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Marriage and Family as the Basis of Social Life in Latin Civilization (expert opinion)

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Introductory remarks

The family in the classical sense is the most basic cell of social life, in which the transmission of life takes place not only on the biological level but also on the spiritual level. The foundation for building such a community is the union of a man and a woman according to the order of nature – only in it can the transmission of life take place. The strengthening of the family in the structure of society and the state seems to be necessary. However, this situation has looked different in different societies throughout history.

In this analysis, I focus on civilization, especially as seen by the great Polish historian Feliks Koneczny. He defined it as a method of system of collective life. In a historical perspective, he distinguished many civilizations, evaluating them according to the criterion of respect for human dignity, natural human rights.

In different societies, the family was structured differently and interpersonal relations were arranged differently. Undoubtedly, however, as the root itself indicates, the family is oriented to the procreation and education of offspring, which is possible only in two-sex unions. Felix Koneczny, a prominent founder of the theory of civilization, noted that: “The life of man alone is hindered by his constant readiness (which so eminently distinguishes him from the animals), which drives him to constant cohabitation with a person of the opposite sex. The basis of all union is the union of the human pair”. Thus, the family is a perfectly natural association that fulfills the purpose of human life. In this understanding, there is no place for “unnatural” unisex relationships, which are absolutely contrary to the Creator's design. It is in marriage and the family that man demonstrates and actualizes his social nature¹. Thus, the family is a completely natural association that fulfills the purpose of human life. In this understanding, there is no place for “unnatural” same-sex relationships, which are absolutely contrary to the Creator's design. It is in marriage and the family that man demonstrates and actualizes his social nature.

From an ancestral system to a nation

According to Koneczny, Latin civilization allows for the fullest realization of man's natural inclinations. It is the only personalistic method of collective life in the history of the world. It is a civilization that goes back to the foundations of Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christian religion. It places high demands on family life, which is based on the monogamous, lifelong union of one man and one woman. This

¹ F. Koneczny, *O wielości cywilizacji*, Kraków 1935, p. 67.



monogamy was the result of a long historical process and, according to the author, was made possible by the educational activities of the Catholic Church. It was in Latin civilization that the principle of the equality of man and woman before the law, unknown elsewhere, appeared. The family gained full subjectivity in family law, inheritance law and property law (strengthening of private property in state law)². It took many years for the empowerment of women to take place in the social system. Many other cultures and civilizations had polygamy or, more rarely, polyandry. In polygamous systems, wives were treated as the property of their husbands. Koneczny wrote:

Polygamy not only harms a woman's freedom – indeed, a woman is her husband's property – but it is also one of the causes of civilizational stagnation in those communities where it exists. Polygamous communities deny half of their members the right to self-determination, creativity, knowledge, and freedom because women are the property of their husbands. Polygamy is also responsible for moral stagnation because it demoralizes both the "buyer and owner" of the wife and the one who is "bought and owned"³.

Koneczny pointed out that monogamy is a natural model (there have always been about the same number of women as men). He wrote: "For polygamy requires an excess of women, which nature does not give; such an excess can only come from outside and therefore requires exogamy, which in turn comes later"⁴. In his view, the theory of genderlessness does not stand up to criticism.

In all ancient cultures, the law of child ownership was also present (to this day, elements of such an understanding of the family still exist, for example, in Chinese civilization). Koneczny noted: "On a much larger half of the globe one can be free in person and in kind only after the death of the father. Where slavery existed, the son was in fact the slave of the father. Among the Indians the son and the slave cannot, by law, own anything for themselves"⁵. The object treatment of children is present in cluster civilizations where the dignity of the human person (any person) was not recognized"⁶. Koneczny writes:

To this day – In most parts of the world – children are the property of the father, in the most literal sense of the word, not excluding the right to sell or

² M. Całus, *Państwo i społeczeństwo w cywilizacji łacińskiej w poglądach Feliksa Konecznego*. http://bc.umcs.pl/Content/36175/PDF/czas21815_24_2019_16.pdf [accessed: 5.02.2023].

³ F. Koneczny, *O wielości*, op. cit., p. 112–118.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 70–71.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 73–74.

⁶ M. A. Krąpiec, *Human Rights and Their Threats* "Man in Culture", 1994, No. 3, p. 55–57.



kill. Not among some "savages," but among the Chinese this is the law. A Chinese son is in far greater bondage than a slave farmhand. What a fate for underage children! Missionary efforts to save Chinese children are well known. They even maim and kill their own children! If the child does not please the father, especially a girl, he kills her immediately or throws her into the canal or into the bushes⁷.

In such a system, the man-child has no legal or property subjectivity. It is reduced to the role of a tool. The child had no rights in the family system until the death of the father. This led to the creation of a system in which the head of the family owned not only material goods, but also his own children. Originally, the family system was the most widespread model of family life (still present in many cultures and civilizations). It generated enormous internal conflicts (including cases of patricide), because a person only attained freedom and subjectivity when he became the head of a given family. Until he reached this position, he could practically not exercise his full rights, nor did he have freedom; he was, as it were, part of a larger whole. Koneczny wrote: "A further practical consequence was the principle that neither grandchild nor great-grandchild – as long as the parents are alive – can own property. The owner of their property is the great-grandfather, after his death the grandfather, then the father. Everyone owns his descendants and their property. This relationship is only broken by death – or you have to go beyond the family to create [...] a new family"⁸.

The real breakthrough in social life was the emancipation of the monogamous family as an entity. This process took place under the strong influence of the Church, although it took a very long time and was met with great resistance. It was the monogamy preached by the Church that led to this emancipation⁹. Koneczny wrote: "Christianity makes sacred one of the institutions of the collective life: the institution of marriage"¹⁰. In a polygamous family, the wife was generally the property of the husband; the woman had no legal or real subjectivity. Koneczny noted that: "Polygamous societies deny half of their members the right to self-determination, creativity, knowledge, and freedom because women are the property of their husbands"¹¹. There is no doubt that such a system limited the development of social life and kept it at a relatively primitive level. Of course, subjectivity did not belong only to women,

⁷ F. Koneczny, *O wielości*, op. cit., p. 73.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 77–78.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 108.

¹⁰ Idem, *Chrześcijaństwo wobec ustrój życia zbiorowego*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie”, 1932, No. 30, p. 133.

¹¹ Idem, *O wielości*, op. cit., p. 112.



but also to the younger members of the family. The emancipation of the family led to changes in property law, in which private property became the basis of management¹².

Long-term monogamous relationships are based less on an ancestral hierarchy than on the free decision of two people to start a family. Koneczny calls the emancipation of the family a “serious social upheaval” with enormous consequences. A son acquires full property rights during his father's lifetime, allowing him to start his own independent family¹³.

The teachings of the church had a direct impact on the empowerment of women in social life¹⁴, in which the expansion of the Marian cult in Christianity had a major role¹⁵. Along with respect for personal dignity, the granting of rights to women began, aimed at their legal and moral empowerment. It can be said that only in the Latin civilization this process took place, in other civilizations there was no such evolution (example: Arab civilization). Thus, the separation of the family inherently eliminates or weakens the old customs. For example, ancestral vengeance disappears. The powers in this area are transferred to the state, with its apparatus of coercion and justice. Man thus transcends the “narrow ancestral ethic” and social life develops. A state in the modern sense of the word is formed. Society is transformed into a cultural community, that is, a nation. It is not blood ties, but culture that constitutes such a community. Only on such a basis can Latin civilization develop, assuming a distinction between private and public law. Only in such a structure can we speak of the free development of man on the moral, spiritual and material levels¹⁶. Koneczny noted:

In a group one was responsible only for obedience, in an emancipated family for everything. Those who were unwilling or unable to develop self-criticism did not grow up to the degree of responsibility required by personal and material freedom, which is a prelude to personalism. In an emancipated family, the individual is no longer passive. Every adult has the right of initiative, which gives rise to prevention, foresight, reflection, and

¹² P. Skrzydlewski, *Rodzina w cywilizacji a wolność człowieka: na kanwie rozważań Feliksa Konecznego*, „Człowiek w Kulturze”, 1998, No. 11, p. 209.

¹³ F. Koneczny, *O ład w historii*, Warszawa 1991, p. 23.

¹⁴ Idem, *Kościół a cywilizacje*, Lublin 1996, p. 40.

¹⁵ A. Jankowski, *Maryja – biblijną syntezą powołania kobiety*, „Znak”, 1976, nr 262, p. 34–45; R. Pernoud, *Kobieta w czasach katedr*, transl. I. Badowska, Warszawa 1990.

¹⁶ P. Skrzydlewski, *Rodzina w cywilizacji*, op. cit., p. 210.



finally (the flower of personalism) submission to norms, that is, mastery of the self¹⁷.

We can see that both individual and social life are truly developed in such a civilization.

The family, then, is the natural community in which each person can grow. It is here that a person comes into the world and develops on a biological and spiritual level. An extremely important aspect of its existence is the question of the free choice of a spouse. In different civilizations, this possibility has presented itself in different ways. In a situation of coercion, it is difficult to talk about the subjective treatment of a person. In Chinese civilization, relationships are based on the implementation of the will of the parents, who induce children to marry and produce male offspring. In the Jewish civilization, the emphasis was on the implementation of religious commandments, etc.¹⁸.

Private property as the foundation of family life

Koneczny pointed out the great importance of private property for the freedom to develop family life. Property as an external guarantor of freedom, the possibility of life and the realization of various goals – this is a very strong principle of Latin civilization. Of course, this cannot be understood in materialistic terms. Koneczny himself asserted: “Our goals are, of course, supermaterial, but they cannot do without material means. [...] The very care of the poor requires that there be wealthy citizens in the parish, and so on. The development of wealth becomes a part of self-improvement, as long as this wealth is treated as an instrument of progress in spiritual terms of being. If we treat wealth from this position, we remain poor in spirit”¹⁹. Every individual and family has the right to multiply wealth, through which the whole community develops.

The multiplication of wealth took place differently in different civilizations. For example, in the Turanian civilization, to which Russia belonged, it took place through appropriation from others during plundering expeditions; in the Latin civilization – through the production of various goods²⁰. Economic development was thus achieved through work. It was Christianity that treated work morally as a privilege and a duty. In many other civilizations, it was treated as a “necessary evil”. In many primitive societies, one could not work beyond the necessity of satisfying the most basic needs. Such communities (tribes) have no chance for greater economic development. “There are societies”, wrote Koneczny, “that despise

¹⁷ F. Koneczny, *Prawa dziejowe*, Komorów 1997, p. 143.

¹⁸ P. Skrzydlewski, *Rodzina w cywilizacji*, op. cit., pp. 227–228.

¹⁹ F. Koneczny, *The Rozwój moralności*, Lublin 1938, p. 271.

²⁰ Idem, *A glance at Polish economic history*, [in:] *Poland in universal culture*, ed. by F. Koneczny, Krakow 1918, p. 269.



work of any kind; others despise certain kinds of work. Work can be a blessing in life, but it can also be a curse”²¹. In ancient times, work was considered an unworthy occupation for a free man, which is why it was mainly done by slaves. In Christianity, man even "sanctifies" himself through work²². Making it a moral duty (the Apostle Paul said, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat”) became the leaven for the abolition of slavery. Only in Latin civilization was this possible on such a scale.

Christianity also linked property and work with the obligation to provide material support for the family. Depriving it of property is therefore a blow to the rights of the family, to the basis of its existence²³. In this sense, the communist system relegates social life to primitive forms of the parastatal system.

Immovable property took on a special importance in Latin civilization. In particular, the ownership of land, of a house, was even culture-creating. “Therefore, any action that harms individual immovable property harms the monogamous family itself, and thus Latin civilization”²⁴. The state's task is the external and internal protection of people's lives and property. In modern times, ideological and civilizational chaos has arisen, which has led to confusion in economic life.

If, then, in the same country, society is to be organized on the basis of solidarity and class struggle, on the principles of private property and communism – if, at the same time, society, the people and the state are to be pulled in opposite directions, if the state and the plans for “reform” are to have the same influence on how the social system is to be changed, with people each aiming at something different – then the result must be an ever-worsening economic disorder and a decline in morality. The moral sense itself is wasted in constant doubt about what is good and what is bad. The anarchy of ethics brings civilization to a standstill – even in material matters²⁵.

The response to this chaos was the social teaching of the Church in the papal encyclicals *Rerum novarum* of Leo XII or *Quadragesimo anno* of Pius XI. The latter wrote The latter, writing “on the necessity and value of the spiritual life, the dignity and sanctity of human life, the duty of obedience, the divine origin

²¹ Idem, *Cywilizacja żydowska*, vol. II, Londyn 1974, p. 268.

²² See John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html [accessed: 5.09.2023].

²³ P. Skrzydlewski, *Rodzina w cywilizacji*, op. cit., p. 221.

²⁴ F. Koneczny, *Rozwój moralności...*, pp. 261–272.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 292.



of human authority, the sacramental nature of marriage and, consequently, the sanctity of family life”²⁶, spoke out against the secularization of life as the cause of the crisis of Christian civilization²⁷.

Ideological threats

Koneczny rejected all socialist demands for the introduction of so-called property equality. Such “equality” could only be established by force and would ultimately lead only to the multiplication of poverty. “The view”, he wrote, “that the cause of the poverty of some is the wealth of others is popular. From St. Basil in the fourth century B.C. to the present day, the illusion has persisted that the *rich* could eliminate poverty if they wished, while induction teaches that if there were no richer, all would be poor”²⁸. In another place we read: “Some peoples have developed a postulate of equality of wealth. It can be seen so far among the Eskimos, the African Negroes, or the Eastern Turks (not far from the Yakuts). An individual is allowed to own only as much as he *needs*, and he is not allowed to work beyond what is necessary. Everywhere, even the richest is poor, and no settlement can survive economic disaster. It is easy to conclude that all those who oppose the accumulation of wealth in one hand have been affected by stagnation”²⁹. In this very vivid way, Koneczny made a very effective critique of the socialist doctrine and system that developed so strongly in the 19th and 20th centuries. He saw socialism as striking at the very heart of family ties. The child in such a system became the property of the state, not of the parents. This was evident in both German National Socialism and Soviet Communism. The Communists argued that man should be a religious and essentially a family. The family, they argued, “encloses the individual in a narrow circle of interests, develops tendencies toward private property, which in turn leads to the formation of classes and gives rise to social antagonisms” and thus “endangers the equality and freedom of men”³⁰.

Father Joseph Shepherd pointed out even before World War II the objectification of children in this system, their real demoralization. We read: “And to give a child who is closest to the family to a *Komsomol* means to lose him completely, that is, to find in him after a few months religious unbelief, haughtiness, contempt for parents and elders, disobedience, complete disregard for domestic order, and

²⁶ Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Ubi arcano Dei consilio. O pokoju Chrystusowym w królestwie Chrystusa z 23 grudnia 1922 r.* http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_pxi_enc_23121922_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio_en.html [accessed: 5.09.2023].

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ F. Koneczny, *O ład w historii*, p. 31.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 29–30.

³⁰ J. Pastuszka, *Psychology of Communism*, [in:] *Bolshevism. A Collected Work*, Lublin 1938, p. 242.



relaxed views of sexual morality”³¹. Thus, the foundations of Latin civilization, for which the family is the basis of its functioning, are completely undermined by the triumph of such a system.

Professor Barbara Kiereś directly shows that under communism there is unlimited possibility of breaking the marriage bond, killing unborn children, etc. Similarly, liberalism, which favors individual selfishness, destroys the communal basis of social life, including the family. The true criterion for establishing social relations is not so much the common good as the realization of individual interests. Kiereś writes:

The consequence of liberalism conceived in this way is anarchism, and thus ultimately the annihilation of any community, which in relation to the family means its disintegration. Under liberalism, the family exists as long as it is a "community of benefits." A threat to it is to place any restrictions on its individual members in the pursuit of their own goals. In such a family, children are "raised" based on the so-called ideas of anti-pedagogy, which states that a child comes into the world ready-made and does not need any upbringing³².

Summary

Latin civilization, firmly rooted in ancient tradition and inspired by the Church's teaching on the personal dignity of the human person, has led throughout history to the strengthening of the family. This was achieved through the erosion of the old family system that prevailed in ancient pagan cultures. With the emancipation of the family throughout the social system, women and children were empowered, including legally. They ceased to be treated as commodities. The emancipation of the family as the basic cell of collective life led in Latin civilization to the formation of nations understood as cultural communities.

Extremely important in this process was the respect for private property, which provided a basis for the secure and free development of the family.

Ideologies that negated the permanence of family life became extremely dangerous from the point of view of Latin American civilization. First of all, marriage as a lifelong union between a man and

³¹ Ibidem.

³² B. Kiereś, *Personalistyczny wymiar wspólnotowego życia w rodzinie. Kontekst cywilizacyjny* "Pedagogia Christiana", 2015, No. 2, p. 201–202.



a woman was undermined (as liberal ideology had already done), and then parental relationships (under both communism and Nazism, children were treated as property of the state). Thus, it can be said that the ideological attack on the family, which has been going on for more than a century, is at the same time a blow to the foundations of the Latin civilization in which Europe – and Poland in particular – was formed. Pawel Skrzydlewski writes:

The loss of the truth about human dignity, or a false conception of it, leads not only to human misery, but also and above all to the loss of the real subjectivity of the human person in the space of public life. The lack of subjectivity reduces the human person to the role of a thing, an object and a means, sometimes used in different ways. This is the way to the existence of totalitarianisms, the way to the depersonalization of the human person, to the denial of his rights to self-determination and, finally, to the right to life. Thus, the lack of truth about the dignity of the human person is the germ of all that is represented by the civilization of death, every totalitarianism, every form of enslavement³³.

³³ P. Skrzydlewski, *Osoba w przestrzeni publicznej. Selected issues in the philosophy of man and politics*, Krakow 2016, p. 271.



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