

CALVINISMUS HEIDELBERGENSIS: THE HEIDELBERG THEOLOGICAL FACULTY AND THE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT PREDESTINATION 1583-1622

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history and theology of the Heidelberg University and its theology faculty in the period of 1583-1622 has been greatly neglected in scholarly research.¹ This is the more surprising since it was during this period that the university was one of the major centers of Reformed education, visited by a large number of international students. One other characteristic of this period is the theological position, in which professors — most of whom stand in the Melancthonian tradition — defend themselves as not wanting to be called Calvinists and are eager to demonstrate that they are still in line with Luther's thought. In 1609 a book appears by the Heidelberg theologian Bartholomeus Pitiscus² in which he tries to show that what the Reformed confess in Germany does not essentially deviate from what the apostolic church has always taught, and neither does it essentially deviate from the concepts of Luther.³ Right at the beginning, Pitiscus gives a list of the criticisms that the Lutherans have of the Reformed. The list goes as follows:

- We deny the omnipotence of God.
- We make God the cause of sin.
- We make God into a tyrant.
- We deny that Christ is truly God.
- We deny the personal unity of both natures in Christ.
- We claim that the divine and the human nature have no actual connection to each other.
- We deny original sin.

¹ See : Herman J. Selderhuis, "Eine attractive Universität — Die Heidelberger Theologische Fakultät 1583-1622," in: Herman J. Selderhuis und Markus Wriedt, eds., *Bildung und Konfession im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung*, Tübingen 2006, 1-30.

² For biographical data on the Heidelberg professors: Dagmar Drüll, *Heidelberger Gelehrtenlexikon 1386-1651*, Berlin/Heidelberg 2002.

³ Bartholomaeus Pitiscus, *Ausführlicher Bericht: Was die Reformierte Kirchen im Deutschland glauben oder mit glauben ...*, Amberg 1609.

- We claim that it was not really the Son of God but an ordinary human being who died for us.
- We deny the power of Christ's death.
- We deny the necessity of faith in Christ, and we claim that the unbelieving pagans can be saved as well as the Christians.
- We destroy holy baptism.
- We deny the saving power of eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion.
- We teach that whoever has been predestined to eternal life will be saved, regardless of his godlessness. And whoever has been predestined to eternal death will be damned, regardless of his piety.⁴

This summary of Pitiscus indicates the polemical framework in which the consideration of election takes place in Heidelberg. It is the criticism of the Lutherans that leads the theologians on the Heidelberg faculty to deeper thought and writing on the questions of election and reprobation.⁵

The criticism of the Lutherans consists primarily of three points. The theologians of the Palatinate make God into a tyrant, for according to them God works out his election arbitrarily. Second, they restrict the reconciling work of Christ by asserting that Christ died only for the elect. Furthermore, their concept is rationalistic and thus unbiblical. Calvinists let their mind rule over scripture and that is how they end up with the apparent closed system of their doctrine of election.

The defense of the Reformed side is among others that if the Lutherans want to reject the Reformed doctrine of election, they have no other choice but also to reject Luther's writing on the bondage of the will.⁶ Pitiscus affirms this when he checks the Formula of Concord on the points of providence and election: Anyone who checks what the Formula of Concord says about it, which points of the Reformed doctrine of election the Lutherans attack, cannot come to any other conclusion than that Formula of Concord is in fact Calvinistic.⁷ In this configuration in which the Lutherans accuse the Calvinists of rationalism, and these Calvinists assert that they reject the name "Calvinist" as a term of contempt, also because they see themselves especially as followers of Luther, it is interesting to see how some Heidelberg theologians handled this theme of predestination. What adds to the interest is the fact that this concerns writings from before the conclusions of the synod of Dordt (1618/19), where Heidelberg theologians were definitely present, as well as the fact

⁴ Pitiscus, *Ausführlicher Bericht*, 10f.

⁵ On the history of the concept of predestination, see, Theodor Mahlmann, "Prädestination," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 7, Basel 1989, 1172–1178.

⁶ "... wie sie dann wol wissen/daß sie unsere lehr von der Predestination nit straffen können/sie wolten dann Lutherum und seine schrifft de servo Arbitrio contra Erasmum straffen." Pitiscus, *Ausführlicher Bericht*, 16).

⁷ "So ist denn das Concordienbuch auch Calvinisch/möcht jemand sagen? Antwort: In dieser sache können wirs anders nicht befinden." *Ausführlicher Bericht*, 269.

that the theological faculty chose to stick with the *Loci* of Melanchthon as their textbook and explicitly refused to use Calvin's *Institutes*.

2. CALVINISMUS HEIDELBERGENSIS

Writings on the subject of election from this period focus especially on “*aufklärung*,” since according to the authors so many misunderstandings exist about Calvinist doctrine. The work *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis* belongs to this category. It was initially published in Latin but soon thereafter in German, and it deals with a fictional conversation between two students, Nemesius and Agathus, in which the convictions and customs of the so-called Calvinists are clarified.⁸

There is a popular notion that the so-called Calvinists “*erschreckliche und absewliche ding lehren sollen*” about providence and predestination.⁹ It is not right to say that Calvinists teach that God arbitrarily, regardless of whether one lives a decent life or not, elects or damns people. The premise is namely that God, “*das gantzze Menschliche Geschlecht mit guten fug und rechten hette verwerffen können*.”¹⁰ That is the starting point of God's election after the fall and not before. The hermeneutical method that is applied in defense of this becomes clear in the conversation. In response to the question whether the Calvinistic notion does not conflict with the text from 1 Tim. 2, that God wants all people to be saved, an account of the exegesis of this text follows.

*Diser Spruch Pauli ist nicht universalis, sondern indefinita, wie man in den Schulen zu reden pfliget/ sol auch nicht de singulis generum, sonder de generibus singulorum, wie die Schullehrer reden/ das ist/ nicht von allen und jeden Menschen insonderheit/ sonder von al-len Ständen der Menschen/ und von allerhand Menschen in allerley Ständen/ wie davon Paulus an erwehntem Ort außtrücklich redet/ verstanden werden.*¹¹

It is interesting to note that the question about the certainty of election is answered at first with a reference to sanctification. Only after the observation is made that a person can weaken in his sanctification, does the reference to the certainty of the promises follow.¹²

The question about election raises the meaning of Christ's death. According to the author, the “*ubiquitists*” and the Calvinists agree that Christ died for all people.¹³ “*Aber der*

⁸ *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis. Dialogus oder Von der Heydelbergischen Calvinisten wandel/ Ordnung/ Ceremonien und Lehrpuncten/ Ein Gespräch*, Heidelberg, 1593.

⁹ *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis*, 39.

¹⁰ *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis*, 41.

¹¹ *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis*, 42.

¹² *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis* 43.

¹³ *A Calvinismus Heidelbergensis*, 45.

*streit ist/de modo, das ist/von der weise/und wie/oder welcher gestalt/Christus für alle gestorben sye.*¹⁴ This work has the Lutherans teach that all men — and in order to show what that means, a very unattractive set of people is presented — are brought into a state of grace.¹⁵ However, the dispute is not about the power of Christ's death, but about its fruits. According to the Calvinists, those fruits are present only in the elect, a proposition buttressed by a number of Bible texts.

An addendum is added to this exposition that deals with the pastoral care for the dying.¹⁶ The reason for that is the criticism of the Lutherans that the doctrine of predestination prohibits offering comfort to the dying. In this “*Entwurf*” follows a summary of eight kinds of challenges that are then provided with a series of Bible citations that are meant to serve as an aid in contesting the challenges. The purpose of this exposition is to show that it is precisely the Calvinist doctrine of election that offers comfort.

Also apologetic in nature is the work that appeared anonymously in Heidelberg in 1594, but that can be attributed to David Pareus.¹⁷ Pareus addresses the accusation against the Calvinists that they restrict the promise to the elect; he posits in opposition “*dass das Evangelium...allen Gnade und vergebung der sünden anbiete und versprechen die daran glauben.*”¹⁸ However, according to Pareus, because only believers accept the promise, one could say that the promises come really only to believers.¹⁹ This is “*im verstand keine ungleichheit/ sondern allein in worten.*”²⁰ That means that the theologians from the Pfalz do not say that the promises are only for the elect, rather that they are for all believers. And one knows that only believers are the elect.²¹

When the subject turns to the question about reprobation, Pareus differentiates between the “*causa efficiens*” and the “*causa impulsiva damnationis.*” God is indeed the *causa efficiens*, but what moves him to that lies inside the reprobates themselves. In the same way he differentiates between reprobation and judgment. Reprobation precedes judgment, “*denn die*

¹⁴ *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis* 45.

¹⁵ “... Cain/Judas/Nero/Caligula/Heliogabalus/die Türcken/Canibalen/etc. ...” *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis* 45.

¹⁶ “Typus oder Entwurff etlicher der hefftigsten Anfechtungen/mit welchen der Teufel gottselige hertzen/sonderlich inn todesnöten zu erschrecken pflaget.” *Calvinismus Heidelbergensis* 93–101.

¹⁷ David Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung daß die Heidelbergische Theologen Gottes Wort/der Augspurgischen Confession/deroselben Apologia/und der Concordia Anno 36/mit nichten ungemess lebren/noch von ihrem Catechismo und vorigen Schrifften im geringsten abweichen/oder wider einander seyn Durch einen Theologum der Augsburgischen Confession zugethan, mit Approbation der Theologischen Facultet zu Heidelberg.* Heidelberg, 1594.

¹⁸ Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung*, 52.

¹⁹ Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung*, 52.

²⁰ Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung*, 53.

²¹ *Gegenbeweisung* 55f.

*Verwerfung is eigentlich die Göttliche verlassung etlicher Menschen in dem Fall und verderben Adams. Die Verdammung ist die verdiente straffe des falls/ verderbens/ und anderer sünden.*²² All men live in sin and to all those comes the call from God. But God does not grant faith to all, for “*die andern erwecket und erleuchtet er nicht.*”²³

3. RENNECHERUS

In 1589 Herman Rennecherus published his *Golden Chain of Salvation*, which he dedicated to England's Queen Elizabeth I.²⁴ In this work Rennecherus gives a detailed exposition of the causes and consequences of eternal election, and about all the questions involved with that issue.²⁵ Although the immediate cause for doing so is the discussion with Rome and the Lutherans, the book is hardly polemical. Rennecherus' intent is to base his discussion only on Bible texts and in his exposition of the Reformed view of election consistently appeals only to Augustine as extra-biblical theologian.²⁶ Nevertheless, Rennecherus too handles ideas that do not occur in the Bible. Rennecherus differentiates between *praescientia* and *predestinatio* because in the final analysis it is all about a clear decision by God, independent of the actions of men. Election is nothing more than selecting from out of the whole lost human race some in Christ and to adopt as children.²⁷ Although the approach of Rennecherus is infralapsarian, he proposes that nevertheless the fall too was part of God's plan, for God cannot show mercy to men if they had not in the first place fallen into the misery of sin. And because God's purpose is to love men and to be worshipped, the fall of man is in fact essential.²⁸ Rennecherus draws a conclusion here for which he has no Bible text but that does flow out of the method in which he uses Bible texts. Rennecherus admits as much after first stating that what God does is always good and that men must keep their distance from the things that are hidden.

What is not hidden must be proclaimed, for God speaks in the Bible about reprobation in order for believers to humble themselves regarding their salvation, and he speaks about predestination so that people can be certain of their salvation²⁹ and receive comfort in their

²² *Gegenbeweisung* 60.

²³ *Gegenbeweisung* 61.

²⁴ William Perkins, often seen as the father of Puritanism, published two years later in England his influential work on the same topic with the same title, *A Golden Chaine*, 1591.

²⁵ Hermann Rennecherus, *Aurea salutis catena; continens et explicans omnes eius causas, et singula Dei ...*, Herborn 1589.

²⁶ Only one other theologian joins him in being mentioned, namely Bernardus. *Aurea salutis catena*, 190.

²⁷ *Aurea salutis catena*, 35.

²⁸ “Ille igitur primi hominis lapsus non minus necessarius fuit, quam ipsa aeterni Dei decreti patefactio et executio.” *Aurea salutis catena*, 32.

²⁹ “... quod electi & pii homines de salutis certitudine in omnibus aerumnis se firmiter consolari possint ...” *Aurea salutis catena* 102.

temptations.³⁰ The decree of election is the decree of comfort.³¹ When doubts arise, one must not follow one's feelings,³² but what God says and promises in his Word. Rennecherus talks about how changeable and unsure feelings can be, and precisely for that reason he points believers to the Word. That Word must also be the guideline when considering the question of who will be lost and who will be saved. Whoever descends into the abyss of God's decrees, ends up in a labyrinth and gets lost.³³

Rennecherus tackles two misconceptions. The first is the idea that it makes no difference how one lives, for if elected all will be well.³⁴ Over against that, Rennecherus posits the close connection between justification and sanctification. The elect wish to live only according to God's will. However, that does not mean that thus we become perfect believers. Neither does God ask that of us, but he is content with what in our human weakness we bring forth.³⁵ In this life we remain imperfect people, and to know that is the highest perfection.³⁶

The second misconception is that a person cannot be sure of his or her election. According to Rennecherus, the Bible says clearly that more people will be lost than saved. But that is not a reason to panic, for where the Word is preached, the Spirit is at work and people come to faith. For one that is at a young age, for another it is later, and for some only at their deathbed.³⁷ Whoever sticks with the Word has no doubt, for that Word says whoever believes is saved. And whoever does not believe today, can do so the next day.³⁸ Whoever cannot believe that he or she belongs to the elect acts as if God is playing a game with election and therefore does him a great injustice.³⁹ Let no one think, therefore, that he belongs with the reprobates. And that hits right at the purpose of Rennecherus's book, for

³⁰ "Nam sine ea neque Dei gratiam recte cognoscere, neque desua salute certi esse, neque Diabolo eiusque tentationibus fortiter resistere possunt." *Aurea salutis catena*, 106.

³¹ *Aurea salutis catena*, 102.

³² *Aurea salutis catena*, 118.

³³ "... certe qui sine verbi Dei luce illud arcanum decretum perscrutari conantur, illi inexplicabilem labyrinthum, in quo perpetuo errabunt, ..." *Aurea salutis catena* 161.

³⁴ *Aurea salutis catena*, 116.

³⁵ "...sic etiam Deus a suis exactam & perfectam obedientiam non postulat, sed tali est contentus, qualem ipsi pro modulo humanae infirmitatis praestare possunt." *Aurea salutis catena*, 233.

³⁶ "Vera igitur propriae imperfectionis cognitio, est summa piorum perfectio..." *Aurea salutis catena*, 237.

³⁷ "Alias enim in prima aetate, alios autem in medio vitae cursu, alios in senectute, nonnullos inter extremos vitae..." *Aurea salutis catena* 185.

³⁸ *Aurea salutis catena* 155.

³⁹ "Quod si quis non crediderit se ex electorum numero esse, sane magnam Domino fecerit iniuriam; quasi is alicui illuderet & frustra aliquem ad Christum vocaret." *Aurea salutis catena*, 158.

he wants to make clear that election is in place in order to spur people on to a life of gratitude and righteousness.

Seven years after the appearance of the *Golden Chain*, Rennecherus once again published a book on election.⁴⁰ He cites the reason for it in his foreword. His first work in 1589 raised some critical reactions, and though he does not name names here either, the reactions came from the side of the Lutherans. Because of those reactions, Rennecherus wants to discuss ten fundamental aspects of election. He is aware of the fact that most of it is already taken up in the *Golden Chain* and that he therefore offers nothing new; still in this new book he wants to elaborate more than he did in his first book on a few points under discussion. This book also has somewhat more of an educational character. This educational dimension surfaces, among other ways, when Rennecherus adds as a fold-out appendix the chart that Beza published in 1595, in which the separation between the elect and the reprobate became visible only after the fall.⁴¹ Thus Rennecherus clearly joins the tradition of Calvin as formed and continued by Beza. This joining illustrates that the refusal of the Heidelberg faculty to use Calvin's *Institutes* is not based on a rejection of Calvin's theology.

4. KIMEDONCIUS

The most comprehensive contribution from Heidelberg in this discussion is that of Jacob Kimedoncius. His book about redemption, to which is added a separate book about election, comprises more than 650 pages.⁴² His work is mainly a comprehensive discussion with Huber.⁴³ In the foreword, Kimedoncius announces that in this book he will argue against the Lutheran charge that the Reformed deny that Christ died for all men. According to him, this is shameless slander, for the Reformed surely confess this since it is scriptural.⁴⁴ That doesn't mean to imply, however, that each person, without exception, with or without faith, will be justified and saved. He elaborates on that further on in his work, where he approvingly cites Thomas Aquinas who said that the blood of Christ was sufficient for all men, but that not all men participate in reaping the fruit of that blood.⁴⁵ Thus Kimedoncius distinguishes a three-fold call God issues to men. There is a universal call issued by nature. There is a special call the gospel issues to all people. The third call comes only to the elect,

⁴⁰ Hermann Rennecher, *Scriptum didascalicum et apologeticum...*, Hanau 1597.

⁴¹ "Ordo & series mediorum a Deo in aeterno illo suo decreto, quo alios ad vitam aeternam in Christo; alios ad aeternum exitum in Adamo destinavit, subordinatorum; tum ad eiusdem decreti executionem, suis temporibus sequuturam, prae-ordinatorum." *Scriptum*, appendix.

⁴² Jacob Kimedoncius, *De redemptione generis humani Libri tres: Quibus copiose traditur controversa, de redemptionis et gratiae per Christum universalitate, et morte ipsius pro omnibus. Accessit tractatio finitima DE Divina Praedestinatione, uno libro comprehensa*, Heidelberg, 1592.

⁴³ Cf. The reaction: Samuel Huber, *Contra Iacobum Kimedoncium Theologum Heidelbergensem. Qui Calviniano furore cum sociis accensus, Mahometismo fores aperit, & Evangelium Iesu Christi funditus extirpare conatur*, Wittenberg, 1593.

⁴⁴ "Impudens calumnia. Id enim secundum scripturas fatemur & nos." *De redemptione* 7.

⁴⁵ *De redemptione*, 63f.

and Kimedoncius underscores that one with a citation from St. Augustine.⁴⁶ In his argument against Huber, Kimedoncius appeals especially to the writings of church fathers and those of Luther, besides texts from both the Old and New Testaments. Against attacks made on individual reformers, Kimedoncius' defense makes it obvious that Zwingli, Musculus, Bullinger, Calvin, and Luther all shared the same conviction.

The second part of the work consists of a less polemical analysis of predestination. Kimedoncius divides his work in six chapters that raise the questions of what election is, what its causes and effects are, and if it is immutable. The fifth chapter deals with the question if and how one can be sure of his or her election.⁴⁷ In the last chapter Kimedoncius attacks the notion that it is better not to discuss election since it is not edifying.

Already early on in his book Kimedoncius introduces the problem of reprobation. He shows how the scholastic theology handled it and announces his difficulties with that. It is not a matter of those of whom God knows in advance that they will not accept salvation. Kimedoncius sees reprobation as the eternal decree of God that some will not be received in mercy but left outside of the fellowship with Christ. God does not thereby do them injustice for they receive their just punishment.⁴⁸ This does not mean for Kimedoncius that thereby the scholastics have been dispensed with. Throughout his book, they are repeatedly cited in defense of the Reformed views on election.⁴⁹

When dealing with the origins and fruits of God's election, Kimedoncius more than once refers to the discussion about free will between Erasmus and Luther. A year before the appearance of this huge volume, Kimedoncius had published a reissue of Luther's *De servo arbitrio*.⁵⁰ That book was, according to Kimedoncius, first of all intended for the theological student. But the intention was just as much to show how the Reformed in their views continued in the footsteps of Luther and how seriously the Lutherans diverged from him.

In comparison with Luther, Calvin gets cited only sporadically, which is not only explainable from the fact that in the discussion with Lutherans, Calvin is a less appropriate source than Luther himself. Another reason is that the Heidelberg theologians, also due to the political situation, sought to join the German, Reformed tradition and were not

⁴⁶ *De redemptione* 171f.

⁴⁷ "An & quomodo certi esse queamus de nostri ad vitam aeternam praedestinatione." *De redemptione*, 444.

⁴⁸ "... reprobatio est aeterna in Deo voluntas quorundamin genere humano, ubi cum aliis in peccatum & damnationem lapsi essent, iusto suo iudicio non miserendi, sed reiiciendi eos a salutis in Christo communione, & abijciendi in poenas peccato debitas." *De redemptione*, 461.

⁴⁹ "Nec alia est doctrina Magistri sententiarum. ... Eandem sententiam Thomas Aquinas & alii inter scholasticos..." *De redemptione*, 552f.

⁵⁰ *De servo arbitrio Martini Lutheri, ad D. Erasmus Roterodamum, Liber illustris: Desideratis iampridem exemplaribus, contra veteres & novos Pelagianos, in usum studiose inventutis, & propagandae veritatis ergo; Nunc denuo, cum praefatione ad Lectorem*, editus, Neustadt 1591.

confident that an appeal to a French theologian who had made a career for himself in Switzerland would likely strengthen their position.

When dealing with the question of the certainty of election, Kimedoncius first of all refers to the doctrinal declarations of the Council of Trent. According to the Popish doctrine, no one can ever be sure of his or her election. And that is for no other reason than that one can never know whether his or her own contribution to salvation is sufficient. But there is nothing about such doubt in the Bible. On the contrary, there is certainty because the reason for one's election rests wholly in the grace of God.⁵¹ Kimedoncius protests in detail against those who want to move the conscience to doubt by pointing to their sin. Because election is of God, there can be no doubt.⁵² When the question follows as to how one can gain assurance, Kimedoncius answers that this can be gained in three ways. First, through the results of election in one's faith and sanctification; second, by looking to the promise that has been extended to us; and third, through the sealing of the Holy Spirit.⁵³ For all these things it is necessary to speak of election. In that way people learn to know God better and honor him more. In addition, it gives comfort and assurance to people in distress, it enlarges love for God, and it spurs the believers to serve God more.⁵⁴ In a last chapter, Kimedoncius does propose that one should speak of election soberly and wisely. The nurturing of curiosity must be prevented, but also the danger that people will see election as an argument for laxity in sanctification. And as far as the manner in which one speaks on this subject, all caution must be taken not to offend.⁵⁵

5. SIMON GRYNEAUS AND GEORG SOHN

The theme of predestination surfaces essentially with every Heidelberg theologian. One year after the reintroduction of the Reformed administration in the Palatinate, a theological discussion took place in Maulbronn in 1584 between Reformed and Lutheran theologians, and in that discussion election was one of the most important themes. Johann Jacob Gryneaus and Georg Sohn belong to the theologians of this beginning phase, and it is noticeable in their writings on this theme that they are at the beginning of a development.

In his disputation about election in the church, Gryneaus calls election a doctrine of yielding great comfort.⁵⁶ He gives a summary of the well-known objections to a discussion

⁵¹ Kimedoncius, *De redemptione*, 686.

⁵² "Nam cum salus tantum electorum sit, eius profecto certitudo constare nequit sine certitudine divinae electionis, quae salutis fons, origo & fundamentum est", *De redemptione* 699.

⁵³ "Est autem triplex fere electionis revelatio..." *De redemptione*, 700.

⁵⁴ "Servit excitando in nobis amoris Dei & studio bonorum operum." *De redemptione*, 733.

⁵⁵ "Denique quod ad modum & formam docendi pertinet, cautione opus est, ut quae vere dicuntur, congruenter etiam dicantur, ad cavendum, quoad licet, offensionem audientium." *De redemptione*, 745.

⁵⁶ Simon Grynaeus, *Theorema, de ecclesiae catholicae electione* Heidelberg, 1585; "Res sancta, certa, plena consolationis est, Praedestinatio catholicae Ecclesiae ad salutem." *Theorema*, 3.

of election. It is presumably too great a mystery and therefore unwarranted curiosity to preoccupy oneself with such hidden things. But Gryneaus does think that election can and should be discussed, precisely because the Holy Spirit instructs us on it in the Bible. To be sure, one needs to pray that God will keep us in simplicity of heart and that we study this matter only in the light of his Word. Noteworthy for the beginning phase of this development experienced in Heidelberg in this discussion is Gryneaus's proposal that one ought not to start with election, but that the whole matter should be viewed "a posteriori"; one should instead move from sanctification to justification, and after that to the calling and only then to election.⁵⁷ Gryneaus is aware of all the discussion points generated by election and reprobation, but emphasizes that what counts for us is to become clear what calling and election mean for the assurance and fruits of faith.⁵⁸

Gryneaus's caution is also recognizable in the formulations of Melancthon's student Georg Sohn. In his dogmatic survey *Methodus Theologiae*, he gives a definition of reprobation, which he also refers to as "predestination to death." In the way in which he defines this election it is clear how he tries to prevent the emergence of an arbitrarily acting God. Thus he speaks of those whom God knows in advance to remain unbelieving, while at the same time he says that God decided not to have them come to faith.⁵⁹ This makes on the one hand their unbelief the ground of their reprobation, while on the other it is God's decision not to make believers out of them. It is just as clear how Sohn tries to find the right relationship between time and eternity. This is about an eternal decision, but at the same time he says that God condemns them in time.⁶⁰ In both cases he assumes the situation of a fallen human race.

The same — in fact apologetic — attempt is apparent in the chapter on election in Sohn's commentary on the Augsburg confession. First he cites five reasons why also in the sermon for the Christian congregation predestination must be addressed. God is thereby honored, people will then know what it is all about when encountering the matter in the Bible, the believer is comforted by it when assailed by doubts and misfortunes, it brings one to humility, and finally it arms one against all kinds of forms of Pelagianism. According to Sohn, it is appropriate to discuss the topic "in soberness, reverence, and wisdom."⁶¹ He wishes to do that too and therefore tries to find a way in which eternity does not make time on earth a meaningless event. Just as in his *Methodus*, Sohn uses again and again the pair of

⁵⁷ *Theorema*, 4.

⁵⁸ "...nec denique quicquam nobis antiquius sit, quam fidei certitudine et effectis, testari firmamque facere vocationem et electionem nostram." *Theorema*, 4.

⁵⁹ Georg Sohn, *Methodus Theologiae plene confirmata* ..., Herborn 1609; "nunc in tempore incredulis ab aeterno praescitis... hoc est, quos non facere fideles..." *Theorema*, 258.

⁶⁰ "Itaque ut nunc in tempore condemnat omnes, qui sunt et manent infideles ... decrevit ab aeterno..." *Theorema*, 258.

⁶¹ Georg Sohn, *Exegesis praecipuorum articulorum Augustanae Confessionis*, Herborn 1609, 995.

words “foreknowledge” and “predestination.”⁶² Predestination is about the things God knows in advance.⁶³ According to his foreknowledge he decides on how things should go.⁶⁴ God has predestined those to eternal life of whom he knows in advance that they will become believers. This does not mean, however, that their faith is the reason for their salvation, for its ground is God’s decision to give them faith. It works in the same way for those destined to perdition. God knew that they would not believe, but it was his decision not to grant them faith. Following his teacher Melanchthon, Sohn tries to hold in balance the sovereignty of God and human responsibility.⁶⁵

6. ELECTION AND SANCTIFICATION

Directly connected to the discussion about election is the question of sanctification. Can one speak meaningfully about the sanctification of one’s life when God’s choice precedes all human action and is completely independent of it? Is the doctrine of election not a direct assault on the Biblical call to sanctification?

Hermann Rennecherus in 1600 published a book about regeneration.⁶⁶ Here he takes up in greater detail the consequences of predestination for the life of the believer. The criticism of both Lutherans and Catholics is that election acts as a brake on sanctification. Rennecherus’ book has no polemical intentions but seeks to offer a systematic presentation of what the Bible has to say on this subject. Election is treated rather briefly in the beginning of the book, and Rennecherus repeats what he also said about predestination in his other two books, namely that God had to allow sin in order to be merciful.⁶⁷ After that, Rennecherus describes especially the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. The means that what the Spirit uses for regeneration is mainly the preaching of the Gospel. Rennecherus rejects the notion that the sermon is not so important really, since the work of the Spirit in

⁶² “...id facere ab aeterno praesciverit & decreverit ...” *Exegesis* 992; “Praedestinatio illa rursus facta est secundum praescientiam Dei, id est, a se praescitos homines, atque adeo ut peccato corruptos, & per Evangelium de Christo vocatos, Deus praeordinavit.” *Exegesis*, 1001.

⁶³ “...praedestinatio est de iis rebus quas Deus praescivit.” *Exegesis*, 998).

⁶⁴ “...ut praescrivit, ita decrevit se facturum esse.” *Exegesis*, 998f..

⁶⁵ Frank calls Melanchthon’s position, “eine vermittelnde Stellung... zwischen ihrer Aufhebung und Radikalisierung” (Günter Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie Philipps Melanchthons (1497–1560)*, Leipzig 1995, 288). For the relation between providence and predestination in the theology of Melanchthon, see Gerrit Den Hartogh, *Voorzienigheid in donker licht. Herkomst en gebruik van het begrip ‘providentia’ in de reformatorische theologie, in het bijzonder bij Zacharias Ursinus*, Heerenveen 1999, 200–216.

⁶⁶ Hermann Rennecherus, *Orthodoxus et perspicuus de spirituali et salvifica hominis lapsi et corrupti regeneratione ...*, Lichae, 1600.

⁶⁷ “Deus itaque ut suae misericordiae, & iudici locus esset, primos parentes labu permisit....” *Orthodoxus*, 15.

the believer is the essential thing. However, God bound his Spirit to the Word, and the Spirit that is separated from the Word is the spirit of Satan and not one from God.⁶⁸

Rennecherus gives much attention to the imperfection of the believer. First he offers a detailed overview of the impressive titles the Bible gives to the believer. But he points out at the same time that however true these titles may be, the believers are nevertheless weak and imperfect and their Christian life a daily, lifelong struggle. That is why sin, weaknesses, and lack of sanctification should not bring the believer to despair, for imperfection is the characteristic feature of regeneration.⁶⁹ Rennecherus in that connection points to examples from the Bible, specifically David and Peter. David sinned with Bathsheba and Peter denied even Christ, though both were born again.⁷⁰ It is in connection with this subject that Rennecherus emphatically attacks other concepts from which the Reformed have always distanced themselves, but of which they are now accused. One such is the thought of the Libertines that the regenerated need not observe law. Even stronger is his rejection of the Roman Catholic and Baptist view of sanctification. In both cases a yoke is placed on the believer. The Catholics urge accomplishments one cannot deliver, accompanied by the constant threat of perdition when he fails to succeed. With the Baptists there is the emphasis on perfection in which the believer is urged to a form of sanctification he cannot satisfy and which God does not ask of us.⁷¹ According to Rennecherus, it is better to accept one's imperfection and to even take its fruits.⁷² For who meditates regularly on the fact that he or she is not an ideal believer, learns ever again that all self-praise is to be excluded and that all honor for salvation belongs to God. At the same time, the believer by confronting his or her own imperfection longs for growth in faith, while also accepting that each day is a struggle to live as God wants us to live. Besides, the Bible teaches clearly that not everyone is regenerated in the same degree and that therefore the same level of sanctification cannot be expected of every believer.⁷³

7. REFORMED RATIONALISM

One of the complaints against the Reformed is that, as far as the doctrine of the sacraments is concerned, they certainly conduct their reasoning rationally. But the

⁶⁸ "Spiritus enim qui a verbo divellitur, non Dei sed Satanae Spiritus est, quia Deus verbo suo conjunxit, ut inquit & docet." *Orthodoxus*, 54.

⁶⁹ "Haec renatorum imperfectio neminem vel conturbare vel ad desperationem adigere debet, ...," *Orthodoxus*, 104.

⁷⁰ "Sic Propheta David quamvis reginitus fuerit, tamen nihilominus adulter & proditor, factus est. Sic Apostolus Petrus reginitus Christum abnegavit." *Orthodoxus*, 110.

⁷¹ *Orthodoxus*, 105–112.

⁷² "...quae utilitates ex imperfectionis meditatione redundant ..." *Orthodoxus*, 113.

⁷³ "...satis manifestum est, non omnes aequali modo & simili mensura regenerari, sed alios longe plus, alios multo minus, prout hoc sapienti Deo placet, emendari." *Orthodoxus*, 225.

Reformed doctrine of election also is criticized for allowing reason to rule over faith.⁷⁴ The issue is raised by Scultetus in the question, “whether it is warranted in religious matters and articles of faith to see and judge reason or the common course of nature as an argument or subsidiary argument?”⁷⁵ He answers his own question: Scripture, indeed, is the only norm, just as Luther too rejected Thomism on the basis of Scripture. And those Scriptures indeed call us to believe with a child-like faith and point to the dangers of so-called wisdom. However, this also means that, when it concerns the Lord’s Supper, one should be able to find in Scripture what the Lutherans say about the bodily omnipresence of Christ.

Kimodoncius also raises the question regarding the value of reason in his book on the Bible⁷⁶. He argues forcefully that philosophy and reason should not be slighted when interpreting the Bible, for both are a gift with which God has endowed us.⁷⁷ Reason, as well as philosophy, can be helpful in making difficult places in the Bible somewhat more understandable.⁷⁸ But they must realize that their place is subsidiary to the Bible and that they are servants of the faith.⁷⁹ It is exactly in that function, though, that they are of great significance. At the same time there is the critique on the Lutheran side that predestination is irrational, for it does battle with justice. Pareus pursues that accusation in his “*Gegenbeweisung*” by asserting that God’s judgments are both just and hidden, and that reason must leave it at that.⁸⁰ Reason does indeed raise the question of justice and regards God’s acts as unjust. But God owes no one anything and thus he is not “*von rechts das ewige leben schuldig*” to anyone.⁸¹

8. MELANCHTHON IN HEIDELBERG

Again and again the person and works of Philip Melanchthon come to the fore in publications from Heidelberg. This is not surprising considering that most docents were directly or indirectly students of Melanchthon. Especially notable among them was Georg

⁷⁴ “Daß wir solchen unseren glauben/nicht auß der blinden vernunft/... geschöpft und erlernt haben” Pitiscus, *Ausführlicher Bericht*, 62.

⁷⁵ Abraham Scultetus, *Vialia, Das ist ein Christlich unnd freundlich Reytz Gespräch, ...*, Hanau, 1618, 61.

⁷⁶ Jacob Kimedoncius, *De Scripto Dei Verbo, libri octo*, Heidelberg 1595.

⁷⁷ “Nemo tamen velut in contemptum Philosophiae haec dicta existimet. Absit. Est enim illa hominum generi a Deo singulari munere tributa; & si quis dextre utatur, utilitates quam plurimas affert, etiam sacras literas discentibus & docentibus.” *De Scripto Dei Verbo*, 111.

⁷⁸ *De Scripto Dei Verbo*, 109.

⁷⁹ “...ancillandi videlicet, non dominandi, religione Christianae.” *De Scripto Dei Verbo*, 111.

⁸⁰ “Murret Menschliche Vernunft dawider/was liget daran? Gottes gerichte seind gerecht und unerforschlich.” David Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung dass die Heidelbergische Theologen*. (See note 17.) p. 67.

⁸¹ *Gegenbeweisung*, 70.

Sohn as an outspoken follower of Melanchthon.⁸² Sohn, born in 1551 in Rossbach in the Wetterau, studied theology in Wittenberg and in Marburg. At this Hessian university he already became in 1574 — when he was 23 years old — professor of theology. A conflict ensued there with a colleague, Aegidius Hunnius, and it became clear in this conflict how much of a student Sohn was of Melanchthon. However, considering how the Lutheran Hunnius enjoyed the support of the Marburg landgrave Ludwig IV, Sohn took the appointment in Heidelberg in 1584 where he remained till his early death in 1589. There in 1588, Sohn's most important work appeared, namely his *Synopsis Corporis Doctrinae Philippo Melancthonis*.⁸³ This overview of Melanchthon's teaching consists of a great many propositions which Sohn had taken from the collection of writings authorized by Melanchthon himself and which were published as *Corpus Doctrinae Christiana*.⁸⁴ This work is especially known as *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum*. Sohn used this *Corpus* in Marburg for his disputations, still recognizable from the titles and construction of the various chapters. In this overview by Sohn, which he dedicates to Caspar Peucer, the son-in-law of Melanchthon, he puts into words the complaint of the Heidelberg theologians against the Lutherans by attacking them for thinking that Luther could stand only if Melanchthon was slain.⁸⁵ Luther was very impressed by Melanchthon, especially by his *Loci communes*. Melanchthon himself did not change his course after Luther's death, but yet the theologians who claim to walk in Luther's footsteps made sure that Luther and Melanchthon were placed in opposition to each other. While canonizing Luther⁸⁶, they gradually robbed Melanchthon of his authority and removed him from the church.⁸⁷ According to Sohn, this campaign against Melanchthon was not only unjust but also unwise. But fortunately, according to Sohn, Melanchthon can be compared to Noah who not only had a son who mocked him, but also two sons who honored him. The work of this man is not only of great value for the humanities, but also for faith, church, and education. Then Sohn gives a summary of of Melanchthon's accomplishments and what will be missed if they neglect to make use of him. Sohn sees it as his task to restore Melanchthon's position and to reconnect him to Luther.⁸⁸ Through this synopsis Sohn hopes to kindle a love for the works of Melanchthon among the theological students. The reason is that those works contain what the church absolutely needs, namely to

⁸² Drüll, *Gelehrtenlexikon*, 507f.; Theodor Mahlmann, "Theologie," in Barbara Bauer (Hg.), *Melancthon und die Marburger Professoren*, Bd. 2, Marburg 1999, 628–645.

⁸³ Georg Sohn, *Synopsis Corporis Doctrinae Philippi Melancthonis Thesibus breviter comprehensa et anno 1582. Marpurgi in privata schola ad disputandum proposita, et nunc primum edita a Georgio Sohn Sacrae Theologiae Doctore et Professore*, Heidelberg, 1588. Cited according to the collected disputations of Georg Sohn, *Theses de plerisque locis theologicis, in Academiis Marpurgensi et Heidelbergensi ad disputandum propositae*, Herborn, 1609.

⁸⁴ Sohn uses the Leipzig edition of 1565.

⁸⁵ "...nec stare posse Lutherum, nisi prostrato Melancthone, putarent." *Synopsis*, 4.

⁸⁶ "...solus floreret in Ecclesia Lutherus, & et scripta eius omnia pro canonicis haberentur...", *Synopsis* 4.; "... scripta eius sine discrimine canonizantes..." *Synopsis*, 5.

⁸⁷ "... scripta eius optima exautorantes." *Synopsis*, 5.

⁸⁸ "... ut optimus Melancthon in pristinum statum, unde dejectus fuerat, restituatur, & cum Lutero iterum conjungatur..." *Synopsis*, 6.

enunciate these matters precisely and clearly.⁸⁹ “I have tried so hard to establish a love for Melanchthon’s writings in the feelings of the young. In these works two things especially emerge which the church has need of: an unambiguous and clear way of speaking.”⁹⁰

In a laudatory poem⁹¹ about Melanchthon, he says that the reformer was buried repeatedly.⁹² Sohn undoubtedly also has in mind the burial of Melanchthon in the “Formula Concordiae” of 1577, in which he is intentionally not named because at the end of his life he came too close to the neighborhood of Calvinism. Over against that, Sohn is full of praise for Melanchthon and especially for his “*loci-Methodē*” as a means of understanding the Gospel and passing it on. In a poem by Calimachus F. that follows Sohn’s laudatory poem, Sohn is praised for succeeding in bringing Melanchthon back to life.⁹³

That accomplishment can also be seen in the decision of the faculty not to use Calvin’s *Institutes* as textbook, but to stick with the *Loci* of Melanchthon. Not the *Institutes* but the *Loci* was used as textbook and the professors refused to change that.⁹⁴ It is very significant that in 1588 in the so-called “Calvinistic” Heidelberg, it is not the “*brevitas et claritas*” that is chosen as example, but the work of Melanchthon. However, this does not imply judgment of Calvin but shows rather how this faculty sees Melanchthon standing theologically in a straight line with the reformer from Geneva.⁹⁵

That surely includes the theme of predestination. By certain Lutheran theologians, the ideas of Calvin on this subject were presented in such a way as to suggest that a rejection of this concept would not only be a foregone conclusion but also necessary. The Heidelberg theologians, on the other hand, tried not only to correct this image of Calvin but attempted at the same time to make clear that Melanchthon favored the same doctrine of predestination as Calvin. This becomes clear in the work of Daniel Tossanus, the father of the earlier-mentioned Paul Tossanus.⁹⁶ Tossanus, born in France, became court chaplain to elector Frederick III. When Frederick’s successor terminated his service, Tossanus became in

⁸⁹ “Amorem scriptorum Melanchthonis, in quibus duo maxime lucent, quae in Ecclesiis sunt necessaria, proprietates & perspicuitas sermonis...” *Synopsis*, 7.

⁹⁰ Mahlmann, *Theologie*, 645.

⁹¹ Text and Analysis, Mahlmann, *Theologie*, 636–640.

⁹² “... fraude & astu multiplici sepultum...” *Synopsis*, 8.

⁹³ “De Philippo Melanchthone redivivo.” *Synopsis*, 10.

⁹⁴ Bernard Vogler, *Le Clergé Protestant Rhénan au siècle de la Réforme (1555–1619)*, Paris, s.a., 54.

⁹⁵ For the relation between Calvin and Melanchthon on the issue of predestination, see Timothy Wengert, “We Will Feast Together In Heaven”. The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon,” in Karin Maag ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence Beyond Wittenberg*, Grand Rapids 1999, 19–44; Richard Muller, *Ordo Docendi: Melanchthon and the Organization of Calvin’s Institutes, 1536–1543*, in: aaO., 123–140.

⁹⁶ See: Friedrich Wilhelm Cuno, *Daniel Tossanus der Ältere, Professor der Theologie und Pastor (1541–1602)*, 2 Bde., Amsterdam 1898; Drüll, *Gelehrtenlexikon*, 530f.

1577 professor in Neustadt and practiced there at the same time the office of general-superintendent and president of the church council. From 1584 till his death in 1602 he serves in Heidelberg as professor of theology. One of his most important works focuses on the theme of predestination.⁹⁷ In this work Tossanus takes up the Lutheran claim that Melanchthon, as far as election is concerned, is not in agreement with the Reformed. Tossanus admits that sometimes Melanchthon in his love for peace goes rather far and that in his discussion of predestination does not always express himself clearly enough. Still, essentially Melanchthon is in agreement with Calvin. The Melanchthonians also teach that the church is the "*Coetus*" of the elect and called. Tossanus defends the absolute predestination and for support points to such theologians as Bucer, Calvin, Peter Martyr, Beza, and Zanchius; and according to him, Melanchthon also fits in this group. Supralapsarianism as taught by these men is also easily defended with Melanchthon's concepts. It is not the question if Tossanus's presentation of these matters is accurate, but it is clear that he sees Melanchthon as a Calvinist.

Pareus hence denies that the theologians from the Pfaltz would be in conflict with the "Confessio Augustana" and with Melanchthon's *Loci Communes*. Melanchthon in his last writings is somewhat more careful than Luther, Calvin, and others.⁹⁸ But he is careful out of concern for making God the author of sin. Yet, Pareus regards that concern of Melanchthon groundless, for we should not be afraid to speak of election and reprobation the way God does in the Bible. Therefore Pareus thinks that Melanchthon is wrongly disturbed by Luther's *De Servo*. For what there is to read by Luther is not the teaching of Luther or Calvin, but of the Holy Spirit itself.⁹⁹

9. CONCLUSION

The reflections on predestination of the theological faculty of Heidelberg in the years 1583-1622 takes place for the most part in the framework of discussion with Lutheran theologians. Through this discussion, which is carried on in a sharply polemical tone, the Heidelbergers find it necessary to pursue the topic in ever-greater depth. While Gryneaus wants to handle the issue *a posteriori*, later theologians consider the question whether God decided on election before or after the fall.

A second feature of the Heidelberg contribution to the election debate is the pastoral motivation for the defense of the Reformed point of view. The doctrine of election and reprobation as it was taught and defended in Heidelberg offers the believers the most comfort and assurance.

Third, it should be pointed out that theologians who associated with Luther came primarily from the school of Melanchthon. Where Melanchthon develops his doctrine of predestination in distinction to Luther and his *Willenlebre*, a stronger identification with Luther is noticeable among the Heidelberg theologians. Melanchthon distances himself from

⁹⁷ Daniel Tossanus, *Doctrina de Praedestinatione, brevibus ac perspicuis quaestionibus comprehensa, et in septem capita distincta*. Hanau, 1609 (published by his son Paul).

⁹⁸ Pareus, *Gegenbeweisung*, 69.

⁹⁹ *Gegenbeweisung*, 70.

Luther in order to protect human responsibility; on this point the Heidelbergers join Luther to prove that they remain in line with Luther, though they are called Calvinists.

Finally, as a fourth distinguishing characteristic, the reception of Calvin and Melanchthon should be mentioned. Both differed slightly with each other regarding election, but the difference was not so great that they thought it necessary to part ways theologically, ecclesiastically, or personally. In Heidelberg the influence of Melanchthon dominated without implication that this meant a choice against Calvin. In the development of the doctrine of election there is a development in the views of Melanchthon toward Calvin's views, but this too is a matter of development and not a change in the basic point of view. That's how a doctrine of election comes into being in Heidelberg that stands in the broad Reformed tradition, a broadness that gives the Heidelberg theologians the hope to reunite the Remonstrants and the contra-Remonstrants in Dordrecht. When that is unsuccessful, they choose the side of the Remonstrants. That too is not a choice in favor of Calvin and against Melanchthon, though the Remonstrants appealed to Melanchthon. The choice for the position of the contra-Remonstrants went back to the conviction that in this position the Biblical givens and thereby the grace of God and the assurance of faith, that is to say the justice of God and the comfort for his people, are best safeguarded. Just as with Melanchthon, comfort is the focus of the doctrine of election.¹⁰⁰ Thereby the pastoral overcomes the polemical, and perhaps theology overcomes philosophy as well.

¹⁰⁰ Melanchthon calls the passages in Scripture on predestination "loci multum consolatorii" (CR 21, 15f).