CHAPTER ONE

PROLOGUE

The Palatinate before Erastus

Origins and Structure of the Palatinate

The Electoral Palatinate (*Kurpfalz*) was a German territory on the upper Rhine whose domains were clustered around Heidelberg and Mannheim. The Palatinate enjoyed a limited run on the stage of German history since it only emerged as a territorial unit in the high Middle Ages and it would be later dissolved into several neighboring territories in the imperial recess (*Reichsdeputationshauptschluß*) of 1803. There was some discussion of reviving the Kurpfalz after the Second World War, and the more recent mooted combining Baden-Württemberg with Rheinland-Pfalz would at least present the opportunity for a possible reunion of the Palatine lands on the right and left of banks the Rhine.¹

In the sixteenth century, the Palatinate was one of the leading states of the Holy Roman Empire in prestige, but not in actual power.² Its ruler,

¹ See Gerd Hepp, "Wiederherstellung der alten Kurpfalz? Zur Frage der Revision der Ländergrenzen im deutschen Südwesten zwischen 1945 und 1956," in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 137 (1989): 414–427.

² For simplicity in this work, "Palatinate" will denote the Electoral Palatinate (*Kurpfalz*), the territories ruled over by the elector palatine including both the Lower and Upper Palatinate. For the general contours of Palatine history, see Henry J. Cohn, *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate in the Fifteenth Century*; idem, "Territorial Princes in Germany's Second Reformation, 1559–1622," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Preswich (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 135–166; Charles D. Gunnoe Jr., "The Reformation of the Palatinate and the Origins of the Heidelberg Catechism, 1500–1562" in *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology*, Lyle D. Bierma et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 15–47; Volker Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat: Regierung und Zentralbehörden der Kurpfalz 1559–1619* [Kieler Historische Studien 7] (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970); idem, "Die 'Zweite Reformation' in der Kurpfalz," in *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland* [SVRG 195], ed. Heinz Schilling (Gutersloh, 1986) 104–129; Meinrad Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988, 1992); Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler, "Kurpfalz, Rheinische Pfalz und Oberpfalz," in *Die Territorien des Reichs im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung: Land und Konfession 1500–1650*, vol. 5, Der Südwesten, ed. Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler (Münster: Aschendorff, 1993), 8–49; Eike Wolgast, *Die*

the elector palatine, belonged to the highest echelon of princes in the imperial constitution as one of the seven electors (*Kurfürsten*) who had the right to cast a vote for the emperor.

The Palatinate was a rather artificial conglomeration of territories; indeed, many of the city districts of modern Heidelberg were not originally subjects of the elector palatine. The state was a political-dynastic construct, and not based on any ethnic, linguistic, or geographic principle. Likewise, it was not one of the German duchies associated with the settlement of an early Germanic tribe. The Palatinate's territorial incoherence was due to the fact that it was a state that had emerged around an office, rather than being a traditional county or duchy. The title, "count palatine" (Latin, *comes palatinus*; German, *Pfalzgraf*) preceded the Palatinate's territorial formation.

In the early Middle Ages, a count palatine had been an office of the Merovingian kingdom. While once there were four such counts, only the count palatine of Lorraine continued to employ this title into the high Middle Ages. In the twelfth century the count palatine of Lorraine established a territorial base along the upper Rhine and became the *Pfalzgraf bei Rhein*. In the thirteenth century, the *Pfalzgraf bei Rhein* gained both the privilege of participating in imperial elections and the ceremonial dignity of imperial steward (*Erztruchseß*). As imperial vicar (*Reichsvikar*), the elector palatine filled the emperor's role in the case of a vacancy of office.

After passing through the hands of the Hohenstaufens (1142–1195) and Welfs (1195–1213), the Wittelsbach dynasty, rulers of Bavaria, acquired the Palatinate in 1214 in the form of a grant from Emperor Frederick II. In the late Middle Ages, the Wittelsbachs were one of the leading houses of the empire, alongside the Luxemburgs and the Habsburgs, frequently putting up candidates for imperial election. Rivalries between the various branches of the Wittelsbach family, however, undermined their opportunity to achieve the dominant position of the aforementioned dynasties.

The Treaty of Pavia (1329) gave the count palatine control of the north Bavarian territory known as the Upper Palatinate (*Oberpfalz*), thus establishing the classic territorial configuration of the Palatinate in the late medieval period. The Golden Bull of Charles IV (1356) confirmed the

Universität Heidelberg 1386–1986 (Berlin: Springer, 1986); idem, *Reformierte Konfession und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert: Studien zur Geschichte der Kurpfalz im Reformationszeitalter* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998).

count palatine's right to vote in imperial elections and nominally recognized the elector palatine as the first secular prince of the empire. The Golden Bull's provision that the elector's core territories were not partible gave the Palatinate a legal territorial unity independent from personal overlordship of the count palatine for the first time in the state's history.³

The most glorious moment in the history of the Palatine Wittelsbachs occurred with the election of Elector Ruprecht III to the office of king of the Romans in 1400. He served as sovereign of the empire until 1410 without being crowned emperor by the pope. The limited demographic and material resources of the Palatinate handcuffed Ruprecht's effectiveness in the imperial office and undermined the Palatine Wittelsbachs' opportunity to keep the imperial title in their dynasty.

In the fifteenth century, while the nucleus of the Palatine lands around Heidelberg remained in the elector's possession, others were divided among the count palatine's heirs, giving birth to the smaller states Pfalz-Mosbach, Pfalz-Neumarkt, Pfalz-Zweibrücken, Pfalz-Simmern, and later Pfalz-Veldenz, thus named for their residence cities.⁴ The leaders of these cadet branches were also entitled to style themselves "counts palatine," while only the ruler of the Electoral Palatinate bore the more distinguished title "elector palatine."⁵ After the Bavarian Succession War, a new state, Pfalz-Neuburg, was created primarily from Bavarian Wittelsbach lands.⁶ Additional collateral lines such as Pfalz-Lautern and Pfalz-Sulzbach were spawned in the course of the sixteenth century.⁷

³ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 1:96.

⁴ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 1:145–160; Cohn, *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate*, 6–7. Simmern and Zweibrücken were originally one line which later split into two separate houses in 1453. Pfalz-Neumarkt and Pfalz-Mosbach returned to the domain of the Electoral Palatinate in 1499.

⁵ The title holder actually bore the fuller designation (linked to the family's Bavarian heritage): "count palatine on the Rhine and duke in Bavaria." Cohn, *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate*, 7.

⁶ This principality, which was a miniscule remnant of the former duchy of Bayern-Landshut, along with some lands from Bayern-München and the Oberpfalz, bore the title Pfalz-Neuburg, as its original rulers were from the Palatine Wittelsbach line in Heidelberg. Elizabeth von Bayern-Landshut, daughter and sole heir of the last duke of Bayern-Landshut, Georg der Reiche (1479–1503), married Ruprecht of the Palatinate, the third son of Elector Philipp der Aufrichtige (1476–1508). Their attempt to win the inheritance of Bayern-Landshut failed in the Bavarian War of Succession. While both husband and wife died in 1504, the new principality was carved out of Bayern-Landshut in the peace settlement as a compensation for their sons Philipp and Ottheinrich. Thus, Pfalz-Neuburg was a principality ruled by a branch of the Palatine Wittelsbach line detached from Bavarian Wittelsbach territory.

⁷ To follow these complicated developments, see Schaab's excellent tables in *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 1:220–225 and 2:253–255.

In the sixteenth century, the Palatinate was made up of two territorial blocs: the Lower Palatinate (*Unterpfalz*)—the domains along the Rhine and Neckar rivers containing the districts of Alzey, Germersheim, Kaiserslautern, Heidelberg, and Neustadt—and the Upper Palatinate (*Oberpfalz*)—a territory in northern Bavaria bordering Bohemia with its administrative center in Neumarkt and later Amberg.⁸

The Lower Palatinate was in a region of particularly scattered lordship: the Palatine territories lay jumbled in a rather haphazard fashion alongside the lands of the nearby bishoprics of Worms and Speyer. Despite the fact that he was a relative latecomer to the region and that he even held most of his lands as fiefs from the local ecclesiastical lords, the elector palatine became the most powerful ruler in the vicinity and utilized claims of dominion over the Rhine and Neckar and the right of safe conduct (*Geleit*) on the regional highways to extend his dominion.⁹ Indeed, in the early sixteenth century the bishoprics of Worms and Speyer could fairly be called satellites of the Palatinate. The Lower Palatinate remained something of an atypical territorial state, especially as it did not possess an assembly of estates. Most of the local nobility were free imperial knights, not direct vassals of the elector palatine, though members of these families often sought appointments at the Heidelberg court. When the elector desired a new tax, his administration negotiated directly with the individual towns. In the late sixteenth century, the militant commitment to the Reformed confession of the electors alienated much of the regional nobility, but a new bourgeois elite consisting of pastors and administrators would step into their place. Likewise, the move toward the Reformed faith would undermine the traditional Palatine satellite system.¹⁰

Unlike the Lower Palatinate, the Upper Palatinate was a more typical enclosed territorial state with a tradition of an assembly to represent the district's estates. On many occasions the elector's heir apparent would fill the post of governor (*Statthalter*) of the territory. Though the Upper Palatinate was considered an integral part of the elector's domains, at times the elector had difficulty imposing his will on it, par-

⁸ The administration was moved from Neumarkt to Amberg in 1544. Volker Press, "Die Grundlagen der kurpfälzischen Herrschaft in der Oberpfalz 1499–1621," in *Verhandlungen des Historischen Vereins für Oberpfalz und Regensburg* (Regensburg: Verlag des Historischen Vereins, 1977), 43.

⁹ Cohn, *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate*, 121.

¹⁰ Press, "Die 'Zweite Reformation' in der Kurpfalz," 115–116; Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:81.

ticularly in questions of religious policy. The Upper Palatinate remained a haven for Melanchthonian Lutheranism until the end of the sixteenth century.¹¹

The Palatinate possessed bureaucratic machinery roughly similar to that of many sixteenth-century states. The key executive body was the high council (*Oberrat*), which generally met daily and worked in close cooperation with the elector—that is, if he was not off hunting, as was frequently the case with electors such as Frederick IV. Majority decisions of this body, with the elector's assent, established state policy. The procedural rules of the *Oberrat*, which had evolved over the previous decades, were codified in 1557. While individuals may have been called “privy counselor” (*Geheimrat*) on occasion, there is no evidence to suggest a privy council as such existed separately from the high council.¹² The highest officials of the Palatine government were the chief steward (*Großhofmeister*), the chancellor (*Kanzler*), and the marshal (*Marschall*). The “supreme court” of the Palatinate was the *Hofgericht*, and since the Palatine court possessed the privilege *de non appellando* according to the Golden Bull, external courts had strictly limited jurisdiction over subjects of the elector palatine. As parties outside of the elector's jurisdiction sometimes lodged cases in the Palatine *Hofgericht*, the court was another means of enhancing the elector's regional hegemony.

The economy of the Lower Palatinate was largely agrarian, though the territory was moderately urbanized by sixteenth-century standards. The fertile Rhine plane was the territory's most productive granary, although its comparatively dense population level held the standard of living of its residents in check. The Palatinate also possessed viniculture along the mountainous fringes of both sides of the Rhine valley.¹³ Meinrad Schaab has estimated that the entire population of the Lower Palatinate numbered 180,000 in 1577.¹⁴ This compared to a population of ca. 80,000 for the Upper Palatinate. Approximately twenty-nine percent of the population of the Lower Palatinate lived in cities, the largest of

¹¹ Press, “Die Grundlagen der kurpfälzischen Herrschaft in der Oberpfalz,” 31–67.

¹² Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 34–36.

¹³ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:97.

¹⁴ This number includes the population of both Pfalz-Lautern and Pfalz-Simmern. Cohn has suggested that the population of the Palatinate in 1503 was closer to 200,000 than 100,000. This estimate would appear to be in basic harmony with Schaab's estimates. In 1439 the population of the city of Heidelberg was ca. 5,000, with its administrative district numbering ca. 21,000 occupants. Cohn, *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate*, 4; Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:95–98.

Engraving of Heidelberg by Matthaeus Merian, 1620.

which was far and away Heidelberg, with a population of approximately 7,000 residents in the late sixteenth century.¹⁵ Konrad von Staufen, the brother of Frederick I. Barbarossa, founded a castle at the site of Heidelberg, and by the twelfth century a town had emerged in its vicinity as well. Heidelberg served as the administrative headquarters of the Palatinate until the Wittelsbachs moved their chief residence to Mannheim in 1720.¹⁶ Its location on both east-west and north-south roads, as well as its position on the navigable Neckar with easy access to the Rhine, facilitated Heidelberg's commercial importance. However, Heidelberg could not be reckoned among the economic heavyweights of Southern Germany, like Augsburg and Nuremberg. The north-south road figured more prominently in Palatine trade than the east-west route, linking Heidelberg with Frankfurt and her fairs to the north as well as to Strasbourg and Basel farther up the Rhine.¹⁷

As the home to the third oldest university in the empire and, according to modern boundaries, the oldest university in Germany, Heidelberg has long possessed an intellectual standing far exceeding its political and economic status. Elector Ruprecht I founded the university in 1386 after the Great Schism made study in Paris unpalatable for students from the Holy Roman Empire who were loyal to the Roman pontiff.

¹⁵ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:98, 223. The Heidelberg "suburbs" (especially Weinheim) were among the other larger settlements of the territory. Amberg, with a population numbering ca. 4,000, was the largest city in the Oberpfalz and the second largest city in the entire Kurpfalz.

¹⁶ The Heidelberger Schloß had been turned into a ruin by the armies of Louis XIV in 1689 and 1692. Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:151–153, 174.

¹⁷ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 1:57; 2:81–108, passim.

Heydelberger becirk uff 6 meilen beschribē[n], from in Sebastian
 Münster, *Erklerung des neuen Instruments der Sonnen, nach
 allen seinen Scheyben und Circeln*, Oppenheim 1528.

The electors were also noteworthy for being the most important pa-
 trons of early humanism in Germany. Late medieval Heidelberg reached
 its cultural apogee in the last decades of the fifteenth century, with the

electoral court serving as a base for humanists such as Jacob Wimpfeling, Johann von Dalberg, Rudolf Agricola, Johannes Reuchlin, Johannes Trithemius, and Conrad Celtis.¹⁸ The presence of such luminaries made Heidelberg, according to Henry Cohn, “the paramount center in Germany for humanist activities between 1484 and the end of the century.”¹⁹ The impact of this humanist circle on the university was ambivalent. On the one hand, Cohn has suggested that the university was not resistant to humanist impulses and noted that humanists like Wimpfeling also taught at the university.²⁰ On the other hand, Eike Wolgast has concluded that this early phase of humanism passed without making a lasting impression on the style or content of teaching at the university.²¹

The fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries also witnessed important Gothic and Renaissance building in the Palatinate, including the *Heiliggeistkirche* (1348–1544) and major additions to the Heidelberg castle, the apex of which was the *Ottheinrichs Bau*, whose ruin stands as a great example of German Renaissance architecture. The political decline of Heidelberg in the early years of the sixteenth century brought a concomitant decline in intellectual and cultural life. Only later during the reign of the openhanded Elector Ottheinrich (r. 1556–1559) would Palatine intellectual and cultural life begin to approach its former glory.

Ludwig V and Frederick II

The late fifteenth century witnessed the apogee both of Palatine cultural achievement and political influence. It was a time of territorial aggrandizement as Frederick the Victorious (1449–1476, Friedrich I *der Siegreiche*) made a play to become a dominant power in Southern Germany. The defeat of the Palatinate, however, in the *Landshuter Krieg* (Bavarian Succession War, 1503–1504) set a limit on Palatine territorial expansion. As the sixteenth century opened, the Palatinate was not in a position to take a leading role in the political affairs of the empire.

When Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-Five Theses” in 1517, Elector Ludwig V (1508–1544), together with his brother Frederick II, who served as governor in the Upper Palatinate, ruled the Palatinate. The Pala-

¹⁸ Henry J. Cohn, “The Early Renaissance Court in Heidelberg,” *European Studies Review* 1 (1971): 295–322.

¹⁹ Cohn, “The Early Renaissance Court in Heidelberg,” 312.

²⁰ Cohn, “The Early Renaissance Court in Heidelberg,” 302–303.

²¹ Wolgast, *Die Universität Heidelberg*, 23.

tine Wittelsbachs enjoyed close personal relations with the Habsburg family at this juncture and demonstrated their loyalty by supporting Charles V's imperial election in 1519. Charles rewarded Ludwig by confirming the Palatinate's extra-territorial privileges. Their threatened position in the empire, living in competition with the neighboring prince-bishops while simultaneously warding off their Bavarian relatives who were envious of the Palatinate's right to vote in the imperial elections, was a leading factor behind the electors' ambivalent reaction to the Reformation during the first half of the sixteenth century.²² Ludwig enjoyed a measure of success in reinvigorating the Palatine satellite system, and by 1529 he had been able to place his brothers in the episcopal sees of Speyer and Worms. Although Luther made a significant impression on a number of young Upper German humanists at the Heidelberg Disputation (1518), and thus had a lasting impact on Upper German Protestantism, Luther's appearance bore little immediate fruit in the Palatinate itself. Ludwig took part in the famous Diet of Worms, but did not vote to place Luther under the imperial ban due to Ludwig's close tie to the Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise.²³

While Ludwig's early reaction to the Reformation was noncommittal, he began to move into the anti-Protestant camp after having to take up arms to suppress both the Knights' Revolt (1523) and the Peasants' War (1525). Ludwig took the Knights' Revolt personally, since it was led by his own former councilor Franz von Sickingen, and Ludwig took part in besieging Sickingen's castle. The Peasants' War proved an even more serious threat to the Southwestern German princes. The south German "Twelve Articles" served as the program of the social revolutionaries who aspired to remake society according to "God's law." In one of his finest moments, Ludwig acted decisively to disband the hordes that rose on Palatine territory, primarily on the left bank of the Rhine. This rising was noteworthy in that it was ended by a feast thrown by the elector

²² The rarely amicable relations between the Wittelsbach dynasties are charted in Volker Press, "Bayerns wittelsbachische Gegenspieler—Die Heidelberger Kurfürsten 1505–1685," in *Um Glauben und Reich: Kurfürst Maximilian I.*, ed. Hubert Glaser (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1980), 24–48.

²³ Wolfgang Eger, "Kurfürst Ludwig V. der Friedfertige (von Wittelsbach), Pfalzgraf bei Rhein," in *Der Reichstag zu Worms von 1521: Reichspolitik und Luthersache* (Worms, 1971), 352–368. See also Walter Müller, *Die Stellung der Kurpfalz zur lutherischen Bewegung von 1517 bis 1525* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1937). For the early reception of Protestant ideas in the Palatinate and environs, see Walter Henss, "Frühe Spuren der Reformation in der Kurpfalz," *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* 50 (1983): 5–42.

rather than by mass bloodshed. On another occasion, other peasants rose to put down the rebellion.²⁴ After quashing the revolt at home largely by peaceful means, the elector's forces also took part in suppressing the revolt in the bishoprics of Speyer and Würzburg.

While these experiences strengthened Ludwig's public identification with the Catholic cause, he never became a zealous anti-Protestant partisan. Rather, he sought to play a mediating role between the increasingly antagonistic Protestant and Catholic factions in imperial politics. While maintaining official adherence to Catholicism, Protestantism put down extensive roots in Palatine territory. A host of distinguished Protestants lectured at the university in the 1520s, including Theobald Billicanus, Johannes Brenz, and Martin Frecht.²⁵ However, by the end of the decade, most of the prominent Protestants had moved on to other posts. The university suffered both from low salaries and competition from the emerging Protestant universities in Wittenberg, Marburg, and Tübingen, which drew away students. Nevertheless, numerous evangelical pastors worked in Palatine parishes during Ludwig's reign. The papal nuncio Peter Paul Vergerio considered the region surrounding Heidelberg to be "one of the most Lutheran in Germany."²⁶ This ambiguous situation—official Catholicism with wide tolerance of Protestants—is perhaps best reflected in the career of Heinrich Stoll, a conciliatory Protestant minister who maintained the favor of the Wittelsbach family, attended the second session of the Council of Trent, and survived long enough to experience the formal adherence of the Palatinate to the evangelical confession in the 1540s.²⁷

The Palatinate briefly became an officially Protestant territory during the reign of Ludwig's starry-eyed brother Frederick II (1544–1556). Frederick made the confession public in the Lower Palatinate by authorizing the Lutheran celebration of the Eucharist and by allowing priests to publicly marry. The Church Order (1546) codified these changes. This commitment was not a new development for Frederick, since he already had moved toward Protestantism while governor of the Upper Palatinate in Amberg, where he called Lutheran preachers and celebrated commu-

²⁴ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:17–18. See also Günther Franz, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*, 11th ed. (Darmstadt, 1984).

²⁵ Wolgast, *Die Universität Heidelberg*, 26; Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 174.

²⁶ Wolgast, *Reformierte Konfession und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert*, 18.

²⁷ Gustav Adolf Benrath, "Heinrich Stoll (Stolo) aus Diebach (1489 bis 1557), Pfarrer und Professor in Heidelberg," *Monatshefte für Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* 16 (1967): 273–285.

nion in both kinds. Both Frederick and his nephew and heir Ottheinrich communicated with Martin Bucer, and Bucer advised the Heidelberg reform movement at crucial junctures.²⁸ Frederick II's passion for political and dynastic intrigue exceeded his religious devotion, though his various schemes, which included attempts to win the hand of a Habsburg princess and claim the Danish throne, produced little fruit. He was fundamentally trapped between his lifelong bond with the Habsburgs and his rather tenuous, if genuine, commitment to the Protestant faith.

The Schmalkaldic War (1546) ended the first round of the Palatinate's experiment with a state-sponsored Lutheran Reformation, though the setback was only temporary. As a close ally of Charles V and something of an outsider among the leaders of the Protestant Schmalkaldic league, Frederick's loyalties were severely strained in the conflict, and the Electoral Palatinate took only the limited step of supplying a small cohort to aid the defense of their regional ally Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. The defeat of the Protestant forces in the Schmalkaldic War—without significant involvement of the Palatinate—nevertheless brought imperial wrath down on the Palatine Wittelsbachs. Spanish troops sacked Neuburg, the residence of the future Elector Ottheinrich, and restored his territory (Pfalz-Neuburg) to the Catholic faith.²⁹ While Ottheinrich endured defeat with equanimity, Frederick submitted to his lord lest he be deprived of his lands and titles as well. This included a distasteful scene in which the Emperor Charles berated Frederick, a boyhood friend of his father Philip the Fair and former military leader of the imperial forces in Hungary, for his disloyalty. Unwilling to risk incurring Charles's wrath again, Frederick dutifully imposed the conditions of the Interim (1548) on his territories, which included the reintroduction of Catholic services, though the Interim conceded the cup to the laity and clerical marriage as a provisional compromise. While the imperial defeat in the Princes' Revolt (1552) allowed Protestant territorial lords to determine the religion of their territories once again, Frederick remained cautious and did not officially restore Protestantism.³⁰

Unfortunately, we do not possess adequate sources to track the progress of the Reformation in the parishes under Frederick II. Hans Rott has

²⁸ Hans Rott, *Friedrich II. von der Pfalz und die Reformation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1904), 56–57, 142–150.

²⁹ Schaab, *Geschichte der Kurpfalz*, 2:26.

³⁰ See Adolf Hasenclever, *Die kurpfälische Politik in den Zeiten des schmalkaldischen Krieges (Januar 1546 bis Januar 1547)* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1905); Albrecht Pius Luttenberger, *Glaubenseinheit und Reichsfriede: Konzeptionen*

suggested through his investigation of the district of Germersheim that pastoral turnover as a result of the Interim likely was not heavy; many of the evangelical pastors who flourished under Frederick II still held the same positions during the reign of Ottheinrich. Likewise, the majority of Frederick II's civil servants were Protestants. These individuals provided another avenue for the survival of Protestant religious life in the outlying parishes through their halfhearted implementation of the Interim's injunctions.³¹ Between Ludwig V's only marginal commitment to the old faith and his tolerance for evangelicals in his territory and Frederick II's timid embrace of the Reformation and even less committed compliance with the Interim, the Protestant movement had been able to put down extensive roots in the Palatinate. It is therefore more accurate to speak of the continuous progression of Protestantism rather than an absolute new beginning under Ottheinrich. Likewise, the popularity of the peasants' uprising in the countryside along with the enthusiastic reception of the evangelical message in the cities and among the Palatine bureaucracy suggests that the populace of the Palatinate eagerly supported the Reformation more than the princes ever did. Though the evidence is perhaps thin, it may not be premature to speak of the success of the "Reformation from below" in the case of the Palatinate.

Ottheinrich

After the false start under Frederick II, the Reformation came in earnest to the Palatinate with the ascension of the Elector Ottheinrich in 1556. The colorful Ottheinrich has passed into history as a prime example of a German Renaissance prince; he patronized the arts, built a lavish new wing on the Heidelberg Castle, sponsored alchemical experiments, and happily collected books and manuscripts. Ottheinrich was also the first elector palatine with an uncompromising commitment to the Protestant faith. Before his accession to the electoral office, Ottheinrich had ruled Pfalz-Neuburg, a poor rump of his ancestor Georg the Rich's lower Bavarian patrimony, and introduced Lutheranism into his small territory in the early 1540s. Ottheinrich's expensive tastes had led to financial ruin and the territorial estates forced him into exile in 1544 with

und Wege konfessionsneutraler Reichspolitik 1530–1552 (Kurpfalz, Jülich, Kurbrandenburg) [Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 20] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

³¹ Rott, *Friedrich II*, 124–125.

a carrot: the estates agreed to assume his debts if he would depart. He took up residence near Heidelberg at that point and waited to claim his more lucrative inheritance. Although he possessed unquestioned Protestant convictions, it has been a commonplace observation that Ottheinrich was not acquainted with the finer points of theology—especially in comparison to his Bible-reading successor Frederick III. This theological naïveté did not deter his political espousal of the evangelical cause, and during his reign the Palatinate first emerged as a leading Protestant power on the imperial stage. The Palatine Reformation under Ottheinrich possessed a distinctive Upper German flavor. Württemberg's church order, composed by Johannes Brenz, and Melancthon's *Examen Ordinandorum* strongly influenced the Palatine *Kirchenordnung* of 1556.³² Brenz's *Landescatechismus* and Luther's *Small Catechism* were used until the adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563. Johann Marbach, the Lutheran president of the Strasbourg church conventicle, headed the first systematic visitation of the Palatine church and issued a list of recommendations for advancing Evangelical doctrine and practice.³³ Although Ottheinrich attempted to win Marbach for the Heidelberg church on two occasions, Marbach refused the invitation, citing his commitment to Strasbourg. Another characteristic of Ottheinrich's Reformation that mirrored the Upper German tradition was state-mandated iconoclasm. Here the image of Ottheinrich the art patron conflicts with his reputation as a reformer. His love of art and monuments aside—he even left instructions for the dusting of his own memorial—Ottheinrich was adamant in his desire to deliver the common folk from idolatry. In the three short years of his reign, Ottheinrich's officials largely cleared the Palatinate of the material artifacts of late medieval piety.³⁴

³² Printed in *EKO*, 14:113–220. See J.F.G. Goeter's introduction to the same, in which he discusses the various theories that have been entertained regarding the antecedents of the 1556 Church Order (pp. 23–26). See also Bard Thompson, "The Palatinate Church Order of 1563," *Church History* 23 (1954): 339–343.

³³ Walther Koch, "Johann Marbach in seiner Bedeutung für die Pfälzische Kirchengeschichte," *Blätter für pfälzische kirche und religiöse Volkskunde* 22 (1962): 119–120. Marbach's recommendations are printed in C. Schmidt, *Der Antheil der Strassburger an der Reformation in Churpfalz: Drei Schriften Johann Marbach's mit einer geschichtlichen Einleitung* (Strasbourg, 1856).

³⁴ Hans Rott, "Kirchen- und Bildersturm bei der Einführung der Reformation in the Pfalz," *Neues Archiv für die Geschichte der Stadt Heidelberg* 6 (1905): 229–254. The order to bring Catholic services to an end (which included instructions regarding the abolition of images, vestments, etc.) is printed in *EKO*, 14:111–113.

Ottheinrich undertook his most lasting contribution to the Palatine reformation through his promotion of the University of Heidelberg. He initiated a wide ranging “reformation” of the university in 1558, relying on the advice of the Palatine native son Philipp Melanchthon. Not only did he augment the financial basis of the university and enhance its library (both often at the expense of local monasteries), he also attracted many leading scholars to Heidelberg. Ottheinrich’s university reflected a wide range of Protestant theological opinion betraying either his lack of appreciation for theological subtleties or his preference for professional reputation over confessional correctness—or, perhaps, both. Alternatively, Ruth Wesel-Roth has suggested that Lutheran misrepresentations of Huldrych Zwingli’s theology may have made in-the-flesh Zwinglians unrecognizable to such casual observers as Ottheinrich.³⁵ The end result was clear, as Eike Wolgast has noted: “Ottheinrich had certainly recruited Protestant intellectuals of most varying theological orientations to Heidelberg: Gnesio-Lutherans, Philippists, Zwinglians, and Calvinists—conflicts were therefore unavoidable.”³⁶ In 1558, Ottheinrich acquired a special prize for his university with the appointment of the humanist physician Thomas Erastus to the second chair of medicine.

Erastus before the Palatinate

Origins and Early Education

So little is known about Erastus’s early life that even into this century confusion has reigned as to whether he was born in Baden in the modern canton of Aargau in Switzerland or in the Margraviate of Baden in Southwestern Germany (in modern Baden-Württemberg). While Eras-

³⁵ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 18.

³⁶ Wolgast, *Die Universität Heidelberg*, 37: “Allerdings hat Ottheinrich evangelische Gelehrte unterschiedlichster theologischer Richtungen nach Heidelberg geholt: Gnesio-lutheraner, Philippisten, Zwingliane, Calvinisten—Auseinandersetzungen waren damit unausbleiblich.” Regarding Ottheinrich’s religiosity, see Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat*, 205–206. See also Heinrich Bornkamm, “Kurfürst Ottheinrich von der Pfalz,” in *Das Jahrhundert der Reformation: Gestalten und Kräfte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 253–262; Barbara Kurze, *Kurfürst Ott Heinrich: Politik und Religion in der Pfalz, 1556–1559* (Gütersloh, C. Bertelsmann, 1956); Georg Poensgen, ed., *Ottheinrich: Gedenkschrift zur vierhundertjährigen Wiederkehr seiner Kurfürstenzeit in der Pfalz (1556–1559)*; *Ruperto Carola Sonderband* (1956); and Joachim Telle, “Kurfürst

tus nearly always referred to himself as Swiss (*Helvetius*)³⁷ and his Basel professors remembered him as a Swiss Badener,³⁸ a seductively detailed tradition developed that held that he was from the town Auggen in the nearby German province of Baden. That this tradition enjoyed such longevity was partially due to the fact that it was picked up in Zedler's *Universal-lexicon* and even mysteriously found its way into an eighteenth-century printed list of the rectors of the University of Heidelberg.³⁹ The various ways in which Erastus identified his place of origin throughout his life, however, all suggest Swiss Baden over Baden in Germany, and modern scholars have accepted Swiss Baden as Erastus's actual birthplace.⁴⁰ Erastus certainly thought of himself as Swiss, and most of

Ottheinrich, Hans Kilian und Paracelsus: Zum pfälzischen Paracelsismus im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Von Paracelsus zu Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt* [SBPF 22] (Vienna: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1981), 130–146.

³⁷ E.g., Gustav Toepke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg von 1386 bis 1662* (Heidelberg, 1886), 2:14: "Thomas Erastus, Helvetius, medicinarum doctor, Badensis, diocesis Constantiensis, 3a May." (The fact that he listed himself as being from the diocese of Constance does not settle the question since both of the proposed birthplaces, Swiss Baden and German Baden, were within the diocese.) He signed the introductory epistle of his first publication with "Thomas Erastus Helvetius." *Astrologia Confutata* (Schleusingen: Hermann Hamsing, 1557), fol. Avr. His epitaph also referred to him as "Helvetius Aquensis Thomas Erastus." Melchior Adam, *Vitae Germanorum Medicorum* (Heidelberg: Johannes Georg Geyder, 1620), 244 (<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/adam/adam2/s276.html>).

³⁸ Rudolf Thommen noted the letter from Bonifacius Amerbach to his son Basilius, who was then studying in Bologna, in which Bonifacius remarked, "The one who returns these [letters] to you is Thomas Lüber born in Baden of the Swiss (Qui has tibi reddit, Thomas Luberus est Badae Helvetiorum ... natus)." Rudolf Thommen, *Geschichte der Universität Basel, 1532–1632* (Basel, 1889), 280.

³⁹ J.H. Zedler and C.G. Ludovici, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle, 1732–1750), 8:1471–1472. Zedler recounts: "Erastus (Thomas) ein Medicus, wurde zu Auggenen, einem in der Herrschafft Badenweiler, drey meilen von Basel gelegenen Flecken, an. 1523 von geringen Eltern geboren. Sein Teutscher Geschlechts-Namen hiesse Lieber." The rector list is the seventh appendix of Toepke's *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg*, 2:619. Erastus is here listed as "Thomas Erastus al[ias] Liebler de Auggen." This list is the synthetic work of the editor and does not reflect an actual sixteenth-century roster.

⁴⁰ This question was addressed as early as 1778 when the editors of the *Athenae rauricae* wrote: "Thomas Erastus (Liebler, s. Lüber) natus est d. 7. Sept. 1524. non, ut quidam perhibent, in Auggen, vico ditionis Badenweiler, Marchionatus Badensis, sed in oppido helvetico Baden, unde & Aquensis dicebatur. Badensem certe ipse se vocavit in matricula Rectoris academiae Basil. & in ejus epitaphio, Basileae exstante, itidem Helveto Aquensis vocatur." *Athenae rauricae sive catalogus professorum Academiae Basiliensis ab anno 1460 ad annum 1778* (Basel, 1778), 427–430. See also "Schlußbemerkung über Thomas Erastus," *Argovia* 12 (1881): 69–70; Thommen, *Geschichte der Universität Basel, 1532–1632*, 280. A. Schumann solidified this point in an errata volume of the *ADB*,

his close friends were Swiss. As we shall see below, he became the chief contact for Swiss students in Heidelberg, keeping an eye on and sometimes boarding students from many cantons, especially Basel, Zurich, and Schaffhausen. In later years after his standing in Heidelberg deteriorated, he would express a certain sentimentality for his homeland, saying that he would prefer to work in Switzerland for 150 florins per annum as opposed to remaining in Heidelberg for three hundred florins, and he later made repeated requests of his friend Johann Jakob Grynaeus to procure a colored rendition of all the crests of the Swiss territories.⁴¹ Almost certainly by birth and definitely at heart, Erastus was an *Eidgenosse*.⁴²

The question of his place of birth holds a potential key to understanding Erastus's early religious experience, about which we know very little. When Erastus was a child in the 1520s and early 1530s, Switzerland attained its modern confessional configuration with the confederation split rather evenly between Catholicism, which predominated in the rural, Alpine Cantons, and the Reformed faith, which was eventually embraced by the more urban and affluent cantons like Zurich, Bern, and Basel less than a decade after Zwingli initiated his own brand of the Reformation in Zurich.

Though the city of Baden is located in the modern canton of Aargau, in the early sixteenth century this territory, which had been wrested from Habsburg control in 1415, was divided into three major sectors.⁴³ The western half, including the city of Aarau, was administered directly by Bern. The eastern half was splintered into various jurisdictions that were considered common lordships (*Gemeine Herrschaften*) of the Swiss Confederation. The southern lands sandwiched between Lucerne, Zurich, and Zug were known as the Free-bailiwicks (*Freie-Ämter*). The northern section of the eastern half of modern Aargau was known as County of Baden (*Grafshaft Baden*), which was somewhat ironic since it was a

29:774. See also Bonnard, *Thomas Érase*, 201–202; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2; Gustav Adolf Benrath, “Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus,” in *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575: Gesammelte Aufsätze sum 400. Todestag* [ZBRG 8], ed. Ulrich Gäbler and Erland Herkenrath (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975), 2:87–88.

⁴¹ Benrath, “Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus,” 110–111; Erastus to Grynaeus, April 23, (15)78, Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel, MS G II 4, fol. 227.

⁴² Literally an “oath-taker,” commonly rendered “confederate” or as simply “Swiss.”

⁴³ The number would increase to four if one includes the Fricktal region, which remained in the hands of the Habsburgs as part of Vorderösterreich in the early modern period.

county without a count.⁴⁴ The complication does not end here, since the towns of Bremgarten, Mellingen, and Baden itself were not technically part of the “*Grafschaft*,” as they were chartered towns with their own liberties and privileges stemming from their prehistory of Habsburg rule.⁴⁵

Thus, when Erastus identified himself as a “Badener,” one might plausibly question whether he had the town or the larger county in mind. The political-religious situation in Erastus’s home region was similarly complicated during his youth. Friction between the Catholic forest cantons and the more urban Protestant cantons concerning the religious policy of the common lordships was one of the main factors leading to the Kappel wars. The town of Baden had been the location of the famous Baden Disputation of 1526 in which the Catholic theologian Johann Eck scored perhaps his greatest debating victory over the Protestants represented by Basel’s Johannes Oecolampadius. Though Zurich continued to encourage evangelical pastors in the common lordships, Grafschaft Baden ultimately remained predominately Catholic. Thus, despite the fact that Erastus was born after the coming of the Reformation in Switzerland, his early religious experience was more than likely within the old church. Another hint that Erastus began his life as a Catholic can be seen in his Christian name “Thomas,” which was becoming an uncommon Protestant baptismal name by this juncture. In any event, the young Erastus would have experienced the existence of rival Protestant and Catholic confessions in close proximity as a settled fact already in the 1530s.⁴⁶

Although it is not really an issue of scholarly controversy, Erastus’s name has also been variously rendered in different historical accounts. In every surviving record before 1549 Erastus gives his name as “Thomas

⁴⁴ In the specific case of the Grafschaft Baden, the common lordship was exercised jointly by the eight ruling cantons (*VIII Orte*: Zurich, Bern, Lucerne, Unterwalden, Schwyz, Glarus, Zug, and Uri).

⁴⁵ See Christophe Seiler and Andreas Steigmeier, *Geschichte des Aargaus: Illustrierter Überblick von der Urzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Aarau: AT Verlag, 1991) 38–43; Walter Schaufelberger, “Spätmittelalter” in *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte*, 2nd ed. (Zurich: Buchverlag Berichthaus, 1980), 1:280–285. I am indebted to Randolph Head of the University of California, Riverside for assisting me with the thorny issues of Swiss territorial organization.

⁴⁶ Alternatively Wesel-Roth alleged, “Die Kindheit und Jugend unseres Schweizers liegt völlig im Dunkeln, nur daß er einmal bekennt, von Jugend auf in der reformierten Lehre erzogen worden zu sein.” However, she offered no documentation for this remark. Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2.

Lüberus.”⁴⁷ While a student in Italy, Erastus graecized his name to “Erastus,” a rough translation of the German “Lieber,” meaning “lover.”⁴⁸ Around the year 1550 Erastus went through a period of transition and would sign his name with combinations like “Thomas Lüber or Erastus.”⁴⁹ While his surname was uniformly given as “Lüber” in the early records, he did once refer to a relative named “Conrad Lüber or Lieber,” which suggests that the name, not surprisingly, did not have a fixed spelling.⁵⁰ From time to time his German name has also been given as “Liebler” in secondary literature, though this phenomenon likely stems from the re-translation of “Erastus” into German and does not reflect Erastus’s own usage. In recent days a second generation over-correction “Lieb” has crept into the literature. For those who aspire to hyper-correctness, “Lüber” is the only German name that is well-documented, though Erastus himself did not use this name after 1552 and it did not appear on any of his publications (in Latin or German) or in the records of the University of Heidelberg. “Erastus” was *not* his penname; it was his complete identity to the same degree that a certain orphan from Rotterdam was known as “Erasmus” or the Palatinate’s most famous son, Philipp Schwartzertdt, was known as “Melanchthon.” Thus, the current fashion of referring to him as “Thomas Lüber” would appear to be a subtraction rather than an addition to knowledge, unless we are prepared to go the entire distance and likewise re-christen his theory of church-state relations “Lüberanism.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Hans Georg Wackernagel, ed., *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel* (Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1956), 30: “Thomas Lüberus Badensis—nihil.” Also relevant here are the letters from Erastus to Konrad Pellikan and Oswald Myconius. See the Correspondence Register.

⁴⁸ The name is graecized with a Latin spelling. One rarely sees the Greek “Ἐραστός” in his writings, and he naturally opted for the Latinate “Erastus” over the strict transliteration “Erastos.” He never used the potential Latin translation “*amator*” to my knowledge. He did not invent the name “Erastus,” as it is found in ancient literature and in the New Testament, and though the name is rare in German-speaking lands, it has had some currency as a Christian name in the English-speaking world.

⁴⁹ The first letter to clearly attest to this change comes from 1549. Erastus to Pellikan, July 9, 1549, Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (Simmlersche Sammlung), MS S 70, no. 168: “Thomas Lüber seu quod idem est Erastus.” It should be noted, however, that since the majority of these early letters are copies rather than autographs, it is difficult to observe this transition with great confidence.

⁵⁰ The etymological origin of the name is also murky. See J.K. Brechenmacher, ed., *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Familiennamen* (Limburg a. d. Lahn: C.A. Starke, 1960–1963) 2:186.

⁵¹ E.g., the contradictory editorial policy of the *OER*. Whereas Erastus is exclusively referred to as Lüber in the work (which will render most of these references meaningless

We are quite poorly informed about the Lüber clan. Presumably the family was of peasant stock from central Switzerland. The name survives in Switzerland in a band from St. Gallen to Bern, with the highest concentration in Zurich, as well as in the German districts of Baden-Württemberg adjacent to the Swiss border.⁵² Erastus's biological relatives rarely come up in his correspondence, and when they do, we lack sufficient background information to make the passages fully intelligible. In 1557, for example, we find Erastus asking Konrad Gessner to convey letters to his unnamed brother, who was apparently in the inner canton of Schwyz. Erastus does not give much identifying information, but it must be assumed that Gessner's and Erastus's relatives were well enough acquainted that they easily make the connection.⁵³ This must be the same brother whose name is later given as "Conrad Lüber" in Erastus's correspondence to Heinrich Bullinger. Conrad Lüber was evidently a cutler from Schwyz and a good friend to a merchant relative of Gessner's who occasionally traveled to the Frankfurt fair. The Schwyz connection raises interesting speculative questions. For example, given that Erastus apparently had an artisan brother with some property in Schwyz, this might suggest that the Lüber family originated there. While we do not know the definitive origin of Erastus's family, the geographical distribution of his immediate relatives evidences some straddling of confessional boundaries. In any event, Conrad Lüber had passed away by 1567,⁵⁴ and Erastus employed a more distant, and apparently less affluent, cousin, Johann Lüber, to settle Conrad's estate in Schwyz.⁵⁵ Johann Lüber would lodge

to those who do not chance to look up Lüber), Erasmus's birth name is not even given in the biographical entry dedicated to him.

⁵² Prior to 1800 the name was most common in the canton of St. Gallen. *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz* (Zurich: Polygraph, 1940).

⁵³ Erastus to Gessner, April 11, (1557), Zurich, Staatsarchiv des Kantons Zürich, MS E II 361, fol. 56: "Dabo operam ut mittantur, cum primum facultas certi nobis alicuius hominis dabitur. Inklusas literas velim perferri Suitiam ad fratrem. Id commodissime fiet, si Gesnero agnatorum tuorum [iri] reddendas curaveris. Nomen hominis mihi excidit, (puto Henrici esse) sed cognosces ex eo inditio, quod uxorem habet, quae Suitiae olim habuit [recto] maritum, quo tempore frater meus apud eius maritum habitavit."

⁵⁴ Wesel-Roth suggests that the death probably was between 1557 and 1560, since Erastus speaks of him in the past tense in 1560. Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2.

⁵⁵ Erastus to Bullinger, July 13, 1567, StAZ, E II 361, fol. 11: "Mitto meum agnatum Johannem Lüber/ cuius pater et ego patruelles fuimus, ut Suiciae, quae frater meus reliquit, exigat, et iis pro suo arbitrio utatur. Quamvis autem credo, aut non multum superesse, aut saltem quae in ei debebantur, non posse facile exigi (Die mögen nit leiden, das ein Landtman einen frembden etwas gebe, das aus dem landt kome. Novi eorum mores.) nolui tamen non tentare. Si quid obtinebit, lucrum erit: si nihil, nihil prodiderit."

with Erastus in Heidelberg in 1576, and Erastus advanced a modest sum to him in 1580.⁵⁶ While Erastus remained in close contact with Swiss intellectuals, familial connections with his biological relatives apparently played little role in his adult life.

Unlike his name and his place of birth, we are less confident in the dates of Erastus's life. While there is no controversy concerning the date of his death on December 31, 1583 (Julian calendar), even this fact is complicated because the last year of his life fell in the period of the early stages of the transition from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar from 1582—but only gradually in Protestant lands. Since Erastus likely only experienced the Julian calendar, we are spared great confusion.⁵⁷ Likewise, since his epitaph gave his death date in the Roman fashion as falling on the first of the calends of January 1583, a plausible interpretation of his epitaph in isolation could lead one to conclude that he died on December 31, 1582.⁵⁸ However, unless the works that Erastus composed in 1583 were literally “ghost-written,” it would seem safe to assume that he lived through the year 1583.⁵⁹

While it is an accepted fact that Erastus died of pneumonia on December 31, 1583, it is unlikely that such certainty can be attained regarding the date of his birth. Various sources suggest that he was born in 1520, 1523, or 1524.⁶⁰ The 1520 date is derived from a letter to Bullinger from 1570 in which Erastus said that he was nearing his fiftieth year.⁶¹ Since Erastus was not speaking in precise terms, however, but merely waxing philosophical about the wisdom of age, this off-hand remark lends little weight to accepting 1520 as his precise birth year. Likewise, if his epitaph, which stated he died a “*sexagenarius*,” were taken literally, we would assume he was born in 1523. Finally, an eighteenth century his-

⁵⁶ See letters from Erastus to Grynaeus: Jan. 27, (15)76, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 195; Feb. 3, (15)76, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 196; March 7, (15)76, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 194; and April 24, (15)80, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 311.

⁵⁷ All sixteenth century dates will be given according to the Julian calendar. The central European custom of dating the change of the year from Jan. 1 also spares us further potential confusion.

⁵⁸ Printed in Bonnard, *Thomas Érase*, 206: “AN. SAL. MDXXCIII PRID. KAL. IAN.”

⁵⁹ E.g., Erastus to Theophil Mader, Jan. 12, 1583, Bremen, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, MS 8, fol. 253. Indeed, since Johann Jakob Grynaeus wrote Rudolf Gwalther and Konrad Ulmer in early January 1584 to inform them of Erastus's death, there can be no controversy here. Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 11, notes. See also discussion in Bonnard, *Thomas Érase*, 207.

⁶⁰ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2.

⁶¹ Erastus to Bullinger, Jan. 1, (15)70, StAZ, E II 361, fol. 17: “et iam incipio ad .50. annum accedere.” I would translate this as, “And now as I begin to approach my fifties.”

tory of the faculty of the University of Basel (*Athenae rauricae*) listed his birth date with enticing precision as September 7, 1524—though without providing documentation.⁶² Alternatively, Erastus's earliest biographer, Johannes Oporinus, only remarked that he was born "around 1524," which agrees with notation on Erastus's portrait by Tobias Stimmer that he was 58 in early 1582.⁶³ Recent scholarship has opted for the 1524 date without pushing the issue further.⁶⁴ The preponderance of the evidence suggests that at least Erastus thought he was born in 1524, although no confirmation can be offered for the September birthdate.

Beyond the odd comment in his later correspondence, our primary source for Erastus's early life is a one-page biographical portrait published in the third volume of Heinrich Pantaleon's *Biographies of Heroes and Illustrious Men of all of Germany*, which was composed by the famous humanist printer Johannes Oporinus, who had also served as the amanuensis of Paracelsus as a young man. Since Erastus would spend much of his mature career refuting the magical world view of Germany's greatest medical prophet, it is a profound irony that Oporinus should serve as the most important biographical source for both Erastus and Paracelsus. Since Oporinus's account of Erastus's life to 1565 is of primary importance, a complete translation of it is offered here.⁶⁵

⁶² *Athenae rauricae*, 427–430. See Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, note, p. 125.

⁶³ See discussion and translation of Oporinus below. The text on Erastus's portrait (Kunstmuseum Basel, reproduced on the cover) reads "Anno 1552. die April 24. Aetatis 58."

⁶⁴ Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 87–88; Ruth Wesel-Roth, "Thomas Erastus," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin, 1953–), 4:1560.

⁶⁵ Heinrich Pantaleon, *Prosopographia Heroum Atque Illustrium Virorum Totius Germaniae* (Basel: In officina haeredum Nicolai Brylinger, 1565–1566), 3:545: Thomas Erastus Medicus Heidelbergensis [Title]. Thomas natus est Badenis Helvetiorum anno circiter 1524. Ibi cum prima literarum rudimenta didicisset, sese anno millesimo quingentesimo quadagesimo ad Basiliensem Academiam contulit, atque artibus & linguis praeclaram operam navavit. Cum etiam dextrae manus usum minus expeditum haberet, sinistra omnia scripsit atque eum habitum sibi comparavit, ut praeceptorum dictata celeriter exciperet, & suos commilitones plerunque superaret. Tum etiam sacris literis incubuit atque earum assidua lectione verae religionis fundamenta feliciter iecit. Eo in loco nos commilitones literarum fuimus, atque nunquam inter-morituram familiaritatem inivimus. Quoniam autem sumptus ij, qui ad studia requiruntur, ipsi deessent, post tertium annum commode accidit ut patronum aliquem nactus in Italiam sese receperit, atque Bononiae magna assiduitate Philosophos differentes per aliquot annos audiverit. Ubi etiam talem rerum cognitionem adeptus est, ut merito doctissimis Philosophia connumeretur. Postea quoque Medicinae Studium coniunxit atque sua eruditione effecit, ut

Thomas Erastus, Physician of Heidelberg

Thomas Erastus was born in Baden, Switzerland around the year 1524. Having already learned the first rudiments of letters there, he moved to the Basel academy in 1540 and did excellent work in arts and letters. Since he was less adept with his right hand, he always wrote with the left, and having challenged himself in this state, he clearly matched the dictations of the teachers and surpassed most of his comrades. In those days he also directed his attentions to theology, and by assiduous reading, he successfully laid the foundations of true religion. In this place we were comrades in learning, and we never approached a jaded familiarity. Since he did not possess the funds needed to continue his studies, after the third year at university it fortunately happened that he secured a certain patron born in Italy, and for some years he studied with different philosophers in Bologna with great vigor. There also he was adept in many subjects, so that he was justifiably reckoned among the most learned philosophers. Later he undertook the study of medicine, and by his erudition he achieved such success that he obtained his doctorate by universal acclamation. Then he practiced medicine for some years, and likewise, having been instructed in every type of learning, he returned to Germany from Italy after about ten years.

After Thomas had returned to Germany, he attended for some time the illustrious family of the counts of Henneberg and became well known to the entire medical community. This was well known to the most illustrious Prince Frederick, Elector Palatine, who especially prized [Erastus] among

suprema Doctorum insignia omnium acclamatione impetrarit. Deinde per aliquot annos Medicinam exercuit, atque tandem, post decennium quasi, ex Italia in Germaniam, omni genere literarum instructus rediit.

Cum in Germaniam Thomas redisset, aliquandiu illustri familiae comitum Hennenbergensium adfuit, & arte Medica omnibus doctis innotuit. Id cum illustrissimus princeps Fredericus Elector Palatinus cognovisset, eum Heydelbergae inter professores receptum plurimum dilexit, suum Medicum constituit, atque etiam, ob raram prudentiam & vitae integritatem, inter consiliarios adoptavit. Eam functionem Thomas suscepit, atque Heydelbergensem Academiam plurimum decoravit. Nec tantum Philosophica & Medica, verum etiam Theologica ea eruditione tractavit & explicavit, ut ad omnes quaestiones enodandas esset promptissimus. Itaque cum contentio illa de Coena Domini in Germaniam reviresceret, ipse sese Lutheranis opposuit, atque in verbis Domini, una cum Zuinglio, tropum subesse significavit, quae sententia etiam Heidelbergae plurimorum consensu invaluit. Hoc modo Thomas etiamnum in ea Academia pergit, atque de hac quaestione libellis aliquo editis, non modo Germanis, verum etiam exteris nationibus plurimum innotuit. Ioan[nes] Opor[inus].

The woodcut illustration which accompanies the text of a physician holding a urine flask has been mistakenly reproduced on occasion as a picture of Erastus. The same woodcut was also used in this work as an illustration for the physicians Achilles Pirmin Gasser, Johann Winther von Andernach, and Giulio Alessandrini, among others. See also the account in Adam, *Vitae Germanorum Medicorum*, 242–246, which is primarily based on Oporinus.

the faculty in Heidelberg, and appointed him his physician. Likewise, on account of his rare prudence and moral integrity, [Frederick] made him one of his councilors. Thomas took on these roles and especially enhanced the Heidelberg academy. Not only has he handled and explicated philosophy and medicine with this erudition, but also theology, in that he was most ready in resolving all questions. Thus, since the Lord's Supper controversy revived in Germany, he has opposed the Lutherans, and [he has maintained,] together with Zwingli, [that] the words of the Lord [in the institution of the Eucharist] should be understood figuratively. This opinion has achieved a dominant position in Heidelberg. Thomas continues in this manner in the same academy, and since he has published several books concerning this topic, he has become well known not only to Germans, but also in foreign lands.

Johannes Oporinus

Since Oporinus also published a book by Erastus in the year he wrote this biographical sketch, it would seem that Oporinus had a pecuniary interest in Erastus's fame. Thus, his piece perhaps falls in the same genre as the biographical blurb that one finds on modern dust jackets. Although it is often vague on details, the account is factually accurate at those points where it can be compared with other sources, though one gets the sense that he wrote it from memory rather than from extensive research.⁶⁶ As discussed above, Oporinus's account of Erastus's birth date may be the most reliable estimate we possess.

Beyond his mention that Erastus already possessed a basic Latin education when he arrived in Basel, Oporinus did not illuminate Erastus's early life. From the limited extant sources, we can reconstruct little more than a plausible outline of his childhood and youth. The most basic fact comes from his entry in the Basel University matriculation list, which records that Erastus contributed nothing to the payment of his university fees.⁶⁷ With little beyond this fact to go on, scholars have postulated that he came from an artisan or peasant family. Not only was he unable to pay his matriculation fees, but he had to depend on an unnamed patron's

⁶⁶ On the surface, Oporinus's account appears to have a factual error in that he leaves out the detail that Erastus was brought to Heidelberg during the reign of Ottheinrich. What I take Oporinus to be saying, however, is that Frederick was already familiar with Erastus's reputation before he ascended to the throne in Heidelberg, and for that reason, he especially prized Erastus among the professors already in residence at the university. There is no surviving correspondence between Erastus and Oporinus, though they must have exchanged some letters in the 1560s. Their relationship is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

⁶⁷ Wackernagel, *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel*, 30: "Thomas Lüberus Badensis—nihil."

benevolence to finance his studies in Italy. While we can certainly rule out a noble or even a patrician background for Erastus, it is possible that a family that displayed such physical mobility was at least at the level of middling peasants, although well-off peasants—like Luther's parents, for instance—would have been able to pay his university fees. Unlike his Swiss associates Bullinger, Ludwig Lavater, and Johann Jakob Grynaeus, who possessed close social connections with the bourgeois elite of their cities, Erastus clearly was a *novus homo*.⁶⁸ Regardless of his origin, an apparent close identification with the interests of the ruling elite was a mentality that he shared with his urban Swiss friends. It is nevertheless noteworthy that he composed many of his early writings, both theological pamphlets and a plague tract, in the vernacular for the benefit of the “common man.”

Not surprisingly, Erastus's modest origins made an impact on his adult psychology. He would display a simultaneous humility and arrogance in his later years. Though from humble origins, Erastus appears to have readily taken to the company of magnates. His decade in Italy may have served as something of a finishing school for Erastus; years among the bourgeoisie of Bologna proved a more than adequate preparation for life at a rustic German court. For all his courtliness, his forthrightness in addressing princes suggests that he never lost a peasant's ability to diagnose a situation in a simple manner and express his opinion in straightforward terms. Nevertheless, having risen from a mean estate, Erastus was not quick to question the social and intellectual norms of the establishment.

The exception to his general embrace of conventional social thinking may be found in Erastus's conception of the church, and in particular, his opinion of the role of the clergy. A measure of popular anticlericalism animated Erastus's heated opposition to the imposition of a Calvinist consistory of elders to monitor parishioners. Erastus perceived that the new Calvinist boss was all too similar to the old Roman boss. If the consensus that he was born in Baden in Aargau is correct, one cannot overlook the fact that he likely spent his early years in a Catholic region. This would have provided him with significant experience with the Catholic Church that was later augmented by his extended stay in Italy.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Robert Walton, “Heinrich Bullinger, Repräsentant der reichen Bauern und seine Beziehungen zur städtischen Oligarchie,” in *Reform, Reformation, Revolution*, ed. Siegfried Hoyer (Leipzig: Karl-Marx-Universität, 1980), 132–142.

Another source that complements the Oporinus portrait is a comment that Erastus made in a letter to Bullinger. Here Erastus recounted:

I hear that somewhere among you dwells a certain Badener, by the name Georg Rockenmann, who once was a monk in a certain monastery in the Black Forest that is named St. Blasien.⁶⁹ He together with his brother, who is in the monastery of Müry⁷⁰ in your vicinity, were my teachers in order that I began to undertake the study of the Latin language.⁷¹

This brief remark raises as many questions as it answers. It informs us of the identity of Erastus's early teachers and tends to confirm the suspicion that Erastus likely spent his early days in Catholic circles. It also lends additional evidence to the thesis that he was born in Baden (Aargau), since Erastus mentions "a certain Badener" without having to explain what kind of "Badener" he meant. This makes all the more sense when we remember that Bullinger was from nearby Bremgarten himself. In that light, this aside takes on the dimension of one Badener speaking to another. Unfortunately, the passage does not explicitly state where he attended Latin school, though it may have been St. Blasien or Muri, either of which were relatively accessible to him in geographical terms. The abbey of St. Blasien was an important lord in Grafschaft Baden, holding judicial rights in the districts directly north of the town of Baden.⁷² While this is only a thread of evidence, one could speculate that Erastus may have lived in one of these districts associated with St. Blasien.

Education in Zurich and Basel

We are only slightly better informed regarding Erastus's transition to higher education. The limited clues from the surviving evidence suggest that his first experience with higher education may well have been in

⁶⁹ The Benedictine abbey of St. Blasien is located a few kilometers north of Waldshut on the Alb, in southern Baden-Württemberg. The Peasants' War began here on May 30, 1524 when St. Blasien's subject peasants refused to fulfill their feudal obligations to the abbey.

⁷⁰ He likely means the Benedictine abbey of Muri in Southern Aargau (then the *Freie-Ämter*), roughly between Zurich and Lucerne.

⁷¹ Erastus to Bullinger, Heidelberg, March 11 [1565], StAZ, E II 361, fol. 48: "Audio apud vos alicubi agere quendam Badensem, nomine Gregorium Rockenman/ qui olim monachus fuit in coenobio quodam Silvae Henricinae (Schwartzwald) cui nomen est Sancti Blasii. Is cum fratre, qui est in monasterio vobis vicino Müry/ autores mihi fuerant, ut latinae linguae inciperem dare operam." Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 88.

⁷² Seiler and Steigmeier, *Geschichte des Aargaus*, 40.

Zurich rather than Basel, as a strict reading of Oporinus would imply. Wesel-Roth suggested that Erastus perhaps studied in Zurich before attending the University of Basel. Robert Walton has supported Wesel-Roth's theory of a sojourn in Zurich, although he has suggested that it may well have occurred some time between 1544–1555, that is, during the timeframe conventionally assigned to Erastus's medical studies in Italy.⁷³ Alternatively, Gustav Adolf Benrath, who has done the fullest investigation of Erastus's correspondence with Bullinger, apparently assumed that their relationship began only after Erastus arrived in Heidelberg.⁷⁴ Like Wesel-Roth and Walton, I find it implausible that the close relationships that Erastus enjoyed with so many Zurich intellectuals and his firm commitment to the Zurich theology did not rest on some more extensive personal experience with the Zurich scene than the surviving sources explicitly confirm.

Putting together what is concretely known about Erastus's whereabouts in the 1540s and 1550s with the pattern of evidence we have in the form of Erastus's surviving correspondence with his early intellectual patrons, it appears likely that Erastus attended the Zurich Academy (*Carolinum*) before moving on to the University of Basel. The Zurich Academy, the ancestor of the modern University of Zurich, was an institute of higher learning that was something between an advanced Latin school and a university specializing in theological education.⁷⁵ Leading Zurich ministers such as Zwingli and later Bullinger and Rudolf Gwalther gave exegetical lectures, the *Prophezei*, at the school. With no surviving matriculation list before 1559, any student's attendance at the Carolinum would have to be confirmed on the basis of external evidence.⁷⁶ In Erastus's case, his close relations with the Carolinum's faculty appear to connect him to the institution. The Old Testament professor Konrad Pellikan served as Erastus's chief backer in his early academic life, and

⁷³ Walton, "Der Streit zwischen Thomas Erastus und Caspar Olevian," 211; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2–4.

⁷⁴ Benrath, "Die Korrespondenz zwischen Bullinger und Thomas Erastus," 89. Benrath includes the rather ambiguous comment, "Es wird wohl zutreffend sein, dass sich Bullinger und der zwanzig Jahre jüngere Erast erst aus der Ferne entdeckten, als es um die Förderung der reformierten Konfession in der Pfalz ging."

⁷⁵ See J. Wayne Baker, "Zürich Academy," in *OER*, 316–317. Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560–1620* [St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History] (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995).

⁷⁶ Maag, *Seminary or University*, 136. While Oporinus does not specifically mention study at the Zurich Carolinum, he does confirm a certain level of academic achievement prior to Erastus's arrival in Basel.

Erastus admired Pellikan as a father. It would be difficult to explain how a young man of humble origins from Baden could have come to develop such a close relationship with Pellikan and his family if he had not studied at the Zurich Academy. Though this is not in itself conclusive proof, positing a time of study at the Carolinum provides the most economical explanation for the depth of Erastus's relationships with the Zurich community. Another factor that makes Erastus's study at the Carolinum appear likely is that not only did Erastus know Pellikan extremely well, he also sent greetings in his letters to Pellikan to other members of the Carolinum faculty, such as Bullinger and Theodor Bibliander, as early as 1546. In one letter he refers to himself as their "child and most honest disciple."⁷⁷ While this is not hard proof, Erastus tended to be rather reserved and tactful in approaching the famous personages of his day, and in most cases where he extended greetings through a third party, we know from other sources that he knew the individual in question personally. Likewise, since his letters from Italy contain few personal references, it would seem most implausible to suggest that he was not personally familiar with four out of the five individuals whom he asked Pellikan to greet in his name.⁷⁸ The simplest explanation for this pattern of contacts is that Erastus studied at the Zurich Carolinum before moving to Basel.⁷⁹

There is no question that Erastus moved to the University of Basel in the early 1540s. Wesel-Roth has suggested that he likely entered the pre-university *Paedagogium* Basel in 1540 and then stood for exams in early 1541 for enrollment in the arts faculty of the university. Thus, in Wesel-Roth's reconstruction, his entry into the Basel matriculation list

⁷⁷ Erastus to Pellikan, June 21 [ca. 1546], Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (Simmlersche Sammlung), MS S 60, no. 93.

⁷⁸ Erastus to Pellikan, May 17, 1546, ZBZ (Sim.) 60, no. 92. Erastus asked Pellikan on various occasions to greet Bullinger, Bibliander, Rudolf Gwalther, Samuel Pellikan, and Lelio Sozzini. See the Correspondence Register.

⁷⁹ The alternate hypothesis of an extended Zurich sojourn after the University of Basel or Bologna would not conform to a conventional academic trajectory and does not fit the evidence from Erastus's correspondence, which indicates well-developed Zurich connections prior to his move to Italy. Erastus's extensive correspondence with Bullinger apparently does not settle the issue one way or the other. That is, no explicit mention seems to be made of Erastus's putative study in Zurich. However, when the correspondence between Bullinger and Erastus picked up in earnest in 1560, it appears that they already knew each other well. The most plausible resolution to this dilemma is that Erastus did study in Zurich, but that he was a protégé of Pellikan and not Bullinger, and thus his contacts with Bullinger were limited prior to Pellikan's death in 1556. Through his entire adult life Erastus appears to have had one primary correspondent in Zurich: first Pellikan, then Bullinger, followed briefly by Josias Simmler, and finally Rudolf Gwalther.

probably reflected his reception of the A.B. in 1542. However, if the thesis concerning a time of study at the Zurich Academy is correct, one does not have to consider this preliminary study in Basel a necessity.⁸⁰ Wesel-Roth also asserted that Erastus likely received the M.A. in 1544 since he had already moved on to Bologna by December of that year. There is no proof that Erastus received an M.A. in Basel, however, and Oporinus's report of his attending philosophy lectures in Italy may suggest that he undertook additional studies in Bologna before beginning his medical program. Perhaps it was his patron's willingness to pay rather than the conclusion of his studies which led Erastus to break off his time at the University of Basel.⁸¹ Oporinus's biographical portrait and his later correspondence with Oswald Myconius, Coelio Secundo Curione, Martin Borrhaus, and the Amerbach family suggest that Erastus made a strong impression on the university community and forged enduring connections in the city.⁸²

While Erastus would maintain and enhance his Basel connections throughout his adult life, he did not frequently reminisce about his Basel instructors. One professor he did not remember fondly was Luther's former collaborator, and later despised rival, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who taught at the university in the late 1530s until his death in 1541 in the same plague epidemic that nearly felled Erastus.⁸³ With the exception of Karlstadt, Erastus would have had ample opportunity to renew these relationships with the Basel intellectual community during his time in Heidelberg. Given Erastus's close relationship with Basel, it is fitting that the city would serve as a place of refuge after his departure from the Palatinate during the territory's return to Lutheranism in the late 1570s.

Whether or not one accepts the hypothesis that Erastus studied at the Zurich Carolinum, the academic flagship of the Zwinglian Reformation, there is no doubt that Erastus was moving within distinctly Reformed circles by the early 1540s. Though little is known about Erastus's earliest religious experience, which may well have been in the Catholic tradition,

⁸⁰ Although Oporinus suggested that Erastus began his studies in Basel in 1540, Bonnard argued that this should be interpreted as an approximate rather than an exact date. To hold to this date too strictly would seem to go against the grain of the generally imprecise nature of Oporinus's portrait. Bonnard, *Thomas Érase*, 202.

⁸¹ Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 2–3.

⁸² Cf. Correspondence Register.

⁸³ Erastus to Grynaeus, Aug. 15, (15)76, Basel UB, G II 4, fol. 198. After briefly noting his studies there in the early 1540s, Erastus quipped, "Carolostadii et sociorum eius novi artem et artes. Dominus eos perdat."

by the time he was about sixteen he was a Reformed Protestant. As we will see below, his experience as a foreign adherent of an outlawed faith in Italy further consolidated this identity. Since it is clear that Erastus was in the Reformed camp by his mid teens, even if he moved from Catholicism to Protestantism, it would not have been a full-fledged adult conversion. Being a Reformed Protestant was an integral part of his identity, and, unlike many of his conversion-prone friends, Erastus pursued a singular religious vision his entire adult life.

From Oporinus we also learn the curious fact that Erastus switched from writing with his right hand to his left hand. Erastus evidently experienced lameness in his right arm, though Oporinus does not mention this specific disability, as a result of his encounter with the Bubonic plague. During another outbreak of the plague, which drove the Heidelberg court to Mosbach in the winter of 1564, Erastus reflected in a letter to his countryman Gessner that his experience with the plague had begun as a patient, rather than as a physician, while a student in Basel in 1542.⁸⁴ In a postscript from a letter to Pellikan from early 1551, Erastus apologized for any mistakes in his letter, saying that he had written hurriedly and with his left hand.⁸⁵

Erastus's early experience as a patient must have played some role in forming a successful bedside manner, which is evidenced in his lucrative practice in attending princes. Perhaps this bout with debilitating disease influenced our young Lüber, who possessed an obvious flair for theological disputation, to pursue a career in medicine. Not unlike today, the financial benefits of a medical career compared to that of a pastor or arts professor would have provided ample inducement. Once Erastus set his sights on a more ambitious academic career with a probable turn to medicine, the natural path was across the Alps into Italy.

⁸⁴ Thomas Erastus, *Varia Opuscula Medica*, ed., Giacomo Castelvetro (Frankfurt: J. Wechel, 1590), 88: "Sum in praesentia magis dubius, quam unquam fuerim. In causa est, quod nullam unquam pestem aliam vidi, Medicus. Nam cum anno 1542[,] si non fallit memoria, Basileae me corripuisset, parum mihi tunc ista curae erant, ut qui animum ad haec studia nondum appulissem, imo ne cogitarem quidem hisce operam navare. Proinde quae ante annum me putabam scire, hoc anno me ignorare libenter fateor."

⁸⁵ Erastus to Pellikan, [early year, 1551], Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (Simmlersche Sammlung), MS S 75, no. 4. This fact perhaps also offers backhanded support for our thesis that Erastus studied at the Zurich Academy before 1541; if his lameness postdated his time in Zurich, this might explain why he felt obligated to explain to Pellikan that he was now writing with his left hand.

Erastus in Italy

Erastus lived in Italy from 1544 to 1555. Moving to Bologna was the final step in the upward trajectory of his education. Not only was he climbing the academic ladder in terms of acquiring degrees (though we know little about the details of these as well), he was clearly ascending in terms of the prestige of the institutions he attended. If Erastus first studied at the Zurich Academy, it would have been natural for a student like him to progress to the more prestigious University of Basel. In fact, Karin Maag has suggested that the Carolinum served as a “spring-board for the most talented to study elsewhere.”⁸⁶ While Basel was the most distinguished institution in Switzerland—it was the only university there—it did not rank among the top universities of Europe, such as Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge.⁸⁷ As for medical schools, Bologna, Padua and Montpellier occupied the upper echelon in terms of contemporary appeal, though modern scholars have recognized Padua as the leading medical innovator, especially regarding the advances in anatomy associated with Andreas Vesalius.⁸⁸ In heading south, Erastus turned toward the epicenter of the humanistic study of philosophy and medicine and took the most dramatic step yet in transcending the humble status of his birth.

Erastus’s time in Italy was a critical period for his professional and personal development. He enjoyed good relations with the Italians, even bringing an Italian bride back home. However, no in-depth study of Erastus’s Italian connections exists, although many continued to flourish after he returned to northern Europe. The first firm sources for Erastus’s life are the letters composed during his time as a student in Italy. These reveal little about his specific comings and goings, though we learn a good deal about his Protestant sensibilities and some fascinating morsels concerning his intellectual milieu. While we know conclusively that

⁸⁶ Maag, *Seminary or University*, 139.

⁸⁷ This was certainly the case at mid-century and was arguably the case even after the rise of the Geneva Academy, which has received more scholarly attention. For the University of Basel in the sixteenth century, see Thommen, *Geschichte der Universität Basel 1532–1632*. For a comparison of the various Reformed institutions, see Maag, *Seminary or University*, passim.

⁸⁸ Regarding medical schools in general, see Lawrence Conrad et al., *The Western Medical Tradition 800 BC to AD 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995). For the special case of Padua, see Jerome J. Bylebyl, “The School of Padua: Humanistic Medicine in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979), 335–370.

Erastus studied in Bologna, it has also been alleged that he studied in Padua.⁸⁹ It would not have been unusual for a student to pick up and attend lectures at another institution for a semester, but there is no firm evidence that connects Erastus to Padua. While the majority of letters that he wrote during this time explicitly give Bologna as his place of residence from 1544 to 1552, no letter is recorded as having been composed in Padua. If Erastus had studied in Padua for an extended period of time (e.g., six years as Bonnard suggested, which seems entirely out of the question), his later works would likely have paid some homage to the masters who taught in Padua, such as Giambattista de Monte (1498–1561). This point cannot be pushed too far, since Erastus seldom referred to his Bolognese professors in his works. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence beyond the surviving letters written from Bologna to prove that he studied there. Likewise, if he did study in Padua, no one has yet tracked any personal relationships which he continued to foster later in life.⁹⁰ Much as his strong connections to Zurich make study at the Carolinum probable, the dearth of later references to Padua make it seem unlikely that he studied there for an extended period of time, though the possibility of a brief sojourn in Padua cannot be ruled out.

Erastus's Protestant convictions were clearly visible in his Italian correspondence. His first surviving letter recounted a lively exchange between an Italian youth and a Catholic friar in Imola, which landed the youth in the hands of the Inquisition. The youth had attacked the friar's assertion that entrance into the kingdom of heaven depended on human merit.⁹¹ Though the youth's audacity impressed Erastus, one does not get the impression that Erastus desired to enter the fray. He apparently attended church services with some frequency and was even impressed

⁸⁹ E.g., Bonnard suggested, but offered no proof, that Erastus studied for six years in Padua. Wesel-Roth was much more cautious and noted that the connection linking Erastus to Padua stemmed from a comment from Johannes Wolf which could just as easily be in error. It is noteworthy, but not conclusive, that neither Oporinus nor Melchior Adam mentioned Padua in their early biographies. However, around the publication of Zedler in the early 1700s, the Padua sojourn appeared in many accounts. Zedler, *Universal-Lexicon*, col. 1471; Bonnard, *Thomas Érasme*, 16; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 3.

⁹⁰ The best example of this is, of course, his wife, Isotta de' Canonici, from Bologna, though Erastus also kept up with Camillius Franchinus. The extent to which his later interactions with the physicians Girolamo Mercuriale, Conte da Monte, Girolamo Capodivacca, and Archangeli Mercenari might have been connected to his time as a student in Italy has not been engaged in prior scholarship.

⁹¹ Erastus to Myconius, Bologna/Imola, Dec. 31, 1544, Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (Simmlersche Sammlung), MS S 56, fols. 166^r–166^v.

by an Augustinian friar's espousal of the absolute dependence on Christ's grace for salvation.⁹² Erastus's other letters from Italy are peppered with jabs at the Catholic authorities. He referred to the Dominicans as "Dae-monicanes" and cardinals as "Carnales." Erastus reveled in recounting the sordid details of Julius III's pontificate, including the well known story of his special affection for the youth Innocenzo, whom Julius made a cardinal.⁹³ As Julius had been the cardinal legate of Bologna, Erastus was well placed to pick up inside information on his court and the machinations surrounding the second session of the Council of Trent. Although Erastus's reports betray a clear Protestant slant, they relayed gossip that would have been equally entertaining or scandalous to a Catholic audience.

The most interesting letter from Italy concerns Erastus's attempt to act as an intermediary between Olaus Magnus (1490–1557) and Konrad Gessner, two of sixteenth-century Europe's great naturalists. Olaus Magnus, a Swedish cleric by profession, a geographer and ethnographer by avocation, was living in exile in Italy due to his loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. Both he and his brother Johannes Magnus had been favored by Rome, and Olaus became titular archbishop of Uppsala and primate of Sweden in 1544—a rather hollow honor as the state-sponsored Lutheran Reformation was taking hold in Sweden. Olaus Magnus is primarily famous for his pioneering work in Scandinavian geography and ethnography including its depictions of sea monsters and naive illustrations of Lapps on skis.⁹⁴ As it was known in Bologna that Gessner was preparing his landmark work in zoology, the *Historiae Animalium*, evidently Olaus Magnus approached Erastus with the offer of additional information regarding the species of Scandinavia that he wanted to contribute to Gessner's work. Erastus noted that Olaus had traveled all over "the island of Scandinavia, which contains Sweden, Gothia, and Norway and other realms" and from his own experience and from others had learned of species unknown to the ancients.⁹⁵ Erastus complained that

⁹² Erastus to Pellikan, May 17, 1546, ZBZ (Sim.) S 60, no. 92.

⁹³ Later Cardinal Innocenzo Ciocchi Del Monte (1532–1577).

⁹⁴ Sten Lindroth, "Olaus Magnus," in *DSB*, ed. Charles Coulston Gillispie (New York: Scribner, [1970–1980]), 9:197.

⁹⁵ Erastus to Pellikan, July 9, 1549, ZBZ (Sim.) S 70, no. 168: "Olaus ille Gothus est et totum scandianam insulam, quae Gothiam, Suediam et Norvegiam eum aliis regnis continet, peragravit, plurima vidit ipse ab aliis plurima accepit, de quibus tamen nemo facilius judicaverit, qualia sint, quam is qui et natus in illi locis est et educatus. Pollicitus est mihi, se multa nomina duum et species nosse quorum ex antiquis nemo unquam mentionem fecerit."

he had twice written at great length concerning Olaus's offer to Gessner, but to this point he had received no response. This silence had caused Erastus no end of consternation and embarrassment, and he hoped that Pellikan would rectify the situation with Gessner. Apparently the mediation worked, and Gessner included information from Olaus in his monumental work.⁹⁶ Erastus likewise continued to pass along information to Gessner concerning the natural world from various contacts, and Gessner would acknowledge him as a source for his *Historiae Animalium*.⁹⁷

This same letter to Pellikan contains another fascinating piece of information which would have been of great interest to Erastus's later enemies in the Heidelberg controversy over church discipline. At the bottom of the letter, Erastus asked Pellikan to pass his greetings to Lelio Sozzini, the Italian biblical scholar generally regarded as one of the fathers of Unitarianism. At this point in his life, Sozzini was simply a precocious foreign student with a magnetic personality who had befriended Melancthon, Calvin, and Bullinger on his long student tour of Protestant Europe. Although his orthodoxy was already in question, he did not publicly espouse heretical views and his personal confession remained sufficiently orthodox to satisfy Bullinger of the rectitude of his faith. It is difficult to know what to make of Erastus's greeting, as we do not know when Erastus came into personal contact with Sozzini. When this letter was written, Sozzini had already been in Northern Europe for a couple of years, as he had left Italy in 1547. His early period in Zurich seems to have begun in late 1548, when he lodged and studied with Pellikan, but by the summer of 1549, he was back on the road. Sozzini would not return to Italy or visit Bologna, where his father had recently joined the law faculty, until the spring of 1552. He only resettled in Zurich after his trip to Italy in late 1552.⁹⁸ Putting their respective chronologies together, it would seem

⁹⁶ See Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 332–343.

⁹⁷ E.g., the "Catalogus" of contributors to the *Historiae animalium liber III qui est de Avium natura* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1555) lists Erastus along with Girolamo Zanchi, Ulysse Aldrovandi, and others. Gessner also quotes Erastus in *Historiae animalium liber IIII qui est de Piscium et Aquatiliu animantium natura* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1558), 533. A surviving letter from 1557 has Erastus attempting to bring Gessner into contact with Dr. Johannes Pontanus, a physician working in Gotha, who possessed pictures of fish from the Baltic. Erastus to Gessner, April 11 (1557), StAZ, E II 361, fol. 56.

⁹⁸ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1947), 239–245; George Huntston Williams, *The Radical*

most likely that Erastus came to know Sozzini in Bologna prior to the Italian's study tour of Northern Europe. While it is possible that Erastus's friendship with Sozzini may have commenced only after his move to Switzerland, it is more likely that Sozzini came into contact with Pellikan through Erastus's mediation. That these two might have become fast friends is wholly in keeping with Erastus's future pattern of close association with individuals of questionable orthodoxy. Erastus mentions Sozzini three times in his Italian letters and appeared to be well informed of his travel plans.⁹⁹ While the evidence does not demonstrate that Erastus and Sozzini were especially close, the combination of this with Erastus's likely association with Ulisse Aldrovandi, suggests that Erastus was in contact with the Bolognese circle of religious radicals that had been influenced by Zwinglian theology.¹⁰⁰ These greetings and Erastus's later interaction with Italian intellectuals call for a more in-depth study of his Italian connections, particularly of his contacts with Italian religious dissenters.

The Italian letters also reveal a young man who had very much taken the path of the humanists, best exemplified by his decision to change his name from Lüber to "Erastus." For a man who had studied in Renaissance Basel, this was hardly a novel step. In the wake of Erasmus, Geisshüsler had become "Myconius," Huszgen "Oecolampadius," Herbster "Oporinus," and Theophrastus von Hohenheim (as if that name were not pretentious enough) had taken to styling himself "Paracelsus." As with his decision to take the road to Italy, Erastus laid claim to a place in the world of letters with this bit of self-fashioning. Thomas Lüber was apparently a poor rustic who could not manage his own matriculation fees; Thomas Erastus would become a humanist scholar, philosopher, lay-theologian, professor, councilor of princes, sought-after physician, and academic patron.

Reformation [SCE&S 15] 3rd ed. (Kirkville, Mo., 1992), 880–882, 965–972. On Lelio Sozzini's crucial role in the radical movement, see Antonio Rotondò, *Calvin and the Italian Anti-Trinitarians* [Reformation Essays & Studies 2], trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (St. Louis: Foundation for Reformation Research, 1968), 7 ff.

⁹⁹ This awareness is quite clear in two letters from 1552 just as Sozzini was stopping in Zurich before his trip back to Italy. Erastus to Konrad Pellikan, May 4, 1552, Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (Thesaurus Hottingerianus), MS F 47, fol. 224; Erastus to Pellikan, June 12, 1552, ZBZ (Hot.) F 47, fol. 232.

¹⁰⁰ Laelius Socinus, *Opere* [Studi e testi per la storia religiosa del Cinquecento 1], ed. Antonio Rotondò (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1986), 35–36.

In changing his name, young Thomas began the process of forging a new destiny. In a letter from June 1552, Erastus informed Pellikan of his intention to defend his doctoral theses in two months. In January he hoped to visit the “vestiges of the antiquities” in Rome. The Roman trip was not intended as merely a tourist holiday. His chief purpose was to augment his collection of herbs and medicinal plants before returning north of the Alps. He conceded the possibility that if a suitable position could not be arranged, he would perhaps remain in Italy.¹⁰¹ The letter proved prophetic, as Erastus remained in Italy for at least another three years.

The additional time in Italy was hardly barren; this experience prepared him to become an immediate success as a physician when he returned north.¹⁰² The surviving evidence suggests he remained in Bologna from 1552 to 1555. He assembled a manuscript for one of his first books while in Bologna, titled *A Most Brief & Easy Method for Forming Syllogisms, Not Teaching the Usage from the Art, but Rather, the Art from the Usage*, though the book would not be printed until 1565.¹⁰³ This short work (the actual text was less than seventy pages) revealed both Erastus's logical acumen and his commitment to the Aristotelian philosophy, which would be expressed again in his anti-Paracelsian works. In addition to this philosophical text, a manuscript by Erastus “On the Rudiments of the Greek Language,” preserved in the papers of Aldrovandi, suggests that he may well have devoted much of his Italian period to humanistic studies.¹⁰⁴ He had also studied with the prominent botanist Luca Ghini.¹⁰⁵ His most auspicious undertaking in Italy was to marry Isotta de' Canonici, a woman of bourgeois or perhaps patrician background from Bologna. She quite possibly brought a handsome dowry to

¹⁰¹ Erastus to Pellikan, June 12, 1552, ZBZ (Hot.) F 47, fol. 232: “Circiter Ianuarium proficiscar Romam, visurus antiquitatum vestigia quae extant hodie, et plantas aliquas, quales nullo alio in loco reperiri affirmant, qui simplicium hoc est herbarum et aliorum huiusmodi rerum medicorum cognitionem profitentur ut docent. Inde revertar ad vos, si mihi locum aliquem honestam vel apud vos vel alios esse poterit. Nisi hoc intelligam fortasse Italiam non reliquam tam in cito.”

¹⁰² Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 4.

¹⁰³ Thomas Erastus, *Ratio Formandorum Syllogismorum brevissima & facilima* (Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1565). Contra Wesel-Roth, the introduction to the 1565 edition of the text suggests that he was in Bologna until 1555 rather than 1553. Erastus, *Ratio Formandorum Syllogismorum*, 4; Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ “Graecae linguae rudimenta auctore Thoma Erasto” (58 folios), Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, MS 1072 (lat. 579), vol. 2, Fasc. 15. I thank Prof. Dr. Joachim Telle for bringing this manuscript to my attention.

¹⁰⁵ Mentioned in Erastus, *Varia Opuscula Medica*, 93, 100.

the marriage, though in the end the marriage was probably more of a financial burden than a boon for Erastus, since Isotta's mother and young sister Lavinia would eventually join the couple in Heidelberg. Although the couple remained childless, Erastus provided for Isotta's sister as if she were their own child, and Lavinia's marriage to Johann Jakob Grynaeus would eventually supply the vital social bond that secured Erastus an intellectual heir. At any rate, if he took on financial burdens, the marriage no doubt brought Erastus additional social prestige.

Henneberg and the Controversy over Astrology

Erastus's first professional position north of the Alps was in the service of the counts of Henneberg from ca. 1555 to 1557. Upon Erastus's arrival, Henneberg was a county in Thuringia ruled by the last count of Henneberg, Georg Ernst (1511–1583) on behalf of his father Count Wilhelm. Though the ruler of a minor territory, Georg Ernst was officially a "prince" of the empire and was well connected with the leading Protestant nobility of Germany. He had honed his social graces and diplomatic talents at the court of Landgrave Philip the Magnanimous of Hesse and had later joined the imperial forces in the war against the Turks. Georg Ernst did not merely rub shoulders with the great; he actually saved the life of Duke Moritz of Saxony in combat. In his concern for his subjects' religiosity and his desire for Protestant unity, Georg Ernst was more a follower of Philip than the crafty Moritz.¹⁰⁶ It is noteworthy that a pious Zwinglian like Erastus would be well appreciated in the court of a zealous, reform-minded prince in the mold of Philip of Hesse.

How Erastus came into contact with the counts of Henneberg remains unclear, though it is possible that the Henneberg native Ortholph Maroldt, who studied medicine in Bologna from 1552 to 1556 and later became the counts' personal physician himself, was the person who brought Erastus to the attention of Georg Ernst.¹⁰⁷ While many sources illuminate Erastus's departure from the Henneberg court and continued relations with the noble family, very little information exists concerning his activities while in residence in Henneberg from 1556 to 1558.

An interesting question is the degree to which Erastus remained in the closet concerning his Zwinglian opinions while in Henneberg. After

¹⁰⁶ *ADB*, 8:671–673.

¹⁰⁷ Hedwig Pfister, *Bad Kissingen vor vierhundert Jahren* [Mainfränkische Hefte 19] (Würzburg, 1954), 18.

his activity on behalf of the Reformed cause in the early 1560s, Erastus would become notorious in south German princely circles for his Zwinglian beliefs. During the church discipline controversy, when Erastus contemplated seeking sanctuary in Henneberg, the prince's Lutheran theologians protested against allowing such an infamous Zwinglian to settle in their midst. Considering how loath Georg Ernst was for Erastus to leave his service in 1557–1558, one suspects that Erastus kept a low profile in Henneberg and practiced making the Reformed perspective sound fully evangelical to his Lutheran hosts.

Just as living as a Protestant in Italy formed Erastus's self-conception, being a well-liked if somewhat clandestine Zwinglian at a Lutheran court gave him opportunity to develop his gifts of tact and persuasion. His time in Henneberg was a crucial preparation for the role he would later play in the Heidelberg Reformation. Even after his opposition to the Gnesio-Lutheran interpretation of the Eucharist became a public issue, Erastus's professional relationship with the counts of Henneberg never seemed to have suffered. Later while in Heidelberg, Erastus sent Georg Ernst a copy of one of his works detailing the Reformed interpretation of the Lord's Supper and pleaded with him to ponder whether interpretations therein were merely Erastus's or truly the mind of Christ.¹⁰⁸ Georg Ernst developed a great attachment to Erastus and nearly every year implored him to accompany him on his cure at various spas in southeastern and central Germany. Clearly Georg Ernst prized Erastus's medical opinions, but one gets the sense that Georg Ernst's interest in Erastus's companionship went beyond his medical position. For example, on one occasion Georg Ernst invited Erastus's wife to join them on the cure. On the basis of both his medical advice and his agreeable personality, Erastus won a patron and friend for life in Georg Ernst.

¹⁰⁸ Erastus to Georg Ernst, Heidelberg, April 28, n.y. [ca. 1562], Meiningen, Gemeinschaftliches Hennebergisches Archiv (GHA) in the Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Meiningen, MS Sect. I, 5810: "Weiter gnediger f. und herr/ hab ich e.f.g. ein schrifft hinder mir gelassen sambt einem büchlin, bitt underthenig/ wie ich zuvor gebetten sie wollens mit fleiß lesen/ und bedencken ob es meine wort oder Christi und des heiligen geists seien oder nit. Und da sie [f]ünden das es der heiligen göttlichen schrifft/ iha den Worten Christi selbst ungleich were/ sollen sies nit glauben darumb ichs gesagt hab/ auch darumb nit verachten das es andre hohere leut nit gesehen. Den der herr seine gaben austeilte seins gefallens/ damit sich nihemands für vol komen selbst ansehen oder von anderen angesehen werden möge. Es werden e.f.g. zum wenigsten mehr von diser sachen verstehen lehren/ den vil ander/ das auch wo von nöten helffen besser fordern/ das sie für recht und Christlich werden erkennen."

Erastus published the first work of his academic career during his stay in Henneberg, and unwittingly also stirred up a minor intellectual controversy.¹⁰⁹ Upon his return to the German lands from Italy, Erastus had been shocked by the popularity of astrology. As an antidote to this, Erastus decided to translate a treatise by Giovanni Savonarola which assailed the validity of the sidereal prognostications. The work was a rather curious hybrid publication entitled *Astrology Confuted* (*Astrologia Confutata*): *A True, Well-Founded, Irrefutable Refutation of False Astrology or Idolatrous Soothsaying from the Course of the Heavens and the Stars, Newly Translated into German from foreign and Latin tongues to Steer Towards the Truth and To Serve as Warning to the Common Man*.¹¹⁰ The centerpiece of the work was a rather free and at times enhanced translation by Erastus of a treatise by Savonarola which was in turn dependent on the prior work of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. The bulk of Erastus's publication, however, was not the translated piece of Savonarola, but his own lengthy "Summa of a Disputation in which it is proven in three ways that it is impossible for the Astrologers to proclaim out of the alignment of birth any future fortune or misfortune (etc.) for the one who has been born."¹¹¹ Finally the book concluded with a brief essay, apparently also by Erastus, on "The Origin of Astrology," which outlined the historical antecedents of astrology in the ancient world.¹¹²

This was a rather humble debut in the world of letters, though the Thuringian Wald was hardly the center of the publishing trade. The reception of Erastus's publication would prove that confidence in the utility of astrological prognostications was not merely the provenance of unlettered common folk in Germany. Melanchthon learned of Erastus's attack on astrology and was appalled by it. Melanchthon was easily the most prominent imperial Protestant intellectual, leading a humanist-

¹⁰⁹ What follows is a condensed version of "German Protestantism and Astrology: The Debate between Thomas Erastus and the Melanchthon Circle," in *Religion und Naturwissenschaften im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert, Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*, no. 210, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz, Thomas Kaufmann, Kim Siebenhüner, and Roberto Zaugg, 86–101 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Thomas Erastus, *Astrologia Confutata. Ein wahrhafte Gegründte Unwidersprechliche Confutation/ der falschen Astrologei oder abgottischen warsagung aus des himels und der gestirnen lauff/ der warheit zu steuer/ unnd dem gemeinen man zur warnung/ aus welscher und Lateinischer sprach/ wie volgend zu sehen/ von neuem ins deutsch gebracht* (Schleusingen: Hermann Hamsing, 1557).

¹¹¹ *Astrologia Confutata*, fols. Gvi^r–Ovii^v.

¹¹² *Astrologia Confutata*, fols. Oviii^r–Pv^v.

inspired reform moment within the imperial educational institutions that led him to be dubbed the *Praeceptor Germaniae*. While investigations into the natural world largely followed a humanist Aristotelian approach in Melanchthon's Wittenberg, like other Aristotelians Melanchthon placed great value in astrology as a form of natural prophetic knowledge, and the subject was prominently represented in the curriculum.¹¹³ Although the chronology of the controversy is not clear, it appears Melanchthon encouraged one of his acolytes, Christoph Stathmion (1509–1585), the city physician of Coburg, to undertake a refutation of Erastus.¹¹⁴ Stathmion accepted the task and answered Erastus's *Astrologia Confutata* with his own *Astrologia Asserta*.¹¹⁵ Stathmion rejected Erastus's out-of-hand repudiation of astrology, and argued that there was a proper distinction between authentic natural astrology and illicit divination. Reflecting the general consensus of the Wittenberg school, Stathmion approved of astrology as a science founded on experience and suggested that it was an indispensable tool for medical practitioners.

¹¹³ Sachiko Kusakawa, "Melanchthon and Astrology for Lutheran Medics," in *Medicine and the Reformation*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993), 33–55, especially, 34. For Melanchthon's larger scientific project, see Sachiko Kusakawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

¹¹⁴ CR 7:794 (no. 4904): "Hodie literas accepti ab eo, qui docet initia mathematicum in Academia Marpurgensi, in quibus scribitur Principem Hessorum Guihelmum praeclare eruditum esse in doctrina Astronomica, ac arte Planetarum motus computare. Dignior hic laude est, quam Medicus aulae Hennebergicae [i.e., Thomas Erastus], qui astris bellum infert magnis clamoribus. Ego iudicio adolescentiam ad optimas artes divinitus monstratas summa cura invitandam eas, ex quibus doctrina motuum extracta est, necesse est. Et haec ipsa est per sese μαντική, quia testimonium est de Deo, et de providentia. Quaeso ut nobis aliquid de tuo vicino scribas. Bene vale. Calend Junii." The letter is grouped with Melanchthon's letters from 1551 in the CR, though the editors acknowledged that the date of the year was uncertain. Melanchthon's letter is dated June 1, and the preface of Erastus's *Astrologia Confuta* was dated May 5, 1557. Melanchthon's letter is thus probably from 1557 or 1558. See also Klaus Matthäus, "Zur Geschichte des Nürnberger Kalendarwesens: Die Entwicklung der Nürnberg gedruckten Jahreskalendar in Buchform," *Archiv der Geschichte des Buchwesens* 9 (1969): cols. 965–1396; especially cols. 1080–1086; *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Heinz Scheible (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977–) 7:318.

¹¹⁵ Christoph Stathmion, *Astrologia Asserta. Oder ein kurtze unnd gründliche verlegung/ der langen unnd ungegründten schrift D. Thome Erasti/ Darinne er sich unterstehet/ die Kunst/ so auß der Sternen lauff natürlich urteylet/ zu vernichten* (Nuremberg: Valentin Neuber, 1558).

The conflict did not end with Stathmion's *Astrologia Asserta*. The parties pursued the controversy through an epistolary exchange ca. 1558–1560. Erastus was prompted to publish additional works on the question to defend himself, since Stathmion had passed their correspondence along to Wittenberg.¹¹⁶ Sometime around 1558, about the time Erastus moved to Heidelberg, he wrote a larger defense of Savonarola's work on astrology in German. By 1568, he had translated this work into Latin and was seeking a publisher. It is well worth noting that Erastus's views on astrology found a more receptive audience in Geneva than in Wittenberg. Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva and Erastus's sometime friend, ushered the Latin translation through press on Erastus's behalf in 1569, during the very period in which Beza and Erastus were in the midst of a bitter row over church discipline.¹¹⁷ In the later treatise Erastus refined his arguments and focused on the philosophical basis of astrology, arguing that it was inconsistent to suggest that a contingent effect could be produced by a necessary cause, which had been more or less the position of the moderate advocates of astrology who wished to avoid the charge of determinism. The final salvo of the controversy would not be launched until 1580, when Johann Jakob Grynaeus edited and published Erastus's letters on astrology to Stathmion and others.¹¹⁸ Whereas their early vernacular tracts had been more or less centered on whether astrology could be reconciled with Christianity, this correspondence dealt with more recondite issues such as whether Galen's corpus supported the medical use of astrology.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Matthäus, "Zur Geschichte des Nürnberger Kalendarwesens," col. 1082.

¹¹⁷ Contemporary letters document Beza's role in the publication of the work. See chapter 6 below. Thomas Erastus, *Defensio libelli Hieronymi Savonarolae de astrologia divinatrice, adversus Christophorum Stathmionem, Medicum Coburgensem* ([Geneva]: J. Le Preux & J. Petit, 1569). This work is briefly discussed in Don Cameron Allen, *The Star-Crossed Renaissance: The Quarrel about Astrology and Its Influence in England* (Reprint, London: Cass and Company, 1966), 82–83; Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 5:653–655. See also Beza's response to Erastus's query regarding astrology. Theodore Beza to Erastus, Geneva, [1568], CB, 9:208–214.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Erastus, *De astrologia divinatrice epistolae D. Thomae Erasti, iam olim ab eodem ad diversos scriptae, & in duos libros digestae, ac nunc demum in gratiam veritatis studiosorum in lucem aeditae, opera et studio Ioannis Jacobi Grynaei* (Basel: Pietro Perna, 1580).

¹¹⁹ Andrew Wear treats the specific problem of the relationship of medicine and astrology in Galen as well as Erastus's reaction to this (p. 249) in his article "Galen in the Renaissance," in *Galen: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Wellcome Institute, 1981), 229–262.

This discussion of astrology, though a cursory overview, displays themes that played prominent roles in Erastus's later work. Particularly noteworthy was his at first almost unconscious assumption that belief in astrology was necessarily an offense to divine honor. In his battle with Stathmion, Erastus was forced to defend and further explicate his views against a member of Melanchthon's circle who had possessed Melanchthon's explicit support. When one takes into account Beza's later role in assisting Erastus, the debate takes on the look of an intramural Protestant dispute on a question of natural philosophy with the traditions of Zurich (with Erastus as their proxy) and Geneva lining up against Wittenberg. Though this split between the Lutherans and the Reformed on the issue of astrology was not absolute, each group's basic theological assumptions conditioned its potential receptivity toward embracing astrology as a legitimate branch of natural philosophy. The heart of the early Lutheran message was simply justification by faith and freedom from the heavy burdens of the merit-based conception of righteousness of the late medieval church. Although the Reformed also embraced Luther's fundamental insight, from early on the restoration of proper worship of God, with its concomitant declaration of war against any idolatrous practice, became the center of Reformed Protestantism.¹²⁰

We will have further opportunity below to discuss Melanchthon's influence on the natural philosophy of German Protestant universities. It is ironic that perhaps the only time that Erastus was able to draw the attention of the *Praeceptor Germaniae* was on the issue on which they disagreed so strongly. Otherwise, Erastus had much in common with Melanchthon. They shared a deep appreciation for Aristotelian natural philosophy. Their interpretations of the Lord's Supper were converging. Likewise, Erastus later befriended many of Melanchthon's favorite disciples, including Zacharias Ursinus, Johannes Crato von Krafftheim, and Albert Hardenberg. The irony becomes more profound when seen in light of the future Philippist-Reformed cooperation in Heidelberg and Erastus's attempt to employ Melanchthon's reputation on behalf of the Heidelberg Reformation.

Although the motivating force of Erastus's attack on astrology was primarily theological, it was more than that. His theological predisposition supplied the lenses through which he perceived that astrological

¹²⁰ Here I follow the insights of Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975) and Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

influences had no basis in experience. Even though Stathmion argued more vociferously from the basis of experience, in the end he did not really have experience in his corner. In the case of astrology, Erastus's Reformed *Weltanschauung* was an active agent of disenchantment. There were no intermediary forces influencing the world, only a providential God who had not been inclined to directly intervene in the natural world since the apostolic era.¹²¹ Erastus's war against any perceived superstitious or magical practice, including many of the occult virtues advocated by the Neoplatonists, would continue as perhaps the most pervasive feature of his career.

¹²¹ This would clearly be the case in Erastus's conception of miracles, which he later explicated in *Disputationum de medicina nova de Philippi Paracelsi Pars Prima* (Basel: Pietro Perna, [1571]).