

**THE JESUITS IN
POLAND: THE
LOTHIAN ESSAY, 1982**

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The Jesuits in Poland: The Lothian Essay, 1982 by A. F. Pollard

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A. F. POLLARD

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POLAND: THE
LOTHIAN ESSAY, 1982**

Oxford Prize Essays **UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA**

THE
JESUITS IN POLAND

THE LOTHIAN ESSAY, 1892

BY

A. F. POLLARD, B.A.
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NOTE.



My best thanks are due to Mr. W. R. Morfill, M.A., Reader in Russian and other Slavonic Languages in the University of Oxford, for advice as to the spelling of Polish names. When a name is familiar in a German or Latin form, e.g. Lemberg or Ladislas, that form has been generally adhered to; but, in the case of less-known names, an attempt has been made to give a more accurate representation of the Polish spelling.

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INTRODUCTORY.

POLAND has been the scene of a struggle waged for more than a thousand years between the influences of the East and those of the West—a struggle which has profoundly affected its religious no less than its political history. Apparently it was a contest between the European and the Asiatic; here the Tatars found the limits of their empire, and here was the bulwark of Europe against the Turk. But underneath this conflict there lay the growing divergence between the Slav of the East, disciplined by the Varangian, corrupted by the Byzantine, rendered servile and barbarous yet stimulated by the Tatar and the Slav of the West, made warlike by the never-ending struggle with the German, but unregulated by external domination or internal coercion. As the danger from the Tatar passed away, the conflict between the two branches of the Slavs assumed larger proportions and a more bitter character. It was a contest which united with the bitterness of political rivalry the gall of religious hatred. To the enmity between the Slav of the East and the Slav of the West was added the enmity between the Church of the Patriarch and the Church of the Pope. And when after the fall of Constantinople, Holy Moscow stood in its place and became the metropolis not merely of a nation but of a Church, the subjection of the Western Slavs became to the Muscovite a part not merely of his patriotism but of his religion.

The tide had not yet turned ; Poland, starting from the West, was adding to itself province after province that had once been ruled by Russians. It seemed that the hegemony of the Slavs was destined to rest with those of the West, not those of the East, and the Church of Rome to absorb that of Constantinople. The Reformation created a diversion in favour of the latter, and the religious duel in Poland became triangular, in which the latest comer seemed likely to be victorious. The introduction of the Jesuits again changed the aspect of affairs ; the Reformation in Poland was reduced to impotence, and Rome with its new ally turned again towards the schismatic Church. The struggle now lay between a power which derived its strength from a religious as well as a political sentiment of unity, and a power which depended on the one hand upon the undisciplined valour of some thousands of nobles, on the other hand upon an order marvellously adapted to the work of missionary propaganda. Poland became the most devotedly Catholic country in Europe, but its political independence was weakened and finally swept away. The success of the Catholic reaction and the intolerant aspect it assumed, acted like a powerful acid in splitting up Poland into its component parts ; at the same time the growth of a powerful Slav state in the East, and its assumption of the Panslavonic hegemony, exerted a magnetic attraction upon those elements of the Polish state whose bonds of cohesion had already been relaxed by the Catholic reaction. In Poland the Society of Jesus won its greatest success ; in Poland its success was fraught with the greatest risks to the welfare of the country.