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DE FALSA ET VERA COGNITIONE *

It is with true appreciation that one should welcome the photo-offset reprinting of a collection of treatises on trinitology and christology which were originally published in 1568 in Transylvania under the title: *De falsa et vera unius . . . Dei . . . cognitione . . .*. Although, surprisingly enough, as many as 25 copies of this work have survived until the present, a fact that seems to be unprecedented as regards 16th century "heretical" literature (it also means that a large number of copies must have been printed), the work is so important in the history of antitrinitarian movement in its early unitarian phase that undoubtedly it deserved a second printing. The latter includes an index of names and an introduction written by an eminent scholar of 16th century Hungarian heterodoxy—Antal Pirnát. It has to be stated at the beginning that Pirnát faced a difficult and challenging task. Although the problems of the very circumstances and the date of publication of *De falsa et vera . . .* it has appeared—in spite of the date in the dedication—in 1568¹ have been the subject of many studies, the question of the authorship, so far, has not been analyzed, at greater detail. Let us point out here that the work consists of 24 chapters and each of them is, in fact, an independent

* *De falsa et vera unius Dei Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti cognitione libri duo* (Albae Juliae) 1568, introduced by Antal Pirnát, Budapest 1988, Akadémiai Kiadó, LXXXVI + 393 pges. Bibliotheca Unitariorum, vol. II.

¹ Apart from numerous evidence pointing explicitly to 1568 as the date of publication, which was given by A. Pirnát in the "Introduction," it is worth stressing that the date appears also in the very text: "Christus

treatise. The chapters were published anonymously and the title page contains only a general statement: *Autoribus ministris ecclesiarum consentientium in Sarmatia et in Transylvania*. Moreover, the preface addressed to John Sigismund Zápolya includes a statement which seems to confirm a collective authorship of the work: "*Ceterum cum hic a nobis multa desiderantur, non enim cohaerent singula (uti par esset) diserte omnia non explicantur, nonnulla saepius, ob authorum, qui scripserunt, consonantiam, repetuntur [...]* pios lectores oramus, velint temporari condonare."²

Pirnát assumes that the main authors of the work were Ferenc Dávid and Giorgio Biandrata (we shall return to the problem in due time). At the same time he rejects the opinion that there were some Polish authors among the contributors. Thus the statement on the title page of *De falsa et vera*, quoted above, suggesting that it is the work of Transylvanian and Polish pastors has been reduced to a symbolic phrase which was merely intended to stress the ideological unity of both Churches.

Pirnát argues the above *ex silentio*. And to this effect, he claims that Andreas Dudith in his letter to the emperor Maximilianus II of 9 April 1568 does not mention the Polish authors. Moreover, the very same Dudith in an undated—and never sent—letter to Thèodore de Béze "mentions only Dávid and Biandrata as the sources of his knowledge of the new teachings, mentioning 'their works published in Transylvania'" (p. XLV). Moreover, Pirnát claims, it seems rather strange that Stanisław Lubieniecki in his *Historia reformationis Polonicae* does not write about the origin, authors or the reception of *De falsa et vera* in Poland. According to Pirnát Lubieniecki was familiar with this work since he adapts the historiosophical concepts presented in chapters 2 and 3 of Book I and chapter 1 of Book II of *De falsa et vera* in his *Historia reformationis*. According to the author of the "Introduction" Lubieniecki's silence may be, therefore, explained only by the fact that in the sources available to him there was no information

verus conceptus est de spiritu sancto, natus ex Maria virgine, annis abhinc postquam dictum est 'hodie nobis natus est Servator Christus in Bethleem' 1568" (De falsa et vera . . . , p. 344—page number of the reprint).

² *De falsa et vera . . . , pp. 4-5.*

about the Polish contributors to *De falsa et vera*. The same applies to *Bibliotheca antitrinitariorum* by C. Sandius-B. Wiszowaty (pp. XLVII - XLVIII).

The above has been a "good-will" summary of the argumentation which, nevertheless, seems to be both biased and uncertain. Let us begin with the evidence provided by A. Dudith who—according to Pirnát's hypothesis—was supposed to be so close to Biandrata that the latter presented him with proofs of illustrations for *De falsa et vera*. However, the sources of which I am personally aware do not provide any grounds for the claim that in 1568 Dudith had so close contacts with Transylvanian or even Polish antitrinitarians. I think that at the time he studied *more academico* the antitrinitarian doctrine, which is documented—among others—by the Leiden manuscript of Modrzewski's *Sylvae* which he started to copy—partly himself—precisely in 1568.³ Dudith's letter to de Béze, mentioned by the author of the "Introduction," in which he praises Dávid and Biandrata and points out their decisive role in the evolution of his own christological views, was written as late as the early 1570s—most probably in 1571—and it would be hardly possible to refer it to the situation in 1568. Besides, let us note that in the above letter Dudith mentions also names of other antitrinitarian activists and writers.⁴

Now, a few words about Socinian historiography. In spite of Pirnát's claims, we do not know whether S. Lubieniecki really read *De falsa et vera* . . . (let us also note that chapter 4, Book III of *Historia reformationis* which deals with Transylvania is unfinished and very poor in factual data, and the only reference to *De falsa et vera* comes from an anonymous letter of 1571 to V. Hellopoeus⁵). The view that *De falsa et vera* . . . is the source of Lubieniecki's concepts of the history of the Church is false. These concepts in fact form the patrimony of the whole of the so called radical reformation and were propagated in the antitrinitarian circles a few years before the publication of *De falsa et vera* . . ., among others by Gregory Paul of Brzeziny.⁶ As

³ Cf. A. Fricii *Modrevii Sylvae*, ed. C. Kumaniecki, Varsoviae 1960, pp. 10 - 18.

⁴ "Hoc tamen tantum abest, ut inficiaturus umquam sim, ut etiam

far as B. Wiszowaty is concerned, one should point out that this intelligent and well-read bibliographer did not have a good access to the 16th century antitrinitarian literature and therefore he was unable to provide full information (see, for instance entries: Peter of Goniądz or Gregory Paul). Besides, Pirnát rejects the assumption expressed in *Bibliotheca antitrinitariorum* that the poem *Amantibus varitatis divinae adhortatio*, which as if closes chapter 8, Book I of *De falsa et vera* . . . was written by Gregory Paul. On the other hand, Wiszowaty's opinion has been verified by Konrad Górski who has proved beyond any doubt that the above verse is an abridged and altered version of the earlier (1564) Latin poem by Gregory Paul *Carmen ad Ioannem Calvinum et pios fratres*.⁷ Thus Pirnát's claim that Poles took no part in *De falsa et vera* . . . turns out to be groundless. What is more, Konrad Górski is of the opinion that chapters 8 and 9, Book II "were probably written by Gregory Paul since their content is strikingly similar to some fragments of *Wieża Babel* [*The Tower of Babel*] and a short work *De Antichristi Deo*."⁸ Suppositions of such an eminent and at the same time cautious scholar should always be taken in account, although it is impossible to confirm them fully today since the only extant copy of *De Antichristi Deo* was destroyed during World War II. What is certain, however, is

libenter profitear, totam hanc coelestem doctrinam secundum Deum, clarissimis illis magnaue doctrina, ingenio, iudicia, pietate praeditis viris potissimum debere, in cuius gloriae societatem iure suo veniunt et Alciatus et Gregorius (et) Schomannus et Krovicius et Socinus et alii praestantissimi virii [...]"—Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum, vol. I, Irenopoli [Amsterdam] p.a. 1656 [1668], col. 523.

I am not discussing here other problems touched by Pirnát in his commentary on Dudith's correspondence with the emperor on the subject of *De falsa et vera* . . . since they would require a detailed polemic which I am going to present elsewhere.

⁵ S. Lubieniecki, *Historia reformationis Polonicae*, Freistadii [Amsterdam] 1685, p. 232.

⁶ Cf. i.e. F. H. Littel, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, Boston 1958, *passim*; Grzegorz Paweł z Brzezina, *O różnicach terażniejszych* [*On Present Differences* [1564]], ed. K. Górski and W. Kuraszkiewicz, Wrocław 1954, pp. 69 - 70 (*Jako Kościół Antykrystów od Boga przez naczynia jego obala się* . . .) [*How Does the Church of Antichrists by God's Vessels Destroy Itself*.]

⁷ K. Górski, *Grzegorz Paweł z Brzezina* [Gregory Paul of Brzezina], Kraków 1929, pp. 207 - 208.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 207.

a close dependence of chapters 8, Book I of *De falsa et vera...* (*De vocibus et phrasis portentosis*) on Gregory's *Wieża Babel*, known today only in the Polish version published in his *O różnicach terażniejszych* [*On Present Differences—1564*].⁹ Moreover, we know that as early as November 1565 Biandrata asked Gregory Paul to send him all his works and papers and also a few copies of Latin version of *Wieża Babel* (it was published in 1563/4 under the title *Turris Babel*): "*Scripta omnia tua cum aliquot turribus Babelicis mitto.*"¹⁰ In Transylvania of those years there were quite a few people who knew Polish; it is enough to mention R. Hoffhalter-Skrzetuski or the Polish courtiers of John Sigismund Zápolya. It is also very likely that Biandrata who had spent a long time in Poland had at least a passive knowledge of our Polish tongue.

The literary work of Gregory Paul of Brzeziny, as a matter of fact, caused the author of the "Introduction" a lot of trouble since he had only very superficially acquainted himself with the work of K. Górski. Thus in the "Introduction"—especially in the parts dealing with Gregory Paul—we find sometimes surprising mistakes and slips. For instance, Pirnát claims (pp. LXII and LXVI) that all works of Gregory Paul published between 1567

⁹ Grzegorz Paweł z Brzeziny, *O różnicach terażniejszych* [*On Present Differences*], Wrocław 1954, pp. [80-81] and *De falsa et vera...*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁰ *Akta synodów różnowierczych w Polsce* [*Records of Protestant Synods in Poland*], ed. M. Sipayllo, vol. 2, Warszawa 1972, p. 358. Let us also add that this letter of Gregory Paul should be dated probably 21st of November 1565 and not—as in the above edition based on a manuscript in the Czartoryski Library in Cracow—21st of September 1565. Among Théodore de Bèze's papers there is an extant copy of this letter—as a matter of fact probably the most accurate one among the three copies known today—and it is dated precisely 21st of November (Genève Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, Archives Tronchin, vol. 163, fol. 58-61 v.—a xerox copy of this document was kindly sent to me by Prof. Alain Dufour). It is also worth noting that the Zurich copy which is the basis of a poor edition by T. Wotschke (*Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen*, Leipzig 1908, pp. 263-268), bears the date 9 days later i.e. 30th of November 1565. The same date is also given by *Bibliotheca antitrinitariorum* by C. Sandius-B. Wiszowaty (Freistadii [Amsterdam] 1684, p. 29) which refers to notes by M. Ruar. Thus, at least, the month of the date—November—seems to be doubtless. The copy was sent to de Bèze on 12th of July 1566 by K. Trety (*Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, vol. 7, Genève 1973, p. 178).

and 1569 lack dates of publication. Yet from Górski's book¹¹ he might be informed that *Rozdział Starego Testamentu od Nowego* [Difference between the Old and the New Testament] and *Antyhymn* . . . which—from the typographic point of view—is a continuation of *Okazanie i zborzenie* [Demonstration and Eversion]—are dated 1568. Thus, it is not surprising that in discussing the chronology of Gregory's book, Pirnát painfully tries to force the door that has been opened sixty years ago by Górski, at the same time providing inaccurate information.

A more careful reading of Górski's monograph would have also saved the "Introduction" from quite unnecessary and erroneous hypotheses concerning the work of Gregory in which he presented his chiliastic views (pp. LVIII - LX). The problem concerns simply his lost treatise entitled *Okazanie Antychrysta i jego królestwa ze znaków jego własnych* . . . [Revelation of Antichrist and His Kingdom Judged from His Own Signs] which is a translation of a chapter from Servetus' work *Christianismi restitutio* (*Signa sexaginta Regni Antichristi et revelatio eius iam nunc praesens*).¹²

There is also a considerable confusion created by Pirnát as regards "Polish parallel texts," i.e., according to him, Polish versions of some chapters of *De falsa et vera* . . ., which are the work of Gregory Paul. For instance, the statement that chapters 4 and 5, Book II have their Polish equivalent in *Okazanie i zborzenie* is a misunderstanding. One has to admit that Górski writes about chapter 5 of *De falsa et vera* as an inspiration for Gregory.¹³ However, my own studies show that *Okazanie i zborzenie* is an original work of a totally different structure and a considerable length (220 pages). Almost the same may be said with reference to Gregory Paul's treatise *Rozdział Starego Testamentu od Nowego* which shows some similarity—in the first part—to chapter 2, Book II of *De falsa et vera* . . . entitled *De discrimine Legis et Evangelii*. This similarity, however, is too superficial to become a reason for the claim that the Polish text is a translation or a revised version of the Latin work. Yet, what is a fact, of which

¹¹ K. Gó r s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 254 - 255.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

Pirnát seems to be unaware, is that in the final section of *Rozdział Starego Testamentu od Nowego* there is an extended Polish translation of a fragment (fol. CC₂ - CC₄) of the treatise *De discrimine Legis et Evangelii*.¹⁴ On the other hand, we cannot claim with certainty that the Polish version of chapters 9 and 12 - 15, Book II of *De falsa et vera* . . . was included in *Wykład miejsc niektórych pisma Starego i Nowego Testamentu* [Explanation of Some Places of the Old and New Testament] by Gregory Paul for the simple reason that our knowledge of this work is only second-hand.¹⁵ Neither is there any mention in the Introduction of the Polish version of chapter 14, Book II of *De falsa et vera* . . . (*Phrases aequipollentes aliquot* . . .) which appeared in Polish under the title *Zgodne a jedną rzecz znamionujące w Piśmie Św. sposoby mów o Jezusie Pomazańcu* [Consonant and One Thing Signifying in the Holy Scriptures Modes of Speaking of Christ the Anointed]. However, it is worth noting that the Polish version takes into account all the changes—very significant ones—which were introduced in a separate edition of chapter 14 published in Alba Julia in 1568 under the title *Aequipollentes ex scriptura phrases de Christo Filio Dei ex Maria nato figuratae*.¹⁶

Generally speaking, one may say that the Polish texts parallel to *De falsa et vera* . . . are in fact only two: the final section of *Rozdział Starego Testamentu od Nowego* [Difference between the Old and the New Testament] and *Zgodne . . . sposoby* [Consonant . . . Modes]. K. Górski considered both these texts to be translations from Latin texts by Biandrata (whom, let us remember, he regarded as the main author of *De falsa et vera* . . .). However, one can risk the supposition that Gregory Paul was also the author of the above Latin texts. It is known that in the years 1562 - 1565 he wrote several works in two versions: Latin and Polish. There are considerable discrepancies between the two versions: works in Latin are more precise, richer in content, more carefully documented and their argumentation is more sophisticated. It seems that the whole problem requires a detailed analysis. I am mention-

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 240 - 241; F.S. Bock, *op. cit.*, vol. I part 2, pp. 607 - 611.

¹⁶ K. Górski, *op. cit.*, pp. 247 - 248.

ing this here since I am convinced neither by K. Górski's claims that Gregory Paul was basically a translator and interpreter of Biandrata's work (it seems that K. Górski might have been misled by the error in the date of publication of the discussed work) nor by A. Pirnát's explanation of the differences between the Latin and the "parallel" Hungarian and Polish texts, according to which the latter were translations of earlier, unknown to us, handwritten copies.

Thus, we have reached perhaps the most important issue—that is the problem of actual contribution of Giorgio Biandrata and Ferenc Dávid to the writing and editing of *De falsa et vera* Pirnát who for many years has been sceptical as regards Biandrata's achievements as a writer and theologian, yet, on the other hand, acknowledging organizational and political talents of the Italian doctor who, moreover, knew how to take advantage of anonymous helpers, maintains that in this case Biandrata's contribution was also minimal. According to the Hungarian scholar Biandrata wrote only the letter of dedication to John Sigismund Zápolya (*nota bene*—his arguments supporting Biandrata's authorship are convincing) and edited or corrected chapter 1 Book II which, according to Pirnát, was written by Ferenc Dávid. As regards the latter, Pirnát ascribes to him the authorship (with a question mark) of chapters 1 - 3, Book I, and chapters 1 - 8, Book II. The only problem is that in support of this audacious thesis the author of the "Introduction" gives meagre evidence. For instance, he does not discuss at greater detail "the Hungarian parallel texts" of the type of two treatises by Dávid published in 1567: *Rövid magyarázat* and *Rövid útmutatás*.¹⁷ At present, one can only attribute to Dávid the authorship of chapter 5, Book II on the basis of evidence not quoted by Pirnát.¹⁸

¹⁷ Pirnát refers to M. Balázs's book: *Az erdélyi antitrinitarizmus az 1560-as évek végén*, Budapest 1988, which does not seem to be the best solution.

¹⁸ Cf. F. A. Lampe, *Historia ecclesiae reformatae in Hungaria et in Transylvania* . . . , Traiecti ad Rhenum 1728, pp. 226 - 227 as well as *De falsa et vera* . . . , pp. 154 - 158. Cf. also Faustus Socinus' opinion: "*Et quamquam tu [sc. F. Dávid—L.S.] ipse in iis scriptis, quae hactenus communiter cum aliis edidisti satis aperte adversus trinitarios defenderis spiritum sanctum non esse personam [...]*" (*Fragmenta Responsionis fusioris, quem Faustus*

Leaving the whole, extremely complex, question open, I would like to emphasize my own opinion that an *a priori* negation of Biandrata's co-authorship of *De falsa et vera*... does not make much sense. On the other hand, one can support the claim that the Italian doctor was more of a politician and organizer than an independent thinker. One can also agree, without serious reservations, with Thèodore de Bèze's unequivocal suggestion that Biandrata must have been helped by others (Peter Statorius) who corrected his writings from the formal point of view.¹⁹ All the above, however, does not account for his unselfish and passionate involvement in the debates on trinitology and christology, in which he demonstrated not a common intuition and theological culture. Neither does the above account for his great influence on professional theologians such as Dávid or Gregory Paul. One can also point out that in the light of his letter to Gregory Paul of November 1565 in which he tries to make Gregory take the side of the unitarian doctrine Biandrata refers him to his own writings ("*scripta mea omnia, collectanea et farragines*"²⁰) one can assume that some part of Biandrata's writings entered into *De falsa et vera*.... I do not intend to present here a number of undocumented conjectures, yet it seems that due to the proliferation of references to Italian "heretics," chapter 3, Book I might have been written by Biandrata.

One should also mention a few minor matters. The author of the "Introduction" seems to overestimate the social and legal position of the Protestant ministers (including the unitarian ones) in Transylvania (p. XLIII) although undoubtedly it was much better than in Poland. The situation, however, was due not so much to legal regulations but to the prince's support, and—perhaps first of all—to the pressure exerted by the supporters of Reformation in Transylvanian towns.

Pirnát maintains also that the higher social status of anti-

Socinus parabat ad Francisci Davidis de Christo non invocando scriptum, in: *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, vol. I, col. 791a, italics mine—L.S.).

¹⁹ *Correspondance de Thèodore de Bèze*, publiée par H. Meylan, A. Dufour et C. Chimelli, vol. 8, Genève 1976, p. 242.

²⁰ *Akta synodów różnowierczych w Polsce* [Records of Protestant Synods in Poland], p. 353.

trinitarian ministers in Transylvania resulted in the fact that they were more interested in abstract theological discussions than their Polish colleagues who were immersed in practical problems: the reform of life and morality in accordance with the spirit of anabaptist postulates (p. XLIV). In fact, however, that group of Polish antitrinitarian theologians, which was influenced by the anabaptist doctrine—in, let us say, 1565 - 1570—dealt with social and political problems mainly during synodal discussions; on the other hand, in their writings, the same group of theologians focused on strictly theological topics too. It is enough to have a closer look at the work of the two most eminent antitrinitarian authors of the period: Peter of Goniądz and Gregory Paul.

It has to be noted with great disappointment that—as is evident from the “Introduction” (pp. XLVI and LXII)—Pirnát still insists on his hypothesis (which has been refuted long ago)²¹ that Faustus Socinus was not the author of *Explicatio primae partis primi capitatis Ioannis* published in Transylvania in 1568.

Quoting (p. LV) a flattering opinion on Gregory Paul expressed in chapter 3, Book I of *De falsa et vera...* (“*Quid tandem vir pius et Ecclesiae Cracoviensis olim pastor Gregorius Paulus praetermisit, quominus verbi divini et primitivae Ecclesiae puritatem atque simplicitatem nobis non restitueret? Ipsius scripta testantur.*”) Pirnát comments on it in the following way: “Thus[...] Gregory Paulus, together with his works written up to 1567 is ranked among the forerunners for the time being. This solution reflects sound psychological and tactical insight. It makes unqualified recognition of merits of the enthusiastic Polish preacher possible and at the same time explains why the propagation of antitrinitarian ideas, which the pastor of Cracow protestant congregation carried on from 1559 onwards, failed to be successful and how it came about that in the most important congregation in Little Poland precisely in the second half of the 1560s the Calvinists became so strong that Gregory Paulus had to leave his

²¹ Cf. V. Marchetti, *Le “Explicationes” giovanee dei Sozzini e l'antitrinitarismo transilvano del Cinquecento*, in: *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi all'epoca del Rinascimento*, a cura di T. Klaniczay, Budapest 1975, pp. 351 - 359; *Aggiunte all'epistolario di Fausto Sozzini*, a cura di V. Marchetti e G.P. Zucchini, Warszawa - Łódź 1982, pp. 39 - 40.

post" (p. LV). Not only, the fact is that Gregory Paul became the minister of the Cracow congregation in 1557, but what is more important, it seems that even the most suspicious scholar will not be able to find in the brief eulogy quoted above all the implications that were discovered there by the author of the "Introduction."

A few philological details. It does not seem possible to translate the obviously deformed sentence from Biandrata's letter of 1568 to Polish congregations: "*Quamobrem nostras Synodos additis thesibus quarum exemplaria 40 per Valentinum seniore Ecclesiae Lublinensis mittimus*"²² in the following way: "For this reason we have sent Valentin the senior of the Church of Lublin with forty copies of the invitation to our synod and forty copies of the related polemical thesis" (p. XXX). In fact, what can be found in the above Latin text is the information that 40 copies of theses for discussion with Transylvanian Calvinists were dispatched to Polish congregation. Naturally, no invitations (on p. XXXI Pirnát mentions even "printed invitations") are mentioned in the letter.

P. XXXIII line 11 from the bottom—instead "The affairs of **our** country" should be "The affairs of **this** country." The English translation of the work by Gregory Paul of Brzeziny: *Okazanie i zborzenie . . .* should be *Demonstration and Eversion of Every Article of Faith Concerning God and His Son Invented by Various People*, and not *Collection and Presentation of Every Article of Faith* (p. LXI *et passim*).

To conclude: the "Introduction" to the reprinted edition of *De falsa et vera . . .* does not fulfil adequately its basic aim, since it does not present the actual state of research on this work; one may even risk the statement that the author treats the achievement of his predecessors in rather careless manner. Moreover, the "Introduction" contains a number of superfluous or undocumented hypotheses as well as obvious mistakes (the present review points not all of them). They could have been avoided—without much trouble.

(Translated by Marta Sienicka)

²² S. Lubieniecki, *op. cit.*, p. 229.