

The Elements of Thomas Aquinas' Theology of the Church in his *Commentary on the Letter to Ephesians*

Key words: Thomas Aquinas, Epistle to Ephesians, biblical Thomism, theology of the Church, Mystical Body, unity, house, city-state, grace.

The most influential work of St. Thomas Aquinas "*Summa theologiae*" does not contain a systematical and explicit lecture on ecclesiology¹. The Thomistic scholars dealing with this issue wonder why, if *opus magnum* extracts all of the most important branches of theology. The possible answers are numerous. One can assume that it is the result of social and political situation within which St. Thomas lived and worked. The mediaeval *Christianitas* was a space in which a secular reality was closely connected with the ecclesial one. Moreover, the religious and political structure of society was a reflection of the one of the Church. The situation was fixed and clear. The

first solely ecclesiological works were probably Giacomo da Viterbo's *De Regimine Christiano* and Juan de Torquemada's *Summa de Ecclesia*. As a matter of fact, it was Luther's revolution that brought about the urgent need of deeper and argumentative ecclesiological reflection. On the other hand, one should claim that the ecclesiological issues did not involve Thomas Aquinas, but we cannot agree on this. Whereas, we are in accordance with opinions claiming that Aquinas concealed his theology of the Church in different fragments of his major works. In the *Summa theologiae*, a theology of the Church is revealed in reflections on Christology and sacramen-

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tology – in part three, as well as in the part dealing with social virtues. Another works of importance are biblical commentaries, especially commentaries on the Pauline Epistles. In the prologue to the commentary on the Letter to the Romans, being an introduction to the whole *Corpus Paulinum*, one can read: “For he wrote fourteen letters, nine of which instructed the church of the Gentiles; four, the prelates and princes of the Church, i.e., kings; and one to the people of Israel, namely, the letter to the Hebrews. For this entire teaching is about Christ’s grace...”. And in the next paragraph: “Christ’s grace is considered in regard to the unity it produces in the Church. Hence, the Apostle deals first with the establishment of ecclesial unity in the letter to the Ephesians; secondly, with its consolidation and progress in the letter to the Philippians; thirdly, of its defense against certain errors in the letter to the Colossians...”. We can see that in Aquinas’ ecclesiological considerations a significant place belongs to the three Letters traditionally called – the Prison Epistles and among them – the Letter to the Ephesians. The commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians is an introduction to further commentaries on the Prison Letters. They are merely their supplement and amplification. St. Paul the Apostle, in the Letter to the Ephesians, included his fundamental teaching about the Church. Thomas Aquinas

notices this fact and uses it in his biblical consideration. One can find out that main reflection on the Church’s theology in the *Super Ephesios* is focused on specific notions. First of all, it is the notion of ecclesial unity. The next ones are the Body of Christ, city-state and house/building. What is distinctive in these terms? Ecclesial unity is not the end, but the means to the end. The Body of Christ describes the Church in its inner, ontic and sacramental structure. Terms *civitas*, *domus* and *aedificium* describe the Church in its exterior, hierarchical and political structure⁴.

The aim of this paper is to present an outline of Thomas’ theology of the Church, on the basis of the analysis of ecclesiological terms from the commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians. One should be aware of that theology of the Church, which *Doctor communis* draws from Pauline exhortations, is highly important for understanding of all Aquinas’ thoughts. As prof. Jan Perszon⁵ said, in Thomas’ commentary a reader can see this intuition in thinking about the Church as *communio*, what was extended just by the Second Vatican Council and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. One also should not forget that ecclesiology is not a separate entity, but it is closely connected to a lecture of Christian morality, which is based on grace of the Holy Spirit.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Romanos lectura*, pr., n. 11.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ T. Prügl, *Bibelkommentare*, in: *Thomas Handbuch*, ed. V. Leppin, Tübingen 2016, p. 208.

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The principle of Christian Church

St. Thomas in his commentary continuously returns to the term “unity” - *unitas*, “in unity” - *in uno, in unum, in unitate*, “for unity” - *unitatis* etc. He does not give comprehensive description of ecclesial unity but provides only crucial information, which approach this notion. Consequently, unity is a principle of community's existence. Its direct source is Christ's grace, which is manifested in attitudes and actions of individual persons. These attitudes are characterized by humility and charity. In the commentary on the Ephesians humility is a special virtue. Its goal is moderation and suppression of human appetite towards the difficult good, so that it does not aim at this good without proper measure. The measure is set by the right judgment of reason, which recognizes shortcomings of its own nature⁶. Humility is in a way commendable, which eliminates an obstacle in love of God and one's neighbor⁷. Love, which is the foundation of the unity in community, is not merely an emotion, but it is supernatural capability and

the direct action of the Holy Spirit in a human. Aquinas compares charity to cement, which binds together entities with each other and everybody with Christ. In a way, this charity breaks the barrier of the “Old Law”⁸, which was based on the fear of punishment. It gives the “New Law”, called also the Law of Love, Evangelical Law, the Law of the Holy Spirit. The principle of which is not moral duty, but only Christ's grace itself. The ritual and denominative rules disassociated people from themselves and established two contrary groups – devoted Jews and condemned others. However, the great testimony of Christ's love, as a real action of God in every human existence, opened the way to reconcile all people in one *civitate Dei*⁹. The fruits of this unity are friendship, mutual devotion and consolidation of dignity of adoptive sons of God. The adoptive sons, who accept one's own state, are obliged to being fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God.

⁶ *S.Th.*, IIa-IIae, q. 161.

⁷ *Ibidem*, a. 1, ad 1-2; J.J. Aguas, *The Notion of Human Person and Human Dignity in Aquinas and Wojtyła*, “Kritike” 3(2009) 1, pp. 55-56; Ch. Peterson, M. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues. A Handbook and Classification*, Oxford 2004, pp. 463-464.

⁸ “Old law” considered as ritual law, the precepts for concrete religious denomination.

⁹ A.T. Kubanowski, *The Christian Moral Life as “Conformitas Christi” in the Light of St. Thomas Aquinas' Commentaries on the Prison Epistles of St. Paul Apostle. At the Sources of Contemporary Moral Christianity*, Ph.D.diss., Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń 2018, p. 264: “The «new human being in Christ» follows the new law which is, in fact, the grace of Holy Spirit. Therefore, the grace is not a reward for believing but a free and anticipatory disposition that cleanses the mind and the will of a human being in order to act freely towards the Supreme Good. The secondary elements of the new law are the evangelical parenthesis, the apostolic exhortations, the sacraments of the Church and the pastoral work of the Magisterium. All of them have an instrumental character because of the fact that Holy Spirit influences a Christian and their moral conduct by inspiring a special instinct (*instinctus Spiritus Sancti*) in them to act in dynamics and fruitfulness which transcends all human possibilities”.

Aquinas as a scholastic master includes some distinctions in his commentary. The unity is divided into the good one and the bad one. The bad unity, namely *unitas carnis*, it is the unity of human nature, which was corrupted by sin and now leads a person to further evil deeds. The good unity, namely *unitas spiritus*, is the unity of one Spirit – the Spirit of Christ, which leads person to good acts. St. Thomas also talks about the unity in analogy to human being, which he draws from Aristotle’s hylomorphism. There are two kinds of unity in a human: the first one is an orderly union between organs of the body; the second one, the union – *compositum*, between the body and the soul. This analogy relates also to the Church. In the Church, two types of bounds should occur:

- Organic, the bound of peace, which is one of the effects of love. In this unity desires and mutual relations of the members are ordered, as organs in one body.
- Spiritual, the bound of faith commonly confessed and done in charity, which

leads to reconciliation between members of the community.

The reason to keep these two types of bound is common vocation to one everlasting reward, which a Christian can only attain if they have one Spirit and His gift – the gift of grace¹⁰.

The grace is, therefore, *in quantum* participation of human being in a divine nature, namely in the inner life of God¹¹. Through this habitual comparison of human nature to God’s life a believer discovers an image of the Trinity in oneself, and this sacred image is revealed also through the community of the Church. Therefore, the image of the Church’s unity is a reflection of the image of the Trinity’s and likewise that ecclesial unity belongs to the essence of being a Christian¹².

Consequently, the unity is an element which binds all images of the Church under such terms as: body, city-state, house and building - the terms which will be reflected upon in the following paragraphs.

The Church as the Body of Christ

Presentation of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ is the one of fun-

damental images used by Thomas Aquinas in his works. This image shows

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Ephesios lectura (In Eph.)*, c. 4, l. 1, n. 192-196; S.Th. Pinckaers, *La vie spirituelle des chrétiens selon saint Paul et saint Thomas d’Aquin*, AMATECA Collection 17(1997) 2, p. 58.

¹¹ *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 110, a. 1 co.; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, c. 54, n. 3928; *In Eph.*, c. 2, l. 5, n. 121; l. 6, n. 123; J.L. Lorda, *La Gracia De Dios*, Madrid 2005, pp. 199-201, J-P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2, Spiritual Master*, trans. R. Royal, Washington D.C. 2003, pp. 159-160; D. Turner, *Thomas Aquinas, A Portrait*, New Haven – London 2014, pp. 169-172.

¹² *In Eph.*, c. 4, l. 2, n. 197-203; Ch.T. Baglow, *The Principle(s) of Ecclesial Nature. The Church in the Ephesians Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, in: *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas, Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives*, eds. Piotr Roszak, Jürgen Vijgen, Turnhout 2015, pp. 532-536.

that Thomas' theology of the Church is deeply settled in Christological consideration and St. Paul's teachings. It is exposed explicitly also in the commentary on the Ephesians.

The Church as the body is a result of spilling the grace which comes from the Head of the body, namely the Christ. Aquinas depicts the wording – *caput omnium hominum*, according to which Christ is the Head for all humans, not only for a Christian, but people are subject to Him on different levels. On the first level, Christ is the Head of those who actually are related to Him by glory; on the second one of those who are actually related to Him by love; and on the third level of those who are actually related to Him by faith. On the fourth level, He is the Head of those, who shall not actually, but in possibility be related to Him pursuant to their destiny. On the last level, He is the Head of those, who potentially are related to Him, but will never actually unite. Therefore, one can state that the union with Christ in glory is a goal of all the levels. Instead, these levels feature that relation to Christ can be actual (*actualiter*) or possible (*potentialiter*). Therefore, people, who actually and continuingly are related to Christ by the supernatural virtues of faith and love, are, in a way, protected against falling into mortal sins. Other persons, who are potentially related to Him from the beginning and by non-shaped faith, are vulnerable in the sense that they do not attain the state of grace and actual relation to Christ. In evanescent

life this is not permanent, because they are gifted in natural and supernatural means to change this situation, from potential to actual unity with Christ. For example, natural means are intellectual powers and moral virtues while supernatural means are, especially, antecedent grace. The special means are also present in the Christ's Church, because spiritual gifts are streamed according to "measure of Christ's gift" from the Head to the members of the Mystical Body.

In part three of the *Summa* we can find that: "...grace was received by the soul of Christ in the highest way; and therefore, from this pre-eminence of grace which He received, it is from Him that this grace is bestowed on others--- and this belongs to the nature of head..."¹³. Similarly, from a fragment of *De veritate*: "In these three different ways Christ in His human nature is called the head of the Church. He is of specifically the same nature as other men; and so the name head belongs to Him by reason of His dignity, on the grounds that grace is found more abundantly in Him. In the Church we also find a unity of order, since the members of the Church are of service to each other and are ordained to God; and in this respect Christ is called the head of the Church as its ruler. We also find in the Church a certain continuity by reason of the Holy Spirit, who, being one and numerically the same, fills and unites the whole Church. Christ in His human nature is accordingly called the head by reason of His influence"¹⁴. Therefore, the Holy

¹³ *S.Th.*, III, q. 8, a. 5 co.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 5 co.

Spirit is the element that keeps the consistency between the Head and the Body comprising of the members. An attribute of the Holy Spirit is that He is always one and the same in Head and in members. We can quote the commentary on the Third Book of Sentences: "In natural body powers split in all members are different numerically in terms of essence, but they converge together in numerically one root and besides they have numerically one, ultimate form. Similarly, all members of mystical body have Holy Spirit as an ultimate complement (*pro ultimo complemento*), cause He is numerically one in all. A charity, which is split in them by Spirit, as to essence is different in different persons, however it has numerically one root. The root of proper understanding action is same subject, from which it takes its own specific. Therefore, depending on this, insofar as that, in what all believe and what they love, faith and charity of all are united in numerically one root, not merely in first root, which is Holy Spirit, but also in the nearest root, which is proper subject"¹⁵. Thus, the Holy Spirit is a soul of the Mystical Body of the Church. He is the principle of its unity as well as

the source of its holiness and supernatural action. The Mystical Body, similarly to a human body, is composed of many parts such as legs, hands, mouth, etc. They are diverse just like the acts of the soul. The body was created on account of the soul, not vice-versa. Therefore, the body in natural way assumes a fullness of the soul and that members are united with the body. Without this union and diversity, a soul cannot act. It is so in a similar way with Christ and the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, insofar as it has conforming nature with Him, which surrenders to His authority and influence. The body was created on account of the soul in the same way that the Church was founded on account of Christ. Moreover, it stands for His fullness because all of the spiritual goods, gifts, virtues and charisms, which are potentially in Christ, are filled up, in a way, in individual members of His Body. Hence, the perfection of concrete good in Christ comes from Him to a concrete member of the Church, as Aquinas said *In Eph.*, c. 1, l. 7, n. 57, that God's action in Christ is the form and exemplar of God's action in us¹⁶.

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Sent. III*, d. 13, q. 2, a. 2 qc 2, ad 2: "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod sicut in corpore naturali vires diffusae per omnia membra, differunt numero secundum essentiam, sed conveniunt in radice una secundum numerum, et praeter hoc habent formam unam ultimam numero; ita etiam omnia membra corporis mystici habent pro ultimo complemento spiritum sanctum, qui est unus numero in omnibus: et ipsa caritas diffusa in eis per spiritum sanctum, quamvis differat in diversis secundum essentiam, convenit tamen in una radice secundum numerum. Radix autem operationis proprie est ipsum objectum, ex quo speciem trahit: et ideo, in quantum est idem numero amatum et creditum ab omnibus, secundum hoc unitur omnium fides et caritas in una radice secundum numerum, non solum prima, quae est spiritus sanctus, sed etiam proxima, quae est proprium objectum".

¹⁶ *In Eph.*, c. 1, l. 8, n. 69-71; *S.Th.*, III, q. 8, a. 1 co.; a. 2 co.; a. 6 co.; Thomas Aquinas, *Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura*, c. 12, l. 3, nn. 731-733. Ch.T. Baglow, *The Principle(s) of Ecclesial Nature*, op. cit., pp. 547-549; J. Perszon, *Kościół i jego natura w komentarzu św. Tomasza z Akwinu*

Endowment of grace is a result of unique incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which the aim was salvation of human race, namely liberating them from the captivity of the sin and the Devil. Although on account of Christ's human nature, these gifts belong to all people in Him, as the first one, and then, in the members of His Mystical Body, these *dona gratiae et gloriae* get a proper power and dynamic¹⁷.

Due to this union of Christ, as the Head and ecclesial body, individual members are united through faith and love in mutual action and mutual purpose. Unifying power of Christ – the Head, is not merely related to common perspective, but it affects and brings up current action of individual Christians along with their personal possibilities and abilities. Due to divine impulses, which are given according to received grace (*secundum mensuram gratiae*), every member of ecclesial community grows spiritually and through their individual progress the whole Body of Church grows and strengthens in love and for love¹⁸.

The Mystical Body of Christ in its sacramental character is the extension of

Christ's physical presence on the earth¹⁹, both in the Eucharist and also in every member, who conforms to Him and becomes like Christ, because they have Christ's faith, the same Spirit and carry out the acts of virtues. One can compare *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 124, a. 5, ad 1 and M-D. Chenu: "The church is at the same time body (a corporation in the sociological sense of the word) and a mystery of Christ living on mystically and sacramentally"²⁰.

Co-creation of one ecclesial Body could not be accomplished if individual members would not build their own relations on truth and truthfulness. Therefore except the mystical and sacramental dimensions, the Church also expresses human nature which has a social character. Thus, the next two images given by Aquinas are related to the Church as a domestic community, which is social and political. One should remember that the notions of the body, house and city-state are different from each other, but they describe the same reality. They do not exclude but rather complement each other.

do Listu do Efezjan, in: Tomasz z Akwinu, *Wykład Listu do Efezjan, Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Ephesios lectura*, eds. Enrique Alarcón, Piotr Roszak, Toruń 2017, pp. 48-50.

¹⁷ *In Eph.*, c. 3, l. 1, nn. 135-137.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, c. 4, l. 5, nn. 228-229. T.F. O'Meara, *Theology of Church*, in: *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. R. van Nieuwenhove, J. Wawrykow, Notre Dame 2010, p. 305.

¹⁹ J.D. Rempel, *Sacraments in the Radical Reformation*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford 2015, p. 299.

²⁰ M-D. Chenu, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la théologie*, Seuil 2005, p. 100.

The Church as the house and city-state

The essence of being a Christian is strictly connected to its relational character, which is manifested in community life. This is why, in his commentary, St. Thomas reflects upon a fragment of chapter 2 of the Ephesians from ecclesiological perspective. Therefore, one can describe the ecclesial community as the house or city-state. The difference between the house and city-state is that while relations in the house are based on private acts, the relations in the city-state are derived from public acts. The house is ruled by a father – *paterfamilias*, while the city-state is governed by a king – *rex*. In a way, the ecclesial community is both the house and city-state. If we consider it from the perspective of a governor, it is the house, because it is ran by God the Father. From the perspective of a believer, it is the city-state because relations between them are formed by public acts, namely *actibus praecipuis*, among which acts of faith, hope and love are present. It is worth noting that Paul the Apostle uses terms like *hospites et advenae*, which means, “strangers and foreigners” for naming people, who are alien in regard to the house and city-state, because they exist outside the Christian community, do not have relation to God the Father and do not have one Spirit. However, the non-Christians through participation in fruits of the Sacrifice, who earlier were foreigners, become “fellow citizens of the saints and members of God’s household”. In this sense, being a member of God’s household also means co-creating

the house itself. The house have two foundations: the primary one – Christ himself as a cornerstone (*lapis*); the secondary one – the teachings of the apostles and the prophets. This house as a building can be understood in two ways. In allegorical sense it pertains to the Church, which is built by people converting to the faith in Christ. In moral sense it pertains to human soul, which wants to achieve holiness by the acts of Christian virtues. That is why a Christian should become a sacred temple (*templum sanctum*) to grow in grace (*in gratia crescit*) and accomplish the deeds of virtues until the temple will be inhabited by God. The more a Christian proceeds in charity, the more God is present in them (*Deus habitat*). Living in charity is nothing else like receiving and acting accordingly to grace, which is continually given to believers by the Holy Spirit. Basically, the term of the “house” is similar to the term of the “building”. Thomas points out that this type of rhetorical figure in the Bible is called metonymy. “It is used where the container is substituted for what it contains, as a house sometimes refers to those who are in the house”. The term “building” is also important to describing relations between gentiles and Jews, who are invited to become walls of the one God’s house, but first the wall of the Old Law dividing them had to be destroyed. Christ broke this wall and united in Himself these two spheres in one building of the Church²¹.

²¹ In *Eph.*, c. 2, l. 6, n. 124-132. T.F. O’Meara, *Theology of Church*, op. cit., pp. 307-308; M.A. Tapie,

The commentary on chapter 4, verses from 5 to 6, extends the understanding of the Church as the city. The city-state is a concept comprised of many parts, but it has a proper unity. For preserving this unity in the city-state, and analogically also in the Church, there are four necessary, common and unifying factors. The first one is the governor, “one Lord” – Jesus Christ. The second factor is one law, “one faith”, namely the Law of Faith, in which there is one, unifying and common subject of faith as well as one and common form of faith understood as theological virtue. The third factor is the existence of mutual symbols, which means the Holy Sacraments, baptism being the first of them. Baptism is called *in una omnium sacramentorum*. Therefore, it is “one” because in the inner way baptism is always given by the one and same Christ, regardless of exterior steward who is only a proxy in this sacrament. It is always given in the Name of the one God in the Holy Trinity. Moreover, bap-

tism is given only once and it marks indelible sign of the sacrament, which cannot be blanked out or repeated. The last factor is the one and common aim, namely God to whom leads only one intercessor – Jesus Christ. The image of a Christian community is a reflection of the unity of the Trinity. The unity in the Trinity is, in turn, an example of ontic and moral unity, which should be the principle of Christian existence²².

One should notice, that Thomas' concept of the Church as city-state is very closer to vision of *civitate Dei* of Augustine of Hippo. We have intuitions to connect these two views. More about this relation between thoughts of two great Doctors we can find in paper of Adam Machowski, “Capabilities and Restrictions of Analogy between Church's Community and Political Community in the St. Thomas Aquinas' Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians”²³.

Aquinas on Israel and the Church, The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas, Cambridge 2014, pp. 149-151.

²² *In Eph.*, c. 4, l. 2, nn. 197-202.

In his commentary St. Thomas wrote also about concert facilities and ministrations in Church, which are diversified. He didn't concentrate on detailed description of structure and hierarchy of ecclesial institution but considered them in the perspective of general aims: first, worship the God; second, salvation of neighbors; further, spiritual growth of Christian; J. Perszon, *Kościół i jego natura*, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

²³ A. Machowski, *Możliwości i ograniczenia analogii pomiędzy wspólnotą kościoła a wspólnota polityczną w komentarzu św. Tomasza z Akwinu do listu św. Pawła do Kolosan*, in: Tomasz z Akwinu, *Wykład Listu do Kolosan, Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses lectura*, ed. P. Roszak, Toruń 2012, pp. 357-381. Short but interesting comparison between Augustine and Aquinas' views on Church in wider perspective we can find in: S. H. Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via, Ecclesiological Development in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the Dictata Super Psalterium (1513-1515) of Martin Luther*, Leiden 1974, pp. 52-59.

Conclusion

The issues pertaining to the theology of the Church in commentary on the Ephesians are eminently extensive. My paper indicates merely the most important interpretations. St. Thomas Aquinas extensively builds his theology of the Church, beginning with Christological considerations, thorough sacramentology, and issues relating to social and political matters. In the Church, he sees the Mystical Body of Christ and political community, which have some political identity. All these dimensions are ve-

ry closely interconnected with each other. Aquinas' theology is not a theology of separation but of unity. For St. Thomas, being a Christian means remaining in community, in which organic bounds between its members exist; a community in which the One Spirit acts. Therefore, in order to get to know thoroughly the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas, one needs to study his theology of the Church. The commentary on the Ephesians can be a good starting point in doing so.

Na ścieżkach teologii Kościoła Tomasza z Akwinu w jego *Komentarzu do Listu do Efezjan*

Słowa kluczowe: Tomasz z Akwinu, List do Efezjan, tomizm biblijny, teologia Kościoła, Mistyczne Ciało, jedność, dom, miasto, łaska.

Teologiczne dziedzictwo Tomasza z Akwinu opiera się nie tylko na systematycznym wykładzie doktryny chrześcijańskiej, ale również na licznych komentarzach biblijnych. Biblijne orędzie poddane właściwej Średniowieczu hermeneutyce stanowi inspirację i niezbędny element Tomaszowej teologii w każdej z jej dziedzin, w tym także eklezjologii. W oparciu o tekst komentarza Listu do Efezjan w niniejszym artykule zostaje przedstawiony zarys teologii Kościoła według Akwinaty. Dzięki analizie kluczowych pojęć teologicznych: jedność, Mistyczne Ciało Chrystusa, dom, miasto, odsłonięty zostaje obraz wspólnoty Kościoła, który Tomasz z Akwinu zaczerpuje z ekshortacji św. Pawła i ukazuje w ramach refleksji teologicznej. W owym podejściu chrześcijańska jedność reprezentuje aspekt ontyczny, tzn. sposób egzystowania wspólnoty oraz cel tego egzystowania, który nie jest dla członków celem ostatecznym, ale „wskazaniem” na niego. Jedność jest więc tym elementem w eklezjologii Akwinaty, który łączy z sobą wszystkie obrazy Kościoła. Przez

„organiczną” więź pokoju we wzajemnych relacjach i duchową więź wiary wspólnota eklezjalna obejmuje sobą Mistyczne Ciało Chrystusa. Członki w Ciele Mistycznym są zjednoczone przez moc Głowy, czyli łaski Chrystusa, w sposób aktualny bądź potencjalny i na różnych poziomach osobistego zjednoczenia. Duszę Mistycznego Ciała stanowi Duch Święty, który napełnia członki duchowymi darami, cnotami i charyzmatami pochodzącymi od Chrystusa i ujawniającymi się w konkretnych członkach posiadających konkretne dyspozycje i umiejętności. Dlatego jeśli Kościół istnieje w ochrzczonych (Chrystusowych) to także wyraża swoją drugą, ludzką naturę, która posiada zarówno aspekt społeczny, jak i polityczny reprezentowane przez wizje domu (jako rodziny) i państwa miasta. Ta eklezjologiczna perspektywa zwracająca uwagę również na szczególne przejawy Chrystusowej wspólnoty jest nie tylko interesująca, ale też aktualna i ważna dla zrozumienia teologicznej myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu.

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