

# Introduction

---

## I. Benedykt Wiszowaty: his life and intellectual profile

Benedykt Wiszowaty (ca. 1660 – post 1704) was most aptly characterized by Lech Szczucki as an “unassuming, even deliberately self-effacing Polish Socinian”<sup>1</sup>. His personality stood in sharp contrast with his ancestry: he was the only surviving son of the celebrated Socinian leader in the diaspora, Andrzej Wiszowaty (1608–1678), and the great grandson of Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604). In spite of (or because of) this, Benedykt did not sign anything he published with his full name: he either signed its work with his initials (B. W.) or left it unsigned, as he did with *Medulla historiae ecclesiasticae*. Perhaps the most noteworthy indication of his character can be found in the fact that he crossed his name off the list of newly added entries for the second edition (after 1686) of the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*. With this gesture, Wiszowaty was literally effacing himself from the series of antitrinitarian authors who were presented as worth remembering by posterity.<sup>2</sup>

Most of Benedykt Wiszowaty’s work is indeed aimed at preserving the works and names of others.<sup>3</sup> He was directly responsible for two publications by Amsterdam presses that ensured the western European reception of Socinianism after its proscription from Poland and that still provide essential reference for scholars: the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum* (1684) – which Wiszowaty presented as the posthumous work of Christoph Sand (1644–1680), but which was to a great extent compiled by him – and Stanisław Lubieniecki’s (1623–1675) *Historia Reformationis Polonicae* (1685), also edited and published by Wiszowaty. Before these pivotal contributions, he had participated in the second edition (1679) of Andrzej Węgierski’s (Andreas Wengerscius, 1600–

1 Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 289.

2 On the manuscript second edition of *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*, now held at the University of Leiden, see Williams, *Lubieniecki*, pp. 315–319, and Szczucki, “Bibliographia”.

3 For Wiszowaty’s role as author and editor see Szczucki, *Sandii Bibliotheca*, pp. VIII–XV; Tazbir, *Wengerscii libri*, pp. XVIII–XXII; Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 287; Szczucki, “Bibliographia”; Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, pp. 189–194. See also Bock, *Historia antitrinitariorum tom I pars II*, pp. 1029–1030; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, pp. 357–358 (dependent on Bock), and Barycz, *Lubienieccii Historia*, pp. XXVII–XXXV.

1649) *Slavonia Reformata*, and he had published an annotated edition of the *Catechesis Racoviensis* (1680). He may have also been responsible for editing the posthumous publication of his father's *Religio rationalis* (1685).<sup>4</sup> With his *Medulla historiae ecclesiasticae* (ca. 1685), Benedykt Wiszowaty accomplished “probably the last serious work to come from the Polish Socinians, one which winds up their contribution for good and is in a sense their parting shot”.<sup>5</sup>

Benedykt was the son of Andrzej Wiszowaty and the Polish noblewoman, Aleksandra Rupniowska (1623–1679), who had married in May 1648.<sup>6</sup> The *Anonymi Epistola* (1680) on the life of Andrzej Wiszowaty, included in the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum* and in all likelihood written by Benedykt himself, records the exhortation that the dying Andrzej reportedly made to “his youngest and only surviving son”.<sup>7</sup> Benedykt's birth must therefore have taken place several years after their parents got married – at some point of the 1650s, or even in the early 1660s. This is confirmed by the fact that Benedykt eventually referred to the Remonstrant historian, Johannes Brandt (1660–1708), as his “comrade” (*sodalis*),<sup>8</sup> a term usually reserved for coevals. Wiszowaty must have therefore experienced as a small child the years of upheaval and migrations that surrounded the expulsion of the Socinians from Poland (1658–1660).

When Andrzej Wiszowaty arrived in Amsterdam in 1666, he probably brought his son Benedykt with him. There, the Wiszowatys enjoyed the favour of the Remonstrant preacher, Isaac Pontanus (ca. 1625–1710), as Benedykt would later fondly recall.<sup>9</sup> It seems quite safe to assume that the young Benedykt studied at the Amsterdam Remonstrant Seminar, where he would have met his ‘comrade’ Brandt. From the late 1670s onwards, Benedykt was demonstrably active in intellectual circles: the aforementioned renowned Prussian antitrinitarian, Christoph Sand, thanked him in the

4 This hypothesis is not mentioned in Ogonowski, “Andrzej Wiszowaty”, but see Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, p. 190.

5 Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 288.

6 See the *Anonymi Epistola exhibens vitae ac mortis Andreae Wissowatii nec non ecclesiarum Unitariorum ejus tempore brevem historiam*, in Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, pp. 219–263 (marriage of Andrzej and Alexandra in pp. 239–240, age of Alexandra in p. 260).

7 Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, p. 260: “Inter caeteros vero filio natu minimo (quem majoribus vita functis, solum superstitem reliquit) inter ultimas admonitiones, hanc moriturus dedit: ‘Prout’ (fatur) ‘me fecisse vidisti, o puer! tu quoque, semper, quod verum atque bonum cura, et roga, et omnis in hoc sis’”. On Benedykt Wiszowaty's very probable authorship, see Szczucki, *Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum*, p. XIV.

8 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Jean Le Clerc (Amsterdam), 26 May 1704 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. C 147): “dominum Brantium, sodalem quondam desideratissimum”. See also the postscript to his letter to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam) of the same day, 26 May 1704 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88d).

9 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 1 February 1697, in Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88c: “inprimis reverendum dominum Pontanum, Maecenatem quondam parentum meorum et meum”. See also Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 25 July 1691 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88b), and Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Jean Le Clerc (Amsterdam), 26 May 1704 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. C 147).

*Appendix* (1678) to his *Nucleus historiae ecclesiasticae* (1669 and 1676) for providing a Latin translation of a Slavonic document.<sup>10</sup> In 1680, two years after his father's passing, Wiszowaty produced the aforementioned edition of the *Catechesis Racoviensis*, profusely annotated with his own comments, which were added to those of earlier Socinians Johann Crell (1590–1633), Jonasz Szlichtyng (1592–1661), Martin Ruar (1589–1657), and Andrzej Wiszowaty. Of course, Benedykt's name is hidden under the phrase *et aliorum*, "and others", on the front page: his notes, which make up almost fifty per cent of the total, are signed with the initials B. W.<sup>11</sup>

In Wiszowaty's commented edition of the Racovian catechism, we can see how his presumably Arminian education informed the apologetic approach that would become most visible in his *Medulla*, where abundant proof is found of his acquaintance with the works of Étienne de Courcelles (1586–1659). In keeping with the general direction of Remonstrant scholarship,<sup>12</sup> Wiszowaty defended his theological views by building on historical arguments instead of purely exegetical or philosophical ones. In doing so, he frequently resorted to non-biblical texts from Christian antiquity. In the unsigned short preface of his edition of the *Catechesis*, Wiszowaty insists on the compatibility of Socinian teachings with Christian antiquity and quotes some lines from the second-century *Shepherd* of Hermas. These lines from the *Shepherd* reappear in the prologue of the *Medulla*, together with Tertullian's words on "the rule of faith", which Wiszowaty had chosen as the opening quotation for his edition of the *Catechesis*.<sup>13</sup> In the same book, historical arguments also support Wiszowaty's straightforward endorsement of Church rituals such as the washing of feet or the anointing of the sick,<sup>14</sup> which are far from prominent in earlier Socinian discourse.

Indeed, Wiszowaty did not hesitate in showing his disagreement with a number of classical Socinian doctrines, exegesis and attitudes. In another of his comments on the

10 Sand, *Appendix*, pp. 62–64. The same translation would be reprinted in Wiszowaty's edition of Wengerscius, *Slavonia reformatata*, pp. 499–503. The Slavonic document in question, which is the object of the twentieth chapter of the *Medulla*, is otherwise known to be a late sixteenth-century forgery (see for further references Szczucki, "Socinian Historiography", p. 299, n. 27; Balázs, "Mittelalterliche Häresie", pp. 228–230).

11 This edition is missing in Knijff et al., *Bibliographia Sociniana*, pp. 69–75. They do include the re-edition of 1684 (p. 75). The fact that this 1684 re-edition does exhibit the name *Benedictum Wiszowatium* on the front page makes me suspect that Wiszowaty was not responsible for it (despite Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, p. 190) and that he might have already left Amsterdam already by that time.

12 On which see Levitin, "Introduction", pp. 61–64. On the historical orientation of their biblical scholarship, akin to the one developed by Socinians, see also Daugirdas, "Hermeneutics of the Remonstrants", and Daugirdas, "Hermeneutics of van Limborch".

13 See [Wiszowaty], *Catechesis*, p. [\*1v] and pp. \*\*2[r–v]. The opening quotation, as well as the short preface including quotations from Hermas, are lacking from the previous 1665 edition of the *Catechesis*. Wiszowaty's unsigned preface is entitled "De novissima hac editione ad lectorem alloquium" and is placed after the preface of the 1665 edition, which is reprinted in pp. \*2[r]–\*\*2[r].

14 [Wiszowaty], *Catechesis*, pp. 130–132.

*Catechesis* he emphatically rejects as a calumny the idea that Socinians had ever denied the existence of Hell.<sup>15</sup> He also dwells at length on the right way of performing baptism (on adults and by immersion),<sup>16</sup> in contrast with the indifference towards baptism that had been characteristically shown by his great grandfather, Fausto Sozzini. Two decades later, Wiszowaty would tell Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736) that Sozzini’s famous interpretation of John 1:1 had “never fully satisfied” him or any of his fellow Socinians.<sup>17</sup>

Benedykt’s first preserved letter to Philip van Limborch (1633–1712), from 1682,<sup>18</sup> attests to an already-established scholarly collaboration with the Remonstrant leader, involving the exchange of materials pertaining to antitrinitarian history. Wiszowaty was understandably keen to contribute materials for van Limborch’s projected edition of Samuel Przykowski (1592–1670),<sup>19</sup> which would eventually be published in 1692 and might be considered a supplement to the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* (1665–1668).<sup>20</sup> A brief letter to the Mennonite physician, Anton van Dale (1638–1708), in which Wiszowaty sends regards from the Leiden mathematician, Burchard de Volder (1643–1709), also dates back to 1682.<sup>21</sup> A close connection with the Mennonites seems to be confirmed by the fact that, after Wiszowaty’s eventual departure for Prussia, his

15 Ibid., pp. 179–180. As remarked by Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, p. 254, Wiszowaty’s “statement [was] not entirely honest”.

16 Ibid., pp. 118–120.

17 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Jean Le Clerc (Amsterdam), 26 May 1704 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. C 147): “Proavi mei (nomen infaustum apud multas Christianorum sectas) explicatio hujus loci, fateor ingenue, nunquam mihi satis fecit, neque ejus homodoxorum atque eorum, qui et in aliis ecclesiis, ejus sequuti sunt vestigia. Ut verum fatear, post tempora horum, qui proximi erant temporibus apostolicis, nulla mihi videtur clarius ac melius mentem S. Apostoli exprimere interpretatio, quam tua, vir clarissime. Quamvis in ea pauca occurrere mihi videntur, quae forsitan ulteriori opus habeant elucidatione. ‘Apud DEUM’ et ‘in DEO fuisse RATIONEM’, quod apud te idem est: optaremus rationibus aliquibus, vel ex S. Scriptura, vel ex ratione sana, fulciri, quae sane non deessent. Perquam placet quod distinctionem facias inter ‘rationem’ et ‘lucem’. Multis enim theologis ac interpretibus idem videtur esse τὸ φῶς et ὁ λόγος, cum tamen S. Joannes clare distinguat haec tanquam contentum a continente”.

18 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Amsterdam) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 2 March 1682 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88a).

19 On this collaboration see Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 289; Simonutti, “Przykowski and Limborch”, pp. 191–193; Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, pp. 191–193 (coincidental page numbers are correct).

20 See Vercruyse, “Bibliotheca”, p. 208: “L’éditeur anonyme de 1692 a tenté d’imiter le mieux possible la composition des autres volumes de la *Bibliotheca* dont il se prétend d’ailleurs le successeur légitime”. This was indeed what van Limborch intended, as he told Jean le Clerc (see Simonutti, “Przykowski and Limborch”, p. 194). Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 287, counts “the monumental *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*” as one of Andrzej Wiszowaty’s “publishing ventures directed after his death by his son, Benedykt”, but he must be loosely referring to this contribution to van Limborch’s 1692 edition of Przykowski, since Benedykt must have been a child when the original volumes of the *Bibliotheca* were published.

21 Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. I 56. See Mandelbrote, “Witches and Forgers”, p. 300.

letters to the Netherlands were sent through a David Rudgers.<sup>22</sup> This may have been either the Mennonite manufacturer, David Rudgers van Rozenburg (1629–1707), or, perhaps more likely, his namesake son, a silk merchant (1658–1713).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, members of the broader Wiszowaty family who remained in the Netherlands – including the sisters Benedykt may have had – appear to have eventually merged into the Mennonite community.<sup>24</sup>

With his intellectual profile, Benedykt Wiszowaty fits well into the category of late seventeenth-century “new Socinians”, characterized by Martin Mulsow as *Transferprodukte*, in as much as they “are the result of the frequent mixing which arose from the migration of Socinian people and ideas to western Europe, and into a completely different intellectual milieu”.<sup>25</sup> Elements of both Arminian and Anabaptist origin are found in Wiszowaty’s edition of the Racovian catechism, as has been seen.<sup>26</sup> Besides Arminianism and Anabaptism, however (the latter of which had, after all, “heavily fertilized” Polish Socinianism since its very beginning),<sup>27</sup> Wiszowaty was much indebted to the production of two independent Prussian antitrinitarians, who he had in all likelihood personally met in Amsterdam: the aforementioned Christoph Sand, and Daniel Zwicker (1612–1678).<sup>28</sup>

In his notes on the Racovian catechism, Benedykt shows himself conversant with both Zwicker’s *Irenicum irenicorum* (1658) and Sand’s *Nucleus*,<sup>29</sup> which would eventually serve him as fundamental sources for his *Medulla*. Both Zwicker and Sand had engaged in intellectual debates with Benedykt’s father, as well as with each other.<sup>30</sup>

- 22 See Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 25 July 1691 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88b), and Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 1 February 1697 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88c).
- 23 See *Ecartico: Linking cultural industries in the early modern Low Countries* (University of Amsterdam): <https://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/ecartico/persons/57691> (access date 21.03.2024).
- 24 See the rich database of <https://www.openarch.nl> (access date 21.03.2024), where a search for “Wis(s)owatius” returns a good number of members of the Baptist community between 1685 and 1741.
- 25 Mulsow, “New Socinians”, p. 51.
- 26 Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 288, points to the latter. In addition to Wiszowaty’s aforementioned comments on baptism, see also his note on whether Christians may be magistrates, where he stresses the pre-Constantinian antiquity of the opinion that they may not (Wiszowaty, *Catechesis*, pp. 82–83). In this case, Wiszowaty’s historical comment tends to support Sozzini’s rather than the Arminians’ and Przyrkowski’s view (see Simonutti, “Przyrkowski and Limborch”, pp. 198–200, and Ogonowski, *Socinianism*, pp. 374–375).
- 27 Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 288.
- 28 On Sand and his intellectual connections see Szczucki, *Nonkonformiści*, pp. 105–131; Snobelen, “Newton, Heretic”, pp. 384–389; Toribio, “Sand’s correspondence”. On Zwicker, see the detailed description provided by Bietenholz, *Zwicker*.
- 29 [Wiszowaty], *Catechesis*, pp. 77–78; see Bietenholz, *Zwicker*, p. 68, n. 25.
- 30 Zwicker and Sand had engaged in 1677 in a debate on “the preexistence of Jesus Christ before his birth from the Virgin” (asserted by the latter against Zwicker and Socinians in general). See Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, p. 171; Bietenholz, *Zwicker*, p. 48.

Andrzej Wiszowaty had debated with Zwicker on “God’s foreknowledge of contingent events in the future”,<sup>31</sup> which was denied by the latter. Sand, on the other hand, is known to have emphatically opposed Socinian Christology. In this context, Andrzej Wiszowaty had written in 1673 against Sand’s idiosyncratic assertion of the pre-existence of the souls.<sup>32</sup> Benedykt’s father had also left a set of critical notes unpublished on Sand’s *Nucleus*, which his son likely used when composing his own *Medulla*.<sup>33</sup> In spite of these intellectual discrepancies, Benedykt must have been personally close to Sand: this can be inferred from his preface – signed with the initials B. W. – to the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*, where Wiszowaty mentions that he had discussed this book project many times with Sand, and adds that the Prussian had granted him permission to correct it.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the meticulously compiled entry on Sand provided in the *Bibliotheca* includes a very precise dating of his death (“the last day of November 1680, at 7:30 in the morning”),<sup>35</sup> which suggests that Wiszowaty was with him at the time, or was at least given this information by people who were.

In March 1682 Wiszowaty stated that he intended “shortly to depart for Prussia”.<sup>36</sup> He must have done so at some point between 1682 and 1686, as we know that he sent a letter from Prussia to van Limborch before October 1686.<sup>37</sup> Wiszowaty’s departure had most likely taken place by 1684, the same year in which the Synod of Rutów (today Stara Rudówka, in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, northeastern Poland) had appointed him minister of the Socinian community of nearby Kosinowo (Andreaswalde in German).<sup>38</sup> There he was to succeed Christoph Crell (1622–1680), son of Johann (1590–1633) and father of Samuel Crell (1660–1747). Kosinowo had become “the centre of Socinianism in Prussia” after Samuel Przypkowski “and another of the brethren” had acquired it, subject to mortgage, in 1666.<sup>39</sup> It was most probably in Kosinowo that

31 Bietenholz, *Zwicker*, p. 50. See Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, pp. 148 and 156.

32 See Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, pp. 147–148: “Defensio Objectionum de Filio Dei ante mundum creatum, post incarnato, contra quendam praexistentiae animarum assertorem [i. e. Christophorum Sandium] scripta a. 1673. MS”. On Sand’s view see Salatowsky, “Ursprung der Seele”.

33 See Szczucki, “Socinian Historiography”, p. 292. Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca*, p. 148, registers these notes as *In Christophori Sandii Nucleum historiae ecclesasticae animadversiones*.

34 Sand [and Wiszowaty], *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*, p. \*3[r]: “Verum cum a longo tempore notus mihi fuerit foetus is Viri Clarissimi, ipseque saepius de eo mecum consilia iniverit, immo et emendandi plenam facultatem concesserit; eo audentius laborem hunc aggressus sum”.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 169: “Denatus Amstelaedami a. 1680, die ultimo Novembris, hora matutina 7 1/2”.

36 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Amsterdam) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 2 March 1682 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88a): “propositum meum est in Borussiam brevi proficisci”.

37 See Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam) to Benedykt Wiszowaty, 25 October 1686, draft (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. III D 17: 158), where this no longer identified letter is referred to.

38 Bock, *Historia Socinianismi Prussici*, pp. 85–88; Bock, *Historia antitrinitariorum tomii pars II*, p. 1029. A photograph of what was most likely Wiszowaty’s house in Kosinowo, taken in 1926 by Earl Morse Wilbur, is provided by Williams, *Lubieniecki*, p. 965 (see also p. 897).

39 Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, p. 516.

Benedykt married Katarzyna Przyrkowska de Przyrkowice, very likely Samuel Przyrkowski's daughter. This marriage must have taken place at some time before 1697, when Wiszowaty refers to her as his wife in a letter to van Limborch.<sup>40</sup>

The writing of the *Medulla*, which Benedykt may well have started in the Netherlands, was the main intellectual project he brought to completion in his first years in Prussia (between 1686 and 1691).<sup>41</sup> Otherwise, pastoral and political rather than strictly intellectual activities are likely to have taken up most of his time in Kosinowo. On a pastoral level, it is easy to imagine that everyday challenges faced by dissident exiles lay behind the questions that Wiszowaty chose to ask van Limborch in their learned exchange: he asked whether it was legitimate for a religious exile to enter into a second marriage, provided that his first wife had refused to accompany him in exile and had herself married again. He also asked the Remonstrant leader in which precise sense the Apostle had forbidden men "to keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition" (2 Thessalonians 3:6):<sup>42</sup> was this, Wiszowaty asked, a general prohibition or was it limited to religious communication? A small community surrounded by Trinitarian Protestants, the Socinians of Kosinowo must have experienced social pressure to convert and the tensions resulting from this.

There were other problems caused by the challenges of maintaining family and community ties in spite of considerable geographical dispersion. An insight into some such problems are given in a letter sent from Kosinowo to Kolozsvár in September 1695. In this letter, the author tactfully mentions legal claims existing around the inheritance of Joachim Stegmann (likely the Younger, 1618–1678) and his descendants, which involved members of the Brandenburg, Prussian and Transylvanian communities.<sup>43</sup>

On a political level, the relationship with Prussian authorities, who did not officially tolerate Socinians, must have also proved challenging for the community. At some point, "the Unitarian Polish exiles were disturbed by some":<sup>44</sup> in response to this, a confession of faith, entitled *Confessio fidei exulum Christi*, "was published by Benedykt

40 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowo) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 1 February 1697 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88c): "cum coetu nostro et conjuge mea (cujus nomen Catharina Pripcovia)".

41 Williams, *Lubieniecki*, pp. 18–19, considers that Wiszowaty must have been also busy in Kosinowo with his edition of Lubieniecki's *Historia* (1685) and the projected second edition of the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum* (1686 or later). He is probably right in relation to the latter, although it is not absolutely certain that Wiszowaty left Amsterdam before 1686. However, since the edition of Lubieniecki's *History* was printed in Amsterdam in 1685, it seems safer to presume that Wiszowaty had finished the work before leaving.

42 In Wiszowaty to van Limborch, 25 July 1691 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88b), Wiszowaty to van Limborch, 1 February 1697 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. K 88c) and Wiszowaty to van Limborch, 26 May 1704 (Amsterdam UB, OTM hs. C 147).

43 Preserved by János Kénosi Tözsér (1708–1772) and István Uzoni Fosztó (1729–1778) in their *Unitario-Ecclesiastica Historia Transylvanica*. See the edition of Káldos et al., *Unitario-Ecclesiastica Historia*, pp. 881–885 (p. 884). The name of the writer of the letter has not been transmitted, but he may well have been Wiszowaty, since he is speaking on behalf of the Kosinowo community.

44 Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, p. 516.

Wiszowaty, minister in Kosinowo”, addressed to the Great Elector, Frederick William (1620–1688, reigning since 1640). The author of this text is unveiled in an introductory note from the 1720s or early 1730s accompanying several manuscript copies of the confession.<sup>45</sup> The information very likely came from Benedykt’s son, as will soon become clear. Wiszowaty’s brief *Confessio* “followed in the footsteps of Jonas Schlichting’s *Confession* of 1642, stating the main articles in brief and simple form, with proof-texts cited for every item, and the obvious purpose of showing that this faith in every particular is agreeable to Scripture and the Apostles’ Creed”<sup>46</sup>

The letters Wiszowaty sent to van Limborch and Le Clerc in May 1704 provide the *terminus post quem* for his death. He was succeeded in the Kosinowo ministry by Christopher Schlichting, a descendant of Jonasz Szlichtyng, but when exactly this happened is unclear.<sup>47</sup>

Benedykt was survived by at least one son, named after his grandfather, Andreas Wiszowaty (1686–1735). Andreas studied at the Unitarian College of Koloszvár, and travelled to a number of universities in Germany and the Netherlands, presumably at the College’s expense. He then served as minister to the Polish Unitarian community in the Transylvanian city from 1724 until his passing on 31 December 1735. This information

- 45 Clemen, “Zur Geschichte des Sozinianismus”, pp. 141–143, transcribes this note from an unidentified manuscript. It begins: “Haec confessio, cum exules Poloni Unitarii in ditionibus Brandenburgicis a quibusdam inquietarentur, per Benedictum Wissowatium, verbi divini ministrum in Cosmovia [*sic instead of Cosinovia*] Borussiae, patrem reverendi ac clarissimi Andreae Wissowatii, ibidem [itidem?] verbi divini ministri ecclesiae Polonicae Claudiopoli collectae, edita fuerat, et Claudiopoli prelo submissa sub titulo: Confessio fidei exulum Christi, qui ab eius sanctissimo nomine Christiani tantum appellari amant, ab iisdem, dum haereseos inculpabantur, serenissimo Electori Bandenburgo dedicata. At anno 1719 praesens titulus eidem confessioni in Transylvania praepositus per Fel. quondam Samuelem Biro . . .”. The same text is found in manuscripts held in Cluj BAR, MSU 531-D and 1115. Andreas Wiszowaty (Benedykt’s son, on whom see below) is mentioned without a reference to his death. Sámuel Bíró, on the other hand, is noted as having passed away (“per Fel. quondam Samuelem Biro”). Since Bíró died in 1721 (Lakó, *Manuscripts*, vol. II, p. 22), the note must have been written between that year and 1735, when we know Andreas died.
- 46 Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, p. 516. According to the aforementioned note, the confession was eventually printed in Koloszvár and re-issued there some time later, with a modified title (*Confessio fidei Christianae secundum Unitarios*), for apologetic purposes by the Transylvanian Unitarian Church (on this printed version, see further Kovács, “Dávid Ferenc”, p. 161). Numerous manuscript copies of it are held today in Cluj-Napoca, both with the original title (*Confessio exulum Christi*) (CBAR, MSU 374-B, 525-B, 531-D, 1010-A, 1115 and 1783; see Lakó, *Manuscripts*, vol. I, pp. 82, 112–113, 198, 223, 368), and with the modified title (CBAR, MSU 111-A, 249, 371, 520-A, 633-B, according to Lakó, *Manuscripts*, vol. I, pp. 32, 60, 81, 110, 129). The text of the confession, “in the precise form in which it was presented to the Elector”, can be read in Bock, *Historia Socinianismi Prussici*, pp. 70–76, who also mentions a German translation circulating in Berlin in 1716 (p. 70).
- 47 “Christophori Crellii e vivis excedentis sedem occupaverat Benedictus Wisowatius, Andreae, Fausti Socini Senensis ex filia nepotis filius, vir eloquentissimus. Hic Benedictus officium suum cui per aliquot annos praefuit curandum commisit Christophoro Schlichtingio, qui aliquot annos hoc munere functus, praematura morte ereptus, ministerium suum resignavit Samueli Arcissewio viro in rebus publicis ac ecclesiasticis versatissimo” (Bock, *Historia Socinianismi Prussici*, p. 88).



comes from his epitaph,<sup>48</sup> which also records that he was born in Prussia, thus further supporting his identification as Benedykt's son. On the basis of a no longer extant "manuscript history of the Morsztyn family", Friedrich Samuel Bock took this Andreas Wiszowaty for a brother or a nephew of Benedykt.<sup>49</sup> However, this is contradicted both by the *Anonymi Epistola* on the life of Andrzej Wiszowaty and by the aforementioned note on the *Confessio fidei exulum Christi*. The former asserts that the Socinian leader had left but one surviving son and the latter notes that Andreas Wiszowaty, the minister of the Polish community in Kolozsvár, was in fact Benedykt's son. The authority of the latter document is increased by the fact that it was written in a Transylvanian milieu and in all likelihood during the period of Andreas Wiszowaty's active service (1724–1735). As we will see, it was also within that period, and most likely in Kolozsvár, that the only manuscript of the *Medulla* expressly ascribing the treatise to Benedykt Wiszowaty was produced.

## II. *Medulla historiae ecclesiasticae*

### 1. Dating, scope and dissemination

In July 1691, Benedykt Wiszowaty asked Philip van Limborch whether he had seen "a manuscript treatise entitled *Medulla historiae ecclesiasticae*",<sup>50</sup> which would have been shared with the Remonstrant leader "some years ago" (*ante aliquot annos*) by Christopher Zagórski. The latter was presumably a member of Wiszowaty's community in Ko-

48 Káldos et al., *Unitario-Ecclesiastica Historia*, p. 887, n. 34: "Epitaphium R. Andreae Wissowatii a seniore scholae Paulo Bencze compositum: Solibus exanguis jaceo vitalibus orbus, / praeproperum mortis disce, viator, iter! / Aemula caelorum vitiatur sponte columna, / tempus et in cineres nobile marmor agit. / Stemmata nec rabiem mortis remorantur avorum, / Musa sed injunctum jus necis ipsa fugit. / Integritas vitae pietasque est nescia mortis, / haec ubi sunt, Parcae nil ibi juris habent. / Sanguine quo fuerim cretus, canit ecce colossus. / Labitur at vitae firma columna meae. / En Wissowatius fueram de sanguine avorum / Andreas divae viva columna domus. / Prussia me genuit, sed Claudia mater adultum / fovit, et aeterno cinxit honore caput. / Namque ibi personui duodenis impiger annis / mystica Sarmatico verba notata sono. / Me prius at docuit Germanica ac Belgica Pallas, / inscia solius frangere tela necis. / Lustra novem Christo vixi cum quatuor annis, / mens manet angelicis jam sociata chordis". This likely corresponds to Cluj, BAR, MSU 1315, p. 61 (see Lakó, *Manuscripts*, vol. I, p. 279), but I have not had the occasion to verify it.

49 "Historia familiae Morstinianae MSC. prodit, eum [*that is, Andrzej Wiszowaty (1608–1678)*] Amstelodami Unitariorum fuisse ministrum, duosque reliquisse filios, alterum Benedictum (iuniorum nimirum), ministrum Andreaewaldensem in Prussia, alterum Andream (qui adeo tertius est huius praenominis), ministrum Claudiopolitanum, qui itidem duos habuit filios, Ioannem et Andream, qui proinde eiusdem praenominis quartus" (Bock, *Historia antitrinitariorum tomus I pars II*, p. 1017). In the same place, Bock interestingly refers to a Wiszowaty who came from Transylvania to visit the Prussian Socinians in 1746.

50 Benedykt Wiszowaty (Kosinowy) to Philip van Limborch (Amsterdam), 25 July 1691 [*8 Calendae Sextileis*] (AUB, OTM hs. K 88b): "Eadem occasione vellem etiam rescire ex te, vir clarissime, an visus sit a te tractatus quidam MS sub titulo Medullae historiae ecclesiasticae, quem frater noster

sinowo, who was then returning to Prussia from France.<sup>51</sup> The treatise must have been completed in Kosinowo in the second half of the 1680s. It was certainly not finished before 1684, the year of the publication of the *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*, which is referred to in the treatise as a recently published work (XXV 16).<sup>52</sup>

As his timid overture to van Limborch suggests, Wiszowaty was probably aiming to publish his treatise in Amsterdam, where all his previous editorial projects had been printed. The *Medulla* was perfectly in keeping with these previous intellectual endeavours. In the works Wiszowaty had edited so far, readers were offered a historical survey of the origin and development of Socinianism and related antitrinitarian trends (in Wengerscius' *Slavonia Reformata* and Lubieniecki's *Historia Reformationis Polonicae*) as well as a synthesis of Socinian theology supplemented with historical comments (as in the 1680 edition of the *Catechesis Racoviensis*). The *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum* had gone a step further by picturing Socinianism as a transnational movement encompassing different kinds of antitrinitarianism.<sup>53</sup> With the *Medulla*, Wiszowaty attempted to extend this imagined antitrinitarian ecumenism to the entire Christian history.

The work belongs to the Protestant apologetic tradition initiated by Matthias Flacius Illyricus' *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556),<sup>54</sup> and consisting of identifying precedents of a given Protestant confession throughout Christian history. Wiszowaty intends "to weave throughout the series of those who held fast to the ancient truth and simplicity since the very beginnings [of Christianity] until our times" (prol. 1), and he describes what he does in his treatise as "producing a multitude of witnesses" (XXV 17). But this tradition is combined in the *Medulla* with the older, spiritualist one that is visible in Sebastian Franck's *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* (1531), where those commonly held as heretics are depicted as the true heirs of Christ.<sup>55</sup>

Christophorus Zagorski ante aliquot annos, huc per vestras oras ex Gallia redux, penes se habuit, et nisi me memoria fallit, retulit mihi tibi etiam ab ipso fuisse communicatum, et tuae, vir reverende, subjectum censurae. Quod si ita sit, rogo ut et de hoc scripto, si vel ad manus est, vel contenta ejus in memoria haerent, velis, vir doctissime, tuum proponere iudicium".

- 51 This Zagórski, who was then likely performing the traditional *peregrinatio academica*, would be "in the years 1702–1706 minister of the Polish and subsequently Hungarian Unitarian community in Kolozsvár before eventually moving to Prussia" (Szczucki, "Socinian historiography", p. 291). See Káldos et al., *Unitario-Ecclesiastica Historia*, p. 881: "Reverendus Christophorus Zágorski [*sic*] anno 1700, caepit verbum Dei Polonis ministrare at tandem una cum tota sua familia in Prussiam exiit, ibidemque permansit".
- 52 The Roman numerals refer to the chapters of *Medulla*, and the Arabic ones to the sections within each chapter.
- 53 The title of the work is eloquent in this regard, as it states that the bio-bibliographical dictionary together with the appended documents amount to a *Compendium Historiae Ecclesiasticae Unitariorum, qui Sociniani vulgo audiunt*.
- 54 As pointed out by Szczucki's, "Socinian Historiography", p. 294.
- 55 On the relationship between spiritualist and antitrinitarian views of Church history see Balázs, "Mittelalterliche Häresie", p. 236. On the spiritualist stance see much more broadly Gilly, "Die Gelehrten".