Pilate His right to the title of king: "It is you who say that I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice" (Jn 18, 37)²³. Jesus does not renounce the royal dignity, but conceives His royal mission not in a political, but a spiritual and eschatic sense (Jn 18, 33-39). The importance of royal dignity of Jesus must therefore be understood in the light of His messianic mission and its message about the kingdom of God, and hence the gathering of the New People of God. Pilate, the chief priests, elders and scribes wrongly saw in the royal claims of Jesus only political and worldly intentions²⁴.

In the narrative of John, Jesus carries the cross not as a convict, but as a king. His crucifixion is not a defeat, but a victory, reign, fulfilment of the announcement about the exaltation of the Son of Man (John 3, 14, 8, 28, 12, 32)²⁵. Thus, the cross definitively reveals the meaning and the importance of the Messiah's royal mission. It should be noted, however, that the reality of the kingdom revealed in Jesus is alien to Jewish expectations and imagination, and thus is not adopted²⁶. Although Jesus in His teaching and deeds links His royal title with the advent of the kingdom of God²⁷, yet the Master of Naza-

²¹ R. Bartnicki, *Przesłanie Ewangelii*, p. 251.

²² J. Gnilka, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, p. 364; I.S. Ledwoń, *Krzyż, I. Historyczność*, LTF, p. 705; idem, *Historyczność wydarzenia krzyża*, „Studia Paradyskie” 8 (1998), pp. 219-220.

²³ F. Gryglewicz, *Jezus przed Pilatem*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 125-127; idem, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, pp. 139-153.

²⁴ J. Homerski, *Pod krzyżem Jezusa*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 155-158; H. Langkammer, *Wprowadzenie i komentarz do ewangelicznych opisów męki Pańskiej*, Lublin 1975, p. 89; I. de la Potterie, *La passione di Gesu secondo il Vangelo di Giovanni*, Torino 1988, p. 78; J. Paściak, *Biblijny obraz Chrystusa Króla*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny” 25 (1972), pp. 168-180; D. Kapkin, *Karykatura króla*, w: *Tajemnica odkupienia* (ColCom t. 11), red. L. Balter i in., Poznań 1997, pp. 176-194.

²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo*, Kraków 1970, pp. 157-158; H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła – rodziny dzieci Bożych (J 19, 16b-30)*, pp. 39-40.

²⁶ T. Dola, *Teologia misteriów życia Jezusa*, pp. 210-212.

²⁷ L.J. Nowak, *Jezus Król Żydowski przed sądem Pilata (J 18, 28 – 19, 16a)*, w: *Prorok potężny czynem i słowem*, red. B. Szier-Kramarek, G. Kramarek, K. Mielcarek, Lublin 1997, pp. 218-219.

reth points to its supernatural character and implies that it is He who – as the Lord of the new people of God – realises it²⁸. The kingdom initiated by Jesus' is the universal reign of God²⁹.

The secret of the new kingdom is definitively revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In all the evangelical communications we find the information that on the cross was placed the inscription: "King of the Jews" (Mk 15, 26; par.)³⁰. These words, which were to explain the reason for the condemnation of Jesus, and at the same time ridicule Him, paradoxically reveal His messianic dignity. Thus the cross for Jesus is not a sign of humiliation, but His exaltation – enthronement. During the process, the Jews deny when Pilate presents the Condemned: "Behold your King!", thereby rejecting Jesus as king (Jn 19, 14-15)³¹. Paradoxically, the rejection of Jesus by the chosen people leads to the enthronement on the cross and the revelation of the royal dignity of the Messiah. Jesus is aware that His kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18, 35), even though it is also realised in this world. The Jews, rejecting Jesus and His royal dignity, recognise that their king is Caesar. The words "We have no king except Caesar" (Jn 19, 15), are as a consequence the denial of Jehovah Himself – the only King of Israel (Judges 8, 23, 1 Samuel 8, 7, 12, 12)³².

The new kingdom on the cross not accepted by the Jews is now universalised – it becomes a gift of God for all people³³. This is certified by Jesus' announcement: "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself" (Jn 12, 32). Also the inscription in three languages then used in Judea, placed on the cross on Pilate's command, confirms that Jesus of Nazareth is the king of all men³⁴. Crucifixion, which is the exaltation – the enthronement of Jesus means not only His kingship, but also leads to the birth of a new community gathered around God's Anointed³⁵. Lifted upon the cross, Jesus attracts people of all ages and nations, and His kingdom is con-

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Eschatologia – śmierć i życie wieczne*, Poznań 1984, p. 50.

²⁹ L. Balter, *Jezus budowniczy Kościoła*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 84 (1992), z. 1, pp. 53-54.

³⁰ J. Homerski, *Pod krzyżem Jezusa*, s. 155; V. Messori, *Umęczon pod Ponckim Pilatem?*, Kraków 1999, pp. 369-377.

³¹ F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, p. 146.

³² L. Stachowiak, *Ewangelia wg św. Jana*, Poznań-Warszawa 1975, p. 371; A. Jankowski, *Teologiczne aspekty pasji Janowej*, „Znak” 43(1991), nr 3, p. 37.

³³ H.U. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, p. 311.

³⁴ F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, p. 147.

³⁵ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, pp. 41-42.

tinually being accomplished in those who through faith in Him and baptism become the sons of God and belong to His Ecclesia³⁶.

It is worth adding that already in conversation with Nicodemus Jesus refers to the Old Testament figure of a raised snake and its meaning refers to the Son of Man (John 3: 14-15). The essence of the similarity is the exaltation and its effect – healing. Jesus foretells his death as an exaltation of the Son of Man on the cross. He emphasises, however, that this exaltation is worship of the Son in the glory of the Father³⁷. In the Old Testament a look at the bronze serpent rescued the Israelites from death. The source of salvation in the New Testament is the exalted Son of Man: He is the source of healing and new life³⁸. Yet, while in the Old Covenant it was enough to look at the serpent placed on the pole, in the New Covenant what is needed is faith in the exalted Son of Man on the Cross (cf. Jn. 3, 15). From the teachings of Jesus it is clear that the promise of eternal life has been given to those who believe in the only begotten Son of God (Jn 3, 15-16). The only Mediator of salvation offered by God is His Son: “This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John 5: 11-12). The exalted Son of Man is the source of salvation and the giver of eternal life to every man³⁹.

II. The ecclesiogenic character of the events at Golgotha

The events on Golgotha are ecclesiogenic in character⁴⁰. A deepened reflection on them reveals the Christological and ecclesiological sense of the cross, allowing a deeper understanding of its credibility. A noteworthy episode is associated with the tunic of Jesus. The scene of dividing the garments of the crucified belongs to the original tradition of the Passion and occurs in all the Gospels (Mk 15, 24; par.). The most extensive version is found in St. John, who first

³⁶ F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, pp. 147-149.

³⁷ *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz A. Paciorek*, Lublin 2000, p. 78.

³⁸ B. Poniży, *Opowiadanie o wężu – znaku ocalenia (Lb 21, 4-9) w świetle tradycji biblijnych*, RBL 41(1988), nr 1, pp. 20-25; H. Sławiński, *Przepowiadanie Chrystusowego Krzyża*, Warszawa 1997, p. 147; F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, p. 148.

³⁹ R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, t. 2, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1980, p. 499; H. Sławiński, *Przepowiadanie Chrystusowego Krzyża*, pp. 146-147.

⁴⁰ J. Mastej, *Staurologiczno-rezurekcyjna wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, pp. 253-256.

tells about Jesus' clothes divided into four parts, and then draws attention to the tunic, which "was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem" (Jn 19, 23). The tunic was not torn by the soldiers, who instead decided to draw lots to get it whole (cf. Jn. 19, 24). The credibility of this event is confirmed scripturally, because it is a fulfilment of the announcement in the Psalm (22, 19). The fact emphasised by the Evangelist that the tunic is a whole and even the soldiers did not want to divide it into parts, makes ecclesiological sense. The seamless and undivided tunic of Jesus in John's narrative is a symbol of the unity of the new community of believers, the Church⁴¹. The context for this interpretation is the teaching of Jesus about one flock and one shepherd (Jn 10, 16), and bringing the children of God "into one" (Jn 11, 52). The importance of the unity is confirmed by the scene of the miraculous catch, during which the net, despite the multitude of fish, was "not broken" (Jn 21, 11). A new light on the significance of the issue of unity is cast by Jesus' prayer for unity among the disciples (Jn 17, 11.21-23). The staurological context of the tunic episode shows that the disciples' communion is rooted in the cross – it is the Crucified who collects them "into one" and makes them a community on the model of the Trinitarian unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit⁴². By dying on the cross, Jesus assures the unity of the Church, which H. Witczyk justifies thus: "that is why there is only one vine and branches, one flock and one shepherd, one net and one fisherman commanding to cast it, one tunic woven «from the top» and one Exalted, who attracts all to himself"⁴³.

Contemporary exegesis sees a prophetic-ecclesial sense in casting lots for Jesus' tunic⁴⁴. A tunic is a garment worn next to the body, and therefore the closest to it. According to the Scripture it is to be preserved in its entirety. H. Witczyk poses the question: "What could be so closely united with Jesus, what belongs to Him and should be preserved in its entirety?" And he answers: "On reading Chapter 17, it is clear that the most precious to Jesus, His

⁴¹ F. Gryglewicz, *Chrystus Król w „Ewangelii św. Jana”*, p. 151; A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia umiłowanego ucznia*, p. 382; A. Jankowski, *Teologiczne aspekty pasji Janowej*, „Znak” 43 (1991), nr 3, p. 38; J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, w: S. Czerwik, J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Święte Triduum Paschalne. Komentarze biblijno-liturgiczne i medytacje*, Kielce 2001, p. 131.

⁴² H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, pp. 44-45; R.A. Culpepper, *The Theology of the Johannine Passion Narrative (John 19, 16b-30)*, „Neotestamentica” 31 (1997), p. 28.

⁴³ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 46.

⁴⁴ F.J. Moloney, *Glory not dishonor: reading John 13-21*, Minneapolis 1998, pp. 143-144; H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 46.

«intimate» property, are the disciples who received the words heard from the Father (cf. 17, 8). When Jesus was crucified, his tunic fell into the hands of the soldiers. The disciples left by Jesus are in the hands of those who crucified Him⁴⁵. In the hour of the Cross the faith of the disciples was put to the greatest test. Through the prayer of Jesus His disciples, despite going through a crisis of faith, remained steadfast in unity.

An important ecclesiological element is the presence at the Cross of Jesus' Mother, the women and the beloved disciple. For ecclesiology particularly important here is the message of John. H. Witczyk emphasises that, in the light of contemporary exegesis, the scene should be read on the historical plane (expressive sense) and the symbolic one (spiritual sense)⁴⁶. On the historical level we see a new relationship between the Mother of Jesus and His beloved disciple, which is established by the will of Jesus, "from that hour the disciple took her into his home" (Jn 19, 27). On the spiritual plane both the character of Jesus' Mother and the disciple have a much broader meaning than an individual one⁴⁷. Jesus' Mother represents the historical Israel, from which the Messiah comes. She appears in St. John's Gospel only twice: in the first and the last moment of the public life of Jesus. However, she becomes a privileged witness of these events. Already at the wedding in Cana she represented an Israel open to the messianic revelation being realised in Jesus. Under the cross she is a figure of the Jews who recognised in Jesus the Messiah of God. It is therefore legitimate to conclude: in the historical-soteriological perspective the cross completes the work begun at Cana⁴⁸. Salvation preached at the wedding, where Jesus revealed his glory, was completed by the exaltation on the cross, when the Father surrounded Him with glory⁴⁹. Both events invite one to faith, and Mary acts as a historical figure – the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, and at the same time – as a woman who at the moment of the Annunciation believed the words of the Messenger of God – she is a figure of the faithful remnant of Israel, who expects the fulfilment of Yahweh's promises

⁴⁵ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, s. 47.

⁴⁷ We are not concerned here with the numerous attempts to explain the spiritual sense. A number of interpretations of the spiritual sense of the presence at the cross of Jesus' Mother and His beloved disciple is discussed by the Rev. H. Witczyk (*Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła* [*Jesus' cross as the origin of the Church*], pp. 47-59).

⁴⁸ H. Lagkammer, *Maryja pod krzyżem*, w: *U boku Syna. Studia z mariologii biblijnej*, red. J. Szłaga, Lublin 1984, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁹ M. Rusecki, *Cud w chrześcijaństwie*, Lublin 1996, pp. 418-419.

of salvation of. Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, by the will of the dying Jesus became the mother of all his disciples; the Mother of the believers in Him, the Mother of the new ecclesial community⁵⁰.

The beloved disciple is representative of those who were elected and appointed by Jesus, meaning “those whom Jesus personally introduced into the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection, to be His credible witnesses”⁵¹. The woman and the beloved disciple therefore represent the new community established by Jesus – the Church. Mary, taking care of the disciple, thus becomes the Mother of the Church – the Mother of all believers; and the disciple whom Jesus loved, becomes the son of the Virgin and the type of believers in Christ who are faithful to Him at the hour of the cross⁵². The new relationship of Mary and the beloved disciple is a figure born under the cross of the unity of the ecclesial community⁵³. On the Cross, Jesus gathers a new community – the Church, which admittedly grows out of the faith of Israel and is linked with it, but its essence is a new faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord.

Gathered under the cross is therefore an ecclesial community. St. John conveys that “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala” (Jn 19, 25). Their presence at the Crucified is evidence of their love for Him, expresses their willingness

⁵⁰ Jan Paweł II, Encyklika *Redemptoris Mater*, Watykan 1987, p 24; F. Gryglewicz, *Testament Jezusa (J 19, 25-27)*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 184-187; H. Langkammer, *Maryja w Nowym Testamencie*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 1991, pp. 30-32; M. Thurian, *Maryja Matka Pana Figura Kościoła*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 180-198; T. Siudy, *Macierzyński udział Maryi w budowaniu Kościoła Nowego Przymierza*, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” 29 (1982), z. 2, pp. 215-232.

⁵¹ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 57.

⁵² A. Tronina, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 167-168; H. Langkammer, *Jezusowe słowa z krzyża*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 175-177; F. Gryglewicz, *Testament Jezusa*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 187-189; idem, „Niewiasta” i „uczeń, którego miłował Jezus”, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” 14 (1967), z. 1, pp. 47-48; M. Czajkowski, *Maryja (J 2, 1-11; 19, 25-27)*, w: *Egzegeza Ewangelii św. Jana. Kluczowe teksty i tematy teologiczne*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1992, p. 39; idem, *Uczniowie podczas męki Chrystusa*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, p. 104; A. Jankowski, *Na styku mariologii i eklezjologii*, „Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne” 3 (1975), p. 225-227; T. Siudy, *Maryja w tajemnicy Chrystusa*, w: *Matka Odkupiciela. Komentarz do encykliki „Redemptoris Mater”*, red. S. Grzybek, Kraków 1988, p. 50-51; J. Mastej, *Udział Maryi w permanentnej eklezjogenezie w świetle nauczania Jana Pawła II w czasie pielgrzymek do Ojczyzny*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 146 (2006), z. 1, pp. 57-63.

⁵³ J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, p. 131.

to join in his saving work, but it is also a sign of hope for the resurrection of Jesus⁵⁴. At this point it should be stressed that the establishment of the new people of God was a step in the mission of Jesus. The new people collected at the time of Jesus' earthly life now gather around the Son of Man raised up on the cross, giving rise to the community of the Church⁵⁵. Therefore, this community always has a staurological character – the cross is the source of saving grace and a hallmark of the followers of Christ.

III. The Pentekostal aspect of Jezus' death

Discussing the process of staurological ecclesiogenesis one cannot overlook the very moment of the death of Jesus and his last words: "I want" and "It is finished"⁵⁶. These words contain an important pneumatological message that allows better to understand the staurological origins of the Church⁵⁷. H. Witczyk, referring to the biblical research of C. Bampfylde, draws attention to the correct translation of John 19, 28: "Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said: I am thirsty". According to the intention of the Evangelist the knowledge of Jesus and the fulfilment of the Scriptures should be connected with the events that have already occurred. The Master of Nazareth regards His mission, which is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, as finished. His last messianic act is the creation of a new community⁵⁸. That is why Jesus' phrase "I thirst" must refer to the final event of his life: "bowing his head he gave up his spirit" (Jn 19, 30). J. Kudasiewicz shows that this Johannine expression contains the truth that, while dying on the cross, Jesus gave to the Church the Holy Spirit⁵⁹. The

⁵⁴ F. Gryglewicz, *Testament Jezusa (J 19, 25-27)*, p. 186.

⁵⁵ H. U. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, s. 313; J. Homerski, *Pod krzyżem Jezusa*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, p. 162; J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, p. 133.

⁵⁶ J. Mastej, *Staurologiczno-rezurekcyjna wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, p. 256-259.

⁵⁷ H. Langkammer, *Jezusowe słowa z krzyża*, w: *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, red. F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1986, pp. 179-181; idem, *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Nowy Testament o męce i śmierci Jezusa*, Wrocław 1994, pp. 112-114.

⁵⁸ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 60; J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁹ J. Kudasiewicz, *Duch Święty – darem Paschy Jezusa*, w: S. Czerwik, J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Święte Triduum Paschalne. Komentarze biblijno-liturgiczne i medytacje*, Kielce 2001, p. 349.

Spirit of God is a gift of the dying Messiah to the community gathered at the cross, which – as already noted – is represented by the Mother of Jesus, the women and the beloved disciple⁶⁰.

In the context of Jesus' teaching, we can conclude that the word "I thirst" is not about the physical expression of desire water. In a conversation with the Samaritan woman, and on the last day of the octave of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus reveals himself as the source of water which gives eternal life (cf. Jn. 4, 10-14; 7, 37-38). It was on the cross that from the Saviour's pierced side flowed the life-giving springs of grace: blood and water. The sense of Jesus' "I thirst" also means the desire to communicate the Holy Spirit. Literally "to give up the spirit" means to die. Most modern exegetes regard, however, that you need to emphasise the spiritual meaning of this expression⁶¹. Jesus' "I thirst", uttered on the cross, should be confronted with the contents of the conversation with the Samaritan woman, and the solemn announcement of streams of living water, uttered in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. In the conversation with the Samaritan woman Jesus declares, "Jesus replied: Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life" (Jn 4, 13-14). Thirst and drinking of water in the physical sense is the image of thirst and drinking in a spiritual sense⁶². In turn, in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus invites and ensures: "If anyone is thirsty, and believes in me – let him come to Me and drink! As mentioned before Scripture: «Streams of living water will flow from within»" (Jn 7, 37-38). The desire of which Jesus is speaking has spiritual sense, which St. John explains: "And he said about the Spirit, which they receive who believed in him; The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7, 39). In the light of these texts it is clear that the death of the Incarnate Son of God is the "hour" of praise and the fulfilment of the promise of outpouring God's Spirit. In saying "I thirst" Jesus expresses His intention of giving to His Church the gift of the Spirit that will quench all human desires. Paradoxically, the one who asks is

⁶⁰ J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, pp. 131-132.

⁶¹ *Ewangelia według św. Jana. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz A. Paciorek*, Lublin 2000, p. 207; J. Kudasiewicz, *Testament Jezusa z krzyża (J 19, 25-27)*, pp. 131-132; idem, *Duch Święty – darem Paschy Jezusa*, pp. 349-350; H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, pp. 65-66.

⁶² J. Szłaga, *Koncepcja królestwa Bożego w ewangelii świętego Jana*, w: *Królestwo Boże w Piśmie Świętym*, red. S. Łach, M. Filipiak, Lublin 1976, p. 191.

the one who gives⁶³. The desire of Jesus is carried out by the fulfilment of the promise of sending the disciples the Holy Spirit. Jesus, who “thirsts” on the cross becomes the eternal Source of grace, because He says of Himself: “no one who believes in me will ever thirst” (Jn 6, 35)⁶⁴.

The metaphor captures the essence of the sending of the Spirit. The Paraclete is the animating force, like water refreshing a thirsty man. To those who accept Him He gives eternal life. The metaphor of thirst and the act of sending the Holy Spirit to the Church become understandable at the moment a spear pierces Jesus’ side, from which flow blood and water, giving rise to the sacraments of the Church. On the cross, Jesus “gives birth” to the Church, giving it His life. This is eternal life, whose Revivator is the Holy Spirit. In Johannine theology outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church happens at the moment of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. This is because the death of Jesus has fulfilled His “hour”⁶⁵. The exaltation of Jesus on the Cross is His worship, which was repeatedly announced by him. In the Fourth Gospel of the Crucified is the victorious King who rose from the cross, at the time of His death, because it was then that His exaltation was made. It should be added that such an approach emphasises a historical-soteriological, rather than strictly chronological sense of the staurological events⁶⁶.

The events and words cited above, crucial to ecclesio genesis, have a high degree of historical credibility (they are confirmed by all the evangelical texts) as well as historical-soteriological one. It is expressed in Jesus’ fulfilment of His messianic mission (announced in the Old Testament), and the establishment of the Church, which is the heir and depositary of salvation gained on the cross. The death of Jesus leads to the birth of a new community of faith in the Son of God⁶⁷. Thus, the cross is the birthplace of new life: for the individual – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and for the Community – through the birth of the Church, which henceforth is an effective sign and instrument of salvation for the world.

⁶³ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, p. 64.

⁶⁴ H. U. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, pp. 312-313.

⁶⁵ A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia umiłowanego ucznia*, p. 383; A. Czaja, *Credo in Spiritum Vivificantem. Pneumatologiczna interpretacja Kościoła jako komunii w posoborowej teologii niemieckiej*, Lublin 2003, p. 122.

⁶⁶ M. Rusecki, *Krzyż w wydarzeniach Paschalnych. Aspekt teologicznofundamentalny*, w: *Diligis Me? Pasce. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana biskupowi sandomierskiemu Wacławowi Józefowi Świerżawskiemu na pięćdziesięciolecie święceń kapłańskich 1949-1999*, red. S. Czerwik, M. Mierzwa, R. Majkowska, t. 2, Sandomierz 2000, p. 523.

⁶⁷ H. Witczyk, *Krzyż Jezusa początkiem Kościoła*, pp. 68-69.

In terms of credibility it should be added that the Church brought to life is the fruit of a particular love of Jesus Christ, being born at the “hour” when God-man gives his life for His friends (cf. Jn. 15, 13)⁶⁸. Humanity, redeemed by Jesus’, becomes the new people of God⁶⁹. It should be added that, to demonstrate the credibility of the Church, what is important is both the motive of giving His life – “out of love”, and the universal nature of Christ’s love – “for all”.

* * * *

Presenting the credibility of the Church in its genesis one must keep in mind the complex structure of the Ecclesia: the natural and the supernatural, historical and trans-historical, visible and invisible. An appropriate reflection of the credibility of the Ecclesia therefore requires perception of the visible elements of its origins as well as the knowledge and understanding of the historical-soteriological content and meaning given to them by God.

A holistic presentation of the credibility of the Church demands taking into account not only its origins but also its meaning in the history (this aspect may be the subject of further research). It is not enough that the Church was made credible at inception; it remains a challenge at all times. The Ecclesia is in fact a dynamic reality, permanently emerging and re-emerging. On the other hand, it is impossible to talk about the credibility of the Church today without reaching to its origins. The credibility of the Ecclesia does not come from extraecclesial reality, but is closely related to its genesis, existence and activity in the world. Only such a comprehensive presentation of its credibility allows us to discover the beauty and the truth of Ecclesia.

At the end it is worth remembering that the heart of the Church is the mystery of Christ, who died, rose and lives. By the power of the Holy Spirit the mystery of the cross is still alive, effective and throughout history is shared by successive generations of Christians. The Church, in celebrating and making present the event of the cross and resurrection, introduces believers into the saving power of this mystery. At the same time it renews its staurological identity and is permanently born, drawing on the mystery of the cross.

⁶⁸ I. de la Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus. The Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus according to John: Text and Spirit*, Middlegreen 1989, pp. 138-139.

⁶⁹ M. Rusecki, *Traktat o Objawieniu*, p. 436.