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The relationship between the Catholic Church and The Polish State in reality of post-secularisation

Abstract: Modernity has modified and significantly limited the role of religion. Idea of the disappearance of religion and replacing it by the knowledge became the foundation of the concept of secularisation. However radical theory of secularisation, providing the general disappearance of religion and its contradiction with the modernization, has lost its focus at the end of the 20th century. It does not mean that there is no place for religion even in modern societies. Moreover, the strength of religion institutions and their relationship with the secular authority is not the same in different countries.

In the literature Poland is presented as one of the few countries where religion plays an important role in public life, and the Church is a very influential institution. However the ideas of secularisation were not completely indifferent to the evolution of modern Polish society.

The introduction of a democratic system in Poland after 1989 opened a new chapter in the relationship between the spiritual (the Catholic Church) and secular authority (the State), at the same time, starting with a discussion about the presence of the first entity in the public sphere and its role. Author tries to describe the relationship between religion institution and the Polish State in this new reality.

Key words: the Catholic Church, the State, post-secularisation, relationship

Introduction

In accordance with the ideas of philosophical and theological period of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, religion played an important role in the functioning

of the society. These views have been challenged by representatives of the Enlightenment. Modernity has modified and significantly limited the role of religion. Its current functions have been taken over by other institutions. The industrial revolution, political, economic, cultural and social transformations have resulted in visible changes in the religious sphere in Europe. The idea of the disappearance of religion and replacing it by the knowledge became the foundation of the concept of secularisation.

However radical theory of secularisation, providing the general disappearance of religion and its contradiction with the modernization, has lost its focus at the end of the 20th century. The emergence of new and renewing the ancient religious movements, as well as testing the level of religiosity in the various societies have forced supporters of secularism to upgrade traditional theories. Since the 1970s, more and more rarely appears the idea of deterministic relationship between modernization and secularisation. Difficult to defend is also the hypothesis of a universal and global nature of the process of secularisation. The indicators of religiosity, though often reveal the weakness of institutional religion, also show that this phenomenon takes place in different countries with different strength and speed. There is no doubt that we can observe the process of de-institutionalisation especially in Europe. The Church in contemporary societies often loses former position, meaning, power, and authority. It is no longer an institution with a monopoly on the clarification of the reality¹. However it does not mean that there is no place for religion even in modern societies. Moreover, the strength of religion institutions and their relationship with the secular authority is not the same in different countries.

In the literature Poland is presented as one of the few countries where religion plays an important role in public life, and the Church is a very influential institution. Attention is drawn to the intense, historical intimacy between the State and the Church. Publicly manifest Christian roots became a part of tradition and a picture of Polish society. Even the days of communism and atheism did not modify this state. The Church has still an important place in Polish public discourse and is an important and influential institution in society. There is no doubt that the Church has played a large role in Polish history. The difficult and often painful history of the Polish nation, the numerous wars, partitions, or the Communist period, paradoxically, have contributed to the strengthening of the role of the Church in public life. This institution was identified not only in terms of its religious dimension, but also became a mainstay of Polish traditions and the Communist opposition. And this all took place when the strong ideas of secularisation were affecting the whole of Europe. However the ideas of secularisation were not completely indifferent to the

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¹ See: J. Mariański, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce w przestrzeni życia publicznego. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2013, p. 86-88.

evolution of modern Polish society. Faith is increasingly an individual concern in contemporary Poland. Even people who call themselves Catholics don't practise regularly and rarely know, and accept the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. What's more, the Church's hierarchy doesn't possess the authority it used to have. Every attempt to influence the political sphere is strongly criticized.

After 1989, the Church in Poland, had to find its own, new place in a modern democracy. The main question is: how strong secularisation and democratic ideas have affected the place and role of the Church in public life. There is no easy answer on this question. Many things should be considered. One of them is the relationship between religion institution and the State. How this relationship looks like according to regulations and in everyday life.

Separation or connection? – possible solutions

In the literature of the subject you can find many models showing the relationships between religion and politics. Using three models is the easiest way you can present it. The first is based on the premise of separation and independence of the religion and politics. According to this model both these spheres "are in a different reality, are designed for other values and purposes (...) action to be taken in terms of religion, come down to the existential sphere of man, his internal development (spiritual sphere). In turn, political activities concern (...) the sphere of social, political or economic (sphere of material)"².

Other models assume the connection of the spheres. One of them is based on the primacy of the political power over the religious. Religion often is treated instrumentally by secular authority, as one of the tools which help to establish the best social order. The authority of religious leaders is used to implement the specific policy goals. Inverse model (third one) assumes a different situation – the primacy of religion over the political sphere.

Analysing the situations described above, we can distinguish two main models – one is based on connection, the second one on separation (see Graph 1).

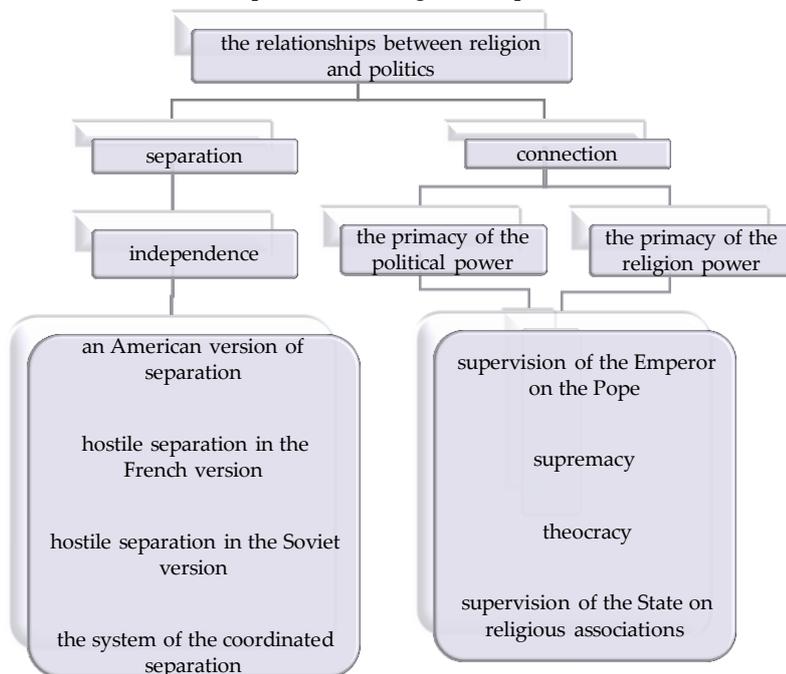
Those models consist of a variety of systems that have occurred in the past, or still have their place in the history of civilization. According to the literature of the subject, in the model of connection we have system of: supervision of the Emperor on the Pope, supremacy, theocracy and supervision of the State on religious associations.

In the first one the secular authority "grants itself the right to supremacy over the Church, the supervision and control over the activities of the Church and interference

² M. Marczevska-Rytko, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010, p. 69.

in its internal affairs"³. Secular authority decides not only about organizational issues, but also about matters of doctrine. The Byzantine Empire is one of the best examples of this model.

Graph 1. Models of the relationships between religion and politics



Source: own research

The system of supremacy is a milder form of the first one. The main idea of this system is based on the will to make the power of the Pope weaker. It was popular for example in Austria in the 18th century.

A theocracy is the inverse system to the first one. In this system the Church controls both spiritual and material sphere, so it has got the power over the secular authority. This idea comes from the Middle Ages. Józef Krukowski describes the system by pointing five main characteristics: the idea of one of the Christian community, the lack the idea of duality between the temporal and spiritual order and the authority of the Pope in both those spheres, the lack of impact of secular powers in the internal affairs of the Church, the possibility to use the physical restraint for religion goals and the superiority of law which is created by the spiritual authority⁴.

³ J. Krukowski, *Kościół i państwo. Podstawy relacji prawnych*, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin 2000, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 31-33

Authority of the State over religious associations is a system dating back to the beginning of the 18th century in which the "religious organisations are treated as a special type of associations of citizens and the role of the State is sovereign authority over them (...). Religious organizations have the freedom to act within the limits of applicable law. In this system the principle of the equality all associations doesn't exist"⁵, what means that some may be in the privileged position. This system appeared first in countries with a prevalence of Protestantism (England, the Netherlands, Switzerland, etc.), and later was taken over in the Catholic States (Austria, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Poland in the interwar period). Some of the countries decided to change this system after the Second Vatican Council.

In the model of separation the most important is the separation between the secular and religious spheres. Literature of the subject makes many systems in this model, among which the most commonly mentioned are: French system, American system and others. Józef Krukowski distinguishes four of them: an American version of separation, hostile separation in the French version, hostile separation in the Soviet version, and the system of the coordinated separation.

The idea of the separation in the United States is a consequence of the large cultural and religious pluralism, and a need to prevent conflicts between different religions. At the same time, the main goal in the US was to break with the idea of the European States of religion and to create a regime based on religious freedom. The Constitution of the United States and the first amendment to the Constitution are the basis of the relationship the State-Church. They give guarantees of religious freedom. The State guarantees the independence of the churches, the lack of interference in the internal affairs, freedom in the conduct of activities connected with worship, teaching and education.

In the hostile separation system in the French version the main idea is the hostile policy of the State towards religion. This system was formed during the French Revolution as an expression of the fight against the idea of absolute monarchy and a manifestation of the liberal ideology. The State guaranteed religion freedom, however many acts of the revolutionary Government was targeted in the Church and the Pope. The most important aim was a complete removal of religion from public life and reduce it to the private sphere. This system still exists in France, although in a more facile form.

The hostile separation system in the Soviet version is the only non-democratic regimes. Classics of Marxism define religion as a form of human alienation, which inhibits its social progress. In the theoretical assumptions it should be replaced by the atheistic worldview. The fight against religion was conducted by all practical means, which included also coercive measures and terror.

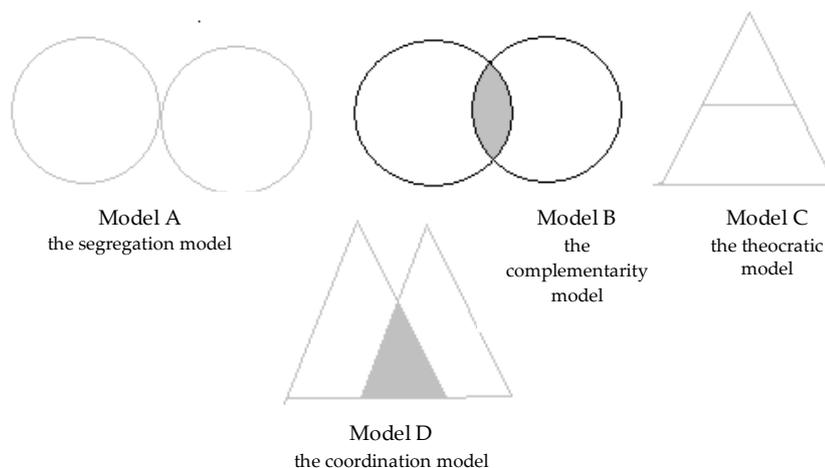
⁵ M. Marczevska-Rytko, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, op.cit., p. 74.

The coordinated separation model exists in Germany. It was created after World War II, as a result of the aspirations of the Protestant churches to be independent. According to this system all the churches are autonomous entity. In the case of matters which interested both: the State and the Church for example issues related to family, school, religious education, social care, they should be regulated by bilateral agreements. This model is based on independence and separation but also on cooperation for the common good of the human person.

Apart those systems it is worth to refer two more divisions of models of the relationship of the State and religion. One of them by Marek Safjan lists four different models: atheistic, neutral, secular and religious. Atheistic State (e.g.. Albania) aims to eliminate the impact of religious communities in public life and fights against religion. In neutral States (eg. France, Czech Republic, Turkey) religious communities have no impact on the legislation or political institutions. Cooperation in the different dimension between the institutions of the State and religious communities is common in the Secular State (e.g.. Poland, Italy, Germany, Hungary). The religion State model (which can be seen on Greece and Malta) is based on the privileged position of religious communities⁶.

The second division belongs to Dariusz Góra-Szopiński. He lists four possible scenarios for the diversification of competences between the secular and religious sphere (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. Models of the relationships between religion and politics according to Góra-Szopiński



Source: D. Góra-Szopiński, *Złoty środek. Kościół wobec współczesnych wizji państwa*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2007.

⁶ M. Marczevska-Rytka, *Religia i polityka w globalizującym się świecie*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010, p.75-76.

Model A (the segregation model) shows a situation “in which none of the members of the civil sphere is not a member of the spiritual sphere. (...) [In the model B – the complementarity model – KP] – there are those people who belong only to one sphere (civil or spiritual), but also those who identify with two in the same time (...). When the problem of dependence between the spheres appears, there are two different options. The first option is the domination one of the sphere over the second [the theocratic model] (...). The second option is to maintain the fragile balance between two vertices sprouting out of the one common basis [the coordination model – KP]”⁷. The type of the model will influence on the issue of the transfer of power. In the case of the model A the problem does not exist, because no directive from one sphere concerns the second sphere. The model C is also very simple. Domination one of spheres means that its directive will also concern in the second sphere. Two other models are based on dependence. Model B does not guarantee, but only gives chance to impact one of the sphere on the overall social life. In the situation of different directives it is important how strong is the bond between a person with a sphere. The further from the centre of one of the spheres, the easier their directives can be undermined or even ignored. Finally model D is based on the certainty of both centres that their directives will be implemented. At the time of the conflict, members of society are subject to a double responsibility. They also have the right to refer from one authority to another, though this most often contribute to the exacerbation of the conflict.

The relationship between the Polish State and the Catholic Church

The introduction of a democratic system in Poland after 1989 opened a new chapter in the relationship between the spiritual (the Catholic Church) and secular authority (the State), at the same time, starting with a discussion about the presence of the first entity in the public sphere and its role. Attempt to determine the place of religion in the public sphere, as well as to regulate the relationship between the State and the Church after the transformation, was really an answer of the question of the possibility/need to implement separation between those two entities. The most clear realization of this conflict was a debate on the establishment of a Constitution, which would clearly define the place of the Church in the new political situation.

In the Constitution description of the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church is based on three words: autonomy, independence and interloper-

⁷ D. Góra-Szopiński, *Złoty środek. Kościół wobec współczesnych wizji państwa*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2007, p. 35-36.

ability. They also appear in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and in the Concordat.

In "the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world" the bishops highlight the need for separation of what concerns the political community and the Church. This separation shows what the believers make (whether individually or in associations) in their own name (guided by moral principles), as citizens, what in the name of the Church. This is necessary because "the Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other. Yet both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same men. The more that both foster sounder cooperation between themselves with due consideration for the circumstances of time and place, the more effective will their service be exercised for the good of all. For man's horizons are not limited only to the temporal order; while living in the context of human history, he preserves intact his eternal vocation. The Church, for her part, founded on the love of the Redeemer, contributes toward the reign of justice and charity within the borders of a nation and between nations. By preaching the truths of the Gospel, and bringing to bear on all fields of human endeavor the light of her doctrine and of a Christian witness, she respects and fosters the political freedom and responsibility of citizens"⁸.

Similar in its content, excerpt from *Gaudium et spes*, is 1st article of the Concordat: "The Republic of Poland and the Holy See reaffirm that the State and the Catholic Church are, each in its own domain, independent and autonomous, and that they are fully committed to respecting this principle in all their mutual relations and in co-operating for the promotion of the benefit of humanity and the good of the community"⁹ and 25th article of the Constitution: "The relationship between the State and churches and other religious organizations shall be based on the principle of respect for their autonomy and the mutual independence of each in its own sphere, as well as on the principle of cooperation for the individual and the common good"¹⁰.

"In the sense of legal autonomy means the possibility of establishing rights and governing it in their field. Independence means the degree of autonomy of the existence in relation to another, which excludes interference in the internal affairs

⁸ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world "Gaudium et spes" chapter IV, §76*, in: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html [retrieved on 10.02.2018].

⁹ *Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, 1993, art. 1*, in: <http://www.concordatwatch.eu/topic-1331.843> [retrieved on 15.02.2018].

¹⁰ *The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997, art 25*, in: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/konse.htm> [retrieved on 15.02.2018].

of each other”¹¹. There is a certain relationship between the two concepts resulting from the fact that independence is the highest degree of autonomy. The difference is that “autonomy thus conceived is primarily in relationships ad intra-internal relations, independence in relationships ad extra – in external relations”¹².

Only the combination of both terms (autonomous and independent) captures the nature of the relationship between the Church and the State. Both entities are independent, do not interfere with each other space, do not exercise sovereignty, each is governed by its own laws. This is described often as some kind of separation. However, this separation is not hostile and its goal is not to eliminate the Church from the social life.

The word separation is considered by many commentators as a statement that is not in the full reality. That is because the principle of separation can be variously interpreted.

Józef Krukowski believes that the settlement of this issue depends on the interpretation of the principle of separation, but on the condition that Concordat does not interfere with the concept of coordinated separation (friendly), that has found acceptance in Polish legislation after 1989. However, words: autonomy and independence better reflect reality. For this reason, many commentators stop using word: separation. So the Church and the State are presented as two independent and autonomous entities, because their legal independence and autonomy not due to mutual giving a concession, but is a reflection of the reality. None of them is derived from the other, both exist and operate separately, each in their own field.

At this point in an attempt to determine the relationship between the Church and the State appear two ambiguities. The first concerns the problem of interoperability, the second – interpretation of statement: their own areas. The existence of the need for cooperation in itself does not seem to be problematic. First, because it is a natural consequence of the existence of both orders and their actions in and for the good of society itself. Secondly, both the State and the Church recognise the need for this cooperation, and their declarations are located both in the Constitution of Poland, as well as in the Concordat and the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The problem arises when commentators try to determine under which conditions and to what extent this cooperation would be carried out.

Regulations give a wide range of interpretations what often leads to confusion. In an attempt to clarify at what level this cooperation should be carried out, it is necessary to begin consideration of the question of ownership own space by the Church and the State. Remigiusz Sobański points out that both the Church and the State are not subordinated to each other hierarchically and not remaining in mutual

¹¹ W. Góralski, A. Pieńdyk, *Zasada niezależności i autonomii państwa i kościoła w konkordacie polskim z 1993 roku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Warszawa 2000, p. 11-12.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

isolation, although in cases in which they consider to be competent, they are “the last instance”.

The State respects the independence of the Church in fulfilling its religious-moral mission, and the Church respects the independence of the State in the temporal order. There are therefore two sovereignty: the spiritual and temporal. The problem arises, however, when these two separate areas have to meet and when appears situation which generates the need for cooperation. At this point it is worth noting that there are two different cases of such potential cooperation: in the areas which are mentioned in regulations, and in the areas which are not mentioned directly but are only the result of the interpretation of the general rulings.

The 11th article of Concordat says that “The Contracting Parties declare their will to co-operate for the purposes of protecting and respecting the institution of marriage and the family, which are the foundation of society. They stress the value of the family and the Holy See, for its part, reaffirms Catholic doctrine of the dignity and indissolubility of marriage”¹³. This can be concluded that the common area of activities will involve first of all any problems related to family and marriage. The Catholic Church always in this topic will take into account religious-moral issues. This means, that the Catholic Church will assume the illegality of homosexual unions, disagreement on abortion or in vitro procedure. And the State as a secular entity does not have any obligation to build his vision of the family and marriage on the foundation of religion. At this point the question arises how this cooperation should look like, where are its boundaries and in the end who ultimately has the right to take conclusive voice.

Another common area will certainly be the matter of social groups excluded, so the activity of charity and caring. Although there are no direct entries that would point this issue under the cooperation of the Church and the State, according to the reports of national research centres there is a big social consent on this kind of function of religious institutions. It also follows the tradition and history of the Catholic Church.

In the end, the last area of cooperation is based on education, which is associated with the family and the socialisation. This is also connected with the Church’s possibility to teach religion in public schools and to possesses own educational institutions.

So the areas, which would be shared by the State and the Catholic Church, on the one hand, are based on the direct regulations, on the other hand, derives from the tradition and history. However, as practice shows, the lack of clearly regulations allows for far reaching interpretations, insinuations and even abuse. This applies not only to determine the fields of cooperation, but also the scope of both sides in

¹³ *Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland*, 1993, art. 11, op. cit..

that dimension. Pretty big interpretative freedom often leads to disputes, based on the allegations of both parties about the denial secular nature of the State.

Disputes around the place of the Church in public life and its relationship with the State are not based only on the above questions, connected with the area of cooperation. In fact, there are situations when the Church takes a position in space, about which there is no direct regulation in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, or in Concordat, in space which seems to be only secular authority's area. This kind of space can be the policy area. On the one hand, the Church does not want to interfere in the political life in accordance with the principle of autonomy and independence from secular authority. The Pope John Paul II in "Centesimus Annus" underlines that "The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with one another. For such a task the Church offers her social teaching as an indispensable and ideal orientation, a teaching which, as already mentioned, recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good"¹⁴. However the Church not only gives its social doctrine as a hint in the formation of public and political life, but at the same time, on the occasion of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops recall that political power should be done within the limits of the moral order, as required by the common good. That is why "the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgment in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it"¹⁵. The Church gives itself a right to give moral evaluation in policy issues, as well as defines the boundaries of its loyalty to the democratic State – is it not respect fundamental human rights¹⁶.

The Catholic Church in the public opinion

The Church, in the opinion of the Polish society is considered as an institution with a big impact on public life. Through years this opinion shows a stable trend. Belief with a strong influence of the Church is more frequent, among those who are better educated, less likely to participate in religious practices and has left-wing

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus*, chapter IV, § 43, in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html [retrieved on 17.11.2013].

¹⁵ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world "Gaudium et Spes"*, chapter IV, §76, op. cit.

¹⁶ See: M. Zięba OP, *Papież i kapitalizm: od Rerum novarum po Centesimus Annus*, Znak, Kraków 1998.

political views. This view makes also a clear division for those who would like to maintain this state of affairs and those whose aim is to reduce the impact of the Church in the public life. This does not change the fact that in the minds of Poles for traditional and historical reasons, this institution has a big impact on public life and also maintains a constant and high level of social trust and approval. The Church is ranked alongside the Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy, PCK, Caritas and the army as a trustworthy organization, ahead of many other national and international institutions. The indicator varies, on average, around 60% positive indications and any deviation upwards or downwards are instantaneous and depend on the current events in the country. For example after the death of Pope John Paul II or the Smolensk disaster (plane crash) the Church had social approval rating of over 60%. On the other hand, whenever the Church has tried to influence political decisions for example about in vitro, social approval decreased. That's because nearly 80% of Poles believe that the Church hierarchy should reduce its influence in the political sphere. "The vast majority of Poles (86%) are opposed to the Church has commented on political matters. Widely accepted is the principle of separation of Church and the State (85%)"¹⁷. Except politic matters other areas, where the Church should have less impact are those associated with education or upbringing of youth and widely understood family matters (like: abortion or in vitro). The Church should not also give its opinion about the economy problems, including ban on trade on Sunday.

On the other hand, there are areas of life, in which according to the Polish society, the Church should have a greater impact. These include first of all those connected with social care-giving support to people in need, the poor, the sick, the lonely. Another area of the Church activity is work with children – prevention of corruption or organisation of free time. However Polish society does not want to increase the Church impact on the education system in Poland. Finally the last areas are those connected with pastoral activity and morality. "Most of the surveyed (61%) agree with the statement that the ten commandments should be not only the basis of human morality, but also of the laws. Almost half of Poles (48%) think that the politics and social life should be based on religious values"¹⁸.

Conclusion

An attempt to identify and characterize the role and the place of the Catholic Church in the Polish public discourse and its relationship with the secular authority shows how very difficult this task is. The phenomenon of the Catholic Church in Poland is connected with many different aspects. It is important to take into

¹⁷ CBOS, Survey report, *Opinie o działalności Kościoła*, Warszawa 2007, no. 37/2007, p. 2

¹⁸ Ibidem

account not only the letter of the law, but also the practice of everyday life, and other factors, such as history, tradition, the specific nature of Polish Catholicism, processes of secularisation, the orientation of the political clique, the current policy and many others. It seems that the most appropriate and least controversial starting point should be the analysis of the Polish law and attempt to find in it the answers to the question about the nature of the relationship between the Church and the State.

The autonomy, independence and cooperation are the concepts that combine Constitution and the Concordat and set the direction in the relations of State-Church. They are also in line with the policy of the Vatican found during the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. However the law seems to be too vague and gives too wide possibilities of interpretation. As a consequence, differently understood regulations lead to conflicts.

With regard to models of the relationship of the Church and the State, it can be concluded that, on the basis of the Constitution and the Concordat we have to deal in Poland with the coordinated separation model by Kruczkowski, a Secular State by Safjan and complementarity model by Góra-Szopiński. All of these models, although differ in name, combines the assumption of independence of the State and religious communities, and readiness for mutual coordination tasks for the common good of man and society. In the case of matters of concern to both parties, for example on the issue of family, school, religious education, social care, they are to be regulated by bilateral agreements. However, analysis of documents, reviews of different environments, and, above all, the practice of everyday life shows how these rules are unclear. Neither the Constitution nor the Concordat does not specify cooperation between the State and the Catholic Church and which side ultimately would decide the issue especially when the common vision or consensus would be impossible to achieve. Another problem in the legislation is the scope of the common area of activity. This applies in particular to the Catholic Church and the question of what issues and topics, of course, with the exception of religious affairs, the rules allow him to actively functioning.

There is no doubt that the Church still plays an important role in Polish society and is a very influential institution. In social life this institution still has a lot of power. Thanks to historical processes religion has become a permanent part of Polish culture, and the Church is one of the most important players in social life. The future of The Catholic Church in Poland is not in danger, however this institution must create and describe its role within the new reality and social context. The Church (as far as possible) must reject any prejudices and aversion to change, look for new solutions and, above all, clearly define their place and role in public life. Such an attitude is the key to maintaining their spheres of influence in society, as well as protecting itself from secularisation processes.