

LECH SZCZUCKI

FAUSTO SOZZINI IN POLAND (1579–1604)*

The chronological scope of this paper is very broad, spanning almost a quarter of a century, while the space I am allowed here, on the other hand, is limited. Therefore, let me only touch upon those matters I consider the most important, merely hinting at the others or leaving them out altogether. I want to say, however, at the very outset, that my essay shall be structured around an account of Fausto Sozzini's battle for the leadership of the Polish Unitarian Church, lasting about fifteen years and, eventually, victorious.

Fausto Sozzini visited Poland for the first time in the autumn of 1578, while on his way to Transylvania, where he was called to by Giorgio Biandrata, alarmed by Ferenc Dávid's dogmatic radicalism.¹ The time Sozzini spent in Kraków was dedicated, as it seems, to gathering opinions on Dávid's views. As a result he took to Transylvania a letter from Grzegorz Paweł of Brzeziny, an eminent theologian of the Minor Reformed Church of Poland and Biandrata's friend, in which he condemns Dávid's nonadorantism.² No doubt Sozzini was already a well-known figure among the Polish Antitrinitarians. In 1568, a translation or, strictly speaking, a paraphrase of his treatise *Explicatio primi capituli Ioannis* was published in Kraków, a work

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¹ *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* (abbreviated: *BFP*), vol. II (Irenopoli post annum 1656 [Amsterdam, 1668]) 710–711.

² Lech SZCZUCKI, "Polski i siedmiogrodzki unitarianizm w drugiej połowie XVI wieku," in IDEM, *Nonkonformiści religijni XVI i XVII wieku* (Warszawa, 1993), 78.a

that—together with an already circulating manuscript of *Brevis explicatio in primum Ioannis caput* written by his uncle Lelio (who had visited Poland twice)—played an important role in the evolution of the Antitrinitarian Church in Poland towards Unitarianism.³ Giorgio Biandrata, held in high esteem in the *Ecclesia Minor*, informed his Polish fellow believers in a letter from November 30, 1569, that as soon as “Faustus ille noster” arrived in Transylvania, he would take part in the final work on the edition of the catechism.⁴ However, Fausto Sozzini did not leave Italy for good until the end of 1575, at which time he made his way to Switzerland, all the while maintaining contact with Biandrata.

I will not recount here the story of Dávid’s tragedy. Suffice to say that Sozzini’s involvement subjected him to accusations from those Antitrinitarians who believed that Sozzini, in close collaboration with Biandrata, was complicit in Dávid’s conviction and imprisonment by Prince Christopher Báthory. Sozzini only addressed those accusations in 1595 in a foreword to an edition of his dispute with Dávid, pointing out, among other things, that at the time of the trial, taking place during the Diet of Torda, he was bedridden in Kolozsvár.⁵

The Sienienian’s journey to Kraków in the spring of 1579 was not, however, caused only by (as suggested by his first biographer, Samuel Przymkowski⁶) an epidemic in Transylvania, but also, perhaps first of all, by the unfriendly attitude shown by a large portion of the Unitarians living there. In this situation, the Minor Reformed Church of Poland, sympathising with Biandrata in his condemnation of Dávid, must have seemed to him a convenient place to operate. He did not have much choice at the time, anyway. Switzerland had become—after his dispute with Jacques Chouvet *de Iesu Christo Servatore*—a dangerous place for him. At any rate, we can say that the man who came to Kraków and to Transylvania was a fully-fledged theo-

³ Konrad GÓRSKI, “Grzegorz Paweł jako tłumacz Biandraty i Fausta Socyna,” *Reformacja w Polsce* 3 (1924): 15–31; Lelio SOZZINI, *Opere*, ed. Antonio Rotondò (Firenze, 1986), *Introduzione* et passim; Valerio MARCHETTI, *I simulacri delle parole e il lavoro dell’eresia. Ricerca alle origini del socinanesimo* (Bologna, 1999), passim.

⁴ Theodor WOTSCHKE, “Zur Geschichte der Antitrinitarismus,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 23 (1926): 96–97.

⁵ *BFP*, vol. III, 712. On the subject of the dispute between Dávid and Sozzini, see Georg H. WILLIAMS, “The Christological issues between Francis Dávid and Faustus Socinus,” in *Antitrinitarianism in the Second Half of the 16th Century*, ed. Róbert Dán and Antal Pirnát (Budapest, 1982), 287–322.

⁶ *BFP*, vol. II, f.**2v.

logian, with an already considerable philosophical record, and, importantly, a seasoned participant in disputes with his adversaries.⁷

In the Sozzini Family, Polish tradition already played a certain role. Apart from the journeys made to Poland by Lelio Sozzini, who was well acquainted with the advances of the Reformation in this country, we should mention his disciple Stanisław Kokoszka, who later became a kind of chaplain sorts in the Sozzini home in Scopeto.⁸ Kokoszka was also accused by the Polish Calvinists of disseminating the writings of Servet.⁹

As regards the appeal that his stay in Kraków had for Sozzini, the fact that the city had a sizeable Italian community, composed of members of various denominations yet open to different ideological propositions, must have been important to him.¹⁰ Fausto Sozzini quickly rose to prominence and authority in this community, a fact noted with concern by Nuncio Alberto Bolognetti a few years later.

While maintaining good, if not friendly, relations with the two chief representatives of the Cracovian Unitarian community, Jerzy Szoman and Szymon Ronenberg, the Sienienian did not hide his distinct views on many questions of doctrine. Pastor Jerzy Szoman noted in his testament, which was at the same time a *sui generis* chronicle of important events: “We had a conversation with Mr Fausto Sozzini on the subject of baptism. He commended us on our having received it, but claimed that for him it was not necessary, because it is not from us that he had received the articles of faith”¹¹ (Szoman indicated a wrong date of the meeting, 1577 instead of 1578 or even 1579). The conversation concerned, of course, the baptism of adults by submersion in water practised in the Minor Reformed Church, a rite of Anabaptist provenance. Sozzini did not yield to pressures and requests to agree to be baptised by submersion and even launched a resolute counterattack, which he published in the treatise *De baptismo aquae disputatio* (finished in mid-April 1580 and circulating in manuscript form). Baptism was, in his opinion, neutral to salvation (*adiaphoron*), unnecessary for the descendants

⁷ About the time Sozzini spent in Switzerland in between 1575 and 1578 see Ludwik CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn (1539–1604)* (Warszawa, 1963), 63–98.

⁸ Valerio MARCHETTI, *Gruppi ereticali senesi del Cinquecento* (Firenze, 1975), 240, 243.

⁹ Theodor WOTSCHKE, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen* (Leipzig, 1908), 271.

¹⁰ Lelio CANTIMORI, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento ed altri scritti*, ed. Adriano Prosperi (Torino, 1992), 332–37; Lech SZCZUCKI, *W kręgu myślicieli heretyckich* (Wrocław, 1972), 146–62. See also: Rita MAZZEI, *Itinera mercatorum. Circolazione di uomini e beni nell’Europa centro-orientale* (Lucca, 1999), 199–231.

¹¹ Christophorus SANDIUS, *Bibliotheca antitrinitariorum* (Freistadii [Amsterdam], 1684), 195–69.

of Christians, as it did not elicit any internal transformation. Moreover—and here Sozzini was in complete agreement with Biandrata, who was a harsh critic of baptism by submersion practised in the Minor Reformed Church¹²—the submersion evokes very bad associations in whole Christendom. At stake here is, of course, the fact that this rite was practised by Anabaptists, rejected not only by the Catholic, but also by the entire so-called classical Reformation. It overtly challenged the official position of the Polish Reformed Church, codified by Marcin Czechowic, a pastor and distinguished writer from Lublin, in his *Rozmowy chrystyjańskie* (1575) and *Trzech dni rozmowa o dzieciokrzęństwie*¹³ (1578), to name but a few. When seeking to be officially admitted to the *Ecclesia Minor*, Sozzini did not hide his dissenting views on predestination, justification and Christ's sacrifice as well; because of all these doctrinal differences, the synod held in Raków on May 10, 1680, turned down his application.¹⁴

The synod's decision also proves that Sozzini gave there an extensive account of the doctrinal differences that set him apart from the Polish Church. It transpires from his correspondence (undated but most likely from the beginning of 1680s) with his senior from the Cracovian congregation, Szymon Ronemberg, that he was concerned about both the low level of education of pastors and about their tendency towards schematic treatment of doctrine. This tendency was visible, Sozzini believed, in the fact that Polish Unitarians regarded as brethren in faith only those who rejected the dogma of the Trinity and baptism of children, but were not interested in their views on other issues.¹⁵

Very soon, Sozzini came to realise that the administrative centre of Polish Unitarianism is the congregation in Lublin, led by the abovementioned Marcin Czechowic and his close friend, a secular senior, Jan Niemojewski—hence his constant interest in the life and activity of this centre, his insistence on finding allies there, his frequent debates and polemics with its leaders, although apparently Sozzini's relations with Czechowic himself in the early

¹² ANDREAS DUDITHIUS, *Epistulae*, part II (Budapest, 1995), 555 (Biandrata to Dudycz 28 November 1573).

¹³ Lech SZCZUCKI, *Marcin Czechowic. Studium z dziejów antytrynitaryzmu polskiego XVI wieku* (Warszawa, 1964), 90–8; Lech SZCZUCKI, "The Beginnings of Antitrinitarian Anabaptism in Lithuania and Poland in the Light of So-Far Unknown Source," in *Anabaptistes et dissidents au XVI siècle*, publiés par Jean G. Rott and Simon L. Verheus Verheus (Baden-Baden, 1987), 343–60.

¹⁴ Friedrich S. BOCK, *Historia antitrinitariorum*, vol. II (Regiomonti et Lipsiae, 1784), 671.

¹⁵ Fausto SOZZINI, *Listy*, ed. Ludwik Chmaj, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1959), 207–11 (F. Sozzini to S. Ronemberg [1583]).

1680s were already characterised by mutual antipathy. The reason for this was that Czechowic, the main ideologue of the Anabaptist Antitrinitarianism, took a firm stand against Sozzini—without mentioning his name, however—in the treatise that constituted an appendix to his Latin work *De paedobaptistarum errorum origine*, published around 1582.

In the treatise, Czechowic demonstrated that in Scripture there is a universal commandment (*universal mandatum*) to be baptised and that baptism does not belong to the category of *adiaphora*. The very word “adiaphoron” was coined and introduced to the Church by people who wanted to obliterate the commandments of Christ. Papacy considers therefore those commandments to be recommendations (*consilia*), and others to be neutral things (*adiaphora*) (and here there is a clear allusion to Sozzini’s views). Strong notes of ethical rigorism recurrent in these arguments show at the same time the essential motive of Czechowic’s enunciation. In the doctrine of Anabaptist Unitarianism, baptism by submersion was not only an act sealing the accession to the *Ecclesia Minor*, but also a challenge to “the world”, it meant a choice of a life of suffering, self-sacrifice and persecution, that is “a truly Christian life”.¹⁶

Here is another allusion to Sozzini:

The only thing I can say on the subject of *adiaphora* is that I am astounded by the audacity with which people easily invent new things in Scripture, so that some of them, as I see it, can more freely and safely can spend their life without a cross on their backs or dangers.¹⁷

Clearly annoyed by this remark, Sozzini responded thus:

Behold the miraculous effects of your baptism: those who have received it believe that they can look into men’s hearts and not only think and speak badly of others in spite of all commandments to treat others with Christian love, but also make use of blatant calumny.¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, then, that Sozzini concluded his rather sharp polemic with a statement that he would not argue any more with believers in superstitious practices.¹⁹ But, surely, he was also aware of the fact that his radical

¹⁶ See Lech SZCZUCKI, *Marcin Czechowic*, 139–40.

¹⁷ Marcin CZECHOWIC, *De paedobaptistarum errorum origine* [Kraków, ca. 1582], 177.

¹⁸ *BFP*, vol. II, 752 (F. SOZZINI, *De baptismo aquae disputatio*).

¹⁹ *BFP*, vol. II, 752.

views on baptism had little chance of success at the time. Therefore, without changing in the least his own views on this issue, he encouraged other brethren to receive it. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that his treatise *De baptismo aquae disputatio* only appeared in print in 1613, which was the year of Marcin Czechowic's death, which demonstrates the importance and also the sensitivity of the issue. Let us add that the issue of baptism of children and baptism of adults by submersion was still sometimes a subject of disputes and polemics within the Minor Reformed Church in the 17th century.

Disputes around the subject of baptism constituted, however, only a part of Sozzini's remarkably intense and multifaceted activity he engaged in even at the beginning of his time spent in Poland. So at the request of the Cracovian congregation he embarked on a polemic with a Calvinist writer, Andrzej Wolan,²⁰ and entered into a series of disputes of, so to speak, private character (we shall discuss them later), and finally clashed violently with Jacob Paleologus.²¹ This dispute calls for a comment. Paleologus, one of the most eminent representatives of radical Antitrinitarian heterodoxy, an author of theological writings, possessed of a great talent and closely associated with the community of Transylvanian Nonadorants, at the time of his stay in Poland in 1572 held a dispute with the Polish Unitarians on the subject of the Christians' participation in war. Paleologus' critique was not only aimed at pacifism espoused by the Polish Reformed Church at the time, but it essentially concerned the Christians' attitude towards the world and the norms defining that attitude. The Greek Antitrinitarian inferred these norms, in accordance with his doctrine, from the Old Testament. The polemic between Paleologus and Grzegorz Paweł of Brzeziny was published in 1580 by Symon Budny, the leader of the Lithuanian Unitarians and an implacable critic of the socio-political ideology of the "Rakovian" Unitarians. Budny took also a firm stand against the involvement of the Reformed Church from Lesser Poland in Dávid's condemnation. A schism within the Polish-Lithuanian Minor Reformed Church seemed therefore to be imminent.²²

Sozzini, who did not meet Paleologus (although he probably read his treatises circulating as manuscripts), widened the dispute, also attacking the Greek's religious doctrine, treating him as a judaising dissenter and an enemy

²⁰ Alodia KAWECKA-GRYCZOWA, *Ariańskie oficyny wydawnicze Rodeckiego i Sternackiego* (Wrocław, 1974), 179–80.

²¹ On the subject of that polemic of Sozzini's see Stanisław KOT, *Ideologia polityczna i społeczna Braci Polskich zwanych arianami* (Warszawa, 1932), 57–64; CANTIMORI, *Eretici italiani*, 407–12; CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn*, 144–69.

²² SZCZUCKI, *Marcin Czechowic*, 116.

of Christ. In this way Paleologus fell under the anathema the Transylvanian and Polish Reformed Churches imposed on Ferenc Dávid. However, in contrast to the Transylvanians, who did not approve of their Polish brethren's pacifism and isolationism, Sozzini in fact endorsed the views of the latter. One could say he was indeed striving to soften the impression to the effect that the attitude of the *Ecclesia Minor* towards the state and its institutions was averse—and thus he made some concessions in their favour in his work—but at the same time he maintained the view that a true Christian needs to distance himself entirely from the politics, political power and, of course, bloodshed.

Sozzini's polemic strengthened his position among the Polish Unitarians, and was also an important step towards his emancipation from Biandrata's influence, who was displeased by the dispute with Paleologus, which he considered a completely unnecessary manifestation of solidarity with the former "Rakovians".²³

The polemics and public disputes were frequent, particularly in the 1580s and 1590s. On the one hand, it was linked to the growing power of the Catholic faction in Poland, already treating the Antitrinitarians as dangerous opponents in the 1580s. On the other hand, the *Ecclesia Minor* was, as it were, a point of reference for the religious nonconformists practically in the whole Europe. The Polish Antitrinitarians, mostly preoccupied with countering the Catholics' attacks, gladly accepted help from the hard-working and learned Sienian, selflessly siding with them. For Sozzini himself, on the other hand, the disputes were of great importance, as they helped to establish his position within the *Ecclesia Minor*.

Among the disputes the earliest is an exchange of opinions with Andreas Dudith, a liberal humanist and imperial diplomat, living at the time in Wrocław. Dudith, who in the late 1560s, openly sided with Antitrinitarians and was a friend of Jacob Paleologus, in later years was also vividly interested in theological matters. Unfortunately, of the extant correspondence of Sozzini to Dudith, written in the early 1580s, contains only four letters, enabling us to reconstruct the contents of their discussions. They concerned many issues, particularly those of the authority of Scripture and the truth of Christianity. The first was already a matter of interest for Dudith for many years, and he would raise it in his correspondence with Beza from the late 1560s, and, in a fully explicit manner, in a letter to Paleologus from 1576.²⁴

²³ CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn*, 165–66.

²⁴ Andreas DUDITHIUS, *Epistulae*, part V (Budapest, 2005), 302–4.

Sozzini wrote at the time, on Dudith's request, a treatise entitled *De Sacrae Scripturae auctoritate* (incidentally, a critical edition of that treatise is being prepared by professor Mikołaj Szymański of the University of Warsaw). The treatise did not, however, convince Dudith, who called into question the authority of the Old Testament and would also demonstrate some of the commandments from the New Testament to be laughable and redundant. What is more, he questioned the truth of Christianity on the grounds that, in his opinion, it is not based on irrefutable foundations; therefore it is hard to believe that we will live after death, as such a view contradicts both reason and experience. It is also easily noticeable that Sozzini was seriously concerned with these views, and he called upon Dudith to abandon the wrong path. Zbigniew Ogonowski, who discusses their correspondence in detail in his book *Socynianizm a Oświecenie*, comes to the conclusion that "at least between 1580 and 1583 Dudith harboured doubts as to the truth of Christianity, and Sozzini did not manage to dispel these doubts, either with the arguments he employed in his letters, or with his treatise about the authority of Scripture."²⁵ But this begs the question whether Dudith might have simply made use of the method he frequently employed—that of testing the interlocutor's dialectic skills, a method we often encounter in his ample correspondence. This cannot be known precisely, but in any case we know that the discussion led rather to the strengthening of relations between the correspondents.

F. S. Bock's hypothesis, endorsed later by Ludwik Chmaj, that it was highly plausible that Francisco Pucci chose Dudith to be the judge in a debate with Sozzini, held in Kraków in the autumn of 1584²⁶ (we also have the testimony of Dudith himself that he was headed for Kraków at the time²⁷). Pucci then discredited the judge as a "man of the Court"—a label perfectly fitting, as Dudith was the emperor's counsellor—and appealed to the minor synod in Chmielnik (in September 1584), which however firmly supported Sozzini.²⁸ At the same time, Sozzini also held a dispute on pre-existence of Christ, defended by a German Antitrinitarian he was on friendly terms with, Erasmus Ioannis.²⁹ The latter also counted on Dudith's arbitrage, but was turned down. The third of the Sienenian's opponents was the philosopher Christian Francken, a former Jesuit and later a radical Antitrinitarian, who

²⁵ Zbigniew OGONOWSKI, *Socynianizm a Oświecenie* (Warszawa, 1966), 33.

²⁶ BOCK, *Historia*, 820.

²⁷ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, ms. R 253 nr 48 (Dudith to J. Praetorius, 9 October 1584).

²⁸ SOZZINI, *Listy*, 1:260–61 (Sozzini to M. Radecke, 8 January 1586).

²⁹ See SZCZUCKI, *W kręgu myślicieli heretyckich*, 159–60.

firmly opposed the adoration of Christ. The debate *De honore Christi*, held in Pawlikowice on March 14, 1584, was undoubtedly difficult for Sozzini, as Francken demanded that only arguments based on reason be used, since Scripture can easily be bent and interpreted according to one's own beliefs. Sozzini—not without hesitation—did accept that proposal. The arguments adduced by Francken, who argued for example that Christ, as a created and therefore a finite being, cannot possess divine attributes, *ex definitione* infinite, Sozzini found to be “arguments philosophical in nature and contrary to the teachings of Christ”. The dispute ended at the synod in Chmielnik in September 1584 with Francken being convicted for his views.³⁰ Sozzini still represented, as we can see, an uncompromising attitude towards non-adorantism, a view that posed, also in Poland—particularly on account of Symon Budny's activity—a considerable threat to the unity of the Minor Reformed Church.

This lively disputational activity, presented here only briefly and selectively, alongside a great deal of writing and participation in synods, for a long time did not, however, bring doctrinal changes called for by the Sienebian, since they were successfully blocked by the Lublin congregation. On the other hand, Sozzini had already earned himself an informal but eminent position in the Minor Church. These successes encouraged him to promote vigorously his own ideas in private discussions and at the synods. Thus in a dispute with Jan Niemojewski, somewhat harsh at times, held between 1587 and 1588, he would expound his soteriological views, at the core of which was the idea that the redemptive mission of Christ was to show the way of salvation to the people, that it took place in Heaven; he also upheld his previous view, that, while the adoration of Christ was necessary, invoking him (*invocatio*) was not included among the truths necessary for salvation. As regards the Lord's Supper, on the other hand, he denied its sacramental character, treating it—in a Zwinglian, so to speak—as a commemorative rite.³¹ In August 1588, he was highly successful at the synod in Brest, as he managed to effect reconciliation between *Ecclesia Minor* and Symon Budny; he also held a few successful discussions in defence of his own views.³² Simultaneously, he would devote his time to writing and publishing his older works. Thus, in 1588, his treatise appeared, already partly written earlier,

³⁰ See Lech SZCZUCKI, “Philosophie und Autorität. Der Fall Christian Francken,” in *Reformation und Aufklärung in Polen. Studien über den Sozinianismus und seinen Einfluss auf das osteuropäische Denken im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Paul Wrzecionko (Göttingen, 1977), 207–10.

³¹ See CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn*, 261–78.

³² Fausto SOZZINI, *Listy*, 2:22 (S. Przytkowski, *Żywot Fausta Socyna*).

against a Calvinist, Andrzej Wolan (*De Iesu Christi Filii Dei natura*), and his polemic with the Jesuits from Poznań, commenced in 1583 and concerning trinitology and Christology (*Assertiones theologicae [...] una cum animadversionibus*, 1589), culminated at some point in an extensive treatise targeting the work of a Jesuit, Jakub Wujek, first published in a Polish translation by Piotr Statorius-Stoiński in 1593, and later in 1595 in the Latin original (*Refutatio libelli quem Iacobus Vujekus edidit*).

In that period Sozzini had already gathered around himself a large group of young Unitarian activists and theologians—Poles and Germans (Andrzej and Krzysztof Lubieniecki, Valentin Schmalz, Piotr Statorius-Stoiński, Johannes Völkel, Andrzej Wojdowski), who studied his work diligently, sought his advice and supported his position during synodal proceedings.³³

At the synod in Lublin held in late May and early June 1593, together with his supporters, Sozzini pushed his theses concerning justification, redemption and the Lord's Supper.³⁴ From the doctrinal point of view, it was a crucial moment, one that marks the beginning of, so to speak, the Socinian period in the history of Antitrinitarianism in Poland. The culmination of these successes was the publication in 1594—almost sixteen years after it was written—of Sozzini's treatise *De Iesu Christo Servatore*. The synod's decisions on sociopolitical issues are also worth mentioning here, because they meant mitigation of earlier rigorism. The synod allowed punishing "murderers and adulterers, but not by death, so that they could still come to their senses." Further, if a servant of an Antitrinitarian committed a crime punishable by death, then—when all means of mitigating the punishment have been exhausted—he or she should be turned over to the relevant authorities. It was also permissible to admit a king or a prince to the Reformed Church, and that king or prince can stay in office and rule with the help of the congregation. No need to mention that the import of the latter resolution was purely theoretical, as an expression of respect for the secular power and, ultimately, a recommendation to forgive debts of poor debtors,³⁵ These resolutions aligned with the Sienenian's wishes, as he strove to temper the extremes of Anabaptist provenance.

Lublin—the mainstay of Anabaptist Antitrinitarianism—lost its leading role in May 1598 after the death of Sozzini's chief opponent, Jan Niemojew-

³³ CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn*, 328–51.

³⁴ "Księga wizytacji zborów podgórskich," ed. Lech Szczucki and Janusz Tazbir, *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej* 3 (1958): 151–53. See also *BFP*, vol. II, 755.

³⁵ "Księga wizytacji podgórskich," 153–54.

ski. Soon after pastor Marcin Czechowic, another implacable opponent of Sozzini, was removed from his position, and in his place two of Sozzini's students were appointed, Krzysztof Lubieniecki and Valentin Schmalz.³⁶ From that moment onwards, despite the schism that took place in the Church in Lublin, Sozzini was the unquestionable leader of the *Ecclesia Minor* in Poland, known also widely abroad due to the polemics his works sparked even at the beginning of the 1580s in both Catholic and Protestant circles.

Sozzini's fame had, however, some effects that were dangerous for him. Papal Nuncio Alberto Bolognetti accused him before Chancellor Jan Zamoyski that in his book against Paleologus he spoke out against secular power, which made the Sienenian leave Kraków temporarily and seek refuge in nearby Pawlikowice. In a letter to Cardinal Giacomo Savelli, the Grand Inquisitor, Bolognetti sketched the following portrait of Sozzini:

Fausto Sozzini is held in the highest esteem among the heretics [in Kraków] not only because of his education, but also due to his gentle disposition that purportedly comes from disregard of worldly things. This esteem harmonizes with the natural pallor of his face and the ostentatiously modest garments (although perhaps that modesty comes from necessity) as well as his speech that sounds humble and sweet, hence moniker "God-sent Angel". For that reason he can inflict much greater harms than anyone else, once he spills his poison.³⁷

As a consequence of Bolognetti's efforts the tenant of Sozzini's estate in Siena, Cornelio Marsini, was forbidden to send the money due to Sozzini, but then the great prince of Tuscany Francesco de Medici, amicably disposed towards him, came to the rescue by deciding that Sozzini was not liable to the sentence of the Inquisition and lifted the prohibition. However, after the death of Francesco de Medici in October 1587, the Sienenian Inquisitors initiated proceedings against Sozzini, which ended in February 3, 1591. He was sentenced to death—in his absence, he was executed *in effigie*, and his estate was confiscated.³⁸ From this moment onwards Sozzini was deprived of his livelihood and supported himself with the help of the royal doctor Niccolò Buccelli—only partially because he took great care to maintain full independence in financial matters—and his Polish fellow believers.

Also in Kraków, where there were a few religiously motivated tumults directed against the dissidents, usually instigated by students and poor towns-

³⁶ SZCZUCKI, *Marcin Czechowic*, 195.

³⁷ *Monumenta Poloniae Vaticana*, vol. VI, part II, ed. Edward Kuntze (Kraków, 1938), 15.

³⁸ See in the same volume, 115–32.

folk, Sozzini fell victim to aggression, first from the nobleman who held a grudge against him because his father or father-in-law was an Antitrinitarian.³⁹ Another, much more serious incident took place on April 29, 1598, when the students of the University of Kraków broke into his home, destroyed most of the books and manuscripts (including the manuscript of his treatise against atheism, much lamented by Sozzini), and dragged the ill Italian out into the street and led towards the Vistula intending to drown him.⁴⁰ He was saved by a few University professors headed by Marcin Wadowita, to whom he wrote a beautiful letter afterwards.⁴¹ On the next day, he was taken out of Kraków, and in mid-June 1598 he went to Lusławice in Podgórze, where he was to spend the rest of his life, although he would frequently attend synods, especially in Raków, where he also intended to move for good. In spite of his declining health—he suffered from many ailments, such as an eye condition that forced him to dictate his works—he would work passionately. In March 1602 and in October 1602, he held *colloquia* in Raków, which were theological seminars for the Church elders, expounding his teachings and defending them against the objections and doubts of the participants, among whom there were also his staunch opponents, like Marcin Czechowic, who participated in a seminar in 1602.⁴²

It is also in Lusławice that the two of his posthumously published works were written: *Commentarius in Epistolam Ioannis Apostoli primam* (1614) and the unfinished *Lectiones sacrae* (1618). Sozzini did not get to finish the catechism, which he was greatly concerned with. Its fragments were published after his death (1618). The only work written in Lusławice and published while he lived (in 1600) was a translation of his appeal to the Polish Calvinists with a proposal of a union.⁴³

Fausto Sozzini died on March 3, 1604, in Lusławice.

³⁹ Fausto SOZZINI, *Listy*, 2:1555 (from S. to A. Wojdowski, 7 October 1594).

⁴⁰ *BFP*, vol. I, 475–77.

⁴¹ *BFP*, vol. II, 692–97. See also Włodzimierz BUDKA, “Faust Socyn w Krakowie,” *Reformacja w Polsce* 5 (1928): 120–23.

⁴² See *Per la storia degli eretici italiani del secolo XVI in Europa*, ed. Delio Cantimori and Elisabeth Feist, 217–75; Stanisław SZCZOTKA, “Synody arian polskich,” *Reformacja w Polsce* 7–8 (1935/37): 52–55; *Epitome colloquii Racoviae habiti Anno 1601*, ed. Lech Szczucki and Janusz Tazbir (Warszawa, 1966).

⁴³ The original latin version—*Quod Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae homines vulgo Evangelici dicti [...] omnino deberent se illorum, coetui adiungere, qui in iisdem locis false et iniuste Arriani atque Ebionitae vocantur*—was published in Raków in 1611. See KAWECKA-GRYCZOWA, *Ariańskie oficyny*, 277.

In spite of the long years he spent in Poland, Sozzini never became Polish in the slightest; he always remained a Tuscan patrician, both in terms of culture and lifestyle, deeply attached to the “*modi italiani*” and dreaming about returning to his homeland.⁴⁴ On the other hand, however, he was perfectly aware that it was only in Poland—thanks to the Minor Church—that he was able to carry out his programme of a radical reconstruction of Christianity.

Probably in the early 1590s, an anonymous adherent of Antitrinitarianism—Ludwik Chmaj might have rightly identified the person as Hieronim Moskorzowski, later a prominent activist and writer in the service of the Minor Reformed Church⁴⁵—asked him the following question:

Why wasn't such a great thing, the foundation of our salvation [Unitarian Christology], revealed to us in some very famous kingdom, but instead here in Poland? It seems that this kingdom has received, in the likeness of Sion, special assurances, to the effect that the word of God that issues from it shall bring great benefits, although other nations dread it like an insult or they downright reject it.⁴⁶

Sozzini's response was firm and unequivocal:

I see no reason the kingdom of Poland should be treated as some forsaken corner of the world, especially when we take into consideration how powerful and authoritative were the dignitaries of the religion that is traditional here, greater than those in any other country. Therefore, since in this kingdom the truth about the true nature of the Father and the Christ has been taught and received, it has a bad reputation among other nations. The Kingdom of Judaea, too, for many centuries, had a bad reputation among foreigners, mainly because it is there that the Christian religion was first preached and received.⁴⁷

The conclusions that follow from this argument are optimistic. The divine truth revealed itself—after the long preponderance of the dominant, Catholic religion, in the Kingdom of Poland.

Naturally, the matter was viewed differently by Catholics. Those views have been formulated in a most emphatic fashion in 1560s by an eminent

⁴⁴ Valerio MARCHETTI, “Do biografii Fausta Socyna. Nowe listy do wielkich książąt Toskanii,” *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 14 (1969): 160.

⁴⁵ CHMAJ, *Faust Socyn*, 279, but also see 280–91.

⁴⁶ *BFP*, vol. II, 327.

⁴⁷ *BFP*, vol. II, 332.

writer, Stanisław Orzechowski. While extolling the splendid political system in Poland, the kingdom of freedom, the land of the chosen people, beloved by God, he also noted with concern those changes that occurred in it as a result of the Reformation, the work of the foreign vagabonds, outcasts of despicable origin.⁴⁸ This view was accepted, with some modifications, by the Polish counter-Reformation camp.

On the other hand, Andrzej Lubieniecki Senior, who was a prominent activist of the *Ecclesia Minor*, combined, in a way, these two antithetical opinions in his historical work written in the second decade of the 17th century, entitled *Poloneutychia, albo Królestwa polskiego szczęście...* Lubieniecki also believed the Poles to be a chosen people—chosen by God who gave them a wonderful political system that guaranteed them freedom, not only politically, but also freedom of religion. Poland's good fortune—this eponymous *eutychia*—was, however, guaranteed by God only as long as people's blood was not shed for faith. However, once two religiously motivated executions occurred 1611—of Antitrinitarian Iwan Tyszkowic and Calvinist Franco di Franco—the irate Creator afflicted the country with various calamities.⁴⁹

Translated by Joanna Frydrych

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⁴⁸ See Lech SZCZUCKI, "Stanisław Orzechowski e gli inizi del pensiero politico della controriforma in Polonia," *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 39 (1995): 83–8.

⁴⁹ Andrzej LUBIENIECKI, *Poloneutychia albo Królestwa polskiego szczęście*, ed. Alina Linda, et al. (Warszawa–Łódź, 1982), 152–64.

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