



Województwo
Śląskie



Instytut Myśli Polskiej
im. Wojciecha Korfanteo

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BORDERS OF THE STATE, BORDERS OF THE CHURCH

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To Wojciech Korfanty, as a devout Catholic and member of the Christian Democratic Party, the welfare of Poland, which respects the heritage of the Catholic Church, was of great concern. He observed with unease the growing wave of secularism in public life. He saw its origins not only in the belief in Marxist dialectics of history but also in the development of moral and technical „innovations”.

To resist the forces that, according to Korfanty, deprive humanity of a moral compass, undermine the sense of patriotism, and extinguish sentiment for institutions that are the stronghold of Christian tradition, the publisher of "Polonia" writes an article in 1927 titled "The Church and Politics." The main theme addressed by Korfanty in the mentioned text is the significance of maintaining ethics in the public life of a modern, law-abiding state.

As our life consists, according to Erving Goffman's famous division, of both public roles and those we perform behind the scenes (privately), we need, as Korfanty states, a vigilant guardian closely observing social actions, speaking out when social and political life is marred by evil. Such a guardian of our morality is the appointed Catholic Church, which is also obliged to be interested in earthly matters. According to Korfanty, the institution of the Church should not deal with tasks that are assigned to civil authority. However, when political actions are heading in an axiologically dubious direction, it is the duty of the Church to express itself through interventions or votes, so that its faithful do not participate in indecent party games or activities, the purpose of which is not necessarily harmful to the state. Korfanty reminds that the government belongs to secular authorities. „The principle of distinguishing between two powers, secular and spiritual, was laid down – notes Korfanty – by Jesus himself, when he demanded that one should give himself to the emperor what belongs to the emperor and to God what belongs to God. This principle the church has never forgotten and has never crossed. The task of political power is to establish

and maintain law and order among human societies, to care for their temporal good and to strive for the internal and external power of the state. The rest is up to the clergy, and the Church cannot see its mission as a substitute for the state. This is a short way to install a theocracy. Hence, Korfanty does not agree to aggressive anti-clericalism referring to the excessively strong influence of the Church in the past. A Catholic priest, argues the leader of the Third Silesian Uprising, as every citizen can, and even should, have developed political convictions and freely exercise his civil rights. In Korfanty's opinion, the contemporary Church is not as powerful an institution as it used to be, and its strong position was not due to a low motive for ruling, but to the desire to support others. Korfanty mentions the fall of the Roman state as examples of such a position of the Church, pointing to the Church as the only authority that could then control the order. Similarly, during feudal times, the Church drew on its wide influence to stand up for oppressed peasants. The charitable service of the Church was also for Korfanty the space that this institution provided for the development of intellectual culture. It was only the present day, believes Korfanty, that the Church was seen as a foreign body in the state organism, threatening its independence. Nevertheless, the Church is an organisation that respects the secular and democratic elections that will lead, notes Korfanty, to the emergence of a specific form of government. Korfanty reinforces his theses with quotations from encyclicals and letters of selected popes. First, he recalls the enunciations of Leo XIII, which can be summarised as follows: the state and the Church have separate sovereignties and competences that remain intact provided that the authorities respect the Christian model of life, i.e. one that ensures freedom, equality and respect for citizens. The Church cannot undermine trust in the authorities or use political parties, which always leads to the instrumentalization of religion. The faithful, on the other hand, should not shun public life and participate in its administration. According to Pius X, it is a great danger for the Catholic Church to be attached to any authority. Benedict XV thinks similarly, calling on bishops to remind the faithful to humbly endure decisions at the level of power, because these moves affect the lives of citizens. What benefits for citizens result from the coexistence of secular and ecclesiastical authorities? While state authorities are changeable, the Church is invariably subject to Peter's principles. His earthly ministry flourishes if – Korfanty reserves – he does not succumb to the mood of the moment, does not participate in revolutions, perseveres in his teachings and „(...) reconciles

with social moods and with the devices that people give themselves, without binding themselves to any of them. (...) So the Catholic Church is nobody's property! It is not a church of lords or people, it does not tie its destiny to kings or emperors, it is neither for a monarchy, nor for a republic, nor for an empire. The Catholic Church is eternally united only with Christ the Lord and the souls of people redeemed by his blood. The Church serves all the benighted who seek light, all the weak and frail who turn to it for help, and it serves only justice, true brotherhood of men, social order and peace on earth. Paradoxically, as emphasised by Korfanty, the Catholic Church, although invariably apolitical and oriented towards the future, should correspond with the politics of its epoch or, to put it simply, practice politics. This should happen if there are deviations from the Church's interpretation of ethics, which actually violates the letter of the divine law in which all authority derives its source. The political theology that Korfanty outlines is therefore a constant sense of duty that the Church takes upon itself in severely holding the secular authorities to account for their conduct, granting itself the right to express its opinion decisively in the event that it feels marginalised by the secular authorities, attacked, when the freedom of the Church is restrained, or when earthly power lays down a law that contradicts divine law. Church policy is still reactive - it responds to provocations, negligence or - in its opinion - gross mistakes to which the faithful will be victims. What could these mistakes be? Korfanty points to the adoption of a law that is harmful to the traditionally functioning family, denying the clergy the upbringing and education of children and youth, and questioning the divine origin and mission of the Church. There is one more duty of the Church, which Korfanty mentions at the end of his dissertation, and which is no less important. It is about the moral vigilance that the Church has been supposed to arouse among those in power from the very beginning. Therefore: „(...) the future of nations depends on the observance of the principles of Christian morality in public life”. A little further on, Korfanty concludes: „Governments are only recognized as *raison d'être* as long as they render services to the common good”.

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