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The Mission of the Catholic Church for the State in the Discourse of “Gosc Niedzielny” during Poland’s Interwar Period

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Abstract: The essence of the Catholic Church implemented in the modern world is of crucial importance for the understanding its mission towards the state, especially when developing appropriate civil attitudes. One sources of cognition is the historical reflection made on an analytical basis of Catholic media content. This article presents the discourse analysis of *Gość Niedzielny* (i.e., *Sunday Guest*), which was one of the most important Catholic publications in Poland, during the reconstruction of the Polish statehood. The pro-state mission of the Catholic Church was an expression of responsibility for common good, was nonpartisan and was connected with the promotion of values that condition the social order. It was believed that the condition of the state is determined by the moral form of its citizens and their level of involvement in social life. Christian values were thought to secure and protect also the good of non-Catholic citizens. Here, the research and discourse analysis allows us to define the conclusions regarding contemporary relations between Church and the state in Poland. The key thoughts included in the publications of *Sunday Guest*, have contemporary application and their message is extremely up-to-date.

Keywords: state; Catholic Church; social order



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1. Introduction

Compared to other denominations in Poland, the Catholic Church is a unique institution with a centuries-old tradition that formed the characteristic cultural face of the people and the state (Pope John Paul II 2005, pp. 164–66). Therefore, it seems reasonable to learn from historical experience. This issue is closely related to the understanding the current role of the Catholic Church in the state. The tendency to marginalize the role of the Church’s role in the public sphere and to reduce faith in the private sphere only limits citizens’ religious freedom and reduces the axiological dimension of public life. On the other hand, extending public activity to political activity may lead to a dangerous instrumentalization of religion in a political battle (Śpiewak 2019, pp. 158–61). Therefore, a model of the Catholic Church’s presence in public life is postulated, which responds to the spiritual and religious needs of the people associated with it, but also shapes civic attitudes that are important from the point of view of the whole state and its citizens. Currently, according to the Central Statistical Office, the Catholic Church in Poland in 2017 numbered 32.91 million baptized (including 30,807 clergy), across 10,263 parishes. The cited number of citizens associated with the Catholic Church clearly indicates the significant position the Polish Catholic Church has on influencing public life.

The key importance for the contemporary legal empowerment of churches in Poland, including the Catholic Church, is the law “On Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience and Confession” (Journal of Laws 2017). It defines the relationship of the state to all churches and other religious associations. It is based on respect for freedom of conscience

and confession (Krukowski 1997, p. 9). According to it, “the guarantees of freedom of conscience and confession in the relations between the state and churches and other religious associations are as follows: separation of churches and other religious associations from the state; freedom of churches and other religious associations to perform religious functions; equality of rights for all churches and other religious associations, regardless of the form in which legal status is regulated. The Republic of Poland is a secular state, neutral in matters of religion and belief ... and churches and other religious associations are independent of the state in the exercise of their religious functions” (Journal of Laws 2017). The aforementioned legal regulations leave churches and other religious associations not only the freedom of organization but also the form and scope of the content communicated to the believers directly or through mass communication tools (Śpiewak 2018, p. 155). Among other things, they have an influence on the formation of public opinion and the development of civil attitudes in accordance with professed doctrine in the context of relations with the state (Mariański 1993, pp. 83–91).

According to John Paul II, the countries of Western Europe have now reached a stage that can be described as “post-identity” (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 91). In his opinion, this is related to a broader process aimed at unifying of the Old Continent after World War II. In the search for a European identity, it is necessary to go beyond purely national categories. Nevertheless, this unification, even with various noble motivations, may foster the loss of national identity. According to the Pope, Polish national identity is unique among the other nations of Europe (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 91). Formed by Christian values, it has for centuries been characterized by respect for other cultures and religions. The Pope even stated: “Polishness is essentially multiplicity and pluralism, not narrowness and closure” (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 92). With a note of skepticism, however, he states that perhaps this conviction is no longer obvious. That is why it is interesting to refer to the past and to discover in it those values which formed the phenomenon of a Polish national identity and influenced the rebirth of Polish Statehood after 123 years of non-existence. Studying the past allows us to look in a new and fresh way at the tasks that the modern age places before both Church and state. Asking about the past, John Paul II said: “So what can we learn from these years dominated by “ideologies of evil” (. . .)? I believe that we must first of all learn to go back to our roots. Only then can the evil done by fascism or communism in some sense enrich us, can it lead us to goodness, and this is undoubtedly a Christian program” (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 56). The study of history can therefore help to heal the present and protect the future from the consequences of current errors or blindness.

This statement is in line with the view expressed by F. A. von Hayek (1996) in his book *The Road to Serfdom*: “Although history never fully repeats itself, precisely because no development is inevitable, we can to some extent learn from the past how to avoid repeating the same course of events. You don’t have to be a prophet to be aware of upcoming dangers. A fortuitous combination of experience and attention often shows someone events from a side that few have seen before” (Hayek 1996, p. 11). In lieu of the above, the historical significance of the Church’s religious and moral preaching’s represents a great opportunity for the state in areas that concern the moral condition of society. Socio-moral action does not automatically imply political commitment, which runs the risk of politicizing its preaching. The pro-state value of the Church’s social teaching does not contradict the pluralism of worldviews that characterizes contemporary societies (Mariański 1997a, p. 44).

2. Methodological Arrangements

An excellent study about the realization of the social and pro-state mission of the Church turned out to come from the weekly magazine *Gość Niedzielny* from the interwar period. It was published in the part of Upper Silesia annexed to the reborn Polish state after the plebiscite in 1922. The research on *Gość Niedzielny* from that period was based on the method of discourse analysis (Van Dijk 2001, pp. 9–44). According to Małgorzata Lisowska-Magdziarz, discourse is understood as “conveying ideas and influencing people by means of language, strongly conditioned by the social position of senders and recipients,

their aims and needs, the state of knowledge, the set and hierarchy of values, as well as the social context of communication and the specificity of communication via mass media" (Lisowska-Magdziarz 2006, p. 9). The analysis of the discourse was based on selected texts published in the *Gość Niedzielny* in the interwar period relating to social and world-view issues (Blum-Kulka 2001, pp. 214–41). The accepted hypothesis is that the weekly magazine *Gość Niedzielny* representing in its journalism the social teaching of the Church, had a pro-state character and was conducive to building and safeguarding social values that were important from the point of view of the functioning of the state. The purpose of this article is to show that the discourse of the *Gość Niedzielny* concern for the state was its essential editorial foundation. This would also confirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to care for the condition of social life and State order.

3. The Importance of the Catholic Church for the State

The First World War changed the face of Europe, wherein the nations of Europe strove to ensure the most optimal conditions for their existence. One of the greatest beneficiaries of the First World War was Poland. Reborn after years of partition. It faced serious difficulties, both internal and international. The Polish state, apart from struggling for the shape of borders, had to make parallel efforts to establish a new internal order, to form a reborn state on the basis of the accepted systemic determinants. The political situation in both the internal and international dimensions strongly determined social life. The Church, being one of the subjects of this life, had to relate to the surrounding reality in a spirit of patriotism and social responsibility for the fate of Poland. This affected its entire activity in the inter-war period. The challenges faced by the Church in Poland were reflected in the journalism of the Catholic magazines of the time, including the *Gość Niedzielny*.

One of the main trends referred to in the journalism of the *Gość Niedzielny* in the interwar period was the mission of the Catholic Church in relation to the state. The articles appearing in the *Gość Niedzielny* on the relationship between the state and the Church above all reflected the social doctrine contained in the teaching of the Popes (Pope Leo XIII 1881, 1885, 1890, 1901; Pope Pius XI 1931, 1937a, 1937b). The state was understood as a necessary form of organization of the nation aimed at protecting the common good and safeguarding social order. It was an element of natural law (Krapiec 1986, p. 169) as well as a manifestation of God's design. This approach did not determine the state system and the form of the rule of government, but it did determine the attitude to God as creator and the resulting axiological order. (According to Strzeszewski: "From a moral point of view, a republic, a monarchy or a dictatorship are phenomena of socio-political technique, but in a given historical and social context they are a better or worse solution and, as a result, a better or worse way of achieving the common good. However, it is possible to agree that it is not the socio-economic or political system but its implementation that is relevant to the common good" (Strzeszewski 2009). Government in the state, according to this view, was not merely a creation of man and was therefore subject to the verdicts of natural law. Regardless of the form of government or the shape of the political system, the State could not distance itself from God, and could not in principle be atheistic or irreligious. The Church taught that the State comes from God and the authority in the State cannot rule "as if there is no God". The position is that it is not competent to decide about moral good and evil. It must interpret them from the order of natural law and from the social teaching of the Church, supported by the light of divine revelation (Wuwer 2006, pp. 89–90).

One of the key issues faced by the journalism of the *Gość Niedzielny*, was the thesis claiming that religion is a private matter (GN Socjalna demokracja a religia 1927, p. 3). This was formulated mainly by representatives of political currents (liberal or socialist), who built on this assumption a vision of a secular state. In such a vision of the state the role of the Church would be marginalized with an attempt to replace Christian values with others (GN Socjalna demokracja a religia 1927, pp. 3–4; GN Kościół i polityka 1928, pp. 3–4). *Gość Niedzielny* believed that such a vision of the Polish state was not only fundamentally false but also unjust. This was due to the fact that the regaining of independence by the

Polish nation owed much to the spiritual efforts of the Catholic Church (GN Odezwa Prezydenta Mościckiego 1926, p.12). Furthermore, the starting point for this position was the undeniable fact that at that stage of history Polish society was predominantly Catholic (GN Kościół i polityka 1928, pp. 3–4). It was therefore believed that this fact entitled the postulate of building the state on the foundation of Christian values (GN Duchowieństwo i polityka 1926, pp. 4–5). It must be stressed that, at the same time, the necessary respect for other nationalities and religions was explicitly raised.

In the process of shaping the political system in the Polish state, the role of religion and the Church, which was the depositary of divine values, also having a universal value, was emphasized (Davis 2014, p. 359). It was also emphasized that the only source of truth about man was his Creator, and His instrument on earth was the Church. It was therefore argued that the Church's taking a concrete stand on social issues must not be equated with interfering in politics (GN Walka z Kościołem katolickim w Polsce 1934, p. 15).

The key thesis was the pro-State character of the Catholic religion. It stemmed from the conviction that every state, as a particular form of organization of the nation, could not function without clearly defined principles guaranteeing its social order (Ihnatowicz 1988, p. 535). This, in turn, as has been argued, is not achievable through formal means alone and does not be guaranteed by any legal or constitutional solutions, but rather depends on axiological criteria (Jeliński 2001, p. 117). It is the accepted system of values that should form the law and not vice versa; the law was to determine a value system of values. The respect for God's law was to be a guarantee for the preservation of citizens' freedom and security (Kłoczowski 1981, pp. 855–60). This sometimes required certain sacrifices, but these were necessary for the common good. Social sacrifices made for religious and moral reasons were not meant to be a form of restriction but an affirmation of freedom (Kłoczowski 1981, p. 864). For this to happen, however, a certain condition had to be met. Only a citizen properly spiritually formed would be able to do so. "This consideration of the whole should also induce our citizens to sacrifice their rights when the interests of the state demand it. The whole of society will benefit from this, so will those who have made this sacrifice, and once the existence of society is assured, then their rights must be claimed. Every stratum of society should be ready to make these sacrifices, otherwise it will ruin the state and therefore itself" (GN Społeczeństwo a religia 1924, pp. 6–7). As far as the state was concerned, the emphasis was placed above all on the importance of the proper shaping of consciousness as to the importance of civic attitudes. Efforts were therefore made to shape the face of the state from below, by persuading citizens of their most important tasks towards the state, and only then of the state's tasks towards the citizen. The shape of the state was a resultant of the previous views and attitudes of citizens. As a result, duties were emphasized above all before rights, and the common good before one's own individual good.

The core of the post of the *Gość Niedzielny* on the Church and State relations, as well as in it on the constitutive role of Catholicism in the life of the Polish nation, the forming of its spirit and culture was reflected in a statement made by the Austrian scholar and poet Richard von Kralik. He published his thoughts " in May 1926 in the weekly magazine *Schoenere Zukunft* in an article *Polnische Geschichten*. His reflections were quoted by *Gość Niedzielny*. Richard von Kralik (Mikoletzky 1980, pp. 663–66) proved the specificity of Polish history. The example of Polish culture and Polish spiritual strength derived from religious sources was to be an important point of reference for the perception of the nature of religion in the space of social life in other European countries. "This national culture, relying on religion, stands above states, it is above politics. The whole history of the world teaches that on such supra-political ideas, to which reality can never quite approach, consists the most costly part of all human work. This ideal Poland, this Poland of national idealism, this Poland living with a separate folk spirit, given from God, is more real and more durable than any state construction. And in this realm the spirit is master over matter, the spirit is the most effective, the most creative, it will contribute the most to maintenance,

more than blood and iron, more than violence...” (GN Co sądzi R. von Kralik o polskiej kulturze 1936, pp. 3–4).

The importance of the religious and political consciousness of the seculars was very strongly emphasized. Religious awareness was consequently also to be translated into their civic attitudes, into concrete choices and actions (GN Przez uświadomienie do potęgi! 1936, p. 57). It was realized that the shape of society and the future of the state depended on the ideas that underpinned it. The state and its authorities needed not only formal but also moral legitimacy. Accordingly, efforts were constantly being made to justify the key role of the Church in building a just social order. In this context, the importance of religious life was emphasized, which organized the moral sphere of the state. Therefore, it was reasoned that the state, in order to guarantee its proper functions and goals, should protect and support religion, specifically the Catholic Church. In *Gość Niedzielny* (*Sunday Guest*) it was written that it is not God who needs prayers and liturgy, but this whole sphere is essential for man and, more broadly for society as a whole.

It was believed that Christianity, and the Catholic Church in particular, had brought to Western culture the fundamental and most important values that ultimately laid the groundwork for the formation of the face of modern democracy (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 133). This author is of the opinion that its shape and functions were an attractive form of exercising power to the extent that they affirm and protect the proper hierarchy of values. Starting from Christian anthropology (Krapiec 1986, p. 127), those values oscillated around such notions as person, family, nation, state, freedom and private property.

4. Catholic Religion as a Factor Guaranteeing an Appropriate Constitutional Form

Gość Niedzielny warned the faithful that without God there could be no real personal freedom and therefore no national freedom. The weakening role of religion in public life could have consequences for the rule of law, justice and the shape of the social order (GN Kościół i Państwo 1934, p. 2). Ultimately, it could threaten the freedom of the whole nation threatened again. It was argued that Catholicism was the factor that guaranteed true freedom, a proper constitutional form and a secure future for the state (GN Odzew katolickiego sumienia młodego chłopca 1934, p. 6). It was also reminded that freedom must not only be enjoyed, but also managed wisely and responsibly. The man who claims to have freedom of choice and can choose to live without Christ degrades not only his own freedom but threatens the condition of the whole nation. By setting a bad example, it draws in other “(easy)believers” who have become so enamoured with their regained freedom that they have lost reason and conscience for illusory modern ideas in which there is no place for God (GN Społeczeństwo a Religia 1924, p. 6).

At a time of such intense emphasis on the importance of freedom, it has been argued that it is the Catholic religion that best safeguards it. Those who seek emancipation from the influence of religion in the name of freedom have insincere intentions and intents. “Freedom is a word that resounds in everyone’s heart, ‘I am free’ is rejoiced by every human soul, freedom is longed by those who have not yet tasted it, and wept by those who have lost it. And truly: freedom is happiness for the individual, happiness for society and happiness for the nation” (GN Społeczeństwo a Religia 1924, p. 6). This priceless treasure is defended to the greatest extent not so much by statute law but by God’s law, which is proclaimed by the Church. Therefore, it is He who should enjoy not only the appropriate respect but also a position in the state. The Church’s teaching defines the proper concept of freedom and thus also constitutes a guarantee of true democracy. In relation to the state and its citizens, this is crucial and protects them from abuses of various kinds. “The Church always and firmly defends the freedom and rights of citizens against the powers that would unjustly seek to limit them; and who could do this more effectively. And if there is not yet that freedom in the world which everyone desires, it is only that mankind does not yet wish to recognize the power and influence of the Christian religion in this field, and by its own attempts—against and contrary to the principles of the religion—wants to achieve it” (GN Społeczeństwo a Religia 1924, p. 7).

All actions in defense of the freedom of citizens taken against the teaching of the Church have already brought about lamentable results on more than one occasion. In order to justify this thesis, examples were given from the past, when the lofty slogans in defense of civil rights “freedom, equality and fraternity” concealed a dramatic reality and quite different contents. It sought to illustrate the importance of understanding freedom correctly and not just writing it on banners. It was written: “The French Revolution wanted to give freedom, the Russian Bolsheviks wanted to introduce freedom. And what did the French revolution give? Having removed in noble zeal the screaming abuses, the revolution then became guilty of the most shameful tyranny. It liberated many, but from life, sowing death and perdition instead of freeing the nation, it brought upon it the terrible bondage of Satan and the passions: Here they have placed harlots on the altar and worshipped them. And how about Russia, where is the promised freedom there? Is the worker, for whom this freedom was supposed to be, does he even have half of the freedom of the past? We do not hear of the strikes and grievances of these poor people, because there no one grieves,—to avoid becoming a victim of death. Terrible times, monuments are erected to Judas the traitor, and the people obediently bow, thinking he is a saint” (GN Społeczeństwo a Religia 1924, p. 7).

According to *Gość Niedzielny* spreading the faith throughout the world, in different societies, has always contributed to the elevation of culture, to the progress and development of civilization. This was particularly evident in the Church’s missionary work and in evangelization (GN Kulturalna działalność naszych misjonarzy 1929, p. 3). To confirm the vitality of the Church and its beneficial influence on the public sphere, positive examples from various European countries were cited. The article “On Catholicism in France” (GN O katolicyzmie we Francji 1924, pp. 5–7). wrote about an exceptional religious revival, calling it “The Catholic spring in France”. It was the result of the involvement of secular people for the common good. Important in this phenomenon was the use of the potential of the Catholic press as an important instrument for forming opinions and civic attitudes in a Christian spirit. “Apart from many others, a Catholic magazine like our own *Przegląd Powszechny (Universal Review)*, published by the Jesuits of Cracow, comes out in Paris, but much richer and edited by Catholic laymen. Great and rich are these manifestations of Catholic life in modern France” (GN O katolicyzmie we Francji 1924, pp. 5–7). This relation ended with an appeal to secular people, especially the intellectual circles, to have courage and to join in social and political activities in the spirit of the Church’s teaching: “May our Polish intellectuals, which so readily imitates the French in secular matters, now imitate them in religious matters. May the Catholic revival in France correspond to the revival of our Homeland!” (GN O katolicyzmie we Francji 1924, pp. 5–7).

„Gość Niedzielny” constantly reminded readers that they could not be indifferent to the Gospel of Jesus when building their own homeland, but had to base their individual and social lives on it (GN O lepsze jutro w Polsce. Trzeba oprzeć nasze życie publiczne o miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczną 1937, p. 125; GN O chrześcijańską sprawiedliwość społeczną 1937, p. 281). The social dimension of faith and its public character were strongly emphasised. Therefore, Christ, as the King, should be present at every stage of Poland’s development and in all its dimensions, both in the formation of the state system, in the creation of its legislation, in the cultural sphere and in economic development. Every Pole and Catholic should testify about Christ in public life and not limit their faith only to the walls of the church or their homes. It was argued that Christ cannot be shamed in public space. Religious identification should be expressed outwardly, in all dimensions of life, and not only in the space sacrum. If reticence and, worse still, shame prevail and one rejects God in one’s daily life, one will in fact be denying one’s faith, betraying Christ and thus opening the way to His enemy. The penetration of the idea of Christ the King into all dimensions of life was considered the most urgent necessity, emphasizing its universal and salutary character for the whole society. „[...] This is more necessary today than ever. They want to relegate religion to a private thing, to remove Christ from economic, political and state life. Quite wrongly. For Christ is not only the Saviour of individual souls, but also the

Saviour of the whole world, and his religion is not only the power to heal the soul, but also the whole of society; it is the basis not only of inner life, but also the basis of public life and the source of culture. So we should not be ashamed of Christ and his teachings in public life" (GN Wy także świadczyć będziecie 1924, p. 2).

The Church's pro-state mission was to help the faithful create their own state, but the faithful themselves could not remain passive in this process. The fate of Catholic society and the fate of the nation depended on their concrete deeds and involvement. The whole condition of Polish democracy depends on the everyday, small choices of every catholic. The potential of future of future generations depends on small decisions. It is with them in mind that efforts should be made to improve the moral condition of society. In the struggle for a better today, a better tomorrow must be sought long term. Therefore, it was necessary to face all personal weaknesses, ignorance and passivity: "Battle is the natural state of man; the enemy is he himself, and the battlefield is life" (GN Wychowujmy się 1924, p. 5).

The very concept of politics is often understood imprecisely. In a strict sense, it referred to all activities aimed at seizing and maintaining power, which are not what the Church and the clergy have in mind, while in a broader sense it refers to concern for the common good. It therefore assumes mechanisms and principles based on mutual respect despite the existing differences in worldviews or political systems. It is thus emphasized that every clergyman, despite his special religious function, still remained a citizen of the State and as such could exercise his rights on an equal basis with others. Yes, he can limit these rights for himself, but this cannot be done for him by the state, much less by any political force. "Has a priest ceased to be a citizen by being ordained a priest? He has to pay taxes, but when he sometimes wants to speak out in public life, it is *clerical abuse*" (FK Religia nie ma nic wspólnego z polityką 1938, p. 35). In view of this it was argued: „Is any uneducated man better qualified for this than a priest who has studied philosophy and theology, law and ethics, and who knows and feels the needs of the people better than anyone else? In the same way that it is right to say that the priest should look after the church and the sacristy, one could say that the worker should only look after the workshop, the merchant after the shop, and the clerk after the office" (GN Religia nie ma nic wspólnego z polityką? 1938, p. 35). (Abbreviation „FK” means “Front Katolicki (*Catholic Front*)”—it was a free supplement to *Gość Niedzielny* published since 1937, see (Lubojańska 2009)). The inconsistency and injustice in arbitrarily depriving a priest of his right to participate in society was glaring. It was also noted that despite equal rights for citizens, their social and political competence is also important. It is not only the individual voice that counts, but also a kind of self-awareness.

The Church in Poland has a strong conviction about its special mission towards the reborn Polish state and the whole nation (GN Konkordat ze Stolicą Apostolską podpisany 1925, p. 8). It feels an exceptional responsibility not only to preserve the national heritage, but also to safeguard it and pass it on to future generations (GN Katolicie wychowanie młodzieży może być wpojone w szkole jedynie katolickiej 1937, p. 84). Throughout the entire period of captivity, the Church confirmed its reverence for the national idea, protected and nurtured it. It did it with determination and heroism in extremely unfavourable conditions for the Polish people. After regaining independence, the Church's attitude towards Poland was to be confirmed in a concordat. In its content, there was an oath of fidelity of Polish bishops to the Republic of Poland. An interesting thread is a certain controversy that has appeared in the pages of some German magazines in this regard. The *Gość Niedzielny* took the position that the separation of Church and state does not mean world-view neutrality, let alone hostility towards the Church.

An important issue for the Church was the definition and observance of proper competences in its relationship with the state. Bishops, in pledging their loyalty to the state, were not exempt from their duty to uphold the truth of the gospel and to carry out the Church's mission. In this mission, one of the priorities was concern for the moral condition of society. At the same time, it was an expression of concern for the state, specifically its development and security. In turn, the Church considered the most important task of

the state to be caring for the family, supporting its development and protecting it from all destructive factors. The *Gość Niedzielny* tried to form the state and civic awareness of its readers via a number of publications—above all, that they should wisely and actively participate in the creation of the state and society. It can be said that through his journalism he supported both citizens and the state. He strove to maintain the right balance and harmony in the state. It was based on the assumption that many social problems stem first from their ignorance and then from the helplessness or social passivity of citizens. They needed reliable and constantly deepening civic knowledge. The social teaching of the Church, especially the encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, has always been an interpretation for this education (GN *Fałszywe i prawdziwe pojęcie demokracji* 1923, p. 6). Therefore, a large part of the journalistic texts on the pages of “*Gość Niedzielny*” had a formative character.

Gość Niedzielny tried to make readers aware that the durability of a state is not determined solely by its political and systemic structures, but is fundamentally influenced by the values that form the foundations of the culture and spirit of a nation (Coste 1969, p. 71). Systemic structures depend on various political conditions. As such, they are changeable and constantly evolving (Pope John Paul II 2005, pp. 133–34). Political forces are often ephemeral, appearing and disappearing. Sometimes, under the influence of various factors, they undergo deformation or even complete annihilation (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 25). Similarly, many flagship ideas proclaimed by political parties are verified over time in confrontation with reality and become outdated. By demonstrating variability in the political and constitutional sphere of the state, an attempt was made to highlight what was fundamental to its sustainability. Consequently, the most important task was to distinguish the secondary from the primary. This was the value of culture based on Christian values (GN VII Zjazd katolicki w Poznaniu 1926, p. 3). The state as understood by the *Gość Niedzielny* was a form of political organization of the nation (Szul 2009, p. 51). It was believed that only such a state has a chance of survival whose people, knowing their own identity expressed through culture, stand by it and defend it. If national identity is diluted, the fundamental values of state-building is also diluted. In other words, the mere current existence of the state does not resolve anything and, like any structure, it is constantly vulnerable to destruction. Only values of a universal, spiritual and timeless nature can guarantee its permanence. If these are diluted or replaced by others, in accordance with the slogans of progress and modernity, the state itself will in time cease to have any meaning or justification. Therefore, the state was threatened by enemies that were not so much political, but above all ideological, who sought to redefine existing notions, giving them new meanings. Most dangerous of all, was the systematic draining of minds and destruction of the fundamental values that formed the fabric of social life in both its collective and individual dimensions. These key values, which organised a whole series of subsequent values in the state, were national identity, a strong attachment to the Catholic Church and the family. Protecting these values is therefore the most urgent challenge.

Gość Niedzielny advocated a democratic system while at the same time showing that “the democratic idea, unadulterated and well understood without prejudice and envy, is consistent with Catholic thought” (GN *Fałszywe i prawdziwe pojęcie demokracji* 1923, p. 7). This thesis was the starting point for outlining the area of cooperation between the state and the Church (Pope John Paul II 2005, pp. 123–25). Based on democratic solutions, this cooperation was to serve the good of society without depreciating the good of the Church institutions. Such cooperation was shown to be by all means beneficial and desirable. Dr T. Stark put it this way: „I understand the cooperation of the Church as permeating all manifestations of political life with the spirit of the Church, the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love for others and of altruism, the spirit which knows no hatred or envy, and which has as its main objective the good of the whole, even if personal interests have to be sacrificed for it” (GN *Fałszywe i prawdziwe pojęcie demokracji* 1923, p. 7). In view of the above, defining the role and place of the Church in a state that was only beginning to build its structures, its system on the “ruins of the old order”, was of fundamental importance. It

was emphatically recalled that the aim of democracy and the task of the state was not only to guarantee security and material well-being, but that it was also to take care of everything that determined the moral and spiritual condition of society (Mariański 1997b, p. 45). This could not have been achieved without the support of the Church.

Readers of *Gość Niedzielny* were made aware that citizens' respect for state authorities was also important in the broader context of international relations. Resentment towards one's own state authorities shown by citizens of a given country abroad, a disrespectful attitude to its regulations, could also result in the creation of an atmosphere of dislike for the Polish state on the international stage. Such critical and negative attitudes shown by some citizens towards the Polish authorities could easily have been used by foreign political forces against the Polish State.

Over the last few centuries, the Church has become known as a subject particularly interested in the good of Poland, and its moral strength, internal and external security (Deszczyńska and Nowak 2018, p. 17). It must be pointed out that while paying attention to the common good, which was the State, the fundamental duty of concern for eternal salvation was never neglected. The teachings of the Church have never been reduced to temporal aspects, nor, the achievement of secular goals. Rather the Church focuses on the construction of the world in a temporal perspective, focusing on its various social problems.

In the series of articles entitled: „Społeczeństwo a religia (Society and religion)” (GN *Społeczeństwo a Religia* 1924, pp. 4–6) an in-depth analysis of the conditions that determine the mutual relations between these areas and their impact on the formation of an appropriate State system, safe for the citizens, because it determines the principles of social order in both the domestic and international dimension, was undertaken. It was stressed above all that the Christian religion is intrinsically community-forming. It is from it that the need to create communities stems. It has been shown that society and the state cannot function properly without religion, because it is religion that preaches the moral principles that guarantee social order (GN *Społeczeństwo a Religia* 1924, pp. 4–6). It was therefore argued that in the long run no society or authority could survive without the support of religion (GN *Społeczeństwo a Religia* 1924, pp. 4–6). „The best school of respect for authority, Guizot [François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787–1874)—French historian, statesman. Dominant figure in French politics prior to the Revolution of 1848]. could say, although not a Catholic, is the Catholic Church. And rightly so, for would irreligion have brought us the Golden Age? Probably not, for without religion there can be no respect for authority, and without it no society. Indeed, if we remove religion and the fear of God, then draconian laws will be necessary, unbearable to keep the people in obedience; then prisons will take the place of Catholics, police companies in place of priests, terrorism in place of justice.” (GN *Społeczeństwo a Religia* 1924, pp. 5–6). In this way, a reverence for one's homeland was fostered. A properly understood concept of the homeland was a guarantee of the prosperity of the State and its citizens.

Love for one's own nation and homeland also requires a definition of one's attitude towards other nationalities. Starting from the principle of brotherhood between people resulting from God's fatherhood, it has been claimed that love for one's own homeland could never turn into hostility or even hatred towards other nations. All nations exist by the same God's plan. The Christian must love his nation and his nationality more than others, as Christ himself did, but he must not exalt himself or despise other nations. “Love for one's own nationality should not breed in us selfishness, lack of love or injustice towards members of another nationality; we should remember that people of all nationalities are children of one Father in heaven and therefore brothers to one another, and that the Catholic Church unites all peoples into one great family of God” (GN *Stosunek do narodowości* 1925, p. 4). *Gość Niedzielny* also cautioned its readers not to perceive other nations through the prism of some individual, extreme attitudes and tendencies. It warned against unjust generalizations and discrediting whole nations because of the abuses and injustices occurring in them. This was a very important aspect in the context of the nationalistic and chauvinistic tendencies emerging in Europe at the time. “For the malice and mischief

of individual people, it is not right to cast condemnation on an entire nationality. Was it possible to condemn all the Apostles together with Christ for the mischief of Judas? Should the whole priestly state be held responsible for one evil priest, or all the teachers for one evil teacher? The same applies to nationalities and their members. Would it please you if someone called you a fraud because a few of your countrymen were? Remember this, and you will not be too hasty to judge others wrongly" (GN Stosunek do narodowości 1925, p. 5).

A properly understood concept of the earthly homeland, anchored above all on religious grounds, was to give rise to concrete attitudes and civic duties. Fidelity to Christ gives rise to loyalty to the homeland and love for it (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 65). Just as Jesus' attitude was characterized by sacrifice and offering for his brothers, so the Church expected from the faithful a similar love for their homeland. Concern for salvation and supernatural, imperishable values did not exclude concern for temporal matters, among which the good of the homeland came first. Hence it was argued: "The same necessity to which our Savior Himself submitted exists also for us. We too must fight to gain victory. We have to fight for worldly goods, to fight to gain and maintain the freedom and independence of our nation, to fight for our country, our homeland. This is what we are used to, and in this respect, we have fulfilled our sacred duty and are ready to fulfil it in the future. But we should also fight for eternal, supernatural goods, fight for faith, fight for freedom and independence of our souls" (GN Walka o święty kraj duszy naszej 1924, p. 1). Love of God and fidelity to God required piety towards one's homeland and concern for its fate. These values have always been combined and shown to be mutually dependent.

In the narrative of the *Gość Niedzielny* the earthly homeland was even sacralized, calling it a "holy land" (GN Walka o święty kraj duszy naszej 1924, p. 1). It was sanctified by the graves of forefathers and the blood of heroes. Care for the homeland was also meant to be a catalyst for building national unity. "Homeland is the land of our most beautiful memories, the land of our dreams of youth, it is the land that gives us bread, unites us into one nation" (GN Walka o święty kraj duszy naszej 1924, p. 1). The justification for such a love of the homeland was not only the example of Jesus himself, but also the entire Old Testament tradition. "As always, however, God turned the punishment to the good of the people. The separation of nationalities was meant to stimulate people to competition, and thus to the progress and growth of civilization; at the same time, it was meant to be a barrier to the too rapid spread of religious and moral collapse. The confusion of languages at Babel broke the pride of risk-takers of that time, while the national differences that arose as a result were to be a bulwark for individual nations, holding back idolatry and the moral decay of neighboring nations" (GN Stosunek do narodowości 1925, pp. 3–4). In order to arouse the spirit of patriotism, examples of saints who were models of love for the homeland and the nation were also invoked (GN Jak to Święci kochali Ojczyznę 1925, p. 4). The homeland was a gift of previous generations, whose sacrifice and devotion went far beyond their own historical context. It was therefore also a task for future generations. People "inherit their belonging to a given nationality each from their parents" (GN Stosunek do narodowości 1925, p. 3).

The journalistic content selected in this article reflects the understanding of the mission of the Catholic Church towards the state and society in the journalism of the "Gość Niedzielny" in the period of crystallization of Polish Statehood after the period of partitions. In the interwar period, the Church in Poland had a strong conviction about its special mission towards the reborn Polish state and the whole nation. It felt responsible not only for the preservation of the national heritage but also for the shape of the state and the attitudes of its citizens desirable for it.

5. Conclusions

The contemporary understanding of the significance of the Catholic Church for state-building cannot take place in isolation from the essence of the Church and its significance for the transformations taking place in the state. In this issue it seems important to take

into account a historical perspective. The detachment of the contemporary context from historical truth generally leads to misinterpretations of current events and to assigning to them a meaning other than their real meaning. Deliberate avoidance of facts recorded by history may bear the hallmarks of manipulation of the message, which today, freely shaped and widely disseminated, may be detrimental to the proper shape of social relations.

Gość Niedzielny, in the analyzed period from 1923–1939, made its readers aware in its pages that without the spiritual support of the Church, society on its own would not survive and overcome the dangers that threatened it. Therefore, in shaping the socio-political reality of that time, it was important to rely on the spiritual foundation of faith (GN VII. Zjazd katolicki w Poznaniu 1926, pp. 3–4). This thesis does not seem to have lost its relevance until today. At that time, but also today, it is necessary to realize that the strength of a state cannot be reduced solely to the parameters of a dynamically developing economy, disregarding the moral determinants of the condition of its citizens. The creation of a healthy democratic order in a state required, and still requires, consideration of the axiological system. This is clearly indicated by the social teaching of the Church (GN Przemówienie Ks. Prymasa na Zjeździe Katolickim w Inowrocławiu 1927, p. 4). It was to constitute in the discourse of the *Gość Niedzielny* an important catalyst for the development of society and at the same time a kind of protective screen for citizens in the face of spiritual and moral dangers. The moral competence of the Church was of particular importance in determining the strategic direction of society's development and in helping to make the right axiological decisions (GN Kościół i państwo 1934, p. 2). A limitation of the presented study is the inability to address the needs of non-Catholic Polish populations needs—their reactions to the uncertainties and difficulties the interwar period brought. The authors recognizes this research gap as a place for further research and scholarship.

The social teaching of the Church in the discourse of the *Gość Niedzielny* was to be a point of reference in shaping the social order in the state. Especially for believers, it was to determine the criteria of political choices and lawmaking in social and axiological issues. In the discourse of the *Gość Niedzielny* constantly resounded the thesis that the state law should always respect God's law, and even more so should not be flagrantly contradictory to it. Being in agreement with the mission of the Church the editors of that weekly seem to have rightly assumed that if, in the name of progress and modernity, multiplication of material goods, one departs from the affirmation of Christian values, which in the social dimension have a universal value, the country will face regression and consequently, fall. However, the recognition of the authority of the Church in the social dimension requires openness to her postulates in the public debate. This issue is closely related to a broader problem, which is the status and perception of the Church in a pluralistic society, as well as its place in the media space (Skrzypczak 2015). The dynamically changing social reality of the interwar period revealed a number of challenges and threats in the ideological and worldview space. Many of them seem to be parallel to the present day. Their identification and understanding require vigilance from both Church and state. The dynamics of social life constantly require the cultivation of moral values and virtues which promise a chance for the development of society and the permanence of the state. The 2002 document "Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life" by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stresses the importance of the social and civic engagement of lay Catholics for the common good, which is the state. It states that: "By fulfilling their civic duties, «guided by a Christian conscience», in conformity with its values, the lay faithful exercise their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values, all the while respecting the nature and rightful autonomy of that order, and cooperating with other citizens according to their particular competence and responsibility" (Ratzinger and Bertone 2002). In particular, this would include defending the value of human life, a proper understanding of freedom, and sustainable economic development. These tasks pose a challenge to contemporary Catholic media. The pro-state profile of the *Gość Niedzielny* from the interwar period can be an inspiration for the contemporary Church media in building an informed and socially

engaged Catholicism taking into account social pluralism according to the guidelines contained in the document: “Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life” (Ratzinger and Bertone 2002). The pluralism that characterizes contemporary society demands that the voice of the Church be considered in public debate. It shall focus especially on dilemmas of axiological character as well as in maintaining national identity and state identification.

In conclusion, it is worth recalling at this point John Paul II’s Statement on the relationship of the Church to the state in the modern world: “In the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* we read: The political community and the Church are on their own ground, independent and autonomous from each other. However, both the political community and the Church, though by different titles, serve the personal and social vocation of the same people. They will be able to perform this service for the good of all the more effectively if they cooperate with one another in a healthy way, taking into account the circumstances of place and time. (...) The meaning the Council gives to the term “separation of Church and state” is thus very far removed from that which totalitarian regimes have tried to give it” (Pope John Paul II 2005, p. 123). In the light of the experiences recalled from the analysis of the discourse *Gość Niedzielny* on the pro-state role of the Catholic Church and the quoted words of John Paul II, building good relations between the state and the Church for the good of society is still a very serious and current challenge.

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