

PART II

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE REFORMED CONSENSUS IN HEIDELBERG

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REFORMED CONFESSION IN STORM AND STRESS

New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.

John Milton

The period of cooperation that went into winning the elector to the Reformed faith and constructing a pluralistic Reformed confessional accord came to an end in the mid-1560s. At that point dissension over the proper form of church discipline split the Palatine church into hostile camps. The leading cleric Caspar Olevianus, with the backing of John Calvin and Theodore Beza in Geneva, steadfastly worked to erect a consistory on a Genevan model that would have independent power to excommunicate wayward believers. While the Palatine church had made great strides in establishing clear Reformed teaching, this group, which has been dubbed the “disciplinists,”¹ thought the fulfillment of the Reformation awaited the creation of a consistory with effective oversight over moral infractions. Many influential figures of the Palatine government, church, and intellectual community resisted this effort, and thus became an opposing “anti-disciplinist” party. Erastus would emerge as the champion of the anti-disciplinist, and thus anti-Calvinist, party and give his name to an alternative conception of church-state relations known as “Erastianism.”

Erastus largely owes his enduring fame in the English-speaking world to the terms “Erastian” and “Erastianism.” Although dictionaries often attempt to define the terms with reference to Erastus, it has been frequently observed that their popular usage has little connection to Erastus himself. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* recognizes two senses of the adjective “Erastian,” I have discerned three uses of the term which naturally possess some overlap in meaning.² The most common sense of

¹ I.e., those who desired to establish a consistory of elders with independent authority to excommunicate recalcitrant sinners on roughly a Genevan model.

² *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. s.v. “Erastian.” The origin and early use of the term “Erastian” will also be engaged in the epilogue.

“Erastianism” connotes a general “ascendancy of the state over church in ecclesiastical matters,”³ whose most common reference point is the Anglican Church in the era of Henry VIII. A second usage of the term connects directly to Erastus’s program and emphasizes the notion that ecclesiastical authorities have no independent disciplinary role in a Christian commonwealth.⁴ This connotation of “Erastian Erastianism” should be regarded as the most authentic use of the term, and while its usage was fairly common from the seventeenth into the nineteenth centuries, it might be considered somewhat archaic at present. The third usage of “Erastian” asserts the absolute right of the state to determine religious policy, regardless of the theological orthodoxy of the magistrate. This “Hobbesian” or “Statist Erastianism” goes well beyond Erastus’s own thought. As we will see in the epilogue, this tendency likewise sprung from the context of Erastian debates of seventeenth century Europe.⁵

The focus of this section is not the history of Caesaropapism or an investigation of the contribution of Erastus’s ideas to seventeenth-century English debates—though the later point will be engaged in the epilogue. This section aims to tell the story of the Heidelberg conflict regarding church discipline and reveal how Erastus’s ideas crystallized during that conflict. The Heidelberg conflict focused on the question of who should police the moral lives of the faithful in a Christian state. Erastus sought to give a theoretical basis for a Reformed state church in which power over church discipline lay in the hands of the magistrate. While Erastus’s arguments sought to do little more than justify the status quo, his Calvinist rivals saw his ideas as having radical and potentially “atheist” tendencies that would undermine all Christian discipline. The Heidelberg conflict, rather than being an isolated controversy, was only one of many clashes—though it may well have been the defining battle—within the Reformed communion on the question of proper church discipline and what role, if any, the Christian magistrate should have in its exercise.

³ F.L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 558.

⁴ E.g., “The essence of Erastianism, or what had come to be called Erastianism, was that all power of discipline, ecclesiastical as well as civil, belongs ultimately to the State.” David Masson, *The Life of John Milton* (London: 1871) 2:606.

⁵ E.g., “Modern Erastianism develops an idea of Hobbes that political representatives even though they are non professing, may legislate upon religious matters.” William B. Hunter, “Erastianism,” in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, ed. idem, et al. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978), 3:68.

The Palatine church discipline controversy was a bitter conflict among former allies who waged a cold war against one another until the advocates of the Genevan style of church discipline gained the upper hand. Nearly every move in the university, at court, or in the church became a proxy skirmish in the larger war over church discipline.

Further Consolidation of the Palatine Reformed Church

The process of establishing Reformed belief in the Palatinate continued with the acceptance of the Heidelberg Catechism at a territorial synod in January of 1563. Further work was to be done in shaping the Palatinate's ecclesiastical structures and liturgical practices. The revised formulary (*Agende*) for celebrating the Eucharist was first employed on October 24, 1563 while the Palatine court had fled to Mosbach to avoid the plague. The proclamation of a new church order (*Kirchenordnung*) on November 15, 1563 further consolidated the Reformed orientation of the Palatinate. Like the catechism, the church order of 1563 drew on multiple sources for its inspiration and, thus, is difficult to characterize as Lutheran, Calvinist, or Zwinglian.⁶ Also like the catechism, the liturgical models it contained would have an enduring impact on the larger Reformed community.

Following the church order, the publication of the "Church Council Order" (*Kirchenratsordnung*) in July of 1564 regulated the administrative structure of the Palatine church and its disciplinary competence. This order addressed church discipline and mandated excommunication, though the manner of its administration—under the hands of the superintendents in a system of visitations under the authority of the church council (*Kirchenrat*)—was more in keeping with a territorial state church

⁶ Printed in *EKO*, 14:333–408. Goeters discusses the background and sources of the church order in the same (pp. 43–47), emphasizing the free borrowing from Zurich and Genevan antecedents, with some influence of Upper German and Dutch refugee church models. Alternatively, Ernst Walter Zeeden had stressed the Calvinist elements of the document, though in the wake of Goeter's analysis his emphasis appears overstated. Zeeden, "Calvinistische Elemente in der Kurpfälzischen Kirchenordnung von 1563," in *Existenz und Ordnung* (Frankfurt: Klosterman, 1962), 183–214. See also Thompson, "The Palatinate Church Order of 1563," 339–354; Bruno Bürki, "The Reformed Tradition in Continental Europe: Switzerland, France and Germany," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 448–450.

than the Genevan consistory.⁷ While the Heidelberg theologians and church councilors did a masterful job synthesizing theological motifs and creating works that genuinely represented Heidelberg, as opposed to being merely slavish imitations of foreign precedents, it was not possible to sweep all of the theological and structural differences away or even produce documents that were thoroughly consistent with one another. J.F. Gerhard Goeters noted the marked dissonance between the church council order on the one hand, which left the final say on the issue of excommunication to a fundamentally state-controlled body, and the catechism and church order on the other, with their mandates that discipline should be exercised by ecclesiastical authorities.⁸ Furthermore, this legislation did not establish the consistorial-presbyterial structure of discipline desired by Calvinist members of the church council such as Christoph Ehem and Wenzel Zuleger—who apparently composed the directive themselves.⁹

Before proceeding, it is fitting to ponder why the Palatinate did not become fully Calvinist in 1563–1564 in terms of its ecclesiastical organization. First is the rather obvious point that erecting a system which would empower a largely clerically controlled body vis-à-vis the state was going against the grain of post-Reformation church-state relations in the setting of a territorial church, even if such an organization might offer some benefit to the state in acquiring another tool for social control. Second, the experience of the highhanded tactics of Tilemann Heshusius, including excommunicating his subordinates under his own authority as church superintendent, no doubt made it difficult for many to see unfettered consistorial discipline whose primary sanction was excommunication as an effective panacea for reform. In fact, Frederick's creation of the

⁷ EKO, 14:48–50 (commentary); 409–424 (text). It should be noted that the terms “consistory” (*consistorium*) and “church council” (*Kirchenrat*) were by no means synonymous in the Palatine context as they sometimes were in other Reformed settings.

⁸ EKO, 14:47. See the Heidelberg Catechism, questions 82–85. The German version of the Catechism was not definitive on this point, as it mandated that sinners were to be reported “der kirchen oder denen, so von der kirche darzu verordnet seind” (Q&A 85). Nevertheless, the clear expectation of the catechism is that excommunication is biblical and a matter pertaining to the church. Schaab also noted this contrast between the church order and the catechism and characterized the 1564 order as “more Erastian.” Meinrad Schaab, “Obrigkeithlicher Calvinismus und Genfer Gemeindemodell: Die Kurpfalz als frühestes reformiertes Territorium im Reich und ihre Einwirkung auf Pfalz-Zweibrücken,” in *Territorialstaat und Calvinismus* (Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1993), 45. See also Paul Münch, *Zucht und Ordnung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 102–104.

⁹ EKO, 14:48–49.

church council, which was fundamentally an appendage of the elector's high council, can be seen in part as a move to bring potentially arbitrary clerical power under state control. Finally, Erastus remained influential in church affairs and was satisfied with the status quo, which inclined more to the Zurich model of church-state relations.

The enactments of 1563–1564 marked the consolidation of a moderate Reformed confession in the Palatinate. Here the more inclusive term “Reformed” is used intentionally to signify that the religious policy that prevailed was a combined Melancthonian, Zwinglian, and Calvinist achievement, built upon a native, Upper German base. There were legitimately Calvinist elements in the Palatine Reformation; however, it is fair to label the Palatinate as “Calvinist” in 1563–1564 only if one intends it as a general synonym for “Reformed.” This does not suggest that the Palatine Reformation did not possess Calvinist themes and that the leaders of the Palatine Reformation were not looking to Geneva, as well as Zurich, for inspiration. As we shall see in the following, it was only through the controversy over church discipline that the Palatine church took a distinctively “Calvinist” turn, and even those developments were subject to revision.

The Palatine Confession under Attack: The Maulbronn Colloquy

Opinions were sharply divided in the mid-1560s as to whether the Heidelberg Catechism deviated from the Augsburg Confession and thus violated the Peace of Augsburg (1555). Walter Hollweg has argued that most Reformed theologians could, and many did, subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. Reformed theologians from Jan Łaski to Calvin embraced the modified 1540 version of the confession, known as the *Variata*, with its much more open-ended language concerning the Lord's Supper.¹⁰ The Heidelberg theologians argued that their new catechism stood in harmony with the Augsburg Confession. Ursinus used this argument in his defense of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession itself would be printed in the Palatinate as part of their self-representation that they had not broken the religious peace.¹¹ Thus, it was a legitimate

¹⁰ Hollweg, *Der Augsburger Reichstag von 1566*, 83.

¹¹ [Zacharias Ursinus], *Gründtlicher bericht Vom heiligen Abendmal unsers Herren Jesu Christi/ aus einhelliger Lere/ der heiligen Schrifft/ der alten rechtglaubigen Christlichen kirchen/ und auch der Augspurgischen Confession*.

question of interpretation as to whether the Palatinate had manifestly transgressed the religious peace or whether they had merely pushed the envelope of the acceptable with their new catechism.

The leading Lutheran princes of southwestern Germany and their theologians understood the matter differently. Even before the publication of the catechism, Duke Christoph of Württemberg had warned Frederick in clear terms of the danger of his deviation to “Calvinism.” With the publication of the catechism, Christoph’s worst fears were realized. Although many sections of the catechism offended the southwestern German princes, they especially complained of its “Zwinglian and Calvinist” teaching of the Lord’s Supper.¹² After the publication of the catechism, Christoph led a coalition against Frederick which included Margrave Karl II of Baden-Durlach and Count Palatine Wolfgang of Pfalz-Zweibrücken. They sought to exclude the Palatinate from the provisions of the Peace of Augsburg. If they were successful, Frederick could have come under the imperial ban and forfeited his territories, and the Palatinate would have been restored to Lutheranism or Catholicism. This was a serious and painful development, as these princes not only were the traditional allies of the Palatinate, but Frederick had family connections with each of them. Friends and family aside, however, they were also individuals who had much to gain if Frederick’s territories should be liquidated. For example, Wolfgang had a personal score to settle related to his displeasure with the disposition of Ottheinrich’s testament.¹³ The princes’ motivations were not merely egocentric, however, and there was something of a parallel religious zeal in Christoph’s abhorrence of Zwinglianism and Frederick’s politically inconvenient attraction to the Reformed faith. Not only were the Lutheran princes lining up against Frederick, but Maximilian II, who as King of the Romans was in line to succeed his father Ferdinand as emperor, agreed with the Lutherans that the new catechism violated the religious peace. Though Maximilian was a Catholic who was often rumored to possess evangelical tendencies—he thought the church should concede the cup to the laity and clerical marriage—he possessed little sympathy for “Sacramentarians” who denied that Christ was physically present in the Lord’s Supper. In Maximilian’s assessment, the catechism was Zwinglian in its sacramental teachings and thus in

¹² Count Palatine Wolfgang, Duke Christoph, and Margrave Karl to Elector Frederick, May 4, 1563, printed in Wolters, *Der heidelberger Katechismus in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt*, 155–164.

¹³ Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 236.

violation of the religious peace.¹⁴ With the Lutheran princes conspiring against him and having no support at the imperial court, the situation looked bleak for Frederick and the Palatine Reformed movement.¹⁵

There was one major attempt at accommodation between the Palatinate and its chief theological opponents in Württemberg. During the reign of Duke Christoph (1550–1568), Württemberg had generally enjoyed a close relationship with the Palatinate. The new confession of the Palatinate undercut this traditional alliance. In an attempt to stem the regional tension between the Palatinate and its neighbors, Frederick and Christoph met in Hilsbach in February of 1564. There they agreed to stage a colloquy between their theologians on the grounds of the former Cistercian monastery of Maulbronn in northern Württemberg territory adjacent to Melancthon's hometown of Bretten. As always, the chief issue of contention was the Lord's Supper. Unlike the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, however, which had chiefly centered on hermeneutical questions, at Maulbronn Christological questions touching on Christ's presence in the Eucharist took center stage.¹⁶

The princes and their representatives met in Maulbronn from April 10 to 15, 1564. According to the published accounts, two primary theologians represented each side. On the Palatine side, the protocol listed the court preacher Michael Diller and the superintendent Olevianus as the primary disputants; Johann Brenz and Jakob Andreae faced them. Both sides possessed a person who acted as the chair of the proceedings as well as a notary. Wilhelm Xylander (1532–1576), a former Tübingen student, served as the Palatine notary; Lucas Osiander for Württemberg.¹⁷ In addition to those listed as the primary disputants, three additional

¹⁴ Maximilian II to Frederick, April 25, 1563, printed in A. Wolters, *Der heidelberger Katechismus in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt*, 153–155. Synopsis in Kluckhohn, *Briefe Friedrich des Frommen*, 1:398–399.

¹⁵ Hollweg, *Der Augsburger Reichstag von 1566*, 41–45; Andreas Edel, *Der Kaiser und Kurpfalz: Eine Studie zu den Grundelementen politischen Handelns bei Maximilian II. (1564–1576)* [Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 58] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

¹⁶ *Protocoll Des Gesprächs zwischen den Pfälztischen und Württembergischen Theologen/ im April des 1564. Jars zü Maulbrunn gehalten* (Tübingen, 1565); *Protocoll Das ist/ Acta oder Handlungen des Gesprächs zwischen den Pfälztischen und Wirtembergischen Theologen/ von der Ubiquitet oder Allenthalbenheit des Leibs Christi ...* (Heidelberg: Johann Mayer, 1565); Robert Kolb, "Maulbronn Colloquy," OER, 3:34–35; Visser, *Zacharias Ursinus*, 135–139; Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahls Streits*, 335–351; Henss, *Der Heidelberger Katechismus*, 48–50; Goeters, "Olevianus als Theologe," 311–312.

¹⁷ *Protocoll Des Gesprächs zwischen den Pfälztischen und Württembergischen Theologen*, [305].

Palatine theologians took part, including court preacher Petrus Dathenus and theology professors Boquin and Ursinus.¹⁸ Erastus was present at the debate, though the published protocols do not mention his participation.¹⁹ Perhaps Erastus's doubts as to the wisdom of holding such a debate might have been a factor in his non-participation.²⁰ It seems more likely, however, that some sense of disciplinary competencies had been restored in Heidelberg. Unlike the Heidelberg Disputation on the Lord's Supper in 1560, at this point the Palatinate possessed enough theological talent to hold their most conspicuous lay-theologian in reserve.

The Württemberg side brought along reinforcements as well, including Balthasar Bidenbach (Bidembach), Dietrich Schnepf and Valentin Vannius (Wannenmacher); however, their participation was negligible. Though Brenz took part in the discussions, Andreae dominated the debate for the Württemberg side. Historians judge both Brenz and Andreae among the most influential Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth century, though by this point Brenz, who had attended Luther's famous disputation at Heidelberg in 1518 and had taken part in the Marburg Colloquy, was clearly reaching the twilight of his career. Erastus was singularly unkind in his assessment of the elderly statesman of south German Lutheranism: "The man Brenz is backward and stupid and is seen to be led around by the advice of Andreae in all things."²¹ The fact that Brenz had been a harsh critic of Bullinger perhaps explains why Erastus felt free to unleash such an intemperate remark against this hero of the south German Reformation. Alternatively, Andreae was at the peak of his powers. Andreae, who would be remembered primarily as one of the co-drafters of the *Formula of Concord*, was in many senses Brenz's spiritual successor. Although he had been conciliatory toward Calvin and the Genevan theologians as a younger man, by the time of the Maulbronn Colloquy, Andreae had absorbed Brenz's strict Lutheran teaching on the Lord's Supper that basically precluded any rapprochement with the Reformed.

¹⁸ Kolb's fine article is mistaken in its description of the Heidelberg participants. Neither Dathenus nor Olevianus were members of the university faculty in 1564. Olevianus had briefly held the third chair of theology in 1561–1562. Kolb, "Maulbronn Colloquy," *OER*, 3:34–35.

¹⁹ Erastus is listed along with Ehem among the "Politici" in attendance. [Johannes Brenz], *Warhafftiger, vnd Gründtlicher Bericht, Von dem Gesprech zwischen deß Churfürsten Pfaltzgraffen, vnd deß Hertzogen zu Wirtemberg Theologe, von deß Herrn Nachtmal zu Maulbronn gehalten* (Frankfurt: Peter Brubach, 1564).

²⁰ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 36.

²¹ Erastus to Bullinger, April 20, [1564], StAZ, E II 345, fol. 731: "Brentius homo est rusticus, stupidus, et qui videatur lac. Andreae consilio omnia agere."

Erastus's assessment of their relationship was somewhat off target, since Andreae had imbibed far more from Brenz than vice versa. As much as the Palatine side resented Andreae's attacks on their theology, one has the sense that they would have liked to have possessed a theologian with his ferocious tenacity in their camp. Although Ursinus may have been more than his equal with the pen, he did not relish the disputation as did Andreae.

For five days the two sides engaged in an instructive if ultimately fruitless exchange of views. From the start, they debated the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature.²² Brenz had been one of the chief proponents of this doctrine, which held that wherever Christ's divine nature was present his human nature must also be present, because of the eternal quality of the union of Christ's two natures in one person. This formulation was needed to explain how the resurrected Christ, seated at the right hand of God, could be physically present in the Eucharist. Although this doctrine was to become standard Lutheran orthodoxy as enshrined in the *Formula of Concord*, at mid-century many Philippist Lutherans rejected it. The Reformed likewise unanimously rejected what they considered an unbiblical and overly sophistic doctrine. Alternatively, the Reformed held to the notion that the resurrected Christ was seated literally at the right hand of God; i.e., the resurrected body of Christ was located in a specific place in heaven. Since Christ's human nature was genuinely human, like other humans it was finite, thereby excluding the possibility of Christ's physical presence in the elements. The Palatine theologians also maintained that Christians received all the benefits of the Lord's Supper through faith and rejected the notion of *manducatio infidelium*, the eating by those without faith, against the Württemberg theologians who maintained that Christ's presence in the Eucharist did not depend on the faith of the participant. Most of the arguments put forward at the colloquy were battle-tested by this point. Perhaps the greatest novelty of the colloquy were some of the unusual syllogisms employed by the participants. Since both sides had already staked out their opinions on this topic, the chances of confessional reconciliation were slim.

The colloquy resulted in the further entrenchment of the two antagonistic camps. The debate broke little new ground but defined the impasse that existed between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Reformed in the Holy

²² It should be noted that the Lutherans did not favor the term "ubiquity." They preferred to speak of a full and real understanding of the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) between Christ's divine and human natures.

Roman Empire and, in focusing on the question of ubiquity, set the stage for the coming decades of confessional conflict. Although the princes had agreed that reports from the colloquy would not be printed, rumors of victory or defeat as well as epistolary reports of the debate circulated, which supplied the impetus for the Württemberg camp to break the non-publication pledge first.²³ The Palatine theologians, who had been preparing their version of events before the Württemberg account was in print, soon responded. Erastus opposed the colloquy, and its failure to reach a positive understanding with the Lutherans did not surprise him. Yet the colloquy had a positive impact on Palatine morale that he had not anticipated. In his analysis of the colloquy, the Palatine side and Ursinus in particular had acquitted themselves well. Erastus was also quite impressed by the fortitude that the elector displayed in the colloquy and thought that the colloquy had buoyed his Reformed convictions. Perhaps the most dramatic moment of the colloquy had come when the Elector Frederick interrupted Andreae's long, Luther-dependent monologue with the assertion "Luther was no apostle; [he] too could err."²⁴ The colloquy also represented something of a coming of age for Olevianus. Some quirky syllogisms aside, he held his own under difficult circumstances in the debates.²⁵ The fact that Erastus could not spare a kind word for Olevianus's performance might suggest that some friction had developed between the two. Erastus's correspondence from the summer and fall of 1564 reveals that he was involved in assembling a compendium of the colloquy himself, though no one has yet identified which of the published accounts of the colloquy should be credited to him or even if his compendium was ever published.²⁶

²³ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 37. Brenz's *Warhafftiger, vnd Gründtlicher Bericht* from 1564 (above note 19) was the first published account of the colloquy.

²⁴ *Protocoll Das ist/ Acta oder Handlungen des Gesprechs* (Heidelberg, 1565), 101: "Luther ist kein Apostel gewesen/ hat auch irren können." See also Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 100.

²⁵ Here Olevianus employed the syllogism "The Ocean circles the globe. Antwerp lies on the ocean, thus Antwerp circles the world" as a characterization of Andreae's position. It is not surprising that the superior dialectician Erastus would have frowned on Olevianus's performance. Visser, *Zacharias Ursinus*, 138.

²⁶ Erastus to Bullinger, August 25, [1564], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 81: "Disputationis Maulbrun. compendium heri, excepta praefationem, quae ad te dirigitur (Statui enim, si per principem licebit excudi curare, ita tamen, ac si me inscio factum fuisset, de qua re aliàs) perfecti benè tarde. Totam hanc septimanam in id operis consumpsi, rebus ordinariis perfectis. Ubi descriptum fuerit exemplum, ad te statim mittam. Puto te inventurum esse, quae sint placitura, habita circumstantiarum r[ation]e. Ursinus noster omni

In late 1564 Erastus resigned his position on the church council to devote more time to his medical profession and his academic career. Judging his work in the Palatine Reformation to be complete, he nevertheless volunteered to advise the council on important decisions. In fact, he does not seem to have left the council until late 1565 and continued to advise the prince on religious affairs at least into 1567.²⁷ Perhaps equally important to the later religious developments of the Palatinate, Frederick promoted Erastus's friend Stephan Cirler from his position as secretary of the church council to private secretary (*Kammersekretär*). Erastus expressed great pleasure with the development, as it placed his supporter in close proximity to the elector.²⁸ With Cirler's promotion, however, Erastus also lost an ally on the church council. This restructuring of the Palatine bureaucracy signaled a changing of the guard in terms of influence on religious affairs. Most of the senior officials who had

meruit laudem." Erastus to Bullinger, Oct. 13, [1564], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 68: "Nunquam ab initio huius causae peiore loco res nostrae fuerunt quam sunt hodie propter aedictum scriptum Wirtemberg[icorum] Theolog[orum]. Numquam etiam meliore fuerunt. Dementarunt quidem mendaciss[imo] scripto o[mn]i[u]m a[n]i[m]os. At rem ad summum pertraxerunt, unde necesse sit vel nos vel illos cadere. Non iam de causa loquor, quam scire nobis D[omi]n[u]s defendet pro suo sancta voluntate. Sed aut nos aut illi pro Nebulonibus porro habebimur. Spero imò certo scio, si d[omi]n[u]s nostris concesserit vitam et facultatem perficiendi quod coeperunt, mundum cogniturum esse et nostram innocentiam, et adversariorum effusam et incredibilem impudentiam. Tibi dico soli haec. Edetur protocollum diligenter. Attexetur eorum extractum ut vocant, cumstrarum ad singulas partes [r]esponsione uberiore, et ubique tamen remittetur lector ad protocollum lectionem citato semper folio [verso] et loco, ut petulantiss[ima] eorum mendacia cunctimet ipsi videant imò palpent. Res acta germanicè est. Ego compendium feci latinum, et verba utriusque partis servavi. Videbis interea vel ex hoc compendio hominum illorum probitatem."

If Erastus's labors went into any of the published versions, the following would seem to be the most likely candidate: *Protocollum, hoc est, Acta colloquii inter Palatinos et Vvirtebergicos theologos, de Ubiquitate sive Omnipraesentia corporis Christi, Et de sensu verborum Christi, Hoc est corpus meum, &c. Anno M.D.LXVIII. Mulbrunnæ habiti. Item Vvirtembergicorum Theologorum de hoc ipso Colloquio eodem anno edita Epitome. Cui addita est Palatinorum Theologorum vera et constans Responsio, ... a quodam Theologiae studioe Latinè reddita* (Heidelberg, 1566). Cf. the VD 16 entries B 7854 and B 7855.

²⁷ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 48; Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 243; Erastus to Bullinger, July 29, [1564], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 66: "Princeps Senatum Ecclesiasticum redintegravit, et D. Willingum et duos alios cooptavit. Mihi dimissionem propter infinita negocia, ita dedit, ut non nisi in graviorib[us] causis vocer." A letter to Bullinger from Jan. 1, 1566 names Johannes Junius as Erastus's successor, but does not give precise information regarding when Erastus actually left the council. StAZ, E II 361, fol. 10.

²⁸ Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 102; Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 240.

connections with the earlier tradition of Upper German Protestantism died in the early 1560s.²⁹ Olevianus and Zuleger—two ardent advocates of the Genevan theology and church discipline—ascended to new heights of influence in religious affairs.³⁰ The influx of Dutch and Walloon refugees also began to add weight to a thoroughgoing Calvinist vision of church reform in the Palatinate.

Iconoclasm in the Palatinate

Another factor which signaled a change in the religious policy of the Palatinate was the state-mandated iconoclasm, which began in the late summer 1564 and continued into 1565. Iconoclasm was not in itself new to the Palatinate. While Lutherans are conventionally viewed as being more tolerant of images than the iconoclastic Reformed, many of the neighboring Lutheran territories such as Württemberg, Baden-Durlach, and Pfalz-Zweibrücken—Frederick's current persecutors regarding the catechism—had taken steps similar to Ottheinrich's efforts to eliminate images. Thus, Frederick's iconoclasm hardly signaled the arrival of "Calvinism" in itself. What was problematic about the iconoclasm of 1565 was that Frederick embarked on this new campaign in territories where his legal right to do so was at best contested.³¹ Frederick's religious enthusiasm, and that of his advisors, emboldened him to act in an impolitic fashion. Frederick felt obliged to act in every location where he possessed patronage rights and in every common lordship. He personally took part in the iconoclasm, not merely by attending, but by destroying images with his own hands. The advisors who seem to have been the chief supporters of the iconoclasm were Olevianus, Zuleger, and Diller.

In early May 1565, Frederick and seventy knights arrived at the abbey of Neuhausen near Worms. Upon Frederick's arrival, the abbey's *scholasticus* Johann Deubinger implored the elector to respect their traditional rights and liberties. Frederick answered that as their "patron and protector" (*Schirm und Schutzherr*), he had come to put an end to the idolatry. He justified the action against the monastery not only on the basis of end-

²⁹ Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 233–234.

³⁰ Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 242. Both Olevianus and Zuleger, who had been on the church council since 1562, had studied in Geneva.

³¹ Rott, "Kirchen- und Bildersturm," 243. Most of Frederick's actions were in areas of joint jurisdiction with the bishops of Speyer, Worms, or the Margrave of Baden.

ing the transgression of the second commandment,³² but also because of the dissolute lives of the monks who lived in concubinage and mismanaged the affairs of their foundation. Before removing the images, Frederick forced the monks to join him and his partisans for a meal, which degenerated into a row over the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Olevianus reportedly took a piece of consecrated communion wafer and asked the monks if Christ's body was to be found inside of it. When they answered his question in the affirmative, he took the host and crushed it before their eyes, declaring that "it was only a bread-god, or rather an enchanted anti-God."³³ The meal served as the prelude to the main event. First Frederick and his men entered the church and broke open the tabernacle and confiscated the hosts. Next he brought in eighty peasants with their tools to break up the idolatrous images in the church. The following day they destroyed the altar, crucifix, and organ. The entire affair concluded with a great bonfire, in which Olevianus and Zuleger allegedly took part.³⁴

Still attached to the church council, Erastus was certainly informed of these actions. As a committed Reformed Christian who abhorred "idolatry" and anything smacking of "superstition," Erastus's sympathies likely were with the iconoclasts. Erastus informed Bullinger of the iconoclasm, however, in a fashion that suggested that he approved of the elector's goals but questioned his tactics. He noted that Frederick destroyed the images in a church in Ladenburg that was under the joint lordship of the elector and the bishop of Worms. He also mentioned that rumors were afoot regarding the monasteries on Frederick's list that housed imperial knights. After listing these dubious actions without much commentary, Erastus summed up his narrative: "I hear indeed that [Frederick] does a noble thing but not in a noble fashion due to certain men who neither want nor have learned how to pursue a good cause well. *These you have known well enough.*"³⁵ Here Erastus's censure was subtle and more implicit than explicit. Olevianus and Zuleger would seem to be the obvious targets of his critique. This was one of the first signs that Erastus had begun to question his Calvinist colleagues.

³² I.e., the Second Commandment according to the numeration of the Heidelberg Catechism.

³³ Rott, "Kirchen- und Bildersturm," 249: "Es sei nur ein brodtgott, ja ein bezauberter nichtiger gott."

³⁴ Rott, "Kirchen- und Bildersturm," 248–252.

³⁵ Erastus to Bullinger, April 25, [1565], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 40: "Audio quidem fieri rem optimam non optimè, propter certos homines, qui causam bonam benè agere neque volunt neque didicerunt. Eos tu satis novisti."

The Diet of Augsburg (1566) and Its Aftermath

That Frederick would dare to make such legally questionable moves at a time when the very legal standing of his confession in the empire was in doubt offers an additional testimony to the passion of his convictions. Since the iconoclasm would lead to protracted legal claims against Frederick in the imperial court, it certainly did not help his image in the empire. Not all of Frederick's actions prior to the Diet of Augsburg in 1566 were so heedless of public opinion. To gain recognition of the catholicity and orthodoxy of the Reformed position, Frederick's advisors launched a plan to solicit confessions from Reformed churches from around Europe. This was part of the larger Palatine desire to have Protestantism defined on an international, as opposed to an imperial, level. The long-term goal of this policy was to hold an international evangelical council that would have accented the strength of the Reformed throughout western and central Europe, unlike their isolated position in the Holy Roman Empire. A preliminary step in this direction was the request for confessions from the principal Reformed churches. The personal confession that Bullinger modified to satisfy the Palatine request took on a much more important life of its own, as it was recognized by the majority of the Protestant Swiss cantons and became known as the *Second Helvetic Confession*. Although Frederick's request had spurred this Zurich-led effort to promote confessional accord, the *Second Helvetic Confession* was not officially endorsed by the Palatinate, though the elector expressed warm personal gratitude to Bullinger for his efforts. In the event, the *Second Helvetic Confession* did not play a large role at the Diet of Augsburg.³⁶

The imperial diet of 1566, which was the first since the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism and church order in 1563, proved to be a turning point in the history of Reformed Protestantism in the Empire. Maximilian II, now Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1564–1576), conspired with the leading southwestern German princes to exclude Frederick III from the religious peace. Not only were the evangelical estates alarmed by the perceived deviation from the faith of Luther, the resurgent Catholic Church, represented by shrewd and resolute figures such as the Jesuit Peter Canisius, also viewed the advance of "Calvinism" into the empire as a threat.³⁷

³⁶ Hollweg, *Der Augsburger Reichstag von 1566*, 163–176; Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 108–109; Goeters, "Die Rolle der Confessio Helvetica Posterior in Deutschland," 80–98.

³⁷ Hollweg, *Der Augsburger Reichstag von 1566*, 2–3.

That the Palatinate's Reformed confession survived the imperial diet was largely due to the political matrix that existed in the 1560s. The plans of the emperor failed because of the resistance of the most powerful Lutheran prince, Elector August of Saxony. August was motivated not by sympathy but by a desire to avoid chaos and protect his own interests since he felt insecure in his hold on the electoral dignity, stolen not that long ago by his brother Moritz from the Ernestine branch of the Wettin dynasty. Like his more famous brother, he refused to subordinate political decisions to confessional interests. The fact that a Melanchthonian brand of Lutheranism was still ascendant in Saxony also aided the Palatine cause. Philip of Hesse likewise was more interested in confessional unity than in persecuting Frederick, whose personal piety he genuinely appreciated. A decade later the situation would look quite different. By then Philip of Hesse was dead, and August had sacked his Melanchthonian advisers.³⁸ The Palatine success in surviving the diet was in part dependent on the timing of the confessional change. Credit must also be given to elector himself, however, for his courageous stand at the diet and his insistence on maintaining the Augsburg agreement in good conscience. His cunning also contributed to the Palatine success; for example, he claimed his opinions were merely biblical and maintained that he had not read a single word of Calvin.³⁹

After surviving the imperial diet of 1566, the Reformed movement possessed a free hand to continue its work of renewing the Palatine church. Their position, immensely strengthened since the failure of the estates to bring a judgment against the Palatinate, meant, as Press argued, an implicit recognition of the legality of their actions.⁴⁰ The agreement between the leading south German Protestant princes in May of 1567 to refrain from further polemics regarding the Lord's Supper also enhanced the position of the Palatinate.⁴¹ Thus, some eighty years before the Peace of Westphalia made it explicit, the Palatinate succeeded in wedging the door open for the Reformed faith in the empire.

³⁸ Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 236–238.

³⁹ Alting, *Historia de ecclesiis Palatinis*, 93–99 (chs. 51–53); Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 229.

⁴⁰ Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 237.

⁴¹ Kluckhohn, *Briefe Friedrich des Frommen*, 2(1):49–50, 94. The participants were Baden, Hesse, Württemberg, and the Palatinate.

The International Scene

The decade of the 1560s would prove to be something of a hinge in the history of Reformed Christianity. There had been some very encouraging developments prior to 1566. Not only had a de facto recognition been achieved in the empire, but England was back under a Protestant sovereign who welcomed home exiles from Geneva and Zurich, whose return gave birth to the Puritan movement during Elizabeth's reign. Affairs were even more promising in France and the Netherlands. The 1560s were the high water mark for the wild growth of Huguenot congregations in France. Likewise, the Reformed faith found many adherents in the Netherlands, especially in southern provinces like Flanders. The fate of the Reformation in France and, in particular, the Netherlands exercised a decisive influence on the developments in the Palatinate. The fact that these "churches under the cross" much more naturally inclined to the Genevan model of church organization would put pressure on the Palatine church leaders to organize their church along the lines of what was coming to be seen as the "universal" and "biblical" form from the vantage of La Rochelle, Nîmes, or Emden. What would ultimately prove crucial to tying religious developments in France and the Netherlands closely to the Palatinate was the presence of large exile communities in the Palatinate. These communities exercised an enormous influence on the ecclesiastical and cultural life of the Palatinate and in turn served as avenues for the dissemination of lessons learned in the Palatinate back to their home communities.

As the decade advanced, however, the situation for Reformed Protestantism worsened considerably. The French Wars of Religion commenced in 1562, and forces from the Palatinate would intervene militarily on behalf of the Huguenots in 1568 and again in 1576 under the leadership of the gallant Count Palatine Johann Casimir, a younger son of Elector Frederick. Religious tensions increased in the Netherlands following the iconoclasm of the Wonderyear (spring 1566 to spring 1567) and the subsequent installation of the Alba regime to quash the rabble rousers. Civil war would follow, lasting for decades. From this juncture German mercenaries would be as influential as Genevan missionaries in insuring the viability of the Reformed faith in western Europe. Ironically, it would be precisely in these years, when the survival of Reformed Christianity was under threat, that the Heidelberg Reformed community would fall out so bitterly with one another over the question of church discipline.

Not surprisingly, as a chief contact for the Swiss churches in the empire, Erastus's letters are full of news and rumors of the latest events in the Netherlands and France. Erastus celebrates the victories and laments the defeats of the Protestant forces in these countries as if each tide of battle were advancing or undermining God's kingdom on earth. In time, however, Erastus soured on the adventurism and hawkishness of his coreligionists, and began to ascribe more worldly motivations to the political champions of Protestantism. His friend Ursinus more vociferously decried the foolhardiness of those political agents in Heidelberg who supported intervention in France and the Netherlands.⁴² After Erastus had become embittered against Palatine court preachers of French and Dutch origin, he also became suspicious of the motivations of their military champions. Later, Erastus began to question whether there could really be any scriptural justification for subjects to take up arms against their divinely sanctioned princes.⁴³

Amberg and Erastus's Alienation from Olevianus

After having successfully weathered the imperial diet and the machinations of the Lutheran princes, the Palatinate's immediate diplomatic difficulties were relieved. In the fall of 1566, Frederick renewed his campaign to implement the new Palatine religious policy on the Upper Palatinate. Though constitutionally part of the elector's inalienable territory, the Upper Palatinate was geographically separate from the Lower Palatinate and enjoyed a tradition of autonomous administration. Lutheranism had put down firmer roots in the Upper Palatinate, and the fact that the validity of the Heidelberg Catechism in imperial law was still contested no doubt emboldened the populace to cling to their Lutheran convictions. Since the governor of the province, Frederick's eldest son, the future Ludwig VI, remained a Lutheran, Frederick faced an awkward problem in implementing his religious policy in the Upper Palatinate. Because he feared that the emperor would back his Upper Palatine subjects in the event of an all-out confessional struggle, Frederick was forced to use more subtle methods to accomplish his will. In

⁴² Visser, *Zacharias Ursinus*, 147–170. See below.

⁴³ Letters of Erastus to Bullinger from Sept. 24, [1572], StAZ, E II 361, fols. 32–32^a and Sept. 7, [1572], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 80. See Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 128–129.

an effort to bring the leading pastors into the Reformed camp, Frederick personally visited the territory with his leading councilors in late 1566.⁴⁴

It was a sign of Erastus's continuing engagement in religious affairs that he traveled with the prince, councilors, and theologians to Amberg and remained there from late October into December, 1566.⁴⁵ Against the advice of Erastus and other councilors, it was decided to hold a disputation. Olevianus represented the Reformed party in the debate, and from the beginning, he fared poorly. Erastus ventured that Olevianus's Lutheran opponent was a good measure cleverer. Erastus would have intervened in the debate, but he knew that in doing so he would necessarily attack Olevianus's position as well. Since he did not want to strengthen the Lutherans' cause by creating the appearance of strife within the Heidelberg camp, he refrained. The Upper Palatine Lutherans apparently took heart from the exchange and later asked Frederick if the disputation could be continued. When they rejoined the disputation, which Erastus again thought a bad idea, Frederick asked Ursinus to take Olevianus's place. Erastus noted, "The prince had seen that Olevianus was losing the struggle, and in the meantime he had called Ursinus. But he did not want to join the colloquy since he anticipated that it would bear little fruit, having resolved that it would not be possible to correct what the other [Olevianus] had already spoiled."⁴⁶ While the episode is doubtless an indication of Ursinus's reserve and his weariness of unproductive confrontations, his refusal to come to Olevianus's aid also suggests that he was not as personally close to Olevianus as the traditional hagiography, which has generally cast them as enthusiastic collaborators, has assumed.⁴⁷

After Ursinus declined the invitation, Olevianus returned to the debate. He eventually arranged an agreement with the preachers of the Upper Palatinate on the basis of these three statements:

Every promise of grace is received through grace alone.
All that is promised to us in the Lord's Supper, with the exception of
external signs, is and belongs to the promise or the word of grace.

⁴⁴ Press, "Die Grundlagen der kurpfälzischen Herrschaft in der Oberpfalz," 43–47; Kluckhohn, *Friedrich der Fromme*, 261–285; Goeters, "Olevianus als Theologe," 313.

⁴⁵ Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 110.

⁴⁶ Erastus to Bullinger, March 28, [1567], StAZ, E II 361, fols. 67–67^a: "Viderat Princeps Olevianum causam perdere, atque interea vocaverat Ursinum. At is congregari noluit, quod sine fructa futurum videret, neque corrigere se posse cerneret quae alter corripisset."

⁴⁷ Visser, *Zacharias Ursinus*, 145–146.

Therefore, what is received in the Lord's Supper, without and beyond the external signs, can only be consumed and received through faith.⁴⁸

Erastus was in no sense satisfied with these results, as his comments revealed: "These [propositions] are seen to be consistent with oral eating and corporeal presence."⁴⁹ In other words, the Upper Palatine pastors could freely hold a Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper. For all intents and purposes the elector's attempt to introduce the Reformed confession in the Upper Palatinate had gone shipwreck. The only additional moves he dared to make were to replace a handful of the most militant pastors and to found a new Latin school in the hope of winning the next generation. Lutheranism would survive for decades in the Upper Palatinate.⁵⁰

Beyond the failure of the elector's religious policy, the episode revealed the developing strains among the Palatine Reformed. Erastus offered a bitter assessment of Olevianus, labeling him "a weak-hearted youth" who possessed no facility in the art of disputation.⁵¹ From this point forward, it becomes hard to assess whether the rift between Erastus and Olevianus centered more on personality or theology. The beginning of the fissure was likely theological. From early in his stay in Heidelberg, Olevianus had not hidden his desire to implement the Genevan program of church discipline.⁵² Olevianus's formative Protestant experience had been in the underground Huguenot congregation in Bourges, and he desired to put into practice the self-regulating form of church discipline that he experienced there. Early in his tenure at Heidelberg he had been given explicit instructions from the master himself on implementing discipline in the Palatinate. Calvin had recommended that the prince "nominate two of his councilors, two from the university, and four from the city council, who will meet together with the pastors of the church, and they are to be the censors of morals." Calvin's words proved prophetic in a dual sense. First, his suggestions had some impact on the form of the consistory as it took shape nearly a decade later. Second, Calvin had frankly

⁴⁸ Erastus to Bullinger, March 28, [1567], StAZ, E II 361, fols. 67–67^a: "Alle verheissung der Gnaden wird allein durch den glauben empfangen. Alles so uns in Nachtmal verheissen wird, ausgenommen die eusserlichen Zeichen/ ist und gehört zur verheissung oder zum wort der gnaden Ergo. Was ihm nachtmal ohne und über die eusserlichen zeichen empfangen wird/ kan allein durch glauben genossen und empfangen werden."

⁴⁹ Erastus to Bullinger, March 28, [1567], StAZ, E II 361, fols. 67–67^a: "Videbant hinc cadere oralem manducationem, corporalem praesentiam."

⁵⁰ Press, "Die Grundlagen der kurpfälzischen Herrschaft in der Oberpfalz," 46–47.

⁵¹ Erastus to Bullinger, March 28, [1567], StAZ, E II 361, fols. 67–67^a.

⁵² Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 45.

acknowledged that erecting such a system was difficult, perhaps even odious, in a state ruled by a prince.⁵³ Alternatively, Erastus favored the Swiss-German model of discipline, which left the oversight of morals in the hands of the state. In the eyes of the Swiss-Germans, the intervention of the state in ecclesiastical affairs had been the salvation rather than the perversion of true religion. Thus, Olevianus and Erastus had different conceptions of church discipline that not only were rooted in the theological matrices of their respective traditions, but whose authenticity had been confirmed in their own life histories. Erastus had come of age in the Swiss-German Reformed church, which left control of morals in the hands of the magistrate, and the tolerant humanist atmosphere of Basel. He compared this experience most favorably against his Italian sojourn, where the oppressive specter of the Holy Office menaced. Alternatively, having grown up in Catholic Trier, Olevianus's formative experience in dynamic Protestantism had been in an underground, self-disciplining Reformed congregation in France, and his attempt to institute the Genevan model of church discipline was in part an attempt to reproduce that experience in a German state church that seemed only partially reformed in his eyes.⁵⁴ Inevitably such divergent visions of the future course of the Palatine church led to conflict. Erastus's acerbic and condescending attitude, coupled with Olevianus's obsessive zeal (and that is how even his friends saw it) made a volatile mix.⁵⁵ As much of an intractable foe as Olevianus would later prove himself to be, Erastus may well have provoked the antagonism. Over time Erastus squandered the good will that he once possessed with Olevianus. Even during their years

⁵³ Calvin to Olevianus, Oct. 27, 1562, CO, 19: 563–565 (no. 3869): “Quod de constituendae disciplinae ratione consilium meum postulas, vix occurrit quod respondeam, nisi optandum esse ut duos Princeps de consilii sui sententia nominet, duos universitas, quatuor autem commune urbis, qui una cum Pastoribus Ecclesiae praesint, ac sint morum censores. Hoc enim modo partes quae alioqui suis ordinibus distinctae sunt, coalescerent in unum corpus, Ecclesia jus suum retineret; nullus autem gravaretur. Modis quidem omnibus instandum est, ut est mediocre saltem disciplinam obtineat.

Difficilis labor et molestus, fateor, addo etiam odiosus, sed ubi Christum habes ducem, non est quod unquam fatigeris. Si tibi cum Juris consultis certandum est, scias hoc hominum genus ubique fere esse Christi servis adversum: quia non existimant se gradum suum posse tueri, si quae vigeat Ecclesiae autoritas. Constanter tamen pergendum, quod eo facilius erit, quia adiutores nactus es non fidos modo, sed etiam animosos et strenuos.”

⁵⁴ Goeters, “Olevianus als Theologe,” 293.

⁵⁵ See Friedrich Rudolf, “Die Kirche in Heidelberg nach den letzten Briefen Bullinger-Beza,” *Zwingliana* 8 (1944), 95–107, especially p. 103. For his detractors' less charitable assessments, see Hollweg, *Heinrich Bullingers Hausbuch*, 276–277, idem, *Neue Untersuchungen*, 1:140–141, 151–152. See also chapter 6.

of the close cooperation, ca. 1560–1564, Erastus never singled out Olevianus for praise. In fact, Erastus later took some of the blame for the breakdown of the relationship on himself, stating, “The hatred that Olevianus has for me stems from this, that first at Maulbronn and later at Amberg, I reproached him sharply in the midst of the debate.”⁵⁶ Events would prove that Erastus should not have underestimated Olevianus’s ability or his resolve in pursuing his vision of a true church.

Erastus’s Dialogue with Jakob Schegk

In the years following the Maulbronn colloquy, Erastus engaged in a curious if little studied exchange with the Tübingen philosopher and medical professor Jakob Schegk (1511–1587). Erastus may well have first met Schegk behind the scenes of the colloquy itself. Another avenue of contact for Erastus with Schegk was Erastus’s close friendship with Schegk’s former pupil Xylander. The literary exchange began when the duke of Württemberg asked Schegk to offer a response to a philosophically-based assault on the Württemberg Eucharistic theology by Theodore Beza.⁵⁷ Erastus perceived that Schegk’s analysis of the philosophical concepts underlying the Christological controversy opened a door for a possible rapprochement between the Reformed and Lutherans. Erastus had his anonymous approach to Schegk printed with Beza’s assistance in Geneva, with a preface by the philosopher Simone Simoni.⁵⁸ Erastus’s basic thrust was to argue that if one could clarify the terms of the debate between the Heidelberg and Württemberg theologians, they really disagreed very little about the central meaning of the Eucharist. While Wesel-Roth has argued that Erastus’s claims were so dramatic here that she even questioned whether Erastus himself thought these ideas might be constructively engaged in Württemberg, a contemporaneous letter to Albert Hardenberg suggests that Erastus genuinely felt that the long running impasse over the Lord’s Supper might be resolved through this

⁵⁶ Erastus to Grynaeus, Jan. 27, (15)76, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 195: “Odium Oleviani erga me originem inde habuit, quod eum Maulbrunnae primum, deinde Ambergae res turbantem acriter reprehendi.”

⁵⁷ Jakob Schegk, *De una persona, & duabus Naturis Christi, Sententia Iacobi Schegkij* ... (Frankfurt: Peter Braubach, 1565).

⁵⁸ [Thomas Erastus], *Declaratio eorum, quae in libello D.D. Iacobi Scheckij, summi & clarissimi Philosophi, De una Persona & duabus Naturis Christi nunnulis obscuriora, et Ubiquitati corporis Christi patrocinari sunt visa* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1566).

interchange with Schegk.⁵⁹ After a further clarification by Schegk, Erastus continued the dialogue with a book whose subtitle reveals its object: *In which Next It is Demonstrated from the Beginning, that the Heidelberg and Württemberg Theologians Do Not Disagree Greatly in the Disputation concerning the Presence of the Body of Christ in All Places [i.e., ubiquity], and Also in the Same Lord's Supper.*⁶⁰ In this text Erastus promoted a high view of sacramental efficacy while also maintaining his aversion to corporeal presence in the Eucharist. Though Schegk pursued the dispute further with Simoni, he only offered a brief response to Erastus to ensure his readers that he did not really agree with the Heidelberg theologians as much as one might think by reading Erastus alone. Nevertheless, Schegk wrote in an irenic tone and only made clarifications in emphasis or noted where Erastus had not engaged his full views.⁶¹ It was by no means a polemical rebuke.

While only a preliminary assessment of the encounter can be offered at this juncture, these points seem fairly clear. Erastus was quite satis-

⁵⁹ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 38–39; Erastus to Hardenberg, Dec. 10, [1565 ?], SUB Bremen, 10, no. 56, fol. 100: “D. Jacob[us] Scheckius summus philosophus aetate nostra Tubengensis professor, iussu Ducis scriptum edidit, ut dicitur, quo [necessitatem] concordiae sternere conatur. Hoc est à Theologis approbatum, ut an principio et fine libri deserte scribit. Imo, aiunt tertio eum corrigere coactum fuisse iubentibus Theologis. Scribit valde obscure, atque hic natura habet, in omnibus suis scriptis [etc.] Sed summa libelli (quem ego declaravi fuisse admodum. Nunc describ[itur] meus alias misissem exemplum) est haec, humanitas Christi Substantiam sive essentiam non nisi uno in loco esse, Ubique dicere esse, absurditatem omn(ium) vincere. At ubique dici personaliter atque id etiam improprie et per accidens. Haec summa est, sed obscure admodum proposita. Spero nos finem controversiae mox viros, aut certe magnam mutationem expecturos.”

⁶⁰ *Responsio Thomae Erasti, ad Libellum D. Iacobi Schegkii, quo nuper Anonymo libro sui, de una persona & duabus in Christo naturis interpreti respondit: in qua mox ab initio demonstratur, Theologos Heydelbergenses et Vvirtebergicos in disputatione de praesentia carnis Christi in omnibus locis, ac in ipsa quoque coena Dominica, non dissentire amplius* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1567). Schegk's rejoinder had been the *Responsio Iacobi Schegkii Schorndorffensis, ad libellum Anonymi interpretis libri sui de una persona & duabus naturis in Christo* (Tübingen: Ulrich Morhart, 1566).

⁶¹ Schegk's “Breve Responsum ad Scriptum D. Thomae Erasti, quo explicatur hactenus non consentire Schegkium cum Erasto” is an addendum to *Responsum Iacobi Schegkii Schorndorffensis, ad Simonis Simonii libellum* ... (Tübingen: Ulrich Morhart, 1568), 169–171. Simoni had continued the controversy with *Interpretatio eorum quae continentur in praefatione S. Simone ... cuidam libello affixa* ... In qua omnia fere, quae ex physicis D.J. Scheckius ad ubiuitatem carnis Christi, eiusdemque in coena Domini praesentiam corporalem astruendam sumpsit, confutantur ... [Geneva, 1567] and *Antischegkianorum liber unus* (Basel, 1570). Christoph Sigwart, “Jacob Schegk, Professor der Philosophie und Medizin,” in *Kleine Schriften* (Freiburg, 1889), 1:274–277; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 38–39.

fied with the outcome of the exchange and reported to Bullinger that he had learned via Xylander that Schegk had also approved of Erastus's text.⁶² Ironically, Beza, who helped Erastus see the books through press, thought that Erastus had conceded too much to the Lutherans.⁶³ Erastus emphasized the positives of the exchange to Beza and exalted in the fact that he had been able to get Tübingen's leading philosophical authority to author a book which "omitted a defense of ubiquity" and did not take a firm position on *manducatio impiorum* in the Eucharist.⁶⁴ It seems clear that the gesture did not meet with great resonance among Württemberg Lutherans such as Andreae. Likely, the long run impact of the exchange was to marginalize Schegk's position with the Württemberg theologians.

Thus, rather than in any way painting Erastus and Schegk as rivals, they must be seen as fellow travelers; in fact, they were nearly philosophical doppelgangers.⁶⁵ The relatively small gap between Schegk's Melanchthonian and Erastus's late-Zwinglian Eucharistic theologies and their common Aristotelian philosophical background enabled them to discuss the Lord's Supper in such a way that emphasized their commonality without demonizing the other's position. Likewise, Schegk's own tepid embrace of ubiquity made it difficult for him to cogently distance himself from Erastus's overtures, which makes for strange reading and had to be problematic for Schegk in the Württemberg context. Erastus and Schegk would find much to agree about in the future debates as well. Erastus would fully endorse Schegk's repudiation of the philosophical novelties of Petrus Ramus, and Schegk in turn would praise Erastus's rejection of the medical world view of Paracelsus.⁶⁶ Erastus was quite deferential to the elder Schegk, whom he acknowledged as the leading philosophical

⁶² Erastus to Bullinger, July 13, 1567, StAZ, E II 361, fol. 11: "Fuit apud D. Schegkium Xylander noster ante paucos dies, itemque alii boni viri. Hi mihi narrant eum meo scripto contentum esse."

⁶³ Beza to Bullinger, Feb. 20, 1567, CB, 8:72 (no. 538). Bullinger, alternatively, was pleased. Bullinger to Beza, March 31, 1567, CB, 8:97 (no. 547).

⁶⁴ Erastus to Beza, April 17, [1568], CB, 11:344–345 (no. 601bis): "Schegkium videbis omnia defensione Ubiquitatis, tantum nescio quid obscure de impiorum participatione scribere, ne putent homines suos theologos prorsus succubuisse."

⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the probable correspondence that passed between Erastus and Schegk has not been preserved. A more thorough analysis of Schegk's correspondence network would likely shed further light on his relationship with Erastus.

⁶⁶ See the discussion of the Ramus affair in chapter 7. On Schegk and Paracelsus, see J. Schegk, "De occultis seu abditis et manifestis medicamentorum facultatibus viribusque . . .," in *Disputationum Physicarum et Medicarum Libri VIII* (Frankfurt: Johannes Wechel, 1590), 9.

authority of the age. Erastus's approval of Schegk was confirmed by dubbing him "our Schegk" in his later correspondence. As the situation in Württemberg became increasingly inhospitable for Schegk during the run up to the *Formula of Concord*, Erastus and Simon Grynaeus attempted to get a book by Schegk published in Zurich, only to have the initiative quashed by the resistance of Andreae and the University of Tübingen.⁶⁷ In short, Erastus and Schegk appear to have become close intellectual admirers, and Schegk was still around after Erastus's death to remember him fondly in a letter to their common friend and sometime nemesis Beza.⁶⁸

The Dismissal of Johannes Brunner

Seen from the perspective of hindsight, the first skirmish in the struggle to establish the Genevan system of church discipline in the Palatinate was won by the Calvinist "disciplinists" with little anti-disciplinist opposition. In the summer of 1567, before the public outbreak of the controversy, the Swiss-German theologian Johannes Brunner was dismissed from his university post. Brunner had come to Heidelberg through the recommendations of Bullinger, Rudolf Gwalther, and Johannes Wolf and held the chair of ethics on the arts faculty at the university. Though at one time regarded as a theologian with a bright future and still judged by Erastus to be an able scholar, the fact that he published nothing during his years in Heidelberg suggests that he had never quite lived up to expectations. His lack of production alone would likely have been tolerated had he not also possessed a difficult personality. In any event, a controversy over the Lord's Supper paved the way for his dismissal.

In the controversy, largely of Brunner's own making, he revealed himself to be a fairly crude Sacramentarian. He argued that the sacrament did not act as an agent of strengthening faith "in itself and properly" (*per se et proprie*) but only "incidentally" (*per accidens*).⁶⁹ This was a return

⁶⁷ Erastus to Gwalther, Dec. 11, (15)76, StAZ, E II 345, fols. 724–725: "Addem hoc etiam caeteris nihil laetius. Reformatior ille Schmidl[in]us a nescio quo Cacodaemone edoctus, Schegkium per me libr[um] suum curare Tiguri excudi, Ducem Wirtemb. monuit." See the discussion of the letter from Simon Grynaeus to Rudolf Gwalther from Nov. 23 [likely 1576] in CB 25:241 (no. 1706; see note 5).

⁶⁸ Schegk to Beza, Sept. 9, 1584, CB 25:240–242 (no. 1706).

⁶⁹ Erastus to Haller, Heidelberg, Sept. 12, 1567, printed Hermann Hagen, *Briefe von Heidelberger Professoren und Studenten* (Bern, 1886), 31–32: "Rei summa haec est: non

to Zwingli's own assertion that the sacrament possessed no power "*per se et proprie*" to strengthen faith.⁷⁰ It is important to make clear that this return to such an early Zwinglian position was clearly against the trend of late-Zwinglianism or "Bullingerism" at mid-century, which Erastus himself espoused. The late-Zwinglian interpretation of the Lord's Supper accepted what B.A. Gerrish has termed a "symbolic parallelism" between participation in the Lord's Supper and the reception of grace.⁷¹ In such a framework, late-Zwinglians like Erastus played up the Eucharist's faith-enhancing quality, using the "as certainly as" language discussed in chapter three to describe the relationship between participation in the sacrament and reception of Christ's benefits. Though Erastus did not explicitly say that the sacrament strengthens faith *per se* or concretely bestows grace, these conclusions would seem to be the obvious implications of his thought. Given that Erastus's conception of the Eucharist differed from Brunner's, it is not difficult to understand why Erastus did not come to his aid at an early stage of the controversy.⁷²

Curt Horn, in an interpretation which was later followed by Wesel-Roth, detected a change in Erastus's opinion of the Brunner affair after he began to realize that the proponents of church discipline on the Genevan model had been behind Brunner's dismissal. The evidence for this putative change was the contrast between a rather harsh letter that Erastus wrote to Bullinger that placed the blame squarely on Brunner for his discharge and a later, more sympathetic version of events that he sent to Johannes Haller in Bern. Ironically, this plausible hypothesis was wholly based on a typographical error found in Karl Sudhoff's *C. Olevianus und Z. Ursinus* in which the author attributed a letter to Erastus that

concedit, Sacramentis per se et propiè fidem nostram accendi vel augeri aut etiam per se obsignari, sed in usu eorum nos confirmari et roborari per accidens, ut in omni pietatis exercito."

⁷⁰ Horn, "Johann Sylvan und die Anfänge des Heidelberger Antitrinitarismus," 248.

⁷¹ Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New*, 124, 128.

⁷² I dissent from Wesel Roth's assessment that Erastus shared Brunner's conception of the Eucharist. Wesel-Roth suggested that the statements Erastus used to sum up Brunner's position in his letter to Haller more or less agreed with his own understanding of the Lord's Supper. I disagree with Wesel-Roth because of the dissimilarity of Brunner's position with Erastus's published works. Erastus clearly described Brunner's opinions without necessarily advocating them in the letter. Note that Benrath has also seen Brunner as something of an outlier, labeling his conception "eine extrem zwinglische Abendmahlslehre." Benrath, "Briefe des Heidelberger Theologen Zacharias Ursinus," 96; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 50–51; Erastus to Haller, Heidelberg, Sept. 12, 1567, Zofingen, Staatsbibliothek und Stadtarchiv, MS no. 2.34 (printed in Hagen, *Briefe von Heidelberger Professoren und Studenten*, 31–32).

was actually composed by Ursinus.⁷³ When this piece of misinformation is removed from the picture, it becomes clear that Erastus's opinion of Brunner did not change as the earlier scholarship suggested. In both Erastus's actual letter to Bullinger and in the letter to Haller, Erastus took a charitable stance toward Brunner, though he did not absolve him of responsibility for his dismissal.⁷⁴ The letter to Haller was not a ringing endorsement of Brunner, but rather a carefully worded and kind gesture on behalf of a fallen colleague. Brunner's conception of the Eucharist was not beyond the pale in what Erastus likely saw as a continuum of acceptable Zwinglian to Philippist teachings. His misreading of the evidence aside, Horn correctly saw this episode as a harbinger of the coming of the church discipline controversy. In the letter to Haller, Erastus explicitly noted that behind Brunner's dismissal were those who desired to introduce a form of discipline that Erastus said should be labeled tyranny rather than discipline.⁷⁵

Before moving ahead to the public controversy on church discipline, it is fitting to note Brunner's later exploits. His dismissal from Heidelberg must have engendered something of a crisis of faith for Brunner. From Erastus's descriptions, one gets the sense that Brunner was deeply pious and perhaps inclined to push theological propositions to the breaking point. Ironically, this one-time, hard-line Zwinglian later crossed the Rubicon and sided with Rome. He later authored a public profession of the Catholic faith that he published after joining the faculty of the University of Ingolstadt and moved on to the Catholic academy at Freiburg im Breisgau.⁷⁶ The coming church discipline struggle would shake the faith of many more.

⁷³ Sudhoff, *C. Olevianus und Z. Ursinus*, 372–373. A corrected version of the letter is printed in Benrath, "Briefe des Heidelberger Theologen Zacharias Ursinus," 105–106.

⁷⁴ Erastus to Bullinger, July 31, [1567], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 46; Erastus to Haller, Heidelberg, Sept. 12, 1567, printed in Hagen, *Briefe von Heidelberger Professoren und Studenten* 31–32: "Nec ob aliam causam est dimissus, quam quod causam non prudentius egit."

⁷⁵ Erastus to Haller, Heidelberg, Sept. 12, 1567, printed in Hagen, *Briefe von Heidelberger Professoren und Studenten*, 31–32: "Inprimis autem cupiunt nescio quam disciplinam, utinamne rectius appellem tyrannidem, cuius forma nec in sacris literis nec in antiquorum historia traditur, introducere." Erastus's friendly if tepid recommendation did not secure Brunner the post he sought.

⁷⁶ Johannes Brunner, *Professio Catholica* (Ingolstadt: Wolfgang Eder, 1582). Brunner's life receives a full overview in Erich Wenneker's entry in Traugott Bautz, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (Nordhausen, 2003) 21:155–158. http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/b/brunner_jo.shtml.

Clouds were gathering on the horizon, and Erastus was only beginning to fathom the intensity of his Calvinist colleagues' desire to impress their vision of authentic discipline on the Palatinate or the lengths they would go to achieve their goal. At the same time as Brunner's dismissal, the university senate contemplated extending a call to the able Italian theologian Girolamo Zanchi to join the university. Zanchi later played an important role on the Calvinist side in the church disciplinary controversy by composing a rebuttal of Erastus's theses and by modeling the presbyterial system of church governance in the Heidelberg foreigners' church. He would also serve as the primary theological expert responsible for ferreting out the orthodoxy of Erastus's one-time anti-disciplinist allies in the later Antitrinitarian affair. In retrospect, it is quite ironic that Erastus avidly supported the effort to bring Zanchi to Heidelberg. Erastus had earlier corresponded with Zanchi and must have been enthusiastic about his erudition as well as his Aristotelian philosophical standpoint. Given Ursinus's increasing reluctance to engage in theological controversies, adding a qualified controversialist of Zanchi's stature was an obvious move. In an odd sense, it was due in part to Erastus's dissatisfaction with Olevianus's performance at Maulbronn and especially at Amberg that he wanted to call Zanchi; but calling Zanchi only strengthened Olevianus's hand. As Benrath has noted, Bullinger's opposition to calling Zanchi to Heidelberg might suggest that Bullinger was already aware of the threat posed by the desire to advance the Genevan brand of church discipline and that he must have numbered Zanchi a proponent of the same.⁷⁷ Zanchi proved to be a contentious colleague at the University of Heidelberg, while maintaining something of an independent voice on theological questions.⁷⁸ Heading into the conflict, Erastus apparently misjudged both his own influence and the intensity of the Calvinist desire to establish their particular vision of biblical discipline.

⁷⁷ Benrath, "Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 111–112. Bullinger also viewed Zanchi as something of a traitor to Reformed Eucharistic teaching for signing on to the Strasbourg Consensus. See Amy Nelson Burnett, "Simon Sulzer and the Consequences of the 1563 Strasbourg Consensus in Switzerland," *ARG* 83 (1992): 158–159; Visser, *Zacharias Ursinus*, 157–158. Zanchi arrived in Heidelberg in September of 1567. Toepke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg*, 2:44.

⁷⁸ Zanchi's repeated requests to have his salary raised above the normal pay for his position and various other quarrels are on display throughout the records of the UAH from the late 1560s into the 1570s. See Christopher Burchill, "Die Universität zu Heidelberg und der 'Fromme' Kurfürst," in *Semper Apertus*, 1:238–239.