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**The Supposed Burning of the Racovian Catechism in 1614:  
A Historiographical Myth Exposed**

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**I**

The Racovian catechism is a famous summary treatise of Socinian thought. It was written in the early seventeenth century by several members of the Minor Reformed Church of Poland, also known as the ‘Polish Brethren’. Established at the convening of a general synod in 1565, and opposed both to post-Nicene Christianity and infant baptism, these separatists abandoned the ‘fertile lands of their native places’ for a patch of ‘sandy ground in the wilderness’ at Raków. Here in 1569, on territory belonging to the castellan of Zarnów, in the region of Sandomierz near Szydłów (about 125 kilometres north-east of Kraków), they began building a town. For the first three years ‘there was peace neither by day nor by night’ in their ‘New Jerusalem’. Instead, stormy debates raged about a variety of pressing religious, political, social, and economic issues that were likewise a source of contention among Anabaptists. These included Christian primitivism, namely the belief that Christianity should be restored along the lines of the apostolic early church; ownership of property and possessions; extravagance and display; manual labour;

the abolition of serfdom; the right of a prince to wage war; bearing of arms; punishment of criminals by civil authority; office holding; and oath taking. Thus, some of the wealthy Brethren, influenced by the Moravian Hutterites, allegedly impoverished themselves by adopting a model of communal ownership of goods. The majority, however, rejected the practice. Similarly, whereas Raków's founders generally advocated non-violence, several seventeenth-century Brethren justified defensive warfare when ordered by civil magistrates.<sup>1</sup>

By 1578 some members of the Racovian community had made contact with the Italian anti-Trinitarian and anti-Calvinist theologian Fausto Paolo Sozzini (1539–1604). Better known by his Latinized name, Socinus denied Christ's divine nature and also stressed the importance of human reason in conjunction with revelation as a means of apprehending biblical truths. In addition, he argued that believers' baptism by immersion was just a rite and came to regard the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as merely a symbolic commemoration of Christ's death.<sup>2</sup>

In 1602, with the support of a converted nobleman, the Polish Brethren founded an academy at Raków. Two years previously they had set up a printing press there which would

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All precise continental European dates are given according to the Julian and Gregorian calendar; all English dates according to the Julian only. The year is taken to begin on 1 January. Moreover, translations are our own unless otherwise credited.

<sup>1</sup> Stanislas Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, trans. Earl Morse Wilbur (Boston, 1957), pp. 28–9, 44, 50, 105, 116; Peter Brock, 'Conscientious objectors in the Polish Brethren Church, 1565–1605', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 70/4 (1992), pp. 670–87; George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* [1962], 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Ann Arbor, 2000), pp. 1079–98, 1157–62.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 9–17; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, pp. 978–89, 1162–75.

issue about 500 titles, together with reprints, until it was confiscated in 1638. Through publications in Latin, Polish, and German, they were able to spread their doctrines throughout Europe.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent Socinian thought, particularly as it developed in England from the mid-seventeenth century, created a linkage between anti-Trinitarianism and anti-Popery: in their eyes, belief in the Trinity was a superstition meant to buttress papal power. Transubstantiation was similarly dismissed as an irrational and unscriptural superstition. Accepting Erasmus's initial excision of the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7–8) from the canon, anti-Trinitarian reformers also sought to divest the Johannine Prologue (John 1:1–18) of its Platonist connotations, and more generally to demonstrate why literal readings of Scripture were usually preferable to allegorical. Even so, this was not simply a reassertion of the foundational Reformation dogma of *sola Scriptura* since in this protracted struggle for interpretative authority the appeal to exegetical precedent was undoubtedly crucial. Accordingly, advocates of anti-Trinitarian positions appropriated and privileged the writings of ante-/anti-Nicene Church Fathers in their contemporary polemical battles.

Yet it was for their understanding of Jesus that Socinians became infamous. According to Socinus's works as well as the Racovian catechism, although Jesus did not have a divine nature, he was still an extraordinary person who had been 'conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary'. Accordingly, they viewed Jesus as the Messiah, namely as a man charged by God with a message of salvation hitherto unknown to humanity. They believed that prior to Jesus's earthly mission human morality was imperfect. This was because the law of nature predisposed

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<sup>3</sup> Kot, *Socinianism*, pp. xi, 132; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 17–18; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, p. 1175; Hanna Świdorska, 'Socinian books with the Raków imprint in the British Library', *British Library Journal*, 8/1 (1982), pp. 207–8.

humans to preserve their worldly interests, whereas Jesus's moral precepts and salvific message offered a better prospect: eternal salvation. Thus, to Socinus and his followers, the prospect of salvation originated in one's free choice to accept God's assisting grace, which could be apprehended through Christian revelation and human reason together rather than by reason alone. Consequently, Socinians embraced freewill, endorsed a moralist soteriology, denied original sin, and rejected predestination while simultaneously acknowledging that God could and would punish unrepentant sinners. On the other hand, they also argued that God could waive his right to punishment and therefore forgive the sins of the repentant faithful who, during their life, sincerely endeavored to obey the divine law. All of which utterly conflicted with mainstream Calvinist doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

During the late sixteenth century, Socinus and several Polish Brethren explained their views on the aforesaid subjects in various treatises of soteriology, Christology, biblical hermeneutics, and moral and political thought. However, after establishing their press and academy in Raków, they decided to expound their theological ideas in a comprehensive work. Before the end of November 1603, Socinus, assisted by Piotr Stojeński [Statorius] the younger (1565–1605), began working on a catechism. This work was intended to revise and effectively replace a Latin catechism ascribed to Georg Schomann (1530–91) and printed by Alexius Rodecki under the pseudonym Alexander Turobinus at Kraków in 1574.<sup>5</sup> Socinus, however, died

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<sup>4</sup> Faustus Socinus, 'De Jesu Christo Servatore' [1594], in *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum quos Unitarios vocant* (9 vols; Irenopoli – Eleutheropoli [Amsterdam], post 1656 [1665–92]), II, pp. 115–246; *The Racovian Catechisme* ('Amsterledam' [London], 1652), title-page and pp. 27–73, 142–52.

<sup>5</sup> [Georg Schomann], *Catechesis et confessio fidei* ([Kraków], 1574).

at Lusławice on 22 February/ 3 March 1604 and Statorius on 29 April/ 9 May 1605. Nevertheless, their initial effort was taken up and continued by some of Socinus's associates, namely Valentine Schmalz [Smalcus] (1572–1622), Hieronymus Moscorovius [Moscorovius] (d.1625), and Johannes Völkel [Volkelius] (d.1618).<sup>6</sup> Eventually, in 1605 a Polish edition of this catechism was published at Raków.<sup>7</sup> Smalcus then translated the catechism into German, which was dedicated to the University of Wittenberg with a preface dated Raków, 21 April/ 1 May 1608.<sup>8</sup> By September that year a Latin version of the catechism had also been completed. It too was printed at Raków in 1608 although, as we shall see, there are four published editions bearing the date 1609. This Latin catechism was dedicated to James VI of Scotland and I of England, who was addressed not only as king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland but also as a

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Rees, 'Historical introduction', in Thomas Rees (ed.), *The Racovian Catechism* (London, 1818), pp. lxxi–lxxix; Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography* (3 vols; London, 1850), II, pp. 201–2; Kot, *Socinianism*, pp. 69, 126–7; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, p. 18; George H. Williams, *The Polish Brethren: Documentation of the History and Thought of Unitarianism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Diaspora, 1601–1685* (2 vols; Missoula, 1980), I, pp. 183–4.

<sup>7</sup> *Katechizm Zboru tych ludzi, którzy w Krolestwie Polskim* (Raków, 1605). Smalcus, Statorius, Moscorovius, and Volkelius began composing the catechism on 15/25 April 1605, although Statorius would die two weeks later.

<sup>8</sup> *Catechismus, der Gemeine derer Leute die da im Königreich Poln* (Raków, 1608). A youthful Jan Amos Comenius was presented with a copy in 1608 by some Polish nobles; see Jan Kvačala, *Johann Amos Comenius* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1892), p. 10.

preeminent theologian in a prefatory epistle by Moscorovius.<sup>9</sup> Since James was then the most powerful Protestant ruler in the world it is likely that the Socinians hoped to gain his favour and protection. If so, they were to be disappointed. Indeed, it is a common misconception that upon reading this Latin edition of the Racovian catechism James immediately consigned it to the flames in 1614. Thus, Sarah Mortimer has incorrectly stated that the king ‘had the work publicly burnt in central London’ at Paul’s Cross.<sup>10</sup> She is not alone in committing this error. A comprehensive list of scholars who have repeated this mistake would take up too much space. But if we consider just the historiography on Socinianism and Radical Protestantism since the mid-twentieth century, this erroneous assertion appears in the majority of essays mentioning the catechism, including some by eminent authorities in the field such as Earl Morse Wilbur, Herbert John McLachlan, Christopher Hill, and Norman Sykes.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of our article is first and foremost to demonstrate that the Racovian catechism was not burnt in England in 1614. In the process we will provide essential context, examining relevant developments not just in the British Isles but also the Dutch Republic and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Moreover, we will argue that there is no evidence to support the claim that shortly after the supposed burning of 1614 a second Latin edition of the Racovian catechism was secretly printed in England with the false imprint ‘Racoviae 1609’. Nonetheless, what we consider to have been the third and fourth Latin editions of the catechism bearing the

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<sup>9</sup> *Catechesis Ecclesiarum quae in Regno Poloniae* (Raków, 1609).

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> For reasons of space we have omitted the relevant references in the secondary literature.

imprint ‘Racoviae 1609’ were clandestinely printed in England with false imprints no earlier than in the mid-1630s. We will then explain how certain erroneous assumptions entered the historical record together with their subsequent transmission. As we emphasise in our conclusion, all of this has a major bearing on the origins of Socinian thought in England, especially in relation to other types of anti-Trinitarianism then current. In short, historians need to turn their attention away from the initially negligible English reception of the 1609 Latin edition of the Racovian catechism. Rather, we need to look at what was happening in the Dutch Republic, particularly at how texts and ideas were transmitted transnationally. Contrary to Herbert John McLachlan, who doubted that ‘antitrinitarianism in England arose as a result of Dutch anabaptist influence’ while at the same time acknowledging the impact of ‘Dutch influences’ in ‘mediating heretical thought’, we will show how aspects of continental Anabaptism, particularly as it was disseminated by small communities of immigrants from the Netherlands, appealed to certain identifiable figures mostly living in London, Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, this article also fulfils an important methodological function in that it corrects a commonly held mistake by examining, for the first time in more than three centuries, the primary sources relevant to its topic. It does this by reconstructing the origins, development, and continuation of this mistake in the historiography on anti-Trinitarianism and the Radical Reformation. In this regard, we follow the example of early modern humanists who advocated a return to the original sources, ‘*ad fontes*’, thereby exposing long-held misconceptions. This method also inspired early modern anti-Trinitarians, who emphasised the necessity of studying primary sources. Hence, they rejected the role of tradition in the pursuit of religious truth and

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<sup>12</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, p. 31.



insisted on *sola Scriptura* as the rule of faith. Then, as now, doubting traditionally accepted assumptions and returning to the original sources is crucial.

## II

In the prevailing historiography on anti-Trinitarianism only one primary source has been cited to support the mistaken assertion that the Racovian catechism was burned in 1614. This is a few lines by the Geneva-educated Calvinist scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), a workaholic who thrived on controversy who had arrived in England in October 1610. They appear in Casaubon's last work, which was in penultimate draft by May 1613 and printed just a few months before his death on 1 July 1614. Entitled *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes*, this was an 'extended criticism' of a twelve-volume Catholic world history by Cardinal Cesare Baronio. Casaubon's *Exercitationes* is now mainly known for a characteristically vitriolic digression in which he attacked the authenticity of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This has been elucidated brilliantly by Anthony Grafton.<sup>13</sup> Our attention, however, focusses on Casaubon's dedicatory epistle to King James that was likely written during the first six months of 1614. Here Casaubon recounted the monarch's angry reaction to the Latin edition of the Racovian catechism:

I remember, most venerable king, when a couple of years ago a certain little book, full of horrendous heresies, was published by I don't know what Polish heretics in Raków, and

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<sup>13</sup> John Considine, 'Casaubon, Isaac (1559–1614)', in *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); Anthony Grafton, 'Protestant versus prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 46 (1983), pp. 78–93.

was indeed inscribed with your august name: later, that little book arrived in your hands, and Your Majesty examined a few things in it; with what disgust you detested both that Satanic work and its authors, most certainly the spawn of Satan; you would have judged them severely, if you had the right and power to do so.<sup>14</sup>

Casaubon's recollection is borne out by his diary entry for 4 January 1613:

The great king has shown us a book entitled *Catechesis Ecclesiarum Poloniae et Lithuaniae quae colunt unum Deum Israelis, et hominem Jesum*, etc. Nothing more wicked and detestable than this book had been published for many centuries. And yet its author dared dedicate it to the King of Great Britain. What an abomination! Lord Jesus, erase such impieties from the memory of humanity. Amen.<sup>15</sup>

The minor discrepancy between the catechism's correct title and Casaubon's imprecise note suggests that he did not then possess a copy of what was probably a rare book. More importantly, despite both his and James's evident hostility, there is nothing to support the assertion that an angry king had the catechism burnt. Nor is there any reference to the catechism's fate in

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<sup>14</sup> Isaac Casaubon, *De rebus sacris & Ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI* (London, 1614), dedicatory epistle.

<sup>15</sup> John Russell (ed.), *Ephemerides Isaaci Casauboni* (2 vols ; Oxford, 1850), II, p. 963.

Casaubon's extensive published correspondence.<sup>16</sup> Why Casaubon's dedicatory epistle has often been cited as a source is something to which we shall return. But it is worth mentioning in passing that although several specific texts in both Latin and English were burned in Jacobean England by order of the authorities, when researching the subject neither David Cressy nor Ariel Hessayon found evidence for a 1614 burning.<sup>17</sup>

Turning now to the situation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it should be emphasised that the Stuart monarchy was better informed about political, military, religious, and economic developments than is usually appreciated. Indeed, they received fairly regular intelligence from certain Scottish émigrés. Several were settled at the Baltic port of Danzig [Gdańsk], a major commercial and intellectual hub which, with its smattering of Calvinist parish churches, had succeeded in attracting Scottish traders, scholars, and soldiers. Among them was the multi-lingual William Bruce (d.1610?) of Caithness, a Catholic of noble descent, doctor of law, military commander, and author whom King James had appointed in May 1604 as a diplomatic agent in Poland.<sup>18</sup> On 26 August/ 5 September 1608

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<sup>16</sup> Theodor Janson (ed.), *Isaaci Casauboni epistolae* (Rotterdam, 1709); Paul Botley and Maté Vince (eds), *The Correspondence of Isaac Casaubon in England* (4 vols; Geneva, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> David Cressy, 'Book burning in Tudor and Stuart England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36/2 (2005), pp. 366–7; Ariel Hessayon, 'Incendiary texts: book burning in England, c.1640–c.1660', *Cromohs*, 12 (2007), pp. 1–25. At least twelve and perhaps as many as seventeen works were burned or suppressed during James I's reign.

<sup>18</sup> William Forbes Leith et al. (eds), *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon. Volume I: Registers of Students* (Aberdeen, 1906), p. 1; Frederick

Bruce wrote from Danzig to Robert Cecil, first earl of Salisbury (1563–1612) informing him that he was busy researching a blasphemous printed book ‘contraire to al religionne’ that, because of its dedication, might damage James’s reputation. This text allegedly maintained that God was not almighty or infinite, that Jesus Christ was not the son of God, and that neither Sabbath nor holy days should be kept. Bruce suspected its author was Christopher Ostorod (d.1611), a former Calvinist turned anti-Trinitarian who preached these opinions to an audience of 200 or 300 just outside Danzig. Though the learned Ostorod is not known to have had a hand in the composition of the Racovian catechism, Stanislas Kot has pointed out similarities between the catechism’s teachings on food and clothing and some passages in Ostorod’s writings. Significantly, according to Bruce, Ostorod claimed to have favourers in England who urged him to dedicate his book to James. Bruce advised that if it came into James’s hands, he should disassociate himself from it. An undated postscript followed in which Bruce added he had since been informed the book was printed not in Danzig but Raków and that if it was not yet published, he would endeavour to

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Devon (ed.), *Pell Records of the Exchequer* (London, 1836), p. 12; J. K. Fedorowicz, *England’s Baltic Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 17–18, 22–3, 60, 136–7, 142; Anna Bieganska, ‘The learned Scots in Poland (from the mid-sixteenth to the close of the eighteenth century)’, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 43/1 (2001), pp. 18–19; Anna Kalinowska, ‘“Pardon Me My Lord, that I Wrytte to Your Honor in Scottish”: William Bruce as the first Stuart diplomatic agent in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’, in T. M. Devine and David Hesse (eds), *Scotland and Poland: Historical Encounters, 1500–2010* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 51–61; Peter Paul Bajer, *Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Leiden, 2012), p. 166.

prevent its circulation until advised what to do next.<sup>19</sup> In another letter to Cecil written from Kraków at the end of November 1608 Bruce again mentioned the Racovian catechism.<sup>20</sup> However, we have found no further reference to it in Bruce's correspondence.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, we can shed light on English and Dutch connections. In 1598, possibly at Socinus's instigation, Ostorod and a Polish anti-Trinitarian named Andrzej Woidowsky [Andreas Voidovius] (1565–1622x25) had undertaken a proselytising mission to Northern Germany and the Low Countries. At Amsterdam they distributed printed books and manuscripts but these

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<sup>19</sup> The National Archive [hereafter TNA], SP 88/2, fo. 183, printed with minor mistakes in Charles Talbot (ed.), *Res Polonicae Iacobo I Angliae regnante conscriptae ex archivis publicis Londoniarum* (Rome, 1962), p. 48, and translated in Williams, *Polish Brethren*, I, p. 210; Kot, *Socinianism*, pp. xxii, 127.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, SP 88/2, fo. 192: 'touchinge the Samosetana thaire booke dedicated to our kinge his M[ajes]tie'.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., SP 88/2, fos. 143, 145, 149, 165, 167, 175, 183, 206, 208, 215, 223, 226; Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku (Gdańsk), Bibliotheca Archivi, 300 R/Bb, 32, fos. 16r–40v, 44r–56v; Richard A. Roberts (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of ... Marquis of Salisbury ... Volume 10, 1600* (London, 1904), pp. 289–90; M.S. Giuseppi (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of ... Marquis of Salisbury ... Volume 18, 1606* (London, 1940), pp. 180, 256; M. S. Giuseppi and D. M. Lockie (eds), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of ... Marquis of Salisbury ... Volume 19, 1607* (London, 1965), pp. 11, 129, 185–9; M. S. Giuseppi and G. Dyfnallt Owen (eds), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of ... Marquis of Salisbury ... Volume 20, 1608* (London, 1965), pp. 106–7; Peter Wieselgren (ed.), *De la Gardiska Archivets ... Femte Delen* (Lund, 1834), p. 109.

'pestiferous' texts were seized by the magistrates. Following an order of the United Provinces' States General meeting at The Hague these 'cursed writings' were examined by the theology faculty of the University of Leiden who on 2/12 August 1598 condemned them as '*execrable blasphemies*' comparable to Islamic teaching since both denied Jesus' divinity. Accordingly, on 26 February/ 8 March 1599 a decree was issued banishing Ostorod and Voidovius, while the noxious books in their possession were to be burnt in their presence. There is uncertainty, however, as to whether this happened. Moreover, the measure failed to prevent '*contagion*' since these 'half-*Lunatick*' Socinian evangelists succeeded in making converts, notably at Leiden, where ten Polish students had recently matriculated.<sup>22</sup> It is also likely that they came into contact with an exiled community of English separatists, for an anonymous anti-Trinitarian chronicle mentions Ostorod's subsequent disputation near Danzig with an Anabaptist and Arian called Thomas Leamer [Lemur] (fl.1588–fl.1614).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher Ostorod and Andreas Voidovius, *Apologia ad decretum illustrium et amplissimorum Ordinum Prouinciarum foederatarum Belgii* (n.p., 1600); Lambeth Palace Library, MS 935, fo. 12, 'Ex libro Annalium Polonicarum Nomina illorum', printed in Kazimierz Dobrowolski, 'Nieznana kronika arjańska, 1539–1605', *Reformacja w Polsce*, 4 (1926), pp. 169–70; Johannes Cloppenburgh, *Compendiolum Socinianismi confutatum* (Franeker, 1652), pp. 334, 335, 501; Johannes Hoornbeek, *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* (Utrecht, 1653), pp. 447, 449; Nicholas Chewney, *Anti-Socinianism* (London, 1656), pp. 216–22; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, pp. 394–98, 402–7, and III, pp. 557–58; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>23</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS 935, fo. 12, printed in Dobrowolski, 'Nieznana kronika arjańska', pp. 170–71.

Leamer had been a student at Clare Hall, Cambridge, afterwards gaining a reputation as an ‘excellent’ scholar. A millenarian who believed in the imminent overthrow of Antichrist, he was also the author of several ‘master-peeces’ of learning including a commentary on 2 Esdras 11 entitled *Babylon is Fallen* (1597).<sup>24</sup> Having been imprisoned in the Clink, Southwark, Leamer eventually settled as a merchant at Amsterdam although even by the relatively tolerant standards of that city his religious opinions were considered somewhat strange.<sup>25</sup> These would later be depicted as the seven-headed monster of ‘Lemarisme’, a catalogue of heresies ranging from Arianism and Apocalypticism to libertinism and separatism.<sup>26</sup> In 1600 Leamer and two unnamed Englishmen, together with a weaver from Brabant, journeyed to Danzig where they proclaimed that Christ would shortly reappear on earth. Their ‘blasphemies’ were challenged both in writing by Valentine Radecius (d.1631), a local anti-Trinitarian leader, and in a debate held on the

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<sup>24</sup> Sheffield University Library, HP 29/3/39B–40B; A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Papers of William Trumbull the Elder 1611–1612* (London, 1938), p. 48; Keith Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands 1600–1640* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 74, 78–82; Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker’s Revenge: ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘Heterodoxy’ and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 174–8, 181.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Barrow, *A Collection of Certaine Schlaunderous Articles* ([Dordrecht?], 1590), sig. Aiiij<sup>r</sup>-<sup>3</sup>; TNA, SP 84/67, fo. 185.

<sup>26</sup> Henoeh Clapham, *Error on the Right Hand* (London, 1608), p. 52; Christopher Lawne, *The Prophane Schisme of the Brownists* ([London], 1612), pp. 55–6; John Paget, *An Arrow against the Separation of the Brownists* (Amsterdam, 1618), pp. 122–3, 383–4; Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography* (London, 1645), p. 77.

mountains outside Danzig before forty ‘good men’. Ostorod and Stanislaus Lubieniecius (c.1558–1633) represented the Socinians, challenging the Arian Leamer to prove that Christ pre-existed his birth by the Virgin Mary. Although Leamer avoided the question, he appears, at least in the short term, to have succeeded in leading some Polish Brethren ‘astray’. As for his companions, they died during an outbreak of plague that struck Danzig in 1602 while Leamer was jailed for polygamy.<sup>27</sup> Following his return to Amsterdam, in spring 1609 Leamer became involved in a disputation conducted in English with Matthew Slade (1569–1628), a Dorset-born rector of the Latin school in the city.<sup>28</sup> He then attempted to solve the highly lucrative albeit complex problem of longitude through a Kabbalistic interpretation of a Hebrew name of God: Elohim (Genesis 1:1).<sup>29</sup> Given their disagreement on Christ’s pre-existent nature, it seems unlikely that Leamer was among Ostorod’s supporters who apparently advised dedicating the Latin edition of the Racovian catechism to James. Even so, it is noteworthy that Leamer’s *An exposition of the XI. XII. and XIII. Chapters of the Revelation* (1623) would be dedicated to the same monarch.

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<sup>27</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS 935, fo. 12, printed in Dobrowolski, ‘Nieznana kronika arjańska’, pp. 170–71; Gustav Georg Zeltner, *Historia crypto-Socinianismi altorphini* (2 vols; Leipzig, 1729), II, p. 1176; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, pp. 388–9, 495–6.

<sup>28</sup> Willem Nijenhuis (ed.), *Matthew Slade 1569–1628: Letters to the English Ambassador* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 8–9.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Lemur, *Een klaer vertoninge, hoe men door het vyrwerck van Elohim* (Kampen, 1612); Abraham Coster, *De Grouwelijke ongehoorde blasphemien ende Raserijen van Thomas Leamer Enghelsman* (Rotterdam, 1613).



Meanwhile, sometime between mid-October 1609 and late August 1610 William Bruce died.<sup>30</sup> His successor was Patrick Gordon (fl.1589–fl.1623), who was accredited as James’s ambassador to Poland and Prussia on 2 June 1610.<sup>31</sup> Educated at Rostock University and active in the region intermittently until November 1621,<sup>32</sup> Gordon most likely continued Bruce’s efforts to obstruct the Racovian catechism’s dissemination. Certainly he was zealous in pursuit of libellers. One of Gordon’s unfortunate victims was a German-speaking Pole named John Stercovius who, having been mocked for wearing his national costume in Scotland, ill-advisedly retaliated with satirical verse. At the king’s behest Gordon and a Prussian of Scottish parentage initiated a costly prosecution which resulted in Stercovius’s public recantation and execution at

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<sup>30</sup> TNA, SP 46/127, fo. 29; *ibid.*, SP 14/57, fo. 41. Bruce’s last known letter is dated Danzig, 9/19 October 1609, while he is referred to as deceased in correspondence dated 29 August 1610. This contradicts the suggestion that Bruce was still living in 1613: cf. Stanislas Kot, ‘Bruce, William (XVI–XVII w.)’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 52 vols. (1935–2019), III (1937), pp. 3–4.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, SP 46/127, fo. 29; Devon (ed.), *Pell Records*, pp. 108, 133; Fedorowicz, *England’s Baltic Trade*, pp. 18–19, 23; Bieganska, ‘Learned Scots’, pp. 20–21; Bajer, *Scots*, pp. 89, 131, 164; David Stevenson, ‘Gordon, Patrick (*d.* before 1657)’, in *ODNB*.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SP 88/3, fos. 19, 53, 55, 127, 147, 173, 203, 205, 219, 223, 243, 261, 265, 267, 281; British Library, Add. MS 38,597, fos. 8v, 9v, 21v; Lambeth Palace Library, MS 669, fos. 26r–28v, 58r–59v, 86r–87v.

Rastenburg (Kętrzyn) in 1611. Ever parsimonious, James even attempted to recoup legal costs.<sup>33</sup>

Other libels were authored and spread by Jesuits, notably *Exetasis Epistolae Nomine Regis Magnae Britanniae* ('Mons' i.e., Braunsberg, 1609; reprinted Douai, 1610) written under the pseudonym Bartholus Pacenius, and *Alloquiorum Osiecensium* (Kraków, 1615). The latter was ascribed on the title-page to a Polish gentleman and canon of Sandomierz, Kasper Cichocki (1545–1616), although it has been suggested that the author was actually the Jesuit Kasper Sawicki (1552–1620).<sup>34</sup> The former is better documented and concerned a response to James's

published defence of the controversial Oath of Allegiance. Briefly, about August 1610 James

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<sup>33</sup> David Masson (ed.), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (14 vols; Edinburgh, 1877–98), IX, pp. 540–43, and X, pp. 43, 100, 191–3, 251, 260; *Letters and State Papers during the Reign of King James the Sixth* (Edinburgh, 1838), pp. 212–13; [James Maidment], *A Book of Scottish Pasquils. 1568–1715* (Edinburgh, 1868), pp. x–xiii; Robert Chambers, *Domestic Annals of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (3 vols; Edinburgh and London, 1858–61), I, pp. 448–9, 543; Thomas A. Fischer, *The Scots in Germany* (Edinburgh, 1902), pp. 33, 255–6, 313; A. Francis Steuart (ed.), *Papers relating to the Scots in Poland 1576–1793* (Edinburgh, 1915), pp. xv–xvii, 103–7.

<sup>34</sup> Fedorowicz, *England's Baltic Trade*, p. 23; Martin Murphy, 'Robert Abercromby, S.J. (1536–1613) and the Baltic Counter-Reformation', *The Innes Review*, 50/1 (1999), pp. 58–75; Martin Murphy, 'Abercromby, Robert (1536–1613)', in *ODNB*; Bieganska, 'Learned Scots', p. 9; Bajer, *Scots*, pp. 162, 164; Martin Murphy, 'James VI and I, the Scottish Jesuit, and the Polish Pasquils', in Teresa Bela, Clarinda Calma and Jolanta Rzegocka (eds), *Publishing Subversive Texts in Elizabethan England and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 28–40.

wrote to the senate of Danzig thanking them for their efforts in censoring this ‘infamous book’. Gordon reported that there were several principal suspects, including Robert Abercromby (1536–1613) ‘an olde Jesuite of Brunsberg (who sundrie tymes hath enticed young gentlemen scholers from Scotland, and ar now broght up in his scoole)’. Gordon was assisted in his investigation by another Scotsman, Andrew Aidie (fl.1603–19), who initially implicated that ‘unnatural monster’ Abercromby and was instrumental in suppressing the libel to which Cichocki later claimed authorship.<sup>35</sup>

Descended from a prominent Aberdeen family with Danzig trading connections, Aidie had been a student at Heidelberg before succeeding Bartholomaeus Keckermann (1572?–1609) as professor of philosophy at the gymnasium of Danzig in 1609.<sup>36</sup> A minor if accomplished neo-Latin poet, Aidie was also the author of a number of undistinguished works on a range of subjects. These were mostly issued at Danzig between 1610 and 1612, with a voluminous commentary on Aristotle appearing at Oppenheim in 1614. All the same, Aidie was suspected of plagiarising his predecessor Keckermann and about 1613 he departed Danzig eventually returning, after a sojourn in Heidelberg, to Scotland.<sup>37</sup> Then, on 5 May 1615, James wrote in

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<sup>35</sup> TNA, SP 14/57, fos. 24, 41; Mary Anne Everett Green (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1603–1610* (London, 1857), pp. 628, 630; TNA, SP 88/2, fos. 238, 242; *ibid.*, SP 80/2, fo. 263.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Anderson (ed.), *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis* (Aberdeen, 1898), p. 28; Bieganska, ‘Learned Scots’, pp. 7, 12; Bajer, *Scots*, pp. 164, 176.

<sup>37</sup> John Dunbar, *Epigrammaton* (London, 1616), p. 168; W. Caird Taylor, ‘Scottish students in Heidelberg, 1386–1662’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 5/17 (1907), p. 71; P. J. Anderson, ‘Theses

support of Aidie's candidature as principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen. By mid-March 1616 Aidie had been appointed to the position, retaining it until 1619 when he was removed following an abject performance in a religious disputation.<sup>38</sup> Before being demitted Aidie petitioned the king recounting his past service at Danzig, both against the Jesuits of Braunsberg [Braniewo] and what he called the Arians, 'who (be dedication of their Catechise) did preass to mak your Maiestie Patron of their Sect'.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, we know nothing more of Aidie's intervention with regard to the Racovian catechism. He does not mention it in his extant correspondence with Cecil, although it seems likely that, perhaps together with Gordon, Aidie attempted to supress it too.<sup>40</sup>

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by Principal Andrew Aidie', *Notes and Queries*, 3 (1911), pp. 246–7; James F. K. Johnstone and Alexander Robertson, *Bibliographia Aberdonensis: 1472–1640* (Aberdeen, 1929), pp. 138–40; Thomas A. Birrell, 'Some rare Scottish books in the Old Royal Library', in A. A. MacDonald, Michael Lynch, and Ian B. Cowan (eds), *The Renaissance in Scotland* (Leiden, 1994), p. 412.

<sup>38</sup> Aberdeen University Library, GB 231 MS 3430; Louise Taylor (ed.), *Aberdeen Council Letters* (6 vols; Oxford, 1942–61), I, p. 134; John Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1570–1625* (2 vols; Aberdeen, 1848), II, p. 370.

<sup>39</sup> James Maidment (ed.), *Analecta Scotica ... second series* (Edinburgh, 1837), pp. 337–8; *Original Letters Relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs of Scotland* (2 vols; Edinburgh, 1851), II, pp. 589–91.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, SP 88/3, fos. 17, 24, 34, 50.

One other Scotsman might also be mentioned in this connection, namely Thomas Seget (c.1575–1627).<sup>41</sup> A neo-Latin poet and Calvinist convert to Catholicism, Seget was a student of the Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius and considered an unassuming ‘man of great intelligence’ possessed of ‘acute and excellent genius’.<sup>42</sup> Over a roughly thirty-year period he became acquainted with some of Europe’s foremost scholars and bibliophiles including, among others, Abraham Ortelius, Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, Paolo Sarpi, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, Galileo Galilei, and Johannes Kepler. Seget was also extremely well-travelled and on 3/13 July 1612, as Valentine Smalcius recorded in his diary, this ‘very noble’ Scotsman arrived at Raków ‘in order to further investigate the divine truth, in which he had conceived a certain interest’. Although Seget departed a few days later on 9/19 July, he subsequently recounted his impression of Raków to his friend Martin Ruar (1589–1657), a recent Socinian convert who would become rector of the academy at Raków. Besides specifically mentioning Smalcius and Moscorovius, Seget

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<sup>41</sup> Edward Rosen, ‘Thomas Seget of Seton (1569 or 1570–1627)’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 28/105 (1949), pp. 91–5; Otakar Odložilik, ‘Thomas Seget: A Scottish friend of Szymon Szymonowicz’, *The Polish Review*, 11/1 (1966), pp. 3–39; Birrell, ‘Some rare Scottish books’, pp. 413–14; Bajer, *Scots*, pp. 164–5; Stefano Gattei, ‘The wandering Scot: Thomas Seget’s *album amicorum*’, *Nuncius*, 28/2 (2013), pp. 345–463; Nick Havely, *Dante’s British Public: Readers and Texts, from the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 80–89; Nick Havely, ‘Seget’s *Comedy*: a Scots scholar, Galileo, and a Dante manuscript’, in Ian Johnson and Alessandra Petrina (eds), *The Impact of Latin Culture on Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing* (Kalamazoo, 2018), pp. 199–221.

<sup>42</sup> Leith et al. (eds), *Records of Scots Colleges*, p. 7; David Irving, *The Lives of Scottish Poets* (2 vols; Edinburgh, 1804), I, pp. 113–14.

conveyed a positive impression of the place where the Socinian heresy principally flourished, as Ruar recorded in one of his letters:

It seemed to him as though he had been transported into another world; for whereas elsewhere all was full of the noises of war and tumults, there it was quiet; men were so trained to frugality and calm that you might think that they were angels, although they were spirited in debate and skilled in languages.<sup>43</sup>

On 19 February/ 1 March 1614 Seget was admitted as a student at Altdorf, which probably brought him into contact with Ruar again. Three weeks later another student was admitted at Altdorf. This was Samuel Przykowski [Przipcovius] (1592–1670), a Polish nobleman who would write a Latin biography of Socinus.<sup>44</sup> By this time Seget knew the English diplomats Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639) and Sir Stephen Lesieur (d.1630x38), while his final work was to be dedicated to another diplomat Sir Dudley Carleton (1574–1632). Since Seget had written to James from Prague in September 1613 advertising his talents as a student of human nature, politics, and foreign affairs, it is possible that he provided intelligence to the Stuart monarchy on Socinian activities. This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that, while

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<sup>43</sup> Martin Ruar, *Epistolarum selectarum centuria altera et ultima* (Amsterdam, 1681), pp. 2–3. See, also, Zeltner, *Historia crypto-Socinianismi*, p. 1196; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, pp. 541–43; Kot, *Socinianism*, pp. 217–18; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 26–27; Odlozilik, ‘Thomas Seget’, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

accompanying the Polish ambassador, Seget supplied information to Lesieur concerning the authorship of Jesuit libels.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, James had been enhancing his image as a defender of orthodoxy. This can be seen in the so-called Vorstius affair concerning the proposed appointment of the heterodox scholar Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622) to succeed Jacob Arminius as professor of theology at Leiden.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in September 1611 Vorstius's *Tractatus theologicus de Deo* (1606, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1610) was burnt in St. Paul's churchyard and at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge because the king considered it full of 'monstrous blasphemie and horrible Atheisme'. Indeed, James justified this visible sign of royal displeasure by likening the book's contents to gangrene that was beginning 'to creep into the bowels of Our owne Kingdom'. Here it should be noted that in 1611 Vorstius published an edition of Socinus's *De Sacrae Scripturae auctoritate*, to which he added a preface. Accordingly, the English ambassador to the United Provinces, Sir Ralph Winwood (1562/63–1617) insisted in a speech before the States General that Vorstius had been suckled on Socinian doctrine since childhood and that Socinus's disciples sought him as their

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<sup>45</sup> TNA, SP 80/2, fo. 263; *ibid.*, SP 80/3, fos. 43–4; British Library, Add. MS 38,597, fos. 71v–72r.

<sup>46</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 20, 36–7; Frederick H. Shriver, 'Orthodoxy and diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius affair', *English Historical Review*, 85/336 (1970), pp. 449–74; Willem Nijenhuis, 'Saravia and James I's moves against the appointment of Vorstius', in Willem Nijenhuis, *Ecclesia Reformata: Studies on the Reformation* (2 vols; Leiden, 1972–1994), II, pp. 206–24; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 45–50.

master. Bowing to this pressure, in spring 1612 the States-General sent Vorstius to Gouda where he dwelled for seven years before being condemned at the synod of Dort and banished.<sup>47</sup>

Over in England, shortly before the conclusion of the Vorstius affair, it was not a book but two human beings that were committed to the flames in 1612. One was the ‘English *Vorstius*’, a ‘rude, proud obstinate fellow’ named Bartholomew Legate.<sup>48</sup> The other was Edward Wightman, sometime draper and alehouse keeper, and the last person burned at the stake for heresy in England.<sup>49</sup> Legate was a cloth-trader from Hornchurch, Essex, said to have been of ‘a bold spirit, confident carriage, fluent tongue, excellently skilled in the Scriptures’. James handled his case personally, attempting to dissuade Legate from Arian heresy by having him acknowledge the divinity of Christ. Yet Legate remained obstinate and after being sentenced and

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<sup>47</sup> TNA, SP 84/68, fo. 121; Hinds (ed.), *Papers*, p. 147; James I, *Declaration concerning ... the Cause of D. Conradus Vorstius* (London, 1612), p. 16; Russell (ed.), *Ephemerides Isaaci Casauboni*, II, pp. 880, 898, 1155–6; Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain* (London, 1653), pp. 120–21; Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain* (London, 1656), pp. 60–62; Shriver, ‘Orthodoxy and diplomacy’, pp. 455, 458, 473.

<sup>48</sup> Horatio F. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 12, 1610–1613* (London, 1905), no. 443; Michael Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 145; Fuller, *Church-History*, pp. 62–4.

<sup>49</sup> Ian Atherton and David Como, ‘The burning of Edward Wightman: puritanism, prelacy and the politics of heresy in early modern England’, *English Historical Review*, 120/489 (2005), pp. 1215–50.



excommunicated was burnt at Smithfield, London on 18 March 1612. Having initially recanted, Wightman followed him to a fiery death at Lichfield on 11 April 1612.<sup>50</sup> Here we return to Casaubon's *Exercitationes* and his dedicatory epistle to James. Immediately after the sentence recounting James's indignation that heretics at Raków had dared dedicate their book to him, it does indeed mention a burning – but not that of the Racovian catechism. Rather, Casaubon was referring to Legate's fate:

An Arian who was very obstinate in his wickedness, and who, while being in chains for long, could not be recalled to a sound mind by any explanation whatsoever, Your Majesty, indignant at the offenses made against Our Lord Jesus Christ, uncreated God, ordered to commit to avenging flames.<sup>51</sup>

The passages we have quoted from Casaubon's *Exercitationes* were of a piece: when taken together with the rest of the dedicatory epistle their purpose was to highlight the threat to Reformed Christianity from the heresies of 'Anabaptists, Libertines, Schwenckfeldians,

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Birch (ed.), *The Court and Times of James the First* (2 vols; London, 1848), I, pp. 136, 164; George Roberts (ed.), *Diary of Walter Yonge* (London, 1848), pp. 25–6; Questier (ed.), *Newsletters*, pp. 145, 148, 153–5; Edmund Howes, *Annales* (London, 1631), p. 1002; Pagitt, *Heresiography*, p. 125; Anon., *A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legatt and Thomas Withman* (London, 1651); Fuller, *Church-History*, pp. 62–4; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 32–3; David Como, 'Legate, Bartholomew (d.1612)', in *ODNB*.

<sup>51</sup> Casaubon, *De rebus sacris*, dedicatory epistle.

Valentinians, new Arians, semi-Arians, Tritheists, and Socinians’.<sup>52</sup> Our reading is supported by Casaubon’s biographer, Mark Pattison:

He takes credit ... for James’ interposition in the matter of Vorstius. He thinks the Racovian catechism so detestable that he would annihilate it. ... Worst of all, the burning of Legatt, the feeble imitation by the English Church of the great crime of Calvin, had – would that it had not! – Casaubon’s approval.<sup>53</sup>

It was for this lack of Christian charity and failure to find compromise with doctrinal innovators, particularly regarding his role in the Vorstius affair, that Casaubon was openly condemned in a letter published in 1614. Since the author was Valentine Smalcius he prudently wrote under a pseudonym and refrained from advocating anti-Trinitarian positions. Instead, Smalcius argued for the foundation of doctrine on the basis of Scripture and the practice of the early church, as well as the merits of religious toleration.<sup>54</sup>

In short, James’s intelligence agents kept his government appraised of developments in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and may well have attempted to suppress the Racovian catechism as they had libels against the Scottish nation and its vengeful king. It also needs to be stressed that the Stuart monarchy was far more concerned about Jesuits than the Polish Brethren.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559–1614* [1875], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1892), p. 446.

<sup>54</sup> Andreas Reuchlin [Valentine Smalcius], *Ad Isaacum Casaubonum Paraenesis* (n.p., 1614), reprinted in Botley and Vince (eds), *Correspondence*, IV, pp. 220–29.

As for the Racovian catechism's misjudged dedication to James, this may have been suggested by Thomas Leamer or perhaps other exiled English separatists dwelling in the Dutch Republic. But as yet we cannot identify any English Socinians and only a handful of English Arians before James's death on 27 March 1625. Indeed, the one supposed example of English Socinianism during this period was an unfounded accusation against Anthony Wotton (1561?–1626).<sup>55</sup> The allegation's appearance in print some thirty years after the initial event and fifteen years after Wotton's death is indicative both of the breakdown of pre-publication censorship from 1641 and, as Peter Lake has shown, of the tendency of mainstream puritanism to fragment when internal conflicts could not be resolved through accepted methods of mediation and reconciliation. Furthermore, as McLachlan, Lake, and Mortimer have suggested, the theological views attributed to Wotton by his antagonist were largely a misrepresentation of his original teachings.<sup>56</sup>

Nor should it surprise us to learn that the English word 'Socinian' was extremely rare during the Jacobean period; its earliest known usage was by King James in his published attack

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<sup>55</sup> George Walker, *Socinianisme in the Fundamentall Point of Justification Discovered, and Confuted* (London, 1641); Anthony Wotton, *Defence against Mr. George Walker's Charge* (Cambridge, 1641); George Walker, *A True Relation of the Chiefe Passages betweene Mr. Anthony Wotton, and Mr. George Walker* (London, 1642); Thomas Gataker, *An Answer to Mr. George Walkers Vindication* (London, 1642).

<sup>56</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 45–9; Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, pp. 221–46; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 50–53.

on Vorstius.<sup>57</sup> Since we have found no reference to the Racovian catechism in the writings of a single Englishman or woman resident in England during this period we are left only with speculation: namely, the possibility that there were Socinian sympathisers in England. Besides Ostorod's apparent claim, reported by Bruce in 1608, that he had favourers in England, there is Martin Ruar's academic peregrination to consider. About 1619 Ruar visited England.<sup>58</sup> By his own account, the impoverished Ruar was favourably received at Cambridge where he was offered a well-paid professorship. Although tempted he declined so as to retain his independence. There is no suggestion in Ruar's correspondence, however, that he smuggled Socinian books into the country.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, in the absence of other evidence, Casaubon remains our only known witness to the reception of the Racovian catechism in Jacobean England.

By contrast, across the North Sea, where Ostorod and Voidovius had been active and where Vorstius published an edition of a work by Socinus, additional information is contained in

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<sup>57</sup> James I, *Declaration*, pp. 80, 86; James I, *Workes* (London, 1616), pp. 377, 379; cf. Edward Brerewood, *Enquiries Touching the Diuersity of Languages* (London, 1614), sig. 3v.

<sup>58</sup> Ruar had matriculated at Leiden University on 31 January/ 10 February 1618 along with three sons of his patron Caspar von Sack the elder (d.1638?) of Bobelwitz [Bobowicko, Poland].

<sup>59</sup> Ruar, *Epistolarum selectarum*, pp. 71, 112; Friedrich Samuel Bock, *Historia Antitrinitariorum* (2 vols; Königsberg and Leipzig, 1779–84), I, p. 720; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, p. 578; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 27–8; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, p. 44.

the correspondence of one of Leamer's and Vorstius's disputants: Matthew Slade.<sup>60</sup> Writing from Amsterdam on 4/14 November 1613 to Sibrandus Lubbertus (c.1556–1625), a Dutch Calvinist theologian who had published a lengthy refutation of Socinus, Slade reported that he had read both a manuscript and printed copy of *Praelectiones Theologicae Fausti Socini Senensis* (Raków, 1609).<sup>61</sup> Again, writing from Amsterdam on 10/20 October 1617 to Dudley Carleton at The Hague, Slade noted that Carleton was keen 'to see some writing of Socinus'. Accordingly, Slade enclosed a copy of the Racovian catechism, a work 'presumptuously' dedicated to King James and which contained a 'synopsis' of 'all their heresies'. Slade had obtained the book from Danzig after a great deal of trouble, adding that recently other minor works by Socinus were being sold at Amsterdam. They were, however, very expensive. Even so, if Carleton desired, then Slade would send him several books by Socinus that he possessed or else endeavour to buy what he could for Carleton.<sup>62</sup> On 7/17 January 1618 Slade wrote to Carleton once more, enquiring if the copy of the Racovian catechism he had sent was in safe keeping since he knew 'no ready meanes to get another'.<sup>63</sup> For his part, Carleton wrote in September 1618 concerning Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), a professor at Leiden, a 'hot

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<sup>60</sup> Matthew Slade, *Cum Corrado Vorstio Theol. Doct. De blasphemiiis, haeresibus & Atheismis* (Amsterdam, 1612).

<sup>61</sup> British Library, Add MS 22,962, fos. 55r–v. For Lubbertus: Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 48, 51.

<sup>62</sup> Nijenhuis (ed.), *Matthew Slade*, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Arminian’ and ‘suspected Socinian’.<sup>64</sup> Besides this correspondence, we have found evidence of ownership at Bernburg, Leiden, and perhaps also Franeker. At Bernburg the possessor was one Georg Halitius (fl.1611).<sup>65</sup> At Leiden it was Johannes Polyander (1568–1646), a Dutch Calvinist theologian who drew unfavourable parallels between the Remonstrants and Socinians.<sup>66</sup> And at Franeker, if our reading is correct, it may have been Sibrandus Lubbertus.<sup>67</sup>

All the same, we must still explain why it was not until the beginning of January 1613, some four years after its publication, that the Racovian catechism finally came to James’s attention. Most likely it was sent with diplomatic dispatches or else presented to the king, perhaps by Andrew Aidié when he visited England seeking preferment or by Patrick Gordon on the ambassador’s return to court.<sup>68</sup> James reacted with disgust when he read the book. But unlike the Vorstius affair, or indeed his dealings with Legate and Wightman, the king decided against a public burning. Perhaps he was counselled against giving too much publicity to a text that few would have read and fewer still would have had the theological skill to refute. If so, the non-burning of the Racovian catechism can be compared with the case of William Sayer, an

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<sup>64</sup> [Philip Yorke (ed.)], *Letters from and to Sir Dudley Carleton*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1780), p. 302.

<sup>65</sup> Lwowska Narodowa Naukowa Biblioteka Ukrainy im. W. Stefanyka, Lviv [Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine], CT I 78129, ‘Sum Georgii Halitii Bernburg[en]s[is] Anno 1611’. Halitius was the author of *Disputatio juridica de Defensione Necessaria* (Zerbst, 1615).

<sup>66</sup> Universiteitsbibliotheek, Leiden, 513 G 14:1, ‘Sum Joh. Polyandri’.

<sup>67</sup> Jagiellonian Library, Kraków, BJ St. Dr. Cim.0.1018, ‘Sum Sibrandi Montani’.

<sup>68</sup> Aidié was in London in August 1610, while Gordon can be placed at Königsberg on 10/20 April 1612 and at Dunbar in July 1613.

Anabaptist and Arian gaoled at Bury St. Edmunds and then imprisoned at Norwich in July 1612 for a variety of heretical opinions including ‘den[i]all of the Godhead of Jesus Christe & of the holie ghost’. As George Abbot (1562–1633), archbishop of Canterbury explained in a letter written at the beginning of December 1612 to John Jegon (1550–1618), bishop of Norwich, although Sayer was a ‘desperate Hereticque’ he maintained his ‘prophane & scismaticall’ opinions out of malice rather than understanding. Accordingly, he ought to be excommunicated or imprisoned. Only if Sayer obstinately persisted in denying something expressly contained in the three creeds (Nicene, Apostles’, and Athanasian) or in the first four ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon) should he burn at the stake as Legate and Wightman had done. Sayer, however, did not share their fate since he confessed his heresy concerning the ‘Godhead of the Sonne & the holy Ghost’ and instead accepted the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, writing from Antwerp on 1/11 November 1611 the English Catholic merchant Arthur Aynscombe had reported that one Fitzherbert ‘an heretike neere Oxenford is to bee burned for denying the Trinity’.<sup>70</sup> Since we know nothing more of Fitzherbert it seems likely that he too recanted.<sup>71</sup> This accords with the church historian Thomas Fuller’s observation

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<sup>69</sup> Cambridge University Library, MS Mm.vi.58, fos. 189–202, partly printed in Champlin Burrage, *Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550–1641)* (2 vols; Cambridge, 1912), II, pp. 169–71. See also McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 33–4.

<sup>70</sup> British Library, Add. MS 72,340, fo. 161; Hinds (ed.), *Papers*, p. 180.

<sup>71</sup> There was, however, a Catholic recusant named Thomas Fitzherbert living at South Newington, Oxfordshire in 1612. He became a Jesuit and died at Rome. See Questier (ed.),

that because the burning of heretics ‘much startled common people’, who were inclined to pity the victims and associate justice with cruelty, King James henceforth ‘politickly preferred’ that condemned heretics ‘should silently, and privately waste themselves away’ in prison rather than ‘amuze others with the solemnity of a *publick Execution*’.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, as a corollary we must re-examine the notion that three of the four Latin editions of the Racovian catechism with the imprint ‘Racoviae’ [Raków] 1609 were secretly printed in England. This was premised on the supposed burning of 1614 and the suggestion does not appear in the secondary literature until 1953.<sup>73</sup> In a future article we will discuss at greater length these four seventeenth-century Latin editions – which we have designated with the letters ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ – together with identifiable owners, manuscript annotations and present locations. For now we merely state that we have assigned primacy to ‘A’ because of its ornamental decorative border, which may have been intended for high status readers. ‘B’ is now recognised as a continental imprint, so the suggestion that it was printed in London about 1614 by Humphrey Lownes the elder (d.1630) can be discarded.<sup>74</sup> Following Leslie Oliver, we think that ‘C’ was a

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*Newsletters*, pp. 1, 6, 7, 17, 46, 74, 112, 272; Thomas H. Clancy, ‘Fitzherbert, Thomas (1552–1640)’, in *ODNB*.

<sup>72</sup> Fuller, *Church-History*, p. 64; Atherton and Como, ‘burning of Wightman’, pp. 1247–8.

<sup>73</sup> Leslie M. Oliver, ‘An early Socinian publication in England’, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 7/1 (1953), pp. 119–21.

<sup>74</sup> Williams, *Polish Brethren*, I, pp. 208, 211; Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Les Imprimeurs des Antitrinitaires Polonais Rodecki et Sternacki* (Geneva, 1974), pp. 200–1; Świdarska, ‘Socinian books’, p. 209.



false imprint and that it was printed by Robert Young (d.1643) in the mid-1630s. Moreover, for this edition Young used both printers' ornaments that he had acquired from his former master and business partner Lownes as well as some decorative capital letters that he employed in some other works that he printed at the time. That leaves 'D' which we also believe was a false imprint because of its close relationship to what we have called 'E', namely another Latin edition of the catechism dated 1651 old style. Now, however, it remains to account for the myth and how it spread.

### III

The widespread yet unfounded belief that the Racovian catechism was burnt in England during the Jacobean era is the result of a series of misunderstandings. It began with the publication of *Charismatum sacrorum trias, sive Bibliotheca Anglorum theologica* (1677) by the German polymath Martin von Kempe (1637–83). Concerning the catechism, Kempe wrote: 'In fact, in the fourteenth year of this century, in the month of April, the Racovian catechism was condemned to the flames in that place by decree of the Parliament.'<sup>75</sup> Kempe was the first author to state that the Racovian catechism had been committed to the flames in 1614. No one had maintained this before Kempe. Neither Socinian authors, nor their opponents, nor any other writer of the period had once referred to the burning of that book in England either in 1614 or at any other time during James's reign.

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<sup>75</sup> Martinus Kempius, *Charismatum sacrorum trias, sive Bibliotheca Anglorum theologica* (Königsberg, 1677), p. 384.

So what was Kempe's source regarding the alleged burning of the catechism in 1614? It was not Casaubon's *Exercitationes*. A few lines after his statement about the burning of the catechism in 1614 Kempe referenced Casaubon, but only as a source concerning the Vorstius affair. Here Kempe cited a letter of 1612 in which Casaubon had provided the French Cardinal Jacques Davy Duperron with King James's comments on the cardinal's 'observations' in matters of theology and ecclesiology.<sup>76</sup> If not Casaubon's *Exercitationes*, then what did Kempe consult? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, was *Summa controversiarum religionis* (1653) by the Dutch Reformed theologian Johannes Hoornbeek (1617–1666). In the second edition of this work, published in 1658 and cited by Kempe, Hoornbeek mentioned the year 1614 ('ad annum hujus seculi decimum quartum') when discussing the spread of Socinian beliefs in the 1610s, especially within Remonstrant circles, and then recounting the subsequent efforts of Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists to 'extirpate' the Socinian 'sect'.<sup>77</sup> Immediately after his account of these events, Hoornbeek wrote: 'In this year, in which I am writing these things, in the month of April, the Racovian Catechism, in England, by decree of the Parliament, was condemned to the

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<sup>76</sup> Kempe's main source of information on the Vorstius affair was Georgius Hornius, *Historia ecclesiastica et politica* (Leiden, 1665), p. 218. As regards Casaubon's letter to Duperron, Kempe gives the following details: 'Casaboni Epistola ad Perronum Cardinalem, pro Rege suo responsoria' (Kempius, *Charismatum*, pp. 384–5). This letter appears in all three editions of Casaubon's epistles. Kempe read the first edition: *Isaaci Casaboni epistolae* (The Hague, 1638), no. 316, pp. 372–402.

<sup>77</sup> Johannes Hoornbeek, *Summa controversiarum religionis* [1653], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Utrecht, 1658), pp. 567–8.

flames.’<sup>78</sup> Given that Hoornbeek’s book was first published in 1653, the words ‘in this year, in which I am writing these things, in the month of April’ (‘Hoc, quo ista scribo, anno, mense Aprili’), denote the month of April in the previous year, i.e., April 1652 when, as is well documented, the Rump Parliament ordered the burning of a Latin edition of the Racovian catechism. Here it is worth noting that in the second edition of his *Summa*, the edition of 1658 to which Kempe referred, Hoornbeek reworded this crucial passage to make it clearer. The 1653 edition has ‘Hoc etiam anno’ (‘also in this year’), which is ambiguous since it can mean either the year 1614, which is mentioned a few lines above, or the year in which Hoornbeek was writing his *Summa*.<sup>79</sup> For the 1658 edition, however, he reworded the passage: ‘Hoc, quo ista scribo, anno’. Doubtless this was to clarify that he meant the year in which he was writing his *Summa*, i.e., 1652. It should also be added that in Hoornbeek’s three-volume *Socinianismi confutati* (1650–64), he made no mention of a burning of the catechism in Jacobean England. Evidently, when consulting Hoornbeek’s *Summa*, Kempe misunderstood the key passage. He misread the words ‘Hoc, quo ista scribo, anno, mense Aprili’ as ‘in this year, about which I am writing, in the month of April’ and took them to mean April 1614, the year mentioned in the preceding paragraph of Hoornbeek’s work. Thus, Kempe’s misinterpretation of this passage in Hoornbeek’s *Summa* is the origin of the specious claim that the Racovian catechism was originally burnt in England in 1614.

Between the publication of Kempe’s *Charismatum sacrorum trias* in 1677 and the late eighteenth century, only a handful of writers mentioned the suggestion that the Racovian catechism had been burnt in 1614; even then, not all of them approved this hypothesis. We have

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 568.

<sup>79</sup> Hoornbeek, *Summa* (1653), p. 446.

found mention of a 1614 burning in only six works published in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These are: two anti-Socinian treatises by the Anglo-French Protestant scholar Jean Gailhard, published in 1695 and 1699; the German historian Daniel Hartnack's edition of Johannes Lütkeschwager's [Micraelius] *Historia ecclesiastica* (1699); *Programma de Catechesi Racoviensi* by the German Lutheran scholar Johann Andreas Schmidt (1707, republished 1724); the third volume of *Nachrichten von einer hallischen bibliothek* (1748); and the first volume of the German Lutheran theologian Johann Georg Walch's four-volume *Bibliotheca Theologica* (1757–65).<sup>80</sup> Whereas Gailhard and Hartnack did not specify their sources, Schmidt, the *Nachrichten* and Walch specifically referred to Kempe concerning a 1614 burning. These three works also reported Casaubon's account of King James's angry reaction, but they did not draw upon Casaubon to substantiate a 1614 burning. Indeed, Schmidt rejected this hypothesis and drew upon the German Arian author Christoph Sand's *Bibliotheca anti-trinitariorum* (1684) to argue that the book was actually burnt during the Cromwellian period.

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<sup>80</sup> Jean Gailhard, *Serious Advice to a Preservative against the Blasphemous Heresie of Socinianism* (London, 1695), p. 39; Jean Gailhard, *The True Character of the Spirit and Principles of Socinianism* (London, 1699), p. 8; Daniel Hartnaccius, 'Continuatio historiae ecclesiasticae Johannis Micraelii', in Johannes Micraelius, *Historia ecclesiastica* (Leipzig and Frankfurt-am-Main, 1699), pp. 966–7; Johannes Andreas Schmidius, *Programma de Catechesi Racoviensi* [1707], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Helmstadt, 1724), pp. 11–12; Siegmund J. Baumgarten (ed.), *Nachrichten von einer hallischen bibliothek* (8 vols; Halle, 1748–51), III, pp. 221–2; Johannes G. Walchius, *Bibliotheca Theologica* (4 vols; Jena, 1757–65), I, p. 538.

Even so, like Sand, Schmidt too incorrectly gave 1653 rather than 1652 as the year of the burning.<sup>81</sup>

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several authors in whose works we might expect to find mention of a 1614 burning make no such reference: for example, Sand; the French historian of Socinianism Louis Anastase Guichard; the German scholars Johann Franz Buddeus, Georg Ludwig Oeder, and Michael Lilienthal; and the English Unitarian Joshua Toulmin –. Instead, they mentioned that the 1609 Latin translation of the Racovian catechism was dedicated to King James and also related how the book was burned during the Cromwellian period.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, they all erroneously gave 1653 as the date of this burning without specifying their source. This misunderstanding probably resulted from a misinterpretation of Hoornbeek's phrase discussed earlier: 'Hoc, quo ista scribo, anno'. Since Sand misread Hoornbeek it is also possible that later authors followed his renowned *Bibliotheca anti-trinitariorum* rather than consulting Hoornbeek directly. That the Latin edition of the Racovian catechism was actually burnt in 1652, not 1653, was eventually clarified by the Welsh Unitarian minister Thomas Rees (1777–1864) in

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<sup>81</sup> Christophorus Sandius, *Bibliotheca anti-trinitariorum* (Freistadt [Amsterdam], 1684), pp. 105–6.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.; Louis Anastase Guichard, *Histoire du Socinianisme* (Paris, 1723), pp. 373; Johannes F. Buddeus, *Isagoge historico-theologica ad theologiam universam* (2 vols; Leipzig, 1727), I, p. 509; Georgius L. Oederus (ed.), *Catechesis Racoviensis* (Frankfurt-am-Main and Leipzig, 1739), p. 8; Michael Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothek* (10 vols; Königsberg, 1741), I, p. 961; Joshua Toulmin, *Memoirs of the Life, Character, Sentiments and Writings, of Faustus Socinus* (London, 1777), pp. 259–60.

his English translation published at London in 1818.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, Rees made no mention of a 1614 burning although, like others before him, he discussed the 1609 edition's dedication to King James.<sup>84</sup> In short, the notion that the Racovian catechism had been burnt in 1614 did not enjoy much support among scholars until the mid-nineteenth century. Only then was the thesis popularised. And the culprit was the English Unitarian minister Robert Wallace (1791–1850), who in his entry on Moscorovius in his *Antitrinitarian Biography* (1850) wrote:

The annoyance, occasioned by the dedication of this Catechism to King James, is said to have been shewn, by a resolution of Parliament, ordering it to be publicly burnt. Walchius informs us, that authors disagree, as to the time when this happened; some referring it to the year 1653, and others to the year 1614. The truth is, that it met with this fate at two separate times.<sup>85</sup>

Following Rees, Wallace clarified that April 1652 was the actual date of what he thought was the second burning of the catechism. Yet he also asserted that the catechism had previously been burnt in 1614. Wallace's source for this alleged burning was Johann Georg Walch's *Bibliotheca Theologica*, one of the few works during the eighteenth century to maintain this view. These are Walch's words on the matter:

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<sup>83</sup> Rees, 'Historical introduction', pp. lxxix–lxxx.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. lxxviii–lxxix.

<sup>85</sup> Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, p. 492.

The Catechism itself was committed to the flames by decree of the Parliament. As regards the year when this happened, writers disagree. Some date it to 1653, and to Cromwell's times; others to the year 1614, and this [hypothesis] has the greater probability.<sup>86</sup>

Like his sources, namely the above-mentioned Sand, Buddeus, and Lilienthal, Walch mistakenly gave 1653 as the date of the catechism's burning. As to the supposed burning of 1614, here Walch's sources were Kempe and the third volume of the *Nachrichten von einer hallischen bibliothek*. Drawing on Walch's work, Wallace therefore concluded that the catechism was burnt in England firstly during James's reign and secondly when Cromwell held power.

Moreover, to our knowledge Wallace was the first author to cite Casaubon as a witness to the imagined 1614 burning. Immediately after stating that the catechism had been burnt on two separate occasions, he continued: 'Isaac Casaubon, a contemporaneous writer ... testifies, in the Dedication to his 'Exercitationes in Annales Card. Baronii', that the Latin translation of the Racovian Catechism was burnt in 1614.'<sup>87</sup> Here too Wallace relied upon Walch's *Bibliotheca Theologica*, although he nonetheless misread it in this regard. A few lines before stating that the catechism was probably burnt in 1614, Walch did indeed reference Casaubon's *Exercitationes*. But he did not do so as testimony to a 1614 burning. Rather, Walch cited Casaubon's work in a footnote denoted by two asterisks and connected to a passage in which Walch recounted James's indignation on seeing the catechism. Even so, this footnote is not related to the subsequent passage in Walch's text, namely the sentence we quoted above: 'The Catechism itself was

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<sup>86</sup> Walchius, *Bibliotheca Theologica*, I, p. 538.

<sup>87</sup> Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, II, p. 492.

committed to the flames by decree of the Parliament'. To elucidate this point we quote the relevant extract from Walch in its entirety:

The translator not only took the liberty to omit, add, and modify, \* but also had the audacity and impudence to dedicate this Latin Catechism to James I, King of Great Britain, who, nevertheless, was consequently very indignant \*\* and the Catechism itself was committed to the flames by decree of the Parliament.<sup>88</sup>

The footnote referred to by the two asterisks reads: 'Casaubon, *dedication, Exercitationes in Annales Baronii* testifies about this thing'.<sup>89</sup> That Walch used Casaubon's *Exercitationes* as a source for James's angry reaction to the Racovian catechism and not for its supposed burning in Jacobean England is confirmed by another detail, namely Walch's subsequent discussion of alternative dates for the burning (i.e., 1653 or 1614). Had he regarded Casaubon as an authoritative witness for a 1614 burning, which Walch considered the more likely, he would presumably have cited him in support. But he did not do so. Instead, almost a century after the publication of his work, Wallace misinterpreted Walch's reference. As a consequence, Wallace introduced Casaubon's *Exercitationes* as a source to support the supposed burning of the

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<sup>88</sup> Walchius, *Bibliotheca Theologica*, I, p. 538.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



Racovian catechism in 1614, a purported burning that many scholars have since taken for granted.<sup>90</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, the renowned American historian of anti-Trinitarianism Earl Morse Wilbur (1866–1956) contributed to further popularising the view that the Racovian catechism was burnt in England in 1614. In his *History of Unitarianism* (1945–52), Wilbur wrote:

His Majesty [King James], having glanced at it [the Racovian catechism] a little, was not well impressed, and expressed his detestation of the satanic work and its authors, the very offspring of Satan, whom he would severely punish if they fell into his power. The work was consequently burnt by order of Parliament, April 1614.<sup>91</sup>

In a note to this passage, Wilbur referred to Casaubon's *Exercitationes* as his source regarding King James's angry reaction, but not for the supposed burning of the catechism.<sup>92</sup> Tellingly, he did not provide sources for a burning by Parliamentary order in 1614. Most likely Wilbur used nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works including Wallace's *Antitrinitarian Biography*,

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<sup>90</sup> Again, for reasons of space we have omitted the relevant references in the secondary literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>91</sup> Earl M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism* (2 vols; Cambridge MA, 1945–52), I, p. 434. See also *ibid.*, II, p. 177.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 822.

which he cited extensively. Elsewhere in the same work, specifically in a note on the catechism, Wilbur returned to the supposed 1614 burning:

This burning is often confused (beginning with Sandius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 105) with that of the first English translation in 1652. Cf. Johannes Hoornbeek, *Summa controversiarum religionis* (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1658), p. 568.<sup>93</sup>

Paradoxically, in this note Wilbur accused Sand of having confused the supposed burning of the Racovian catechism in 1614 with something that the Commons never ordered: whereas they commanded the burning of a Latin edition of the catechism in April 1652, they resolved upon suppression rather than public incineration of the English translation of 1652 in June of the same year. As for Wilbur's citation of Hoornbeek's *Summa*, it is unclear whether he referred to this book as a source for the supposed 1614 burning (as Kempe had done before him), or for the supposed 1652 burning of the catechism's English translation. What is certain is that Wilbur's statement that the Racovian catechism was 'burnt by order of Parliament, April 1614' is erroneous.

In the mid-twentieth century, Wilbur's groundless assertion was accepted by another prominent historian of Socinianism, the minister Herbert John McLachlan (1908–2007), whose book *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (1951) remains an important treatment of the subject. Drawing on Wilbur as well as the Unitarian minister Alexander Gordon (1841–1931), but making no reference to contemporary sources, McLachlan wrote that the 'little duodecimo'

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., I, p. 823.

1609 Latin edition of the Racovian catechism was burnt by order of Parliament in April 1614.<sup>94</sup> In addition, he conjectured that the English authorities had the Latin edition of the catechism burnt five years after its publication because of the appearance of a Dutch edition in 1614. But no known Dutch edition of the catechism was published around this time. Instead, McLachlan had been influenced here by Gordon, who in turn had followed Rees in supposing that edition ‘B’ of the Racovian catechism had been printed in Holland.<sup>95</sup>

Ultimately, Wilbur’s and McLachlan’s endorsement of the groundless supposition that the Racovian catechism was burnt in England for the first time in 1614 had a considerable impact on subsequent historiography, particularly about Socinianism, but also to an extent early modern English radicalism. As we have noted, this claim is present in a number of studies published since the mid-twentieth century. Whereas some scholars cited Wilbur and McLachlan as their sources, others simply refrained from providing references. Most likely this is because the supposed 1614 burning has become an accepted historical fiction. For the same reason, nobody before us has undertaken an investigation of the primary sources and subsequent secondary literature of the kind attempted here. What has emerged from our enquiry is that there is no evidence whatsoever to support the notion that the Racovian catechism was committed to the flames in Jacobean England. This specious assertion originated with Kempe’s misreading in 1677 of Hoornbeek’s account of the actual burning of the catechism in April 1652. Thereafter, this ill-founded claim was perpetuated and disseminated within Anglophone scholarship by

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<sup>94</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, p. 36.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. See, also, Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 17; Rees, ‘Historical introduction’, p. lxxix. Rees knew editions ‘B’ and ‘C’ through copies in Dr Williams’s Library, but was seemingly unaware of ‘A’ and ‘D’. He guessed ‘C’ was the original.

Wallace, who also added Casaubon's *Exercitationes* as supporting evidence. This falsehood was afterwards accepted by authoritative historians of Socinianism. And in the meantime, for more than three centuries, no one bothered to carefully examine the origins, history and transmission of this historiographical myth which we have here exposed.

#### IV

The history of Socinianism in the British Isles must be rewritten. From Joshua Toulmin's *Memoirs of ... Faustus Socinus* (1777) together with the Unitarian minister Theophilus Lindsey's *An Historical view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine and worship* (1783) to McLachlan's *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (1951) by way of the work of Rees, Wallace, and Wilbur among others, there has been a tendency common to the writing of denominational history of glorifying the founding figures, pitying the sufferings of theological forebears, and tracing the antecedents of what became a Unitarian tradition through an essentially linear path.<sup>96</sup> These are the pitfalls of what Patrick Collinson considered 'an excessively vertical, or linear treatment' of the 'origins of the dissenting tradition'.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, to legitimate that tradition Socinianism was given greater longevity in these islands than it merited. As we have seen, there is as yet no firm evidence of anyone sympathetic to Socinian teaching in England before the end of the Jacobean era. Instead, we must look to a different direction for the main roots of English anti-Trinitarianism, namely continental Anabaptism. And while these ideas were not mediated in

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<sup>96</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 4–6.

<sup>97</sup> Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), p. 527.

a straightforward fashion, their reception can nonetheless be demonstrated through a number of examples.<sup>98</sup>

Thus a Dutchman and his wife were burned at Smithfield in June 1535 for various heretical opinions, notably denying that Christ had two natures (God and man) as well as the validity of infant baptism, while twelve of their compatriots were burnt in the provinces for similar offences.<sup>99</sup> Thirteen years later, in December 1548 John Asheton vicar of Shillington, Bedfordshire was tried for affirming ‘hereticall opinions’, including that the Holy Ghost was not God and that Jesus Christ was a holy prophet but ‘not the true lyvyng God’.<sup>100</sup> In April 1551 a Dutchman named Georg van Pare [George van Parris] was burned at Smithfield for holding detestable Arian opinions: ‘that Christ was not very God’.<sup>101</sup> Then in July 1575 two unrepentant

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<sup>98</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 30–35; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Hughes and James Larkin (eds), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3 vols; New Haven, 1964–9), I, pp. 227–8; John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1605), p. 963; Charles L. Kingsford (ed.), *Two London Chronicles from the Collections of John Stow* (London, 1910), p. 10; Irvin Horst, *The Radical Brethren* (Nieuwkoop, 1972), pp. 60–61.

<sup>100</sup> David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae* (4 vols; London, 1737), IV, p. 40–41; Horst, *Radical Brethren*, p. 136.

<sup>101</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, IV, p. 45; Kingsford (ed.), *Two London Chronicles*, p. 23; John Stow, *The Summarie of English Chronicles* (London, 1566), p. 170; John Stow, *The Chronicles of England* (London, 1580), p. 1049; Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* [1679], ed. Nicholas Pocock (7 vols; Oxford, 1865), II, pp. 203, 205; Horst, *Radical Brethren*, pp. 136–7.

Dutch Anabaptists, who denied that Christ took ‘flesh of the substance’ of the Virgin Mary, were burned at Smithfield dying ‘in great horror’.<sup>102</sup> Afterwards, on 20 May 1579, Matthew Hamonde, a ploughwright of Hethersett, Norfolk, having been convicted of speaking seditious and slanderous words against Queen Elizabeth I, was burned in the ditch of Norwich castle for espousing a number of heretical opinions, particularly that Christ was not the son of God but merely a man; that there was no Holy Ghost; and that baptism was unnecessary in the church of God.<sup>103</sup> The next year at Colchester an Essex bricklayer was accused of denying both the three persons in the Godhead and that the baptism of infants was lawful.<sup>104</sup> Three years later in September 1583 one John Lewis, an ‘obstinate Heretique’ who took the new name Abdoit, was burned at Norwich for denying the divinity of Christ and ‘other detestable heresies’.<sup>105</sup> In 1587 Peter Cole, an Anabaptist tanner of Ipswich, suffered the same fate at Norwich for ‘abominable

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<sup>102</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, IV, p. 282; Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* [1587], ed. Henry Ellis (6 vols; London, 1807–8), IV, pp. 326–7, 328; Stow, *Annales*, pp. 679, 680; Fuller, *Church-History*, pp. 104–5; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of Norfolk* [1739–75], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (11 vols; London, 1805–10), III, p. 292. See, also, Gerard Brandt, *The History of the Reformation* (4 vols; London, 1720–23), I, p. 282–5.

<sup>103</sup> Blomefield, *Topographical History*, III, p. 292–3; Goddard Johnson (ed.), ‘Chronological memoranda touching the city of Norwich’, *Norfolk Archaeology*, 1 (1847), p. 149; Anon., *The Faithful Analist* (London, 1660), p. 127.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, ASSI 35/23/2 mem. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Blomefield, *Topographical History*, III, p. 293; Johnson (ed.), ‘Chronological memoranda’, p. 150; Fuller, *Church-History*, p. 169; Anon., *Faithful Analist*, p. 140.

blasphemies'.<sup>106</sup> So too did the Arian Francis Kett in 1589.<sup>107</sup> To these examples we can add the cases of Thomas Leamer, Bartholomew Legate, Edward Wightman, and William Sayer discussed earlier.

Even in the 1630s, a decade during which interest in Socinianism within England can be documented, engagement with Socinian teaching did not necessarily equate to sympathy. Thus Thomas Barlow (1608/9–91), afterwards bishop of Lincoln, began amassing a large collection of Socinian literature.<sup>108</sup> This included a manuscript version of the Racovian catechism, which he dated Queen's College, 1635, the year when he was appointed reader in metaphysics at Oxford University (among his pupils was the prolific anti-Socinian theologian John Owen).<sup>109</sup> Since Barlow produced a reading list for young students of divinity which included the central issues disputed by Socinians and their critics and since such directions for reading gained a measure of popularity, it is possible that Young's edition of the Racovian catechism ('C') had been secretly printed in the mid-1630s (if our dating is correct) to satisfy scholarly demand rather than as part

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<sup>106</sup> Alexander Neville, *Norfolke Furies and Their Foyle* (London, 1623), sig. P2<sup>r</sup>; Blomefield, *Topographical History*, III, p. 293; Johnson (ed.), 'Chronological memoranda', p. 151.

<sup>107</sup> Dewey D. Wallace, 'From eschatology to Arian heresy: the case of Francis Kett (d.1589)', *Harvard Theological Review*, 67/4 (1974), pp. 459–73.

<sup>108</sup> McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 121–3.

<sup>109</sup> Queen's College, Oxford, MS 246, numbers 1, 2; John Spurr, 'Barlow, Thomas (1608/9–1691)', in *ODNB*.

of a Socinian evangelising campaign.<sup>110</sup> Certainly student engagement with Socinian writing was extensive enough to prompt action from ecclesiastical and university authorities alike. Hence, on 29 May 1640 seventeen canons were subscribed by an assembly of clergymen that included Archbishop William Laud. The fourth was against the ‘damnable and cursed heresy of Socinianism’ and expressed concern that young and impressionable people were being exposed to dangerous books imported from abroad. Accordingly, no student at either Oxford or Cambridge University, nor any one in holy orders (excepting, among others, graduates in divinity), were permitted to read Socinian writings on pain of severe punishment.<sup>111</sup> Although these canons were objected to by members of the Long Parliament and subsequently declared null and void on 15 December 1640, some weeks earlier John Cosin, vice-chancellor of Cambridge, had drafted an order empowering university officials to search for Socinian literature and compile a list of students possessing these prohibited texts.<sup>112</sup> However, an irony seems to have been lost on these authorities. As Mortimer has shown, a proclamation of 1626 banning disputation on the subject of predestination effectively closed off one avenue of attack on anti-Calvinist positions. Consequently, refuting Socinian doctrines enabled ‘creative and adventurous’ Reformed theologians not only to find a new ‘polemical target’ but also, for those

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<sup>110</sup> British Library, MS Sloane 2569, fos. 56–67; St. John’s College, Cambridge, MS 347, fos. 205, 218–19; John Bruce (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1631–32* (London, 1862), pp. 428–9. See, also, McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 124–8, 144–8.

<sup>111</sup> William Douglas Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1640* (London, 1880), p. 232; Wilkins, *Concilia*, IV, p. 548; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, pp. 41–2.

<sup>112</sup> Cambridge University Library, V.C.Ct.III 36, fos. 115–18.



minded to do so, to attack Arminian beliefs by proxy.<sup>113</sup> But in order to challenge these Socinian doctrines, proponents of orthodox Calvinism had to have, ideally, detailed knowledge of their teachings. And the only way to do so was to access writings that they were prohibited from acquiring unless they were of sufficient academic or clerical standing. All of which doubtless stimulated interest in the Racovian catechism in Caroline England – even among its fiercest critics.

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<sup>113</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, pp. 55–7.