

= Piotr Skarga =

Piotr Skarga ( less often , Piotr Pow?ski ; 2 February 1536 ? 27 September 1612 ) was a Polish Jesuit , preacher , hagiographer , polemicist , and leading figure of the Counter @-@ Reformation in the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth . Due to his oratorical gifts , he has been called " the Polish Bossuet " .

Skarga is remembered by Poles as a vigorous early advocate of reforms to the Polish @-@ Lithuanian polity , and as a critic of the Commonwealth 's governing classes , as well as of its religious tolerance policies . He advocated strengthening the monarch 's power at the expense of parliament ( the Sejm ) and of the nobility ( the szlachta ) .

He was a professor at the Kraków Academy and in 1579 he became the first rector of the Wilno Academy . Later , he served in the Jesuit College at Kraków . He was also a prolific writer , and his Lives of the Saints ( ?ywoty ?wi?tych , 1579 ) was for several centuries one of the most popular books in the Polish language . His other important work was the Sejm Sermons ( Kazania Sejmowe , 1597 ) , a political treatise , which became popular in the second half of the 19th century , when he was seen as the " patriotic seer " who predicted the partitions of Poland .

= = Life = =

Skarga was born on 2 February 1536 , north of Grójec , in the small folwark ( manor ) of Pow?szczyzna ( also known as Skargowzczyzna or Skargowo ) . His family are often described as lesser landless szlachta ( gentry , or nobility ) , but it seems likely most of his ancestors had been peasants , later townsfolk who had only recently become minor nobility . He was reared at the family estate , and lost his parents when he was young ; his mother died when he was eight years old , and his father , Micha? Skarga , four years later . Thereafter he was supported by his brothers , one of whom , Stanis?aw Skarga , was a priest . Piotr started his education at a parochial school in Grójec before moving to Kraków , where in 1552 he enrolled at the Kraków Academy , precursor to Jagiellonian University . His teachers included the priests Marcin Glicjusz and Jan Leopolda . He finished his studies in 1555 .

Immediately after he finished his education , he served for two years as rector of the collegiate school at St. John 's Church in Warsaw . From October 1557 he tutored Jan T?czy?ski , son of magnate Andrzej T?czy?ski , and visited Vienna with his pupil , where he likely became closely acquainted with the Society of Jesus , a key order of the counter @-@ reformation . He then returned to Poland , which emerged as one of the main terrains of struggle between the Protestant Reformation movement and the Catholic Church 's counter @-@ reformation . From 1562 he served as a parson in Rohatyn , and around 1564 he took holy orders . That year he became a canon , and the following year he also served as chancellor of the Lwów chapter . From 1566 to 1567 he was chaplain at the court of castellan Jan Krzysztof Tarnowski ( the royal secretary to King Sigismund II Augustus ) ; after Tarnowski 's death he returned to Lwów , taking up the position of the cathedral preacher .

In 1568 he departed for Rome , arriving in 1569 and joining the Society of Jesus . In 1571 he returned to Poland , and preached successively at Pu?tusk , Lwów , Jaros?aw , Warsaw ( where he delivered a sermon before the Sejm ) and P?ock , where he visited the court of Queen Anna Jagiellon , who would become one of his patrons . A leading proponent of counter @-@ reformation , Skarga commonly preached against non @-@ Catholic denominations and helped secure funds and privileges for the Society of Jesus .

In 1573 he was rector of the Wilno Jesuit College , precursor to the Wilno Academy ( Vilnius University ) . In 1577 he became a professor at the Kraków Academy . That year he also finished one of his most important works , The Lives of the Saints ( ?ywoty ?wi?tych ) , which was published two years later . In 1579 he became the first rector of the Wilno Academy .

In 1576 he published Pro Sacratissima Eucharistia contra haeresim Zwinglianam , ad Andream Volanum ( For the Most Sacred Eucharist , against the Zwinglian Heresy , to Andrzej Wolan ) . In 1582 he published Artes duodecim Sacramentarium , sive Zwinglio @-@ calvinistarum ( The

Seven Pillars on Which Stands Catholic Doctrine on the Most Sacred Sacrament of the Altar ) . Both these works formed part of Skarga 's dialogue with the Calvinist author Andrzej Wolan , which took the form of a series of rival polemics over a number of years . Wolan was a notable figure in the Commonwealth politics ? not only a publicist , but a royal secretary , diplomat and Sejm deputy .

In 1584 Skarga was transferred to the new Jesuit College at Kraków . On 26 March 1587 he founded the Polish version of the Mount of Piety , a pawnbroker run as a charity and called in Polish the Bank Pobożny ( lit. the Pious Bank ) . In 1588 the newly elected King Sigismund III Vasa established the new post of court preacher , and Skarga became the first priest to hold it . Skarga became a valued adviser to the King , and Sigismund became so fond of him that when the priest considered retirement , Sigismund rejected this , requesting that he remain at court for as long as possible .

As part of his Counter @-@ Reformation policies , Skarga was also a major proponent of the Union of Brest , a merger between the Roman Catholic Church and a faction of the Eastern Orthodox Church . His influence on King Sigismund , whom he supported ( or encouraged ) in opposing religious tolerance and seeking to strengthen royal power , was a factor that has been cited as a cause of the civil war ? the ( ultimately unsuccessful ) Zebrzydowski Rebellion of 1606 ? in which the royal faction confronted a popular movement among the nobility , led by the Zebrzydowski family , who sought to depose Sigismund . Some critics referred to Skarga as " the principal mischief @-@ maker of the Kingdom " ( in the Latin , " praecepius turbator Regni " ) .

In 1611 he delivered his final sermon before the Sejm and published his final work , an ideological testament , Wzywanie do jednej zbawiennej wiary ( A Call for One Redeeming Faith ) . He remained Sigismund 's court preacher until April 1612 , four months before his death .

Skarga died on 27 September 1612 and was buried in the Saints Peter and Paul Church in Kraków .

= = Writer = =

In addition to being a popular and well @-@ known preacher , Skarga was the author of numerous theological texts and polemics , and it is as a writer that his fame has endured .

His two most important works are The Lives of the Saints ( Żywoty Świętych , 1579 ) and Sejm Sermons ( Kazania Sejmowe , 1597 ) . The former , a hagiography , won him fame in his lifetime , while the Sermons gained recognition only in subsequent centuries , during the Partitions of Poland . Tazbir describes the Lives as Skarga 's chief work and as a major attack on the religious tolerance promoted by the Warsaw Confederation . The book was immensely popular , the first edition selling out by 1583 . A second edition was published in 1585 , and by the mid @-@ 17th century twelve editions had been printed , making it one of the most popular books published in Poland and Lithuania in that era ( rivaled by the Kronika Polska ? Polish Chronicles ? of Marcin Bielski ) . It was Skarga 's most popular work and continued to rank highly with Polish readers until the 18th and 19th centuries , when it was eclipsed by his Sermons .

The Sermons , a political treatise composed in the guise of sermons , went almost unnoticed by contemporaries . In the Sermons , Skarga discusses what he sees as the problems of the ailing Commonwealth : lack of patriotism , internal quarrels , tolerance of heretics , the king 's relative powerlessness , perverse laws ( a critique of the nobility 's Golden Freedoms ) , and immorality . Another notable aspect of the book is its focus on the desperate plight of the serfs ( the peasants ) .

= = Importance = =

Janusz Tazbir , in his 1978 biography of Skarga , noted that " there already is an extensive literature on Skarga " . He attributed this to Skarga 's being the most famous figure of the Polish Counter @-@ Reformation , which gained him his initial fame ; and , later , to his rediscovered reform proposals which , while controversial in his time , gained him renown during the Partitions of Poland and have been well regarded since .

His popularity as the " patriotic seer " who predicted the Partitions reached a zenith in the second

half of the 19th century , when some historians , such as Ignacy Chrzanowski , went so far as to speak of " the cult of Skarga . " Tazbir states that Skarga 's writings are valued primarily for their advocacy of political and socioeconomic reforms , rather than for their theological content .

From the Polish Enlightenment of the middle of the 18th century onward , his works , penned in Polish rather than in Latin , have also been increasingly valued for their style and contributions to the development of the written Polish language and of Polish literature . Skarga has been positively viewed not only by historians but by such luminaries of Polish culture as poet Adam Mickiewicz and painter Jan Matejko ; the former called Skarga 's Lives a " most poetic Polish masterpiece " , and the latter created a well @-@ known painting , Kazanie Skargi ( Skarga 's Sermon ) .

Over the centuries , Skarga became a character in a number of other artistic works , including a novel by Józef Ignacy Krasiński , though he has never been the chief character in any literary work longer than a poem .

In 1936 , on the 400th anniversary of Skarga 's birth , with the endorsement of Poland 's President Ignacy Mościcki and the Polish government , the Polish writer Zofia Kossak @-@ Szczucka proposed that Skarga be beatified . Nearly eight decades later , Skarga 's cause for beatification was inaugurated on 12 June 2013 .

In 2012 , on the 400th anniversary of his death , the Polish Sejm declared that year the " Year of the Reverend Piotr Skarga " .

= = Writings = =

Pro Sacratissima Eucharistia contra haeresim Zwinglianam , ad Andream Volanum ( For the Most Sacred Eucharist , against the Zwinglian Heresy , 1576 )

Lives of the Saints ( Żywoty Świętych , 1579 , 8 editions in his lifetime ) .

Artes duodecim Sacramentarium , sive Zwinglio @-@ calvinistarum ( Siedem filarów , na których stoi katolicka nauka o Przenajświętszym Sakramencie Ołtarza , II The Seven Pillars on Which Stands Catholic Doctrine on the Most Sacred Sacrament of the Altar II , 1582 )

Sejm Sermons ( Kazania sejmowe , 1597 , published posthumously ) .

Soldiers ' Devotions ( Żołnierskie nabożeństwo , 1606 ) .

Wzywanie do jednej zbawiennej wiary ( A Call for One Redeeming Faith , 1611 )