

IS THE CHURCH COTERMINIOUS WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Student: XXX

Course: XXX

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The Church is “a reality founded by heaven in *time*”¹ and from the time of Christ onward, the whole Church has entered the end time.² The Church “is destined to possess the kingdom of God, which was founded on earth by God himself and must continue to unfold, until it is perfected by him at the end of the ages.”³ Church growth and miracles throughout the centuries prove that it’s an organization created by Him.⁴ The outward appearance of the Church is similar to other organizations, but it is different because the inner nature of the Church is supernatural, hidden and mysterious.⁵

The Church is “not only the believers who are alive today... but also those who have lived before us, and those who will come after us, until the end of time.”⁶ The Church is the gathering together of all the saints, since the beginning of the world, to include the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs and all the righteous who form one single Church; they are sanctified through one faith and are marked with one Spirit; they form one single body.⁷ “The Church is already now the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven.”⁸ The Church is where Christ is, so how would it be possible for her to not be in heaven, where Christ is? Their names are entered as citizens of heaven (Luke 10:20). To be a Christian means that one has set up his tent in heaven.⁹

“God... out of love... has made us, who were dead through our sins, alive together with Christ... and He has raised us up with him in Christ Jesus and given us a place with him in the heavens” (Eph. 2:4–6). Christian existence means being with Christ, and thus means being where he is, sitting at the right hand of the Father. In terms of her head and of her goal, she is a *heavenly* Church. Conversely, she is also an earthly Church, a *pilgrim* Church that is stretching out to reach her goal.¹⁰ The Church is comprised of pilgrims on earth and those who “have departed from this life and are being purified” and those who are already glorified in the vision

¹ Christoph Schönborn, “The Kingdom of God and the Heavenly – Earthly Church,” in *Letter & Spirit* (2006), 221.

² *Ibid.*, 223.

³ *St. Augustine On the Psalms*, 9.

⁴ Matthias Joseph, *The mysteries of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2015), 539.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 340.

⁶ *St. Augustine On the Psalms*, 62, 2.

⁷ Schönborn, “The Kingdom of God,” 221.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 220-221.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

of God.¹¹ These three levels include the Church pilgrim (or the militant Church because it is a battle here on earth), the Church of the state of purification and the triumphant Church.¹²

There is no distance between the Church and the kingdom of heaven, but there is a difference of *status*: The *pilgrim* Church is the kingdom that grows until the time for the harvest, but the Church in the glory of heaven is the perfected kingdom, which is the goal of the pilgrim Church.¹³ As Augustine says, the Church is already “the reconciled world...but she is not yet the kingdom in its fullness and its definitive realization.”¹⁴ The Church is “hidden with Christ in God, until she appears in glory, united to her bridegroom” (Col. 3:1–4) “It is only in heavenly glory... that the Church will be perfected.”¹⁵

“How are we to keep alive the knowledge of the invisible dimension of the Church, when her invisible members are forgotten in our liturgical assemblies, at which they are actually present?”¹⁶ “In her sacraments and institutions, which still belong to this period of the world, the pilgrim Church bears the figure of this world, which is passing away... but sitting at the right hand of the Father, [Christ] works continuously in the world to lead men to the Church and to unite them more closely to Himself through her”¹⁷

“The kingdom is already on earth and the Church is already in heaven.”¹⁸ By partaking in the power that is conferred by the Eucharist, there is a mysterious bond that connects all members of the Church.¹⁹ The hypostatic union of humanity with the Logos is similar to the sacramental character *signum configurativum cum Christo*, which is a connection with the stamping seal of the divine person upon the human nature.²⁰ The thesis of eschatology is based in a *continuum of time*, which denies coterminalism. However, Christ taught us to pray the Our Father prayer, which includes praying for God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven” – and this happens in the Eucharist where the Church is coterminous with the Kingdom of God.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (hereafter *LG*) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 49.

¹² Schönborn, “The Kingdom of God,” 218.

¹³ *LG*, 9.

¹⁴ Schönborn, “The Kingdom of God,” 223–224.

¹⁵ *LG*, 48.

¹⁶ Schönborn, “The Kingdom of God,” 233.

¹⁷ *LG*, 48.

¹⁸ Charles Journet, *L’église du verbe incarné*, 2:57.

¹⁹ Joseph, *The mysteries of Christianity*, 542.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 587.

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