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The Idea of Knighthood in the Sermons and Speeches by Aleksander Jełowicki CR

LA NOZIONE DEL CAVALIERATO NEI SERMONI E NEI DISCORSI
DI ALEKSANDER JEŁOWICKI CR

Summary

In the texts of Aleksander Jełowicki's public speeches, in particular those associated with his preaching practice, attention is drawn to the frequent reference to the idea of Christian chivalry. Christian knights, in the discourse of the Resurrectionist, are the defenders of the homeland who have been fighting throughout history, as well as all those who took part in national uprisings, who were often forced to emigrate. In allegorical terms, Poland itself is recalled as the knight fighting for Christian values, distinguished by its attitude against the background of the degrading societies of the West. The long duration of the personal model developed after the Council of Trent, described as *miles christianus*, was therefore inserted by Jełowicki into the current of shaping national aspirations, characteristic of the 19th century. The moral and religious aspect of these was to identify with the values represented by the Catholic Church, standing by which, according to the preacher, ensured the recovery of independence. Thus, the idea of Christian chivalry was complementary to the vision of a state and nation strongly linked to biblical models, which, moreover, characterized the spirituality of the congregation. Jełowicki's texts, ultimately, exemplify a peculiar kind of militarization of Polish spirituality and religiousness, a testimony that is also recognizable in the contemporary Catholic Church in Poland.

Keywords: Aleksander Jełowicki; sermons; Resurrectionists; knighthood; *miles christianus*; Christian values

Sommario

Nei testi dei discorsi pubblici di Aleksander Jełowicki, in particolare quelli associati alla sua pratica di predicazione, si fa notare il frequente riferimento all'idea del cavalierato cristiano. I cavalieri cristiani, nel contesto discorsivo del Resurrezionalista, sono i difensori della patria che hanno com-

battuto nel corso della storia, così come tutti coloro che hanno preso parte alle rivolte nazionali, e che spesso sono stati costretti ad emigrare. In termini allegorici, la stessa Polonia viene evocata come il cavaliere che si batte per i valori cristiani, distinguendosi nell'atteggiamento contro lo sfondo delle società degradanti dell'Occidente. La lunga durata del modello individuale sviluppato dopo il Concilio di Trento, descritto come *miles christianus*, è stata quindi inserita da Jełowicki nella corrente di formazione delle aspirazioni nazionali, caratteristica del XIX secolo. L'aspetto morale e religioso di tali aspirazioni era quello di identificarsi con i valori rappresentati dalla Chiesa cattolica, il cui rispetto, secondo il predicatore, garantiva il ripristino dell'indipendenza. Così, l'idea del cavalierato cristiano risultava complementare alla visione di uno Stato e di una nazione fortemente legati ai modelli biblici, che, inoltre, caratterizzavano la spiritualità della congregazione. Si trattava essenzialmente dell'impegno per la resurrezione personale in unione con Gesù, il quale fu anche il modello per la patria sofferente. I testi di Jełowicki, in ultima analisi, esemplificano un tipo particolare di militarizzazione della spiritualità e della religiosità polacca, una testimonianza che è riconoscibile anche nella Chiesa cattolica contemporanea in Polonia.

Parole chiave: Aleksander Jełowicki; sermoni, Resurrezionisti; cavalierato; *miles christianus*; valori cristiani

The figure of Aleksander Jełowicki CR (1804-1877) has already been the subject of studies, introducing his personality and achievements.¹ This remarkable writer, poet, translator, publisher, traveler, November insurgent, member of the Sejm in 1821, and ultimately a member of the Resurrectionist order, left a rich legacy, which continues to attract readers interested in his writings.² In addition to the analysis of the literary talent of the expatriate clergyman, the paper adds an observation regarding his promotion of the idea of Christian chivalry. Jełowicki fondly associated moral values and attitudes related to them, especially to the Poles who stood on the battlefield. Recalling their devoted service to the homeland, he would consistently address them directly in his sermons and speeches using the word *knights*, thereby granting a special rank to their deeds in both historical and moral terms. Although he was not entirely original in this way of speaking, it is worth noting that the popularity of his sermons and speeches established in the 19th century the image of a Pole as an heir to the first Republic's characteristic role model,

1 The bibliography on Jełowicki is quoted primarily in the works of: W. Mleczek, *Wkład ks. Aleksandra Jełowickiego CR w dzieło formacji duchowieństwa*, "Polonia Sacra", 18 (2014), no. 3 (36), pp. 147-165; J. Klechta, *Powstaniec, tułacz, kapłan. Ks. Aleksander Jełowicki (1804-1877) pierwszy rektor Polskiej Misji Katolickiej we Francji*, Paryż 2004; B. Micewski, *Jełowicki Aleksander CR*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 7, ed. S. Wielgus, Lublin 1997, col. 1165.

2 This is evidenced by Alina Nowak's speech entitled *Aleksander Jełowicki – an extraordinary among the extraordinary* [*Aleksander Jełowicki – nieprzeciętny wśród nieprzeciętnych*], delivered at a scientific conference in Zamość under the title *Resurrectionists. People. Ideas. Actions* [*Zmartwychwstańcy. Ludzie. Idee. Działania*], November 20th, 2023.

which was *miles christianus*.³ Fighting bravely in defense of the homeland, the Christian knight was a reference point particularly for Catholics, given that his spiritual struggle against such opponents as the flesh, the world, sin, Satan and death was a role model for all followers of Christ in a society that had already been divided by the Reformation.⁴ This moral reference, available to generations of Poles, was not affected by the transformation that happened in other countries of Western Europe and led to the transition of the medieval knight into a *gentiluomo*, which in the 19th century already took the form of a gentleman. The loss of independence seemed to have legitimized the model referred to by Jełowicki, giving it new references in the context of national independence uprisings and moral renewal, built within the Catholic Church, which was the bastion of national-independence aspirations.⁵

The sources quoted below from which Jełowicki's text excerpts were taken, are based on *Sermons on Polish Saints and the Queen of the Polish Crown and Premarital Teachings, Funeral Speeches and Casual Sermons...* [*Kazania o świętych polskich i o Królowej Korony Polskiej tudzież Nauki przedślubne, mowy pogrzebowe i kazania przygodne...*], printed in Berlin in 1869.⁶

The mention of the knights is encountered as early as in the *Sermon on Polish martyrs, delivered in Paris at the Church of the Assumption on August 19th, 1860* [*Kazaniu o ss. męczennikach polskich miane w Paryżu w kościele wniebowzięcia dnia 19 sierpnia 1860 roku*]. In it, Jełowicki, addressing the martyrdom sacrifice of many generations of Poles, wrote:

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- 3 M. Lenart, *Miles Christianus e Heroina Christiana come modelli personali nella tradizione culturale polacca dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, in: *Obedience and Authority. Obbedienza e Autorità*, ed. A. Gieniusz, T. Grabińska, A. Hennel-Brzozowska et al., Kraków 2018, pp. 123-143; idem, *Wzorce osobowe doby potrydenckiej w perspektywie idei walki*, in: *Formowanie kultury katolickiej w dobie potrydenckiej. Powszechność i narodowość katolicyzmu polskiego*, ed. J. Dąbkowska-Kujko, Warszawa 2016 (Kultura Pierwszej Rzeczypospolitej w Dialogu z Europą. Hermeneutyka Wartości, vol. 6), pp. 351-387.
 - 4 See: W. Potocki, *Pojedynek rycerza chrześcijańskiego (ok. 1645) oraz Enchiridion militis Christiani (ok. 1685)*, ed. R. Grześkowiak, M. Lenart, in: *Umysł stateczny i w cnotach gruntowany. Prace edytorskie dedykowane pamięci profesora Adama Karpińskiego*, ed. R. Grześkowiak, R. Krzywy, Warszawa 2012 (Studia o Literaturze Dawnej, vol. 1), pp. 123-157.
 - 5 It is worth noting that in 1858 was published an edition of Szymon Starowolski's seventeenth-century text *The Right Night* [*Prawy rycerz*] (Cracow, Wydawnictwo Biblioteki Polskiej). Earlier, Jan Milewski published the ballad *The Polish Knight in Olszyna near Grochów* [*Rycerz polski w Olszynie pod Grochowem*] (Warsaw 1831, printer unknown) and Henryk Rzewuski would publish in three volumes a widely read novel from the reign of Jan Kazimierz *Rycerz Lizdejko* [*Knight Lizdejko*] (vol. 1: Warsaw 1851, J. Unger; vol. 2: Warsaw 1852, Księgarnia S. Orgelbranda; vol. 3: Warsaw 1852, J. Unger).
 - 6 A. Jełowicki, *Kazania o świętych polskich i o Królowej Korony Polskiej tudzież Nauki przedślubne, mowy pogrzebowe i kazania przygodne. Poprzedzone listami Ojca Świętego Piusa IX a zakończone dokumentami odnoszącymi się do założenia Seminarjum Polskiego w Rzymie i nauką roztropności chrześcijańskiej ś. Wincentego a Paulo*, B. Behr, E. Bock, Berlin 1869. When quoting and translating texts, spelling has been adapted to current norms, leaving, however, the original phrases and some linguistic forms, characteristic of 19th century literature.

Who would count all of our martyrs from all religious orders, when the Dominican Order alone gave so many of them in our country, that the Holy Church wrapped their white robe with a red belt, as if with a stream of blood. And if the friars themselves died so much, then how much of our population fell under the sword of barbarians in more than a hundred savage invasions, that Poland, in the course of centuries, stopped with her own breast and repelled with her own hand, at the cost of truly martyric blood, shed with faith and for the Faith! How many died in those invasions, not only **our knights** [emphasis by M.L.], but quiet peasants, but old men and children, but virgins, but Polish mothers defending the innocence of infants, more than life! When I remember those murders and devastations by which Poland has been tormented so many times, our blood boils like the blood of our ancestors boiled, and we all feel to be a nation of martyrs, and that there are more Polish martyrs in heaven, than today's living Poles on earth.⁷

The preacher's thoughts on knights have already continued with regard to those warring against the Church's opponents:

With Sobieski, **Christian Knights Brothers** [emphasis by M.L.], no one can compare. His image will grow with the centuries, and with it the glory of Poland, and the glory of martyrdom; because whoever fights holy battles for the Holy Faith and the Holy Church, does truly fight God's battles, and by the hand of his Christ Commander will be crowned with his own wreath, a martyr's wreath. For what struggles and battles have our nation suffered and endured, said one of the Popes: "Squeeze a handful of Polish soil, and martyr's blood will gush from it." This is our land, dear brothers, a truly holy land, the land of martyrs. Such was our history, the history of **chivalry and martyrdom** [emphasis by M.L.].⁸

Not only those who fought on the battlefields, however, deserved to be called Christian knights, according to Jełowicki. With the universality of the fight for the highest values, the whole of Poland throughout history became, for the preachers of Polish exiles, the allegorized knight, as evidenced in the *Sermon on St. Wojciech the Martyr Archbishop of Gniezno, the patron saint of the Polish kingdom, given in Rome in the church of St. Claudius on the first Sunday after the Feast of the Resurrection, the year 1858* [*Kazaniu o świętym Wojciechu męczenniku arcybiskupie gnieźnieńskim, patronie królestwa polskiego miane w Rzymie w kościele s. Kłaudiusza w pierwszą Niedzielę po Święcie Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego, roku 1858*]. The text includes such a passage:

7 Ibidem, p. 10.

8 Ibidem, p. 11.

Poland! Oh, Poland dear to us! How fortunate you are to have Wojciech and Chrobry together! If you had always been ruled by such pairs, how great and holy you would be today! Poland, in those memorable times, was already baptized. She still needed confirmation. I want to say that she already had the Faith, but she was not given confirmation in the Faith; so that, as long and wide as she was, she could become a **Knigh of Christ**, fighting for the Faith and bearing the Faith.⁹

This image is complemented by the comparison of hussar wings to angelic ones that appeared a few pages later: “a knighthood in the likeness of angelic hosts, winged as he had never seen.”¹⁰ In this passage, the Polish knighthood, the martyrs for the faith, and finally all of Poland are placed in the sacred image of the Church Militant. The peculiar celebration of the comprehension of this revealed truth became exceptionally important in Jelowicki’s texts; since it becomes part of the construction of a vision of the state and the nation, having some extremely important role to fulfill, with the goals set ahead strongly connected to the idea of battle.

The above-provided quotations extracted from the texts found on the opening pages of the cited source, prompt us to recall the aforementioned importance of the personal role model that *miles christianus* became for Poles. The popularization of attitudes connected to the fulfillment of the role of the Christian knight was related to widespread activities that were part of the Catholic Church’s reforms. Thanks to them, missions were carried out in the Polish army, utilizing the possibilities provided by the participation, especially by the nobility, in the mobilization of the armed forces [pospolite ruszenie]. Lastly, they were the main focus of the activities of camp preachers, who had a unique opportunity to speak to soldiers gathered from different areas of the First Republic. In addition to sermons, they also published books for the army, using models and suggestions from the works of Antonio Possevino, such as *Biblioteca selecta*¹¹ and *Il soldato christiano*,¹² among others. These publications became the inspiration for Piotr Skarga, who was the author of a literary piece for the army that was frequently reprinted and

9 Ibidem, pp. 24-25.

10 Ibidem, p. 27.

11 A. Possevino, [...] *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum. Ad disciplinas et ad salutem omnium gentium procurandam recognita novissime ab eodem et avcta, et in duos tomos distributa* [...], apud Altobellum Salicatum, Venetiis 1603. The first edition of this volume was published in Rome, in 1593. See also: T. Bieńkowski, “*Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum*” Possevina jako teoretyczny fundament kultury kontrreformacji, in: *Wiek XVII – kontrreformacja – barok. Prace z historii kultury*, ed. J. Pelc, Wrocław 1970, pp. 291-307.

12 A. Possevino, *Il soldato christiano con l’istruzione dei capi dello essercito catolico. Composto dal r. padre Antonio Possiuno della compagnia di Gesu...* per li heredi di Valerio, et Luigi Dorici, Roma 1569.

reworked, entitled *Soldier's Service* [*Żołnierskie nabożeństwo*], which was first published in 1606 in Cracow.¹³

The researchers on the 19th century are much more likely to refer to the more popular books, such as *Sejm's Sermons or Lives of the Saints* [*Kazania sejmowe czy Żywoty świętych*], which were written by Skarga, presumably because they corresponded well with the difficult history of the Republic, marked by the loss of independence, and explained the dramatic failures through attempts to identify the fate of Poles with the biblical history of God's chosen people. These ideas, dating back to the 17th century, became evident with full force in the 19th century, when a specific vision of Poland's own history was consolidated, in which a peculiar place was taken by prominent figures, legitimized by the virtues of heroic martyrs and Christian saints. The leading role in this pantheon, formed throughout history, was played by the Poles elevated to the altars, whose lives were described by the royal preacher. The particular worship surrounding them also helped to maintain the national spirit during the Partitions. Therefore, it is not surprising that Piotr Skarga himself was included among the group of exceptional people, alongside

13 Print (16°) was reproduced by the widow of Jakub Siebeneycher. Skarga dedicated the first edition to "the paramount chiefs of the army": Karol Chodkiewicz and Stanisław Żółkiewski. The second edition was published with *Kazania przygodne z innymi drobniejszymi pracami...* (Cracow 1610, pp. 489-509; 2°), and the third edition was also published in Cracow by Franciszek Cezary in 1618 (8°). *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo* was published twice at the end of the 17th century: in Poznań in 1677 at Wojciech Regulus Młodniewicz's "at the cost of the Most Excellent Jan III, King of Poland, given to print" (8°) and entitled *Żołnierz chrześcijański nauka z Pisma św. i Ojców św. i przykłady, i modlitwami przeciw nieprzyjaciolom Krzyża św.... uzbrojony*; and in Oliwa by Jan Jakub Textor Factor in 1688 (8°), entitled *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo, to jest Nauki i modlitwy, i przykłady do tego stanu służące, pisane od X.... Societatis Jesu*. From the 18th century come the following editions: two Vilnius editions (Drukarnia Akademicka S.J., 1748 and 1759; both in 12° and under the same title: *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo, powołaniu wojskowych ludzi właśnie służące...*), the Łowicz edition (Drukarnia JMci Prymasa, 1763; in 12°, entitled *Żołnierskie nauki i nabożeństwo oraz reguły o powołaniu do stanu żołnierskiego chrześcijańskiego w dziełach prawdziwie należące...*), the Supraśl edition (XX. Bazylian, 1767; in 8°, entitled *Nauki zbawienne, modlitwy pożyteczne i potrzebne, pobudki chwalebne, przykłady wdzięczne dla żołnierza chrześcijańskiego...*) and the Sandomierz edition (Drukarnia JMci i Rzeczypospolitej, 1789; in 12°, entitled *Żołnierz chrześcijański, czyli Zabawy pobożności chrześcijańskiej dla stanu żołnierskiego na widok podane*). Skarga's book later was included only in parts in writings intended for the military. It should still be stated that *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo* was published twice in Prague, translated by Tomasz Ignacy Placalia: *Pobożny soldat, to jest: nauczeni, modlitwy, przykładowe soldátskému životu přísluše* (Prague: [?], 1630; in 8°, and Prague: [s.a.], 1634; in 12°). The list of editions of *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo* (*Dziela X. Piotra Skargi T.J. Spis bibliograficzny*, Cracow 1916, compiled by Konstanty Otwinowski and later supplemented in Estreicher's *Bibliografia*, has recently been expanded to include further editions, which probably do not yet complete the list of all reissues and alterations of the text. More on this subject see: M. Lenart, *Miles pius et iustus. Żołnierz chrześcijański katolickiej wiary w kulturze i piśmiennictwie dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (XVI-XVIII w.)*, Warszawa 2009 (Studia Staropolskie. Series Nova, vol. 21), pp. 65-66. Revised with transcription of missing pages phototype edition of the only surviving copy of the first edition of *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo* from 1606 can be found in: *"Kto ojczyźnie swej służy sam sobie służy". Pamiętka obchodów czterechsetlecia śmierci Piotra Skargi*, ed. M. Lenart, Opole 2014.

saints, hetmans, and victorious kings. He made his mark in the collective consciousness as a “swordsmen of counter-reformation,”¹⁴ expressing his opinions on issues important to the fate of the state and the nation. Jelowicki very often referred to the Polish Jesuit, especially when it became necessary to reinforce the message by invoking an authority from the past. As an example, one can cite the *Funeral Speech in Honor of Karol Sienkiewicz (January 20th, 1793, February 7th, 1860), given in Montmorency at the annual solemn service for the souls of all those who persevered to the end in serving Poland, on May 21st, 1860*, where the Resurrectionist lamented the lack of “perseverance in the holy love of the beloved homeland”:

And this lack, unfortunately, does not show on one face alone, in the bluish stains heralding the death of the Polish spirit, as a result of greedily swallowed slow poison, which has long troubled Poland, and of which, strong in faith, had already warned his people **the ever-renowned Skarga** [emphasis by M.L.]. This poison, even today the most harmful to us, is the sweetly joyful and destructive foreignness. We are betrayed by foreignness. It is the one who has brought upon us both bad teachings and bad customs. It is the one who cools our hearts and turns our heads. And wherever it has entered, there is no more truth or love. Not everything foreign was poison, there was also a lot of health in it; but what is healthy in it, is common to us, it entered into us with Faith and lives in us with Faith, it's not foreignness, it's our homeland. Let's defend our Swojszczyzna from the foreignness, which is already beginning to stifle us from the cradle.¹⁵

Another example is the Sermon on St. Wojciech the Martyr the Archbishop of Gniezno, Patron Saint of the Kingdom of Poland, given in Rome at the Church of St. Claudius on the first Sunday after the Feast of the Resurrection, 1858, in which he quoted Skarga's words emphasizing the etymology of St. Wojciech's name related to soldierhood:

“The fame and glory of the great nations of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary, the most honorable man, priest and martyr of Christ, Wojciech, in other words an army-bearer, from that nation, which was famously called Slavic, descended from Bohemia, had noble parents, united in blood with the Kings, whose glory and great secular state he adorned and glorified with his holy and peculiar spiritual life”. With these firm words of our great Skarga, I begin my speech about the great saint and our patron saint, who, having strengthened us in the holy faith, became, by God's grace, the builder of Poland.¹⁶

14 Compare with J. Tazbir, *Piotr Skarga. Szermierz kontrreformacji*, Warszawa 1978.

15 A. Jelowicki, *Kazania o świętych polskich i o Królowej Korony Polskiej tudzież Nauki przedślubne, mowy pogrzebowe i kazania przygodne*, pp. 492-493.

16 Ibidem, p. 17.

Military references, constantly concurrent in texts illustrating Polish history and so typical of Skarga's work, especially in the field of polemical writing, were probably one of the most important reasons for recalling his works and emphasizing the role of the Jesuit preacher as a teacher of morality and patriotism. This was particularly noticeable in times when it was required to take up arms in defense of the lost or threatened sovereignty. Such historical contexts allowed to constantly remind of the *Soldiers' service* [Żołnierskie nabożeństwo], at least in the military environment, where the texts of Skarga addressed to the army were published, supplemented, reworked and quoted.¹⁷ The willingness to distribute Skarga's teachings among soldiers is demonstrated not only by the numerous editions of his book prepared for this environment, but also by the fact that recalling the thoughts contained in this work has become a tradition of its own, as evidenced also by contemporary prayer books and texts prepared by chaplains who provided pastoral care in garrisons.¹⁸ This tradition was only interrupted during the communist regime, when efforts were made to minimize the influence of the clergy in shaping the religiousness of people associated with the military. However, it should be noted that this work has had a considerable impact on the strengthening of the image of the militant and national Catholic Church. It is worth remarking here that the successive editions found in library and museum resources today testify to the fact that the booklet for the army enjoyed great interest, and its successive editions were eagerly read.¹⁹

Going back to Jełowicki, it is worth reminding that in the environment of the Resurrectionists there was even a consideration of organizing a "knightly order" of a religious-patriotic nature, as evidenced by the records of Bogdan Jański.²⁰ This was probably a result of the military formation, which was close to many Resurrectionists and the representatives of the emigration, who had the same soldierly education or only experience gained on the battlefields.

17 See M. Lenart, *Miles pius et iustus*, pp. 88-97; idem, *Miles christianus od Skargi do Starowolskiego*, in: *Humanizm polski. Długie trwanie – tradycje – współczesność (wstęp do badań)*, ed. A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, M. Cieński, Warszawa 2009-2010, pp. 91-113; idem, «Trattato... sopra il modo di fare un compito libro militare» di Antonio Possevino. Un'importante fonte per autori di libri indirizzati ai soldati polacchi nel Seicento, in: *Vita pubblica e vita privata nel Rinascimento. Atti del XX Convegno internazionale*, ed. L. Secchi Tarugi, Firenze, 2010, pp. 333-348; idem, *Modlitewniki dla wojska wydane na Śląsku w okresie pierwszej wojny światowej*, in: *Śląskie pogranicza kultur*, vol. 1, ed. M. Ursel, O. Taranek-Wolańska, Wrocław 2012, pp. 105-119; idem, *La "nuova" religiosità dei soldati polacchi dopo il Concilio di Trento*, in: *Lingue e testi delle riforme cattoliche in Europa e nelle Americhe (sec. XVI-XXI)*, ed. R. Librandi, Firenze 2012, pp. 77-92; *Podręcznik życia wojskowego i religijnego Piotra Skargi*, in: "Kto ojczyźnie swej służy sam sobie służy", pp. 45-56.

18 See: M. Lenart, *Miles pius et iustus*, p. 118.

19 See the phototype edition of the unique copy of the first edition referred to in the footnote above: "Kto ojczyźnie swej służy sam sobie służy".

20 B. Jański, *Dziennik 1830-1839*, read from the autograph and compiled by A. Jastrzębski, Rzym 2001, p. 253, footnote 660; 353-355, 647.

Besides, it is important to remember that even in the Old Polish era the value of a mission among the army, based on discipline that could be compared to the strict rules that governed the life of religious communities, was recognized. Moreover, it was one of many elements that allowed an effective connection with the idea of knightly orders with a clearly defined mission and guided by discipline strictly associated with devotional acts specified by an appropriate rule.²¹ For all these reasons, missions among the army proved to be an extremely effective way of spreading the Catholic doctrine, enabling the rooting of devotional practices and solidifying for many years the vision of the Church in Poland as the fighting Church and a besieged fortress of Christianity, the echoes of which resonate not only in Jelowicki's texts, but are present in Polish culture even today. As a result, the military religiosity, although superficial and often borderline magical,²² has become a permanent part of Polish culture. The contacts with military chaplains, among other things, were the reason why the representative of the noble state in Poland underwent a transformation from a nobleman to a Christian knight in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. They were, though, unable to develop sufficiently and comparably to the people of other European countries as a *gentiluomo*, who functioned in close connection with court culture, as mentioned above.

The knighthood, as a result, would become an added value in Poland, heavily referring to medieval patterns with a religious tint. It is notable that Skarga in the title of his work, dedicated to people who were supposed to be engaged in military crafts, still writes about a soldier, while less than half a century later Szymon Starowolski, remembered, among other things, as the secretary of Hetman Jan Chodkiewicz, entitled his book of a similar purpose: *The Righteous Knight [Prawy Rycerz]*.²³ The 17th century, recorded in the pages of history as a period of wars devastating the Republic, became one of development of Sarmatian culture with a predilection for referring to the heroic deeds of the closed circle of the nobility. Fighting in the ranks of the crown army and the army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, at the same time allowed the nobility to be exposed to the message, the carrier of which were primarily the camp preachers, calling for the connection of military training with the religious life, conducted in their own parochial countryside during short periods of peace. This was understood by Skarga, who entitled the last "teaching" of his book for the army: *Without war home soldier's fun [Bez wojny doma zabawa żołnierska]*. In there he addressed those who used to battle with the following words, which were meant to describe the soldier's life upon returning home:

21 M. Lenart, *Miles pius et iustus*, pp. 103-119.

22 Ibidem, pp. 170-179.

23 See M. Lenart, *Miles christianus od Skargi do Starowolskiego*, pp. 83-88.

The harshness that he has learned in the field and with the enemy, and these wild military customs he is to lay down of himself, and in grace and tranquility he is to clothe himself. He is to convert hunger, misery, sleeplessness and cold, which he got used to in the tents, into fasts, prayers, getting up in the morning and penitential austerities for sins, and he is to lead the spiritual soldiering at home against his evil inclinations and motives for sins and chase against the sins themselves, just as he chased against his enemies at war. Every man has a great number of his personal and domestic enemies, which he can win, bringing inner peace and a good conscience – great is the glory of victory and the expectation of a high heavenly reward. Do fight, righteous ones, against the old serpent, and be brave against him. The old serpent, the devil, who leads us to sin with evil thoughts, and wants to chain and enslave us, and throw us into hell with him. To oppose him and to beat him, and to chain and enslave evil motives in the flesh and in anger, and in covetous and ungovernable desires, is the perfect and righteous valor of a Christian soldier.²⁴

Also, Jelowicki, in his *Sermon on Saint Jan Kanty the patron saint of the kingdom of Poland (secondary) given in Paris at the Church of the Ascension on October 23rd, 1859* [*Kazanie o świętym Janie Kantym patronie królestwa polskiego (wtórym) miane w Paryżu w kościele niebowzięcia dnia 23 października 1859 roku*] would recall the “enemies of the soul” attacking the Christian knight:

The vigilance, dear brothers, is a knightly virtue, and therefore a Christian virtue: because fighting is the life of man on earth (Job, VII, 1). Knightly vigilance sounds like a war trumpet, in this exclamation: Attention! To this exclamation, woke up in the days of battle our troops and ranks; and our knights, with the clang of weapons, answered: We are ready! Christian vigilance also serves us as a guard of safety in **the constant battle that we, as soldiers of Christ, must fight with the devil, with the world and with ourselves, and keeps us ready for all God’s battles** [emphasis by M.L.]. Vigilance, like the trumpet of the Archangel, awakens us to battle and encourages us in battle.²⁵

The proposal to transfer war into the inner world was an important guideline, for those seeking to deepen their religious life based on the ideas of spiritual warfare

24 P. Skarga, *Żołnierskie nabożeństwo*, Kraków 1606, pp. 58-59.

25 A. Jelowicki, *Kazania o świętych polskich i o Królowej Korony Polskiej tudzież Nauki przedślubne, mowy pogrzebowe i kazania przygodne*, pp. 112-113.

developed in the monastic world.²⁶ What distinguishes the modern man from the experience of their ancestors is the lack of experience connected to the reality in which warfare, or more specifically the direct fight to defend one's own life, while simultaneously killing another person, was part of the collective experience, thus becoming a clear point of reference also in the world of religious values. One can hardly overlook the fact that the strong emotions that accompanied participation in warfare also strongly influenced the approaches taken throughout life. Virtues such as, fortitude, fidelity or servitude acquired proper emphasis and meaning, because they had a tangible reference particularly to situations on the battlefield, where the tensions associated with endangered lives embedded them forever in the memory. It was no different with the awareness of the limitations of one's own body, its insignificance in the face of the laws of death, which led to radical reevaluations and the search for sources of true strength. In his speeches, Jelowicki seems to be the worthy successor of the camp preachers, who in this case usually predicated maintaining a close relationship with God through penitential practices and sacramental life. People involved in the military craft, however, found it rather difficult to follow such principles. The appeal to attitudes of a communal nature seemed much clearer, as was well the understanding of the military ranks, where survival depended on the cooperation of entire formations and the specific behavior of comrades fighting side by side. This is perhaps where the idea of the spiritual formation of refugees within the framework of some kind of pious association, modelled on chivalric orders, as mentioned above, was born. The substitution of physical violence against another human being for spiritual struggle – no longer of an individual, but of a whole group of people united in God's service against evil – appealed to the imagination of former soldiers in a very figurative way. This kind of vision seems to have been at the root of the perception of issues related to religion and religiosity as related to the community identified with the nation. Probably this is why the nation, over time, seemed more and more to be a battle-tested army, able to give efficient resistance against forces trying to break the shackles of the Christian *antemurale*, which was no longer the borders of a homeland erased from the maps, but the shackles of the moral values of Poles at home and in exile.

The religious aspect of chivalry survived throughout the loss of independence thanks to the interpretation of the fate of the Polish nation as the chosen one. A significant testimony to this is provided in texts appearing since the late 1820s, where the period of

26 More on this topic is discussed in my study of texts on spiritual warfare that referenced military comparisons in a similar manner as Skarga did: M. Lenart, *Dwa polskie teksty "ku przyzbrojeniu wojownikowi chrześcijańskiemu" z pierwszej połowy XVII wieku*, "Napis", series XII: *Krwawy świt, mroczny dzień... Tom poświęcony literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej*, pp. 287-303; idem, *Miles pius et iustus*, pp. 122-145. See also Franc Cardini's introduction to Dag Tessore's book *La mistica della guerra*: D. Tessore, *La mistica della guerra. Spiritualità delle armi nel Cristianesimo e nell'Islam*, pref. F. Cardini, Roma 2003.

the previous forty years was perceived as the same time when God let the biblical people of Israel wander the desert before leading them to the Promised Land. The handwritten prayer on the last pages of the *Psalter during the war and public defeat... [Psalterz podczas wojny i publicznej klęski...]*,²⁷ composed while the Kościuszko Uprising²⁸ was still in progress, can be quoted as an example. The circumstances of the creation of this text, written during the November Uprising, are known, as indicated by the note attached to the title: *The last cry of Polish children to God begging for the rescue of the homeland from 1831 [Ostatnie wołanie dzieci polskich do Boga błagających o ratunek ojczyzny z 1831 roku]*.

Here before Your Majesty, children flooded with tears, the remnants of the people blessed by You, falling on their faces, we beg You: do not abandon us, support us, raise us up! Forty years of cruel oppression of the most strenuous slavery has suffered the Polish nation, suffered, although it did not fault any of its oppressors, forty years it moaned in shackles for relying on their good faith! [...] Forty years of whining and complaint, forty years of slavery, whose bloodthirsty executioners of conscience even ours wished to shackle in their yoke, in order to eradicate the faith of the fathers from our hearts, whose dearest motto was: after all eternity God and fatherland [...]. Forty years of such exemplary atonement for our recklessness, for the crimes of our ancestors, we make a pleading sacrifice to You today, Lord, begging Your mercy [...]. Here is already the moment of the final judgment on poor Poland heralded by the sound of the snorting war trumpets! [...] Here, at a small distance, stands a handful of fearless, as in the justice of their cause and Your help, great God, trusted Poles – the last of our bloody efforts, the last of our brothers, the last of our hopes! [...] Save us, Blessed Mother Mary! Whom our first patriarchs proclaimed as their queen, and whom the oppressor forbade us to summon protection in her name! Queen of Poland, raise your most holy prayers for your once-loved people! [...] But no! The one for whom you, Mary, contribute to the Father of all creatures, will never perish! The nation that has put its trust in God will not perish! The ray of hope shines! The hand of the Almighty directs the thunderbolts! Poland will be saved! Faith will save her. Her enemy has already outdone the measure of his harshness. Poland will be saved with a single nod from You, God [...].

27 *Psalterz podczas wojny i publicznej klęski...*, [s.l., s.a.] The prayers were presumably adopted from one of the editions of Horstius' prayer books: *Paradisus animae christianae and Manuale pietatis*.

28 It concerns the *Prayer against the enemies of our homeland, composed by a zealous citizen*. See: *Psalterz podczas wojny i publicznej klęski*, pp. 43–46. See also texts in: *Poezja powstania kościuszkowskiego*; there is an interesting *Song of Kościuszko [Piosneczka Kościuszki]* which refers only to the subject of faith and trust in God without references to the war (*Poezja powstania kościuszkowskiego*, compiled and provided with an introduction and explanations by J. Nowak-Dłużewski, Kielce 1946, p. 133).

The words of the quoted prayer summarize the specific achievements of the nation from previous centuries in the religious sense. It was based on the consistent building of the belief in the Divine protection of the Poles and, above all, the involvement of God in the acts of war supporting Poland. Moreover, the closing sentences, by expressing confidence in Divine intervention, seem to impose its influence, which characterizes many prayers composed without ecclesiastical censorship.

It is one of many examples of comparing the history of the Polish nation to the people of Israel.²⁹ Throughout the entire 19th century, war and captivity as a punishment for sins, but also a way to redeem them through suffering, have been long embedded in the mentality of Polish Catholicism. Hence promoting the real combat in defense of the faith and the spiritual battle against one's own weaknesses became an important, if not key, aspect of Polish religiosity with strong patriotic undertones.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning yet another text by Jelowicki, from the *Funeral Speech in honor of Andrzej Niegolewski Colonel of the Polish Army (November 30th, 1786 – February 18, 1857) appointed in Paris, at the Church of the Assumption on February 28th, 1857* [*Mowa pogrzebowa na cześć Andrzeja Niegolewskiego pułkownika wojsk polskich (30 listopada 1786 18 lutego 1857) mianej w Paryżu, w kościele wniebowzięcia dnia 28 lutego 1857 roku*]. This is what he wrote about the battlefield hero recognized among the émigrés:

The young Niegolewski knew these truths since his childhood, having been brought up in the Old Polish manner in his parents' home. He knew that fighting is the life of man on earth (Job, VII, 1); that the sense and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth (Gen. VIII, 21). He was warned of this, like every one of us, externally by battles and internally by fears (II. To Cor. VII, 5), the holy dreads of a vigilant conscience. With the shield of the Psalm of David, which, thanks to Jan Kochanowski, has become the Song of the entire Polish nation: Who shall give himself into the protection of his Lord (Psalm XCI): **bravely and steadfastly fought against himself, against the world, and against the devil** [emphasis by M.L.]. None of them ever heard of any treachery in all their lives. And in the midst of this battle, already dreaming of another, in the manner of his ancestors he prepared himself for it; and from the morning of his days, in the morning of every day, this knightly son cried out to God with the knightly Psalmist: Blessed is the Lord my God, who teaches my hands to battle, and my fingers to war (Psalm CXLIII, 1). And God heard him. And this faithful soldier of his, while he was still young, fit to be a valiant **knight of Poland** [emphasis by M.L.]. Each of you is waiting already for me to pronounce the word Somosierra; the word which holds the living testimony of Poland's afterlife, her sacrifice, fortitude, bravery, and that love

29 Compare with B. Burdziej, "Super flumina Babylonis." *Psalm 136(137) w literaturze polskiej XIX-XX w.*, Toruń 1999.

of the homeland, which one of our Bishops rightly called holy; because if it is holy among us where, especially in our holy people, who, though unlearned, knows that in defending the Polish cause, he **defends the cause of the Church, and therefore the cause of God** [emphasis by M.L.].³⁰

The political-religious vision of Poland that Skarga once proposed turned out to be extremely alluring, not only to his contemporary citizens of the Republic, as evidenced by Jełowicki's texts evoking the idea and personal model of the Christian Knight. However, this is not just an ethical dimension, but an ordering element, i.e., one that makes one see the state as a great military camp, as a congregation of soldiers engaged in a constant war in defense of the true faith and the Church. In this camp, all traitors and those who do not accept the eternal laws constitute a threat similar to that of the "outsiders" that surround it, wishing to destroy the last bastion of the righteous. This image was just as clear even when the borders of the Polish state were obliterated. Translating the ideas discussed above into the imaginary world, Poland became the bastion that every Christian Knight carries in his heart and mind.³¹

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30 A. Jełowicki, *Kazania o świętych polskich i o Królowej Korony Polskiej tudzież Nauki przedślubne, mowy pogrzebowe i kazania przygodne*, pp. 460-461.

31 The same sermon reads: "Whoever voluntarily expels the Polish language from himself and out of himself, who despises the gift of God, his own heart and his own home he himself de-nationalizes, who on our nation, as far as it is in his power, performs suicide, into this unconquered, on a separate speech built by God himself fortress, bringing in an internal enemy, without whom the external enemy would accomplish nothing. Ah, truly, looking at what is happening to us not only externally, but also internally, it comes upon us over this nation of ours, over beloved Poland, over this Jerusalem of ours, with Jeremiah's cry, and cry Outside the sword kills, and at home death does!" (Treny, I, 20). Ibidem, p. 468.

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