

Triune Elohim:  
The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians and Reformed Readings of  
Hebrew in the Confessional Age

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Christ Church

DPhil Oriental Studies

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**Short Abstract**

In 1563, the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism marked the conversion of the Rhineland Palatinate to a stronghold for Reformed religion. Immediately thereafter, however, the Palatinate church experienced a deeply unsettling surge in the popularity of antitrinitarianism. To their Lutheran and Catholic opponents, this development revealed a toxic connection between Reformed theology and the tenets of antitrinitarianism. As early as 1565, for instance, the Catholic Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius argued anonymously that the Reformed principle of *sola scriptura* was indistinguishable from the biblicism which had led heretics to reject the doctrine of the Trinity on the grounds that it was nowhere explicitly justified in the biblical text.

Seven years later, the displaced Italian theologian and Heidelberg professor, Girolamo Zanchi, countered this argument in his *De Tribus Elohim* (1572). This huge landmark of this early theological crisis in Heidelberg sought to oppose the biblicism of the early antitrinitarians by arguing that the doctrine of the Trinity was explicitly taught within the Hebrew divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*. The following year *De Tribus Elohim* received an Imperial Privilege from the Catholic court in Vienna, a distinction virtually unheard of for a Reformed theological text. Zanchi's argument was then widely promulgated in the marginal notations of the tremendously influential *Biblia Sacra* of Franciscus Junius and Immanuel Tremellius, and became a staple of refutations of antitrinitarianism thereafter.

Yet Zanchi's confidence that trinitarian theology was contained within the Hebrew of the Old Testament was not shared by many of his own Reformed colleagues. John Calvin's exegetical works had explicitly rejected this argument; and theologians like David Pareus (Zanchi's younger colleague in Heidelberg) and the Dutch Hebraist Johannes Drusius preferred a more historical-grammatical reading of the Old Testament and dismissed Zanchi's reading of the name *Elohim* despite the danger that this might sacrifice a valuable defence against antitrinitarianism. Complicating the picture further, the Lutheran polemicist Aegidius Hunnius directed Zanchi's arguments against Calvin in his *Calvinus Iudaizans* (1593).

This variety of responses to Zanchi's argument demonstrates the diversity of assumptions about the nature of the biblical text within the Reformed church, contradicting the notion that the Reformed world in the age of "confessionalization" was becoming increasingly homogenous or that the works of John Calvin had become the authoritative touchstone of Reformed orthodoxy in this period.

## Long Abstract

Since the twelfth century, it had been commonly argued by Christian exegetes, like Lombard, Lyra, and Luther, that the Hebrew divine name *Elohim* was intended to communicate the plurality of persons within the godhead. However, because of his commitment to a more literal, historical / grammatical hermeneutic, John Calvin's exegesis tended to strip away the trinitarian reading of many of the standard Christian Old Testament proof texts, like the argument from the word *Elohim*. From the 1550s onwards a series of Italian Protestant exiles, sojourning primarily in centres of Reformed learning, applied the principle of *sola scriptura* even more radically and argued that a consistent application of this fundamental Protestant principle required that only terminology taken directly from Scripture should be allowed in theological discussion, thus severely undermining the doctrine of the Trinity.

The antitrinitarian claim that their rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity had necessarily resulted from their submission to the Reformed insistence on *sola scriptura* afforded great opportunities to those, like the Polish Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, who were hostile to the Reformed cause. In 1568, two theologians of Zurich, Josias Simler and Heinrich Bullinger, feeling the weight of this argument against the Reformed church, attempted to distance the Reformed understanding of *sola scriptura* from that of the antitrinitarians with the work *De aeterno Dei Filio*. However, as antitrinitarianism continued to advance in Poland a petition was made to the ministers of the Palatinate on behalf of the Polish trinitarians for further assistance. Unfortunately, this appeal found itself accepted by Johann Sylvan, a member of a small group of Palatinate ministers who were feeling more and more ostracised by the leadership of the Palatinate's Reformed theologians due to an ongoing controversy on the subject of church discipline. Rather than eliciting a rebuttal of the heresy, this request became the catalyst for Sylvan and his companions apostasy into antitrinitarianism.

Thus the suspicions of anti-Reformed polemicists were even further confirmed when, in the Summer of 1570, the Palatinate's conversion to the Reformed faith was immediately followed by the shocking discovery that a handful of Palatinate ministers had converted to antitrinitarianism. What is more, the Heidelberg antitrinitarians pinned their denial of the doctrine of the Trinity on the "Calvinism" that they had been taught in the Reformed church. The scandalous nature of this episode was exacerbated when the Lutheran Stephan Gerlach encountered the former Heidelberg minister and companion of Sylvan, Adam Neuser, in the court of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. In several conversations, Neuser clearly pinned the blame for his conversion to Islam on the distinctives of Calvin, feeding Gerlach the provocative slogan "He who fears falling into Arianism, let him beware of Calvinism." When Gerlach returned to the University of Tübingen, his conversations with Neuser became powerful anecdotal evidence of the dangers of Calvinism.

The Heidelberg antitrinitarians were characterized by a commitment to the following four points: biblicism, attention to the original languages (especially Hebrew), a prioritizing of the Old Testament over the New, and a conviction that their antitrinitarianism was really just a logical extrapolation of Reformed theology. Given the Palatinate's already precarious position within the Empire, the Heidelberg antitrinitarians and their claims about the inevitable trajectory of Calvinism created a pressing need for the Reformed theologians of Heidelberg to produce a definitive defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, which took into account these four distinctives.

Girolamo Zanchi, an Italian exile and a Reformed theologian whose life both paralleled and intersected the lives of a number of the most influential and well-known

antitrinitarians, was a natural choice for Frederick III to respond to the challenge of the antitrinitarians and to produce a definitive defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, *De Tribus Elohim* (1572). Although Zanchi had previously published very little and was known for his glacial pace when moving through theological questions, his firsthand experience with antitrinitarianism well equipped him to produce a monumental work in, relatively speaking, a brief period of time. Modern estimations of Zanchi's defence of the Trinity have been shaped by the notion that post-Calvin Reformed theologians, like Zanchi, betrayed Calvin's theology with a rationalistic Scholasticism and, therefore, conclude that Zanchi's defence of the Trinity was characterized by this rationalistic Scholasticism. The sole book length treatment of the theology of Zanchi has been the 1961 dissertation, by Otto Gründler, later published in German, which cast Zanchi as a rationalistic scholastic who, along with Beza and Vermigli, had betrayed the Christ-centred theology of John Calvin and replaced it with a lifeless scholasticism. J.P. Donnelly and Christopher Burchill have both argued, although with fairly different estimations of his motivation, that Zanchi's response to the antitrinitarians was essentially framed as a scholastic argument.

However, a survey of *De Tribus Elohim* reveals that Zanchi's work was carefully crafted to answer the biblicism of the antitrinitarians. Zanchi built his defence of the Trinity around the biblical divine names, *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, arguing from passages like the *Shema* of Deut. 6:4 that the Trinity had been apparent to the Old Testament saints. Zanchi insisted that the Hebrew language held a special rank as the most ancient and most semantically accurate of all languages, giving a special significance to the Hebrew divine names and providing the necessary foundation for his assertions about their significance. Zanchi demonstrated that by close attention to a *proprie* reading of the Hebrew text it could be shown that the Old Testament authors had clearly used the words *Jehovah* and *Elohim* to indicate the mystery of the Trinity. Zanchi was made confident in his explanation of these divine names by the testimony of Petrus Galatinus, whose *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis* claimed to find support for this interpretation in the works of some of the most ancient rabbis. By placing the doctrine of the Trinity in the divine names, Zanchi was able to seek doctrinal unity amongst the Reformed by speaking in purely scriptural terminology. Soon after its publication, *De Tribus Elohim* received an Imperial Privilege, confirming Zanchi's success in producing a defence of the Trinity that transcended certain party lines and guaranteeing a much wider reception of the work.

Previous assessments of Zanchi's works, distracted by Gründler's charges of scholastic rationalism, have missed the fact that by placing the orthodox definition of the Trinity in the Hebrew divine names, Zanchi was able to cater to the biblicism of the antitrinitarians as he confronted their heresy. Thus, in making his case that Zanchi represented a significant departure from the theology of Calvin, Otto Gründler mischaracterised Zanchi's theological method as given over to rationalism.

Zanchi's work was soon regarded by Christian theologians throughout Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, as an invaluable resource for making the case for the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the fact that Zanchi used the divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, despite Calvin's rejection of this argument, was cited by the Lutheran polemicist Aegidius Hunnius in his own attack on Calvin. To Hunnius's mind, the fact that another Reformed exegete also saw a testimony of trinitarianism in these Hebrew names was further confirmation of the fact that Calvin's exegesis had deviated from orthodoxy. Hunnius first made this case in his *Articulus* (1589), arguing that John Calvin's grammatical reading of the Old Testament had weakened the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way that the Reformed

church had become a conduit to antitrinitarianism. The Heidelberg theologian David Pareus came to Calvin's defence, initially insisting in his response to Hunnius that the argument from Gen. 1:1 was really an unimportant part of the exegetical defence for the doctrine of the Trinity. Hunnius responded to Pareus with *Calvinus Iudaizans* (1592), in which he pointed out how the case against Calvin was essentially spelled out in Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*. Pareus soon answered Hunnius and attempted to reclaim Zanchi as an ally. Despite his opposition to Hunnius, Pareus's position was marked by a pragmatic irenicism, which abandoned the notion that the meaning of the text was necessarily singular and sought to incorporate both the interpretation of Calvin and that of Zanchi.

The controversy between Hunnius and Pareus has often been cited as a clear example of the growing divide between Lutheran and Reformed confessional identities. Calvin's "grammatical reading" of the Old Testament and his occasional receptivity towards rabbinical commentaries have been the primary focus of modern summaries of Calvin's exegesis. Combining this characterization of Calvin's exegetical method with the misguided, though seemingly omnipresent, notion that Calvin's work acted as a touchstone for Reformed orthodoxy, has generated the assumption that Reformed exegesis was characterized, in opposition to Lutheran exegesis, by Calvin's "grammatical reading." However, once the exchange between Hunnius and Pareus is placed within the context of Heidelberg's antitrinitarianism and Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*, Reformed confessionalization of exegesis becomes less clearcut.

The continuing debate over whether or not the divine names, *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, revealed God's triune nature extended into the Dutch Republic with the two Hebraists, Franciscus Junius and Johannes Drusius. Although both men were professors in prominent Reformed Universities, they exemplified two very different approaches to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Junius, an accomplished linguist and an enthusiastic supporter of the Reformed agenda, echoed the theological reading of Zanchi and described the Hebrew language as the most ancient, most precise, most divine language on earth, giving it a unique power to convey biblical truth. Drusius, however, the consummate grammarian, though moving through many of the same circles as Junius, continued in the footsteps of Calvin and was far more concerned with the grammatical reading of the Hebrew text than the theological. Both men published, in the same year, widely diverging studies of the "parallels" of the Old and New Testament. Junius, convinced that the meaning of Scripture was always singular and that the parallel passages of the Old and New Testaments conveyed a single meaning, believed that the entire Christian *analogia fidei* had been obvious to the Old Testament saints, according to a *proprie* reading of the Hebrew text. Drusius, on the other hand, in his *Parallels*, is uninterested in demonstrating a unity of meaning between the two testaments and indeed goes as far as describing the New Testament parallels as being completely divergent from the original Hebrew text.

Together with Immanuel Tremellius, Junius published the immensely influential *Biblia Sacra* (1575-1579), which provided significant support for Zanchi's trinitarian reading of the Hebrew text, promulgating throughout its footnotes the exegetical arguments of *De Tribus Elohim*. With greater skill as a Hebraist, Junius was well equipped to further the exegetical argument of Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*. In 1604, Drusius described the question of whether or not the Hebrew divine name *Elohim* indicated a plurality of persons within the divine nature as having provoked an ugly controversy that raged within the small world of Reformed exegesis. Drusius, himself, published several works defending a more grammatical reading of the Hebrew text and denying that the Hebrew name *Elohim* indicated the three persons of the

Trinity. As if to come full circle, just as Calvin's hermeneutic had been accused of "judaizing" by his many detractors, now Drusius's grammatical reading of the Hebrew text and his rejection of many of the trinitarian arguments provided from the Old Testament by Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius (combined with his association with the Remonstrants) now invited the accusation of Socinianism from his own antagonists.

Within the Protestant church, the argument for the doctrine of the Trinity from the Hebrew phrase *Jehovah Elohim* became for many an essential part of the argument for the Trinity from Scripture. Using the Hebrew divine names to describe the triune nature of God overcame the biblicism of the antitrinitarians, transcended the partisanship of many of the divisions within the Protestant church (despite revealing another division), and demonstrated that the teaching of the Reformed church on the doctrine of the Trinity was none other than the ancient and orthodox faith. Nevertheless, despite the widespread popularity of Zanchi's argument throughout the Christian church, many reformed theologians continued to follow Calvin's explanation of the significance of the word *Elohim* and maintained that the trinitarian reading of the word *Elohim* was a weak and forced argument. An exegetical spectrum was then produced amongst the Reformed theologians, with men like Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius on one side, relying on a theological reading of the Hebrew text to establish clear scriptural proofs for the doctrine of the Trinity. And on the other side men like Calvin, Pareus, and Drusius rejected those same readings of the Hebrew as they produced a more grammatical reading of the Old Testament and then found themselves accused of having unwittingly undermined the case for the Trinity (though Pareus's irenicism at times placed him in the middle). And as the antitrinitarians took the grammatical reading one step further than Calvin and his colleagues, taunting them for their supposed failure to see the logical conclusion of their course, they gave opportunity to the Lutherans to outflank the Reformed just beyond Zanchi and his colleagues.

The word *Elohim* then became a sort of shibboleth for these various positions, identifying a host of presuppositions about the nature of the Old Testament held by various Reformed exegetes at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. In fact, this study has discovered a controversy, similar in many respects to the vowel point controversy, centred on the correct exposition of this name *Elohim*. Additionally, this study has demonstrated that the persistent, though erroneous, notion that the theological convictions of John Calvin were the primary yardstick by which the Reformed measured orthodoxy has also contributed to the misguided assumption that Calvin's grammatical reading, as opposed to the theological, was broadly representative for Reformed exegetes of this period. Rather, as has been made clear in the preceding chapters, Reformed exegetes such as Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius, were just as fond of the theological reading as were their Lutheran opponents. Equally clear is the fact that they did not hold Calvin's estimation so high that they were unwilling to accept interpretations of the text which had been explicitly rejected by him. This variety within the Reformed church also calls into question recent attempts to apply the confessionalization thesis to the discipline of exegesis. The controversy over the word *Elohim* shows that, rather than undergoing an exegetical normalization at this particular point, Reformed exegetes maintained a significant amount of variety in their interpretations, in contradistinction to post-Formula of Concord Lutherans.

Had it not been for the threat of antitrinitarianism, had the antitrinitarians never surfaced, or had the antitrinitarians made their case against the Trinity solely on the grounds of rationalism and not by means of a radical interpretation of *sola scriptura*, the difference between the theological reading and the grammatical reading might have been far less dramatic. The difference between Calvin's explanation of the word *Elohim* in Gen. 1:1 and

the explanation given by other Reformed exegetes might have been so trivial as to be not worth mentioning. However, once the antitrinitarians had supported their case with a radical biblicism and had laid claim to Calvin as their exegetical inspiration, the question of the right interpretation of *Elohim* became crucially important. Nevertheless, even after several bouts with antitrinitarianism, including the scandalous Heidelberg affair, the Reformed still did not normalize their exegesis. Rather than producing a standardized, confessional response from within the Reformed ranks, the antitrinitarians sparked controversy – the *Elohim* controversy.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those that contributed to my work over the past several years to make the completion of this dissertation possible. This work began as a continuation of my MSt at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, where my dissertation explored the role of Jewish exegesis in the works of John Calvin. I am grateful to this program and the staff at Yarnton Manor for their generosity and for the first opportunity to study the intersection between the study of the Hebrew and the development of Reformation theology.

Dr. Joanna Weinberg was the supervisor for my MSt dissertation as well as the following work, although Professor Howard Hotson joined her as a co-supervisor on the present work, adding another layer of expertise to my supervision and guidance. At our first meeting Professor Hotson suggested that the study of Calvin's exegesis, though a fruitful field of study, was also a crowded field of study. Thus he proposed that I move my focus to something slightly later and within the Empire, bringing me into a region of study comparatively less researched in the English literature, as well as into an area that made better use of Professor Hotson's expertise. I am tremendously grateful for this suggestion as this shift, though feeling a bit risky at the time, has yielded much more fruitful research than my earlier trajectory was likely to have produced. Throughout this journey Dr. Weinberg and Professor Hotson have been invaluable guides. Many thanks.

I am appreciative of the sharpening my work received at both my transfer of status and my confirmation of status with Dr. Piet van Boxel, Professor Guy Stroumsa, and Sir Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch. Additionally, Professor Ian Maclean reviewed an earlier draft of this work and made a number of helpful observations and suggestions. His own research into the story of the publication of *De Tribus Elohim* was particularly enlightening. My work has also benefited from conversations and correspondence with Theodor

Dunkelgrün and Christopher Burchill. Thanks also are due to Tim Griffith and Dr. Louis Perraud for their corrections to my Latin translations. Additionally, Stéphanie Kay's proofing of this dissertation receives my insistent gratitude. The help of Betsy Bybell, from the Moscow Public Library, made it possible for me to continue my research while away from Oxford.

Particular thanks are due to Dr. Timothy and Anna Edwards for their hospitality, friendship, and assistance. Without the support of my mother, Anita Merkle, my father, Gary Merkle, and the seemingly limitless generosity and encouragement of Douglas and Nancy Wilson, this work would have never been completed. And most of all I thank my wife, Rebekah Merkle, and our five children, Knox, Jemima, Belphoebe, Hero, and Judah Merkle, for fitting their lives into a handful of suitcases and moving across the ocean with me. I am beyond grateful to you for your loyalty to me and hope that your memories of Oxford with me are as fond as mine are of you lot.

Despite the help I received from so many others, all the mistakes in the following dissertation remain entirely my own.

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# Introduction

## Beware of Calvinism

In *Antidanaeus* (1580), the Lutheran theologian Stephan Gerlach described an encounter he had had in Istanbul, on 2 July 1574, with the soon-to-be notorious former minister of Heidelberg, Adam Neuser.<sup>1</sup> Neuser had fled to Turkey two years previously, after having scandalously converted from the Reformed faith to Arianism; from serving as a prominent minister of the Reformed church to forging a radical antitrinitarian path, serving under the Sultan of Istanbul as a *spahi*. In this encounter in Istanbul, Neuser had shown Gerlach a letter that he had received from an unnamed antitrinitarian in Poland. Neuser had scribbled a note in the margin of this letter reading: “No one in our time (that I know of) has become an Arian, who was not first a Calvinist: Servetus, Blandrata, Alciatus, Franciscus Davidis, Gentilis, Gribaldus, Sylvanus, and others. Therefore, he who fears falling into Arianism, let him beware of Calvinism.”<sup>2</sup> Neuser’s incendiary remark was filed away by Gerlach as a useful testimony concerning the inevitably heretical trajectory of “Calvinism.” Gerlach would make good use of this scandalous remark in the following decade in his own campaign against the “Calvinists.”

Neuser’s own biography neatly embodied the concerns of many about the exegetical principles of the Reformed church. When the Protestant reformers placed Scripture, and

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1 Stephan Gerlach, *Antidanaeus, sive responsio, qua Lamberti Danaei figmenta et calumniae, quas contra Antiturmum D.D. Osiandri, in causa coenae dominicae et maiestatis Christi hominis, impotenter evomuit, ex verbo Dei deteguntur et confutantur*. (Tübingen: Georgius Gruppenbachius, 1580), 38–39. The most extensive bibliography for Adam Neuser is found in Christopher Burchill, *The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians: Johann Sylvan, Adam Neuser, Matthias Vehe, Jacob Suter, and Johann Hasler*, Bibliotheca Dissidentium (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1989), 87–126.

2 ‘Nullus nostro tempore (mihi notus) factus est Arianus, qui non antea fuerit Calvinista, Servetus, Blandrata, Alciatus, Franciscus Davidis, Gentilis, Gribaldus, Sylvanus, et Alii. Igitur qui timet sibi, ne incidat in Arianismum, caveat Calvinismum.’ Gerlach, *Antidanaeus*, 39. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

Scripture alone, as the final infallible authority in all theological discussion, in addition to challenging the authority of the Roman Catholic church, their appeal to *sola scriptura* also suggested to theological radicals an obvious pathway for attacking certain doctrinal questions which the reformers themselves considered to be entirely settled. Thus, early antitrinitarians, like Adam Neuser, positioned themselves as the only ones to take seriously *sola scriptura*, arguing that the terminology of the Trinity was non-existent in Scripture and that consistent Reformed exegesis required a denial of this seemingly unbiblical doctrine. The challenge of antitrinitarianism in the late sixteenth century, therefore, placed a unique pressure on the Reformed church, by essentially daring her to embrace the radicals' caricature of *sola scriptura*.

Modern summaries of Reformed exegesis during this period have overlooked the influence of the antitrinitarian controversy on the development of Reformed biblical studies. They have instead traced the development of Reformed exegesis as if it were one continuous stream descending from the works of John Calvin moving on, uninterrupted, to the age of orthodoxy. This dissertation examines the way that the intervening challenge of antitrinitarianism shaped Reformed readings of Scripture in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By situating the publication of Jerome Zanchi's defence of the Trinity, *De Tribus Elohim* (1572), in the context of the scandal of antitrinitarianism in Heidelberg, this study will demonstrate that Zanchi's divergence from the exegetical principles of Calvin was intended to counter the biblicism of the antitrinitarians. Zanchi's interpretation of the divine name *Elohim*, though in contradiction to Calvin's treatment of the word, subsequently received the support of a number of his Reformed colleagues, who further developed Zanchi's arguments. Thus, considering Reformed exegesis from the perspective of the antitrinitarian controversy leads to the discovery of an exegetical variety within the Reformed church, a variety which deviates significantly from the exegetical principles of Calvin and from previous

descriptions of Reformed exegesis.

# I

## How Many *Elohim*?

The principle of *sola scriptura* played a central role in the Protestant Reformation, justifying the Protestant church's need to scrape away centuries of extra-biblical traditions heaped up by the Catholic church. However, discerning what was a mere extra-biblical, man-made tradition and what was a legitimate interpretation of the text was not always simple. This disagreement amongst Protestant exegetes was then further exacerbated by the rise of the antitrinitarians, who claimed that their denial of the doctrine of the Trinity was merely a more consistent application of the principles of exegesis articulated by Calvin and many of his Reformed contemporaries.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1 The Trajectory of Calvinism

*Once he had returned to the Empire, Gerlach joined the cause of defending Lutheran orthodoxy and discovered that his encounter with Neuser had supplied him with valuable anecdotal evidence that Calvinism led inexorably to Arianism.*

From 1573 to 1578 Stephan Gerlach served in Istanbul as the chaplain of Baron David Ungnad von Sonnegg, the imperial ambassador to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup> Adam Neuser had arrived in Istanbul in the summer of 1572, after having escaped from the Palatinate where he had been imprisoned for his heretical views. Once he was inside the Turkish borders he was once again arrested, this time on suspicion of spying, and was taken to the capital city. Neuser had by then circumcised himself in the hopes of demonstrating his submission to the Koran, and he subsequently took a post in the service of the Sultan. The paths of fellow expatriates, Neuser and Gerlach, often crossed, providing the Lutheran

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3 I am particularly grateful to Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, Kt., whose reading of an earlier version of these first four chapters yielded a number of very helpful suggestions.

4 Gerlach had been specifically recommended for this post by the theologians of the University of Tübingen, who saw in Gerlach's placement an opportunity to open up correspondence with the Patriarch of Constantinople – Jeremiah II. Gerlach carried with him a copy of the Augsburg Confession in Greek with the objective of initiating reconciliation with the Eastern Orthodox Church. This mission to the East explains why it was that such a promising young theologian was then serving as a chaplain to the ambassador. The resulting correspondence between the theologians of Tübingen and the Patriarch is contained in George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982).

chaplain with a number of anecdotes about the behaviour of the infamous former Heidelberg minister.<sup>5</sup> Neuser died in Istanbul, on 12 October, 1576. An entry in Gerlach's journal for that date noted his passing, and a subsequent entry described how Neuser had lost his life in a drunken stupor, afflicted with dysentery.<sup>6</sup>

In 1578, Gerlach left Istanbul and returned to Württemberg to take a post as lecturer of Theology at the University of Tübingen, a centre of Lutheran orthodoxy in the late sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Once a member of the Tübingen faculty, Gerlach began publishing a string of polemical volumes, aimed at both the Reformed and the Roman Catholics. In 1580, with *Antidanaeus*, Gerlach took issue with the Reformed understanding of the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, a favourite bone of contention between the Reformed and the Lutherans, and an issue of increasingly heated debates since the promulgation of the Lutheran *Formula of Concord*.<sup>8</sup> Since questions about the nature of Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper often led to questions about the relationship between the divine and human natures of the Son, Gerlach's personal anecdotes about the former Reformed minister Neuser

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5 Gerlach's diary provides additional information about the chaplain's interactions with Neuser during his time in Istanbul. However, the diary was not published until nearly a century later. Stephan Gerlach, *Tage-Buch* (Frankfurt: Zunners, 1674).

6 *Ibid.*, 254 and 285.

7 Carl von Weizsäcker, *Lehrer und Unterricht an der evangelisch-theologischen Facultät der Universität Tübingen von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Ludwig Friedrich Fues, 1877), 34. A generation earlier, in 1538, Melancthon had recruited Johannes Brenz to the faculty of the University of Tübingen, which appointment had led eventually to the eclipse of the "Bucerian-Swiss Reformed faction" by the Lutheran orthodox, and to the establishment of the university's reputation as a Lutheran stronghold. See Richard Harrison, "Melancthon's Role in the Reformation of the University of Tübingen," *Church History* 47, no. 3 (September 1978): 270–278.

8 *Antidanaeus* was Gerlach's response to Lambertus Danaeus, *Antiosiander: Sive Apologia Christiana simul et necessaria, in qua tum Helvetiae Ecclesiae, et quae cum iis in Fidei Confessione consentiunt: tum etiam earum vera de S. Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Coena sententia defenditur adversus iniustam Lucae Osiandri condemnationem* (Geneva: Vignon, 1580). Danaeus was answering Lucas Osiander, *Antisturmius Unus* (Tübingen: Gruppenbachius, 1579). And Osiander's work had been provoked by Joannes Sturm, *Antipappi tres contra Ioannis Pappi Charitatem et condemnationem Christianam* (Strasbourg, 1579). Sturm's *Antipappi* consisted of several years worth of written exchanges between Sturm, the rector of the Strasbourg Academy, and Johann Pappus, the young Lutheran theologian and president of the Assembly of the Clergy in Strasbourg. Sturm, in light of the publication of the *Formula of Concord*, wrote in resistance to the Lutheranization of the city of Strasbourg and what would likely be the death of the Academy if the Reformed element were to be eliminated. See Irene Dingel, "The Echo of Controversy: Caspar Fuger's Attempt to Propagate the Formula of Concord among the Common People," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 3 (1995): 520.

and his own testimony of the connection between Calvinism and Arianism seemed particularly relevant in this work.

According to Luther, the body and blood of Christ were received truly by the mouths of both believers and unbelievers in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.<sup>9</sup> The Reformed had objected to this doctrine, arguing that the risen Christ had been seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven and that, therefore, Christ's finite physical body was contained in heaven and not capable of being given on earth.<sup>10</sup> The Lutherans responded that because of the *communicatio idiomatum* (the communication of the properties of Christ's human and divine natures) the ubiquity of Christ's divine nature was communicated to his human nature, making Christ's physical body as omnipresent as his divinity. Given the omnipresence of Christ's body, it is therefore possible for Christ's physical body to be present in the elements of the Lord's Supper.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Reformed objection to the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper became focused on the question of the relationship of Christ's divine nature to his human nature. Calvin denied the ubiquity of Christ's body by maintaining that Christ's divine nature extended beyond (or *extra*) his flesh,<sup>12</sup> a position which would later become known as the *extra*

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9 Luther's doctrine was represented in Article IX of the *Augsburg Confession*. 'De Coena Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis [waherer Leib und Blut] Christi vere adsint [unter Gestalt des Brotes und Weines], et distribuantur vescentibus [da ausgetheilt und genommen wird] in Coena Domini; et improbant secus docentes [Derhalben wird auch die Gegenlehr verworfen].' Philip Schaff, ed., "The Augsburg Confession," in *The Creeds of Christendom*, trans. Charles Krauth, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 13. A concise summary of Luther's opposition to the various understandings held by Reformed theologians, such as Zwingli and Oecolampadius, is given by David Steinmetz, "Scripture and the Lord's Supper in Luther's Theology," in *Luther in Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 72-84.

10 See, for example, Zwingli's use of this argument in "An Exposition of the Faith," composed by Zwingli in 1531. Ulrich Zwingli, "An Exposition of the Faith," in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1953), 251-253.

11 The question of ubiquity became the focus of the *Formula of Concord* (1577) discussion of the person of Christ (Article VIII). See "The Formula of Concord," in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 147-159.

12 For a book length treatment of the matter, see - David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology* (Boston: Brill, 1966). The *extra Calvinisticum* appeared in the *Heidelberg Catechism* in the answer to question number forty-eight. "But are not the two natures in Christ separated from each other in this way, if the humanity is not wherever the divinity is? Not at all; for since divinity is incomprehensible and everywhere present, it must follow that the divinity is indeed *beyond* the bounds of the humanity which it has assumed, and is nonetheless ever in that humanity

*Calvinisticum*. While from the Reformed perspective the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity smacked of *monophysitism*, with the Son's humanity seemingly fully absorbed by his deity, from the Lutheran perspective the Reformed position seemed to be a revival of *Nestorianism*, establishing a distinction between the divine person of the Son and the human person Jesus Christ. To the Lutheran mind, a secret heterodoxy in the category of Christology could be the only real explanation for the Reformed rejection of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Given his firsthand familiarity with Neuser and what appeared to him to be the ultimate destination of Reformed theology, Gerlach was well placed to illustrate the dangers of the influence of the Reformed by documenting its logical progression through Nestorianism and on to Arianism and even to Muhammadism. In his *Antidanaeus*, Gerlach put it this way:

Since at first the Zwinglians only took away the presence of the body and blood of Christ from the supper, against the very clear words of institution: then likewise they, corrupting the articles of the faith, fell into Nestorianism: from this many of them have fallen into Arianism: Neuser, of unfortunate memory, formerly the premier pastor of the Heidelberg Church, moved from Zwinglianism through Arianism all the way to Muhammadism, along with not a few others.<sup>13</sup>

Neuser's scribbled marginal notation that "Calvinism" had opened wide the doors to Arianism only confirmed for Gerlach what any Lutheran theologian could have already predicted about what seemed to them to be the dangerous trajectory of Reformed theology. In

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as well, and remains personally united to it." (italics mine) Allen Miller and Eugene Osterhaven, trans., *The Heidelberg Catechism* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1962).

13 Gerlach, *Antidanaeus*, 38. 'Cum enim Zuingliani initio, tantum praesentiam corporis et sanguinis Christi, contra clarissima institutionis verba, e coena tollerent: postea quoque articulos fidei depravantes in Nestorianismum inciderunt: ex hoc plurimi illorum in Arrianismum prolapsi sunt: et Neuserus, infoelicis memoriae, olim Heidelbergensis Ecclesiae primarius Pastor, ex Zuinglianismo per Arrianismum ad Mahometismum usque, cum aliis non paucis, progressus est.' Neuser's role in convincing Gerlach that Calvinism led inescapably to Arianism is discussed further in - Dorothea Wendebourg, *Reformation und Orthodoxie - der ökumenische Briefwechsel zwischen der Leitung der Württembergischen Kirche und Patriarch Jeremias II. von Konstantinopel in den Jahren 1573-1581* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 374-379.

a preface to another later work, Gerlach described a lunchtime conversation that he had had with Neuser, in which Neuser, emboldened by the knowledge that he was then out of danger of retribution from the Heidelberg authorities, narrated to him the full story of his theological migration from Calvinism to Islam. Here Neuser had explicitly pointed to his own rejection of the Lutheran explanation of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine as the first step on a journey that had led inevitably to a rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and, eventually, to the embracing of Islam. Neuser insisted to Gerlach that he had, in the midst of the controversy, testified to Elector Frederick himself that the root cause of his apostasy had been the Calvinism that the Elector had espoused. "Had I not been a Calvinist, I would not have reached that point."<sup>14</sup>

Gerlach's published reports of Neuser's boasts were soon repeated in numerous Lutheran attacks on Reformed teaching. Wilhelm Holder, in his *Cuculus Calvinisticus* (1585), pointed to the apostasy of Sylvan and Neuser as a premier example of the "Arian Leprosy" with which Calvinism was infected.<sup>15</sup> The Gnesio-Lutheran Johann Wigand repeated Gerlach's account of his conversations with Neuser in his *De Sacramentariismo Dogmata* (1585).<sup>16</sup> And Martin Chemnitz, Lutheranism's *alter Martinus* and one of the primary authors of the *Formula of Concord*, reminded his Calvinist opponents that it was Calvin who had set Neuser on the road to Istanbul.<sup>17</sup> Roman Catholics, as well, saw the opportunity afforded by Neuser's statements. Kaspar Ulenberg, a Lutheran convert to Rome, cited the discovery of antitrinitarians in Heidelberg in his *Summaria Descriptio Privati Cuiusdam Colloquii* (1590) and described the attempts of Neuser and Sylvan to propagate Islam in Germany.<sup>18</sup> And the

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14 'Nisi Calvinianus factus essem, eo non devenissem.' Stephan Gerlach, *Assertio Piae Sanaeque Doctrinae De Divina Maiestate Christi Hominis* (Tübingen: Gruppenbachius, 1585), iv.

15 Wilhelm Holder, *Cuculus Calvinisticus sive de gratitudine et modestia Calviniana* (Tübingen: Gruppenbachius, 1585), 12.

16 Johann Wigand, *De Sacramentariismo Dogmata* (Leipzig, 1585), 361b–362a.

17 Martin Chemnitz, *Locorum Theologicorum Pars Secunda* (Frankfurt: Spiessius, 1599), xiv.

18 Kaspar Ulenberg, *Summaria Descriptio Privati Cuiusdam Colloquii* (Cologne: Calenius et Quentelios, 1590), 51.

Roman Catholic Englishman William Rainolds included an account of the affair in his *Calvino-Turcismus, id est, Calvinistiae perfidiae cum Mahumetana collatio, et dilucida utriusque sectae confutatio* (1597).<sup>19</sup>

Lutheran misgivings about Reformed Christology, however, did not spring solely from the controversy surrounding the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. At the same time as they were finding fault with the *extra Calvinisticum*, Lutheran theologians also saw, particularly in the Old Testament exegesis of John Calvin, a dangerous proclivity to dismiss the traditional Christological and trinitarian interpretations of a number of biblical texts that had for centuries been seen as theological *loci* for the proof of the divinity of Christ and the triune nature of God. Representative of this Lutheran criticism would be the work of Aegidius Hunnius. In *Calvinus Iudaizans* (1593), Hunnius argued that a serious blow had been struck against the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by Calvin's dismissal of the trinitarian reading of passages like the *trisagion* of Isa. 6:3 where the seraphic cry "holy, holy, holy" had traditionally been understood as indicative of the three persons of the Trinity.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, it seemed to Hunnius that Calvin had seriously weakened the biblical case for the doctrine of the Trinity when he rejected the traditional argument that the three persons of the Trinity were being indicated by the apparent plurality of the noun *Elohim* in Gen. 1:1 – "In the beginning, *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth." As we will see in the following chapter, just as antitrinitarians like Neuser could claim that it was Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper that had pointed him to Arianism, so too Neuser and a number of prominent antitrinitarians could claim that their inability to find the doctrine of the Trinity in the

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19 William Rainolds, *Calvino-Turcismus, id est, Calvinistiae perfidiae cum Mahumetana collatio, et dilucida utriusque sectae confutatio*, ed. Gifford (Antwerp: Petrus Bellerus, 1597), 13–14. Rainolds died in 1594 and the work was subsequently completed and published by Gifford.

20 Aegidius Hunnius, *Calvinus Iudaizans, Hoc est: Iudaicae Glossae et Corruptele: Quibus Iohannes Calvinus illustrissima Scripturae sacrae loca et Testimonia, de gloriosa Trinitate, Deitate Christi, et Spiritus sancti, cum primis autem vaticinia Prophetarum ad Adventu Messiae, nativitate eius, passione, resurrectione, ascensione in coelos et sessione ad dextram Dei, detestandum in modum corrumpere non exhorruit. Addita est corruptelarum confutatio.* (Wittenberg: Seuberlich, 1593), 7–14 and 42–43.

Scriptures was the result of having been taught Calvin's plain, historical method of exegesis of Scripture.

## 1.2 Lombard, Lyra, and Luther

*Since the twelfth century, it had been commonly argued by Christian exegetes that the Hebrew divine name Elohim was intended to communicate the plurality of persons within the godhead.*

To understand the significance of Calvin's deviations from the traditional Old Testament arguments for the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, it is worth taking a moment to consider the extent of the tradition from which he deviated. When Peter Lombard, the twelfth century scholastic theologian and *magister sententiarum*, defended the doctrine of the Trinity in his *Sententiae*, he began with a selection of testimonies drawn from the text of the Old Testament. Having established the unity of the divine essence with Deut. 6:4, Lombard went on to address the distinction of three divine persons within this unity by pointing to passages like Isa. 6:3, where God's triunity had been indicated by the angels of Isaiah's vision declaring the threefold holiness of the Lord, and also by the three repetitions of the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, in Psa. 67:6-7. ". . . God, our God will bless us. God will bless us. . ." <sup>21</sup> The distinction of the Son and of the Holy Spirit from the Father was indicated by the description of creation found in Psa. 33:6: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; and all their hosts by the breath/spirit of his mouth." <sup>22</sup> The eternity of the Son, furthermore, was demonstrated by the exhortation to the Israelites found in Psa. 81:9, that they not worship any new (*recens*) god, and by Wisdom's declaration in Prov. 8:22 that "The Lord

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21 יְבָרְכֵנו אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ: יְבָרְכֵנו אֱלֹהִים [The numbering of the Psalms here, and throughout, is taken from the numbering of English Protestant translations. Thus the Vulgate is Psa. 66:7-8 and the Hebrew text Psa. 67:7-8].

22 בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָל צְבָאָם

possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old.”<sup>23</sup>

Then Lombard drew another argument from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the *hebraica veritas*, (as it had been termed by Jerome) which would attract considerable attention in the following centuries.

And for that which is called by us ‘God,’ the Hebrew *veritas* has ‘Elohim,’ which is the plural of the singular ‘El.’ Therefore, because it does not say ‘El’ which is ‘God,’ but rather ‘Elohim,’ which can be translated as ‘Gods’ or ‘Judges,’ it refers to a plurality of persons. This seems to be what the Devil refers to when he says through the Serpent: ‘You will be as gods,’ but the Hebrew says ‘Elohim,’ as if to say: You will be as divine persons.<sup>24</sup>

Here Lombard has seized on the grammatical curiosity of the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, which has a plural ending. Although the word *Elohim* can be used to refer to a true plurality of individuals,<sup>25</sup> when it indicates the God of Israel it is treated as if it were grammatically singular, meaning it is joined to singular adjectives, participles, and verbs. Both this observation by Lombard and the Old Testament arguments for the Trinity might well have been gleaned from the works of Peter Abelard. For centuries afterwards, however, the *magister sententiarum* would be credited as the source of this grammatical argument.<sup>26</sup>

Nicholas de Lyra, a fourteenth century Franciscan writing from the Sorbonne, began his *quodlibetal* discussion of this question by pointing to Lombard and his argument from the plural ending of *Elohim*. Lyra’s discussion, entitled “Whether, from the Scriptures received from the Jews, our Saviour can be effectively proved to be God and man,”<sup>27</sup> used the Hebrew

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23 יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז

24 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae* (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1971), Liber I, Dist. II, Cap.

IV.5. With the title *De testimoniis veteris Testamenti, quibus Trinitatis mysterium declaratur*: ‘. . . Et pro eo quod apud nos dicitur ‘Deus’, hebraica veritas habet ‘Elohim’, quod est plurale huius singularis, quod est ‘El’. Quod ergo non est dictum ‘El’, quod est Deus, sed ‘Elohim’, quod potest interpretari dii sive iudices, ad pluralitatem personarum refertur. - Ad quam etiam illud attinere videtur, quod diabolus per serpentem dixit: ‘Eritis sicut dii’, pro quo in hebraeo habetur ‘Elohim’, ac si diceret: Eritis sicut divinae personae.’

25 Eg. Exod. 18:11, Judg. 5:8, Psa. 97:7, 138:1, variously translated as gods, angels, judges, or rulers.

26 Peter Abelard, *Theologia Christiana*, Patrologia Latina 178 (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1855), 1126D–1128A.

27 *Utrum ex scripturis a Iudeis receptis possit efficaciter probari salvatorem nostrum fuisse Deum et hominem*. This discussion is described in detail in Deena Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 82–108.

text of Gen. 1:1 as a proof of the Trinity. When the *hebraica veritas* said, “Elohim created,” Lyra argued that it was as if it had said, “Gods [*dii*] created,” indicating the plurality of divine persons. Lyra went on to argue that just as the plural ending of the noun indicated a plurality of persons within the godhead, the fact that the word appeared to be treated as if it was grammatically singular testified to the fact that the divine essence was truly singular. Thus, the simple phrase “Elohim created,” with a plural subject and a singular verb, constituted proof of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Lyra, however, also found in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament a number of passages where the word *Elohim*, though referring to the God of Israel, was treated as if it were grammatically plural. In Josh. 24:19, Joshua rebuked the people, saying that they would not be able to serve the Lord, “. . . because he is a holy God.”<sup>28</sup> Here, in the Hebrew, the adjective ‘holy’ appeared in the plural, agreeing with the apparent plurality of *Elohim*. In Jer. 23:36, the prophet described how the Israelites had perverted “. . . the words of the living God. . .”<sup>29</sup> Again, the adjective “living” was in the plural, pointing to the true plurality of persons within the godhead. These few instances where the word *Elohim* was treated as if truly plural seemed to Lyra to suggest that the word was intended to communicate that there was a true plurality within the singular divine essence. Therefore, the Hebrew text of the Old Testament had clearly declared the doctrine of the Trinity to its original Hebrew readers.

Lyra’s *quodlibet* was often copied out individually, but the work had a much wider reading when it was appended to the end of his immensely popular *Postillae litteralis super Bibliam*.<sup>30</sup> In her recent study of Lyra’s works, Deena Klepper observes that Nicholas’ *Postillae*,

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28 כִּי אֱלֹהִים קִדְּשִׁים הוּא

29 דְּבַרְי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים

30 Additionally, a manuscript entitled *Questio magistri Nycoliae de Lyra, qua probat ex scriptura Hebreorum Christum iam venisse in carnem* was recorded as given to the University of Heidelberg in the late fourteenth century. Jürgen Miethke, *Die Rektorbücher der Universität Heidelberg* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990), 2. 472.

“. . . became, after the *Glossa ordinaria*, the most widely copied and disseminated of all medieval Bible commentaries, finding its way into hundreds of libraries across the Continent in scholastic, monastic, cathedral, and courtly settings.”<sup>31</sup> The comments of Lyra’s *Postillae* were marked by a close attention to the literal or plain sense of the Hebrew text. Much of Lyra’s work was supported by a dependence on medieval Jewish commentaries, in particular the works of Rashi, the Jewish commentator. This affinity for the plain meaning of the text would, two centuries later, make Lyra a favourite of the Reformers, giving rise to Peter of Pflug’s well-known pun on Lyra’s name: “If Lyra had not played, Luther would not have danced.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus it is unsurprising to find in Martin Luther’s lectures on Genesis the following observation on Gen. 1:1.

But it is more worth noting, that Moses does not say, “In the beginning, Adonai created heaven and earth,” but he uses the word *Elohim* in the plural number, a name which Moses and others apply sometimes to angels and sometimes to judges or magistrates. . . . Here, however, it is clear that it signifies the one and true God, by whom all things have been created. Why therefore does he use a plural name? The Jews variously quibble about Moses: but it is clear to us that he wanted to reveal the Trinity or plurality of persons within the one divine nature.<sup>33</sup>

On the one hand Luther was a strong critic of the tendency of the medieval church to find a plurality of meanings within the biblical text, insisting instead that the meaning of Scripture was simple. On the other, he insisted that the centre of Scripture was always the person Jesus Christ. For Luther, there was an expectation that he would always find that the Christological

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31 Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers*, 6. Klepper gives a thorough summary of the manuscript traditions for Nicholas’ *quodlibet* discussions, as well as an appendix detailing the extant versions. *Ibid.*, 111–117 and 135–142.

32 ‘Si Lyra non Lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset.’ Samuel Jackson, ed., *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids, 1953), 7.99.

33 ‘Sed dignius observatione est, quod Moses non dicit: In principio creavit Adoni coelum et terram, sed utitur vocabulo pluralis numeri Elohim, quo nomine in Mose et alibi tum Angeli, tum Iudices seu magistratus appellantur. . . . Hic autem certum est significare Deum unum et verum, a quo creata sunt omnia. Cur igitur utitur plurali nomine? Iudaei varie cavillantur Mosen: Sed nobis clarum est, voluisse eum Trinitatem seu personarum pluralitatem in una divina natura tecte ostendere.’ Martin Luther, *Genesisvorlesung*, vol. 42, D Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1911), xlii, 10.

reading of the text, even in the books of the Old Testament, was the simplest and most straightforward meaning of Scripture.<sup>34</sup> It was fitting then that Lyra's attempt to find the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ within the Hebrew text of the Old Testament struck a chord with Luther.<sup>35</sup> Although focused in one sense on the literal meaning of the passage, Luther's Christological focus trumped a purely grammatical reading of Scripture. Luther's reading of the Hebrew text was always a "theological reading," meaning he came to the Hebrew text informed by the New Testament and expecting to find the doctrines of the Christian faith clearly elucidated in the Old Testament.

### 1.3 Calvin and Kimhi

*Because of his commitment to a more literal, historical / grammatical hermeneutic, John Calvin's understanding of the significance of the word Elohim differed considerably from that of Lombard, Lyra, and Luther, and came much closer to the explanation provided by medieval Jewish grammarians like Rabbi David Kimhi.*

On this issue, the leading reformer of Geneva was of a very different mind. For John Calvin, this attempt to find proof of the doctrine of the Trinity within the syntactical oddities of the Hebrew text often appeared to be just one more example of the overly imaginative exegesis which had seemed to typify the allegorical abuses of the late medieval church. Calvin was known, perhaps even more so than Lyra, for his plain interpretations and "grammatical reading" of the biblical text. In the dedicatory epistle to Simon Grynaeus, prefaced to his commentary on the book of Romans, Calvin gave a short summary of his understanding of the goal of the expositor. Here he insisted that the chief virtue of the interpreter lies "in lucid

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34 See James Preus, "Old Testament Promissio and Luther's New Hermeneutic," *The Harvard Theological Review* 60, no. 2 (April 1967): 145-161; and Kenneth Hagen, "Luther, Martin," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 212-220.

35 See also Christine Helmer, "Luther's Trinitarian Hermeneutic and the Old Testament," *Modern Theology* 18, no. 1 (January 2002): 49-73. Helmer similarly demonstrated Luther's concern for finding the doctrine of the Trinity in the text of the Old Testament, though her focus is primarily on the "royal" Psalms.

brevity” and that his purpose in expounding a text must be to “reveal the mind of the writer.”<sup>36</sup> Calvin was critical of commentators who provided lengthy explanations and tedious lists of varying opinions in their exposition of the biblical text. In his letter to Grynaeus, he singled out Bucer as an example of a commentator who, whenever he writes, “so many things are suggested to him, by the incredible fruitfulness of his wit, in which he excels, that he does not know when to stop writing.”<sup>37</sup> Instead, it was a lucid and brief explanation of the author’s original intent that Calvin sought after.

To Calvin, the “theological reading” of his fellow Christian exegetes and their attempts to find Christological meanings within the Old Testament text often seemed to be overly ambitious attempts to prove a point that was, although theologically true and orthodox on its own, nevertheless not the point of the verse at hand. Calvin’s “grammatical reading” was not simply a preferring of the literal sense over and against the spiritual sense of Scripture, as it had once been designated by Origen and had later been maintained as one of the ingredients in the medieval *quadriga*. Instead, he sought to distill the text’s “simple and natural” meaning, a meaning which might have been considered spiritual by Origen, or typological by a modern exegete.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, to Calvin the text’s meaning was simple and singular, a plain and natural reading of the text, which would have been obvious to the text’s original audience as

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36 ‘perspicua brevitate’ and ‘mentem scriptoris . . . patefacere’ John Calvin, *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, Corpus Reformatorum Series II [vols. 29-87] (Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1863), Epistle 191, X, 2.402–406. For more on Calvin’s method of exegesis, see - THL Parker, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); Richard Gamble, “Brevitas et Facilitas: Toward an Understanding of Calvin’s Hermeneutic,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 1–17; John Luther Mays, “Calvin’s Commentary on the Psalms: The Preface as Introduction,” in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 195–204; THL Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); David Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); John Thompson, “Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter,” in *John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 58–73. Wulfert De Greef, “The Psalms,” in *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 85–106. David Steinmetz, “John Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible,” in *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 282–291; G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

37 ‘Tam multa illi ad manum suggeruntur ab incredibili qua pollet ingenii foecunditate, ut manum de tabula tollere nesciat.’

38 See, for instance, Calvin’s comments on Ps. 45:6, where he begins by expounding on the ‘simplex et genuinus sensus.’ John Calvin, *OC*, XXXIII, 451.

the clear and intended meaning of the original author.

Thus it was that the interpretations of medieval Jewish commentators, with their close attention to the literal meaning of the Hebrew text, frequently came closest to Calvin's ideal of lucid brevity and laying open the mind of the author. Calvin's embarrassment at the Christian theological reading and his affinity for the grammatical method are particularly evident in Calvin's repeated concern that Christians, made reckless in their exegesis by an ignorance of the Hebrew language, not open themselves up for ridicule from the Jews with outlandish Christological interpretations.

Rejecting a Christian attempt to find a prophecy of the church in Psa. 72, where the King of Israel was described as having dominion ". . . from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth," Calvin admonished Christian interpreters:

Those who would interpret it simply as a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ, seem to put a construction upon the words which does violence to them; and then we must always beware of giving the Jews occasion of making an outcry, as if it were our purpose, sophistically, to apply to Christ those things which do not directly refer to him.<sup>39</sup>

Commenting on the nearly universal opinion of the medieval church that the words of Jer. 31:22, ". . . for the Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman will encompass a man,"<sup>40</sup> applied to the virgin Mary, Calvin remarked, "This is deservedly laughed at by the Jews. . ."<sup>41</sup> And Calvin rejected both the Greek and the Latin fathers who attempted to read Psa. 16:10, ". . . you will not permit your faithful one to see corruption," as a reference to Christ's return from Hell.<sup>42</sup> "Instead," he wrote, "it is better to remain in that genuine

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39 'Qui simpliciter vaticinium esse volunt de regno Christi, videntur nimis violenter torquere verba. Deinde semper cavendum est ne Iudaeis obstrependi detur occasio, ac si nobis propositum esset sophisticè ad Christum trahere quae directe in eum non competunt.' *Ibid.*, XXXI, 664.

40 פִּי בְרָא יְהוָה תְּדַשֶּׁה בְּאֶרֶץ נְקוּוּהָ תְּסוּבֵב גְּבֵר

41 John Calvin, *OC*, XXXVIII, 680. 'Merito hoc ridetur a Iudaeis . . .'

42 . . . לֹא תִתֵּן תְּסַדֵּךְ לְרֵאוֹת שְׁחַת . . .

simplicity, in order that we not become the objects of Jewish ridicule . . .”<sup>43</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the Protestant notion of *sola scriptura* required close attention to the simple and natural interpretation of the text, which was frequently well represented by late medieval Jewish exegesis and he was, in many instances, more partial to the interpretations of the Jewish grammarians than to the excessive allegorising of late medieval Christians.

When it came to the argument for the plurality of persons within the godhead from the name *Elohim*, which Lombard, Lyra, and Luther had accepted, Calvin was dubious of this imaginative exegesis and insisted that the plural ending of *Elohim* was a poor proof for the doctrine of the Trinity. In his 1554 commentary on Genesis, he wrote:

Genesis 1:1 - Moses uses אֱלֹהִים, a noun of the plural number. From this it is often concluded that this signifies that there are three persons in God: but because it seems to me not solid enough a proof for such a great thing, I will not stand on this word. But rather readers should be warned that they beware of violent glosses of this sort.<sup>44</sup>

Calvin’s language here was cautious. He did not deny that the plurality of *Elohim* indicated God’s triune nature; nevertheless, it was still a “violent gloss,” and a weak defence of a doctrine central to the Christian faith. He went on to explain that the plural ending of the name *Elohim* was more likely to have intended to convey to the reader a sense of divine power.

In fact, many of the passages supplied by Lombard, in the Old Testament portion of his defence for the doctrine of the Trinity in the *Sententiae*, received a similar treatment from Calvin. For instance, Calvin questioned whether the argument for the Trinity from the threefold declaration of God’s holiness in Isa. 6:3 was really all that persuasive.

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43 ‘sed praestat in genuina illa simplicitate manere, ne ridiculi simus Iudaeis . . .’ John Calvin, *OC*, XXXI, 157.

44 ‘Habetur apud Mosen אֱלֹהִים, nomen pluralis numeri. Unde colligere solent, hic in Deo notari tres personas: sed quia parum solida mihi videtur tantae rei probatio, ego in voce non insistam. Quin potius monendi sunt lectores ut sibi à violentis eiusmodi glossis caveant.’ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 15.

The ancients made use of this testimony when they wanted to prove against the Arians that there were three persons in one divine essence. I don't reject their opinion: nevertheless if I had to deal with the heretics, I would want to make use of a more certain testimony.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, he questioned whether Psa. 33:6 was really all that powerful of a proof text for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The ancients made use of this passage against the Sabellians rather subtly, in order to prove the eternal divinity of the Spirit. However, it is clear from other passages, especially from Isa. 11:4, that "by the breath of his mouth" his speech is being indicated, for there it is applied to Christ . . . Therefore, I don't dare to urge that this text be used to prove the deity of the Spirit against the Sabellians.<sup>46</sup>

For Calvin these two tendencies – his suspicions about several of the key biblical *loci* for the medieval exegetical defence of the Trinity and his deference to the more literal exegesis exemplified by the Jewish grammarians – were nothing more than an expression of his commitment to the broader Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. For Calvin, the "grammatical reading" was the most faithful expression of this central principle. Scripture was, as he explained in his *Institutes*, "the sole rule of perfect wisdom."<sup>47</sup> As such, no reading could be imposed onto the biblical text, no matter how orthodox, which did not arise directly from an attempt to make plain the simple and natural meaning of the author with lucid brevity.

#### 1.4 "Jewish Exegesis" and "The Basel – Wittenberg Conflict"

*Calvin's "grammatical reading" of the Old Testament and his occasional receptivity towards rabbinical commentaries have become a primary focus of modern summaries of Calvin's exegesis. Combining this characterization of Calvin's exegetical method with the misguided, though seemingly omnipresent, notion*

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45 'Veteres hoc testimonio usi sunt, quum vellent adversus Arianos tres personas in una Dei essentia probare. Quorum ego sententiam non reiicio: quanquam si mihi res cum haereticis esset, mallet firmioribus testimoniis uti.' *Ibid.*, XXXVI, 129.

46 'Subtilius veteres hoc elogio usi sunt contra Sabellianos, ut aeternam spiritus deitatem assererent. Atqui ex aliis locis patet, ac praesertim ex Iesariae cap. 11. Vers. 4. Spiritu oris notari sermonem, illic enim de Christo dicitur. . . . Ergo in probanda deitate spiritus, hoc testimonio Sabellium urgere non auderem.' *Ibid.*, XXXI, 327.

47 *Ibid.*, II, 859.

that Calvin's work acted as a touchstone for Reformed orthodoxy, has generated the assumption that Reformed exegesis was characterized, in opposition to Lutheran exegesis, by Calvin's "grammatical reading."

The fact that the exegetical method which Calvin preferred was a method that had been developed and propagated by medieval Jewish rabbis has regularly prompted the speculation, from his own time up to the present, that Calvin's exegesis had a sort of essential Jewish character to it. David Puckett, in his book *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, makes this point in a chapter provocatively entitled "The 'Jewish' appearance of Calvin's exegesis."

Puckett lists many examples of Calvin's preference for the 'peshat' style of the Jewish grammarians,<sup>48</sup> a style characterized by a plain and straightforward, or literal, reading of the text. Puckett counters this chapter with another chapter on "The Christian appearance of Calvin's exegesis," and concludes, in terms of theological content, that Calvin's theology was essentially Christian. Yet, because of his method of exegesis, he still situates Calvin in an intermediate position between "Jewish exegesis" and "Christian exegesis."<sup>49</sup> Derek Thomas's study of Calvin's sermons on Job,<sup>50</sup> postulates the same continuum as Puckett, but concludes that Calvin's devotion to the grammatical reading and his reluctance to find Christological readings in the Hebrew text places him nearer the Jewish end.<sup>51</sup>

These observations have been profitable insofar as Puckett and Thomas's discussion has given greater insight into Calvin's concern for the "grammatical reading" of the biblical text and has brought to light the extent to which Calvin relied on Jewish sources (a fact which is easily obscured by Calvin's reluctance to name his sources). Less helpfully, the discussion presupposes the existence of a simple exegetical continuum running between the worlds of Judaism and Christianity. On one side is "Jewish exegesis," marked by a simple and natural

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48 Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, 52–81.

49 Ibid., 139–145.

50 Derek Thomas, *Calvin's Teaching on Job* (Fearn: Mentor, 2004).

51 Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, 308.

reading of the text and a resistance to christological interpretations of the Old Testament: on the other end of the spectrum lies Christian exegesis, with its allegories and christological focus. This notion of a continuum, however, ignores the great variety within the worlds of both Jewish and Christian exegesis and can easily lead to simplistic characterizations of Calvin's exegesis, where his interpretations are evaluated as being either essentially "Jewish" or essentially "Christian," basing the conclusion simply on the level of allegorical content allowed by his exegesis.<sup>52</sup>

In a similar way, in his analysis of sixteenth century Christian hebraica, *The Most Ancient Testimony*,<sup>53</sup> Jerome Friedman divides the exegesis of the magisterial reformers into two schools of thought. One school of Protestant hebraica, according to Friedman, arose in Wittenberg under the influence and close supervision of Luther. Friedman describes Luther's affection for the "loci method" of exegesis, which consisted of fitting the theological commonplaces of the New Testament back into the text of the Old Testament.<sup>54</sup> It was a method which made the study of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament subservient to the study of Christian theology, or as W. Schwartz remarked, ". . . for Luther it was theology that governed grammar."<sup>55</sup> Luther's close attention to and supervision of the Hebrew instruction offered at Wittenberg ensured that this "loci method" was propagated by every instructor of Hebrew under his influence.

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52 This is discussed in greater detail in my MST dissertation, Benjamin Merkle, "The Place of Jewish Exegesis in the Works of John Calvin" (MST Dissertation, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies: University of Oxford, 2007), 3–9.

53 Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983). See also the article Stephen Burnett, "Reassessing the 'Basel-Wittenberg Conflict': Dimensions of the Reformation-Era Discussions of Hebrew Scholarship," in *Hebraica Veritas?: Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 181-201. While not denying the tension between the Lutheran approach to the Hebrew text and that of the Reformed theologians of the upper Rhineland, Burnett observes that "Friedman's schema masks a number of features of Hebrew studies that were common to Protestant Hebraists throughout Germany."

54 Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 127–135.

55 W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation controversies and their background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 192.

Friedman takes Johannes Forster as typical of the sort of Hebraist produced by the Wittenberg school of exegesis and describes the man's extravagant, and somewhat comical, attempts to free the study of Hebrew from reliance on Jewish sources by rooting all understanding of the Hebrew text in the meaning of the New Testament. For example, Friedman describes Forster's *Dictionarium Hebraicum Novum*.<sup>56</sup>

Rather than provide dictionary-type explanations for OT Hebrew terms, his work was more of a lexicon and compendium of some 1,758 root verbs that had a bearing on Christ. The student using Forster's dictionary would learn no Hebrew and acquire no understanding of the OT idiom but would be able to locate references to many terms that demonstrated a specific understanding of Jesus.<sup>57</sup>

"Forster's overall approach to and concept of Hebrew studies" Friedman concludes, "was characteristic of the quality of work done in Wittenberg in general."<sup>58</sup> And from Wittenberg, this approach to the Hebrew text came to dominate all the Lutheran schools, such that "In all these institutions Hebrew instruction never progressed past the stage of service to faculties of theology and, as such, provided only meager instruction in that language."<sup>59</sup>

Conversely, Friedman saw in the Hebraists of the Reformed churches of Strasbourg, Basel, and Zurich a greater willingness to rely on the Jewish sources for assistance in learning to read the Hebrew text, and a desire to interpret the text in its historical context rather than to rush to a christological interpretation. Sebastian Münster of Basel typified for Friedman the Reformed attitude, and thus Friedman could entitle his chapter on the tension between Lutheran and Reformed Hebraists as the "The Basel-Wittenberg Conflict."<sup>60</sup> Münster's 1546 second edition of his translation of the Old Testament (the first edition having appeared in

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56 Johannes Forster, *Dictionarium Hebraicum Novum, non ex Rabbiorum Commentis nec ex Nostratum Doctorum Stulta Imitatione Descriptum, sed ex ipsis Thesauris Sacrorum Bibliorum et eorundem accurata locorum Collatione Depromptum, cum Phrasibus Scripturae veteris et Novi Testamenti Diligenter Annotatis* (Basel, 1557).

57 Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 171.

58 Ibid., 173.

59 Ibid., 173–174.

60 Ibid., 165–176.

1534) included both the Latin and original Hebrew texts, a wealth of Jewish sources cited in Münster's annotations, and an introduction to the work titled "Hebrew Commentaries are not to be Condemned."<sup>61</sup> Münster's translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Hebrew,<sup>62</sup> along with a brief explanation of the Christian faith in Hebrew, his own dependence on Jewish sources, and his assistance to Froben of Basel in publishing rabbinical works, are all cited by Friedman as proof of Münster's conviction that in order to master the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, Hebrew scholars must rely heavily on the works of medieval Judaism.

G. Sujin Pak, in *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms*,<sup>63</sup> has reinterpreted Friedman's assessment of the "Basel-Wittenberg Conflict" in terms of confessionalization. Pak's book, a published version of her University of Duke dissertation under David Steinmetz, surveys the exegesis of eight messianic Psalms (2, 8, 16, 22, 45, 72, 110, and 118) in the works of medieval and late medieval commentaries, as well as the works of Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin. In Pak's analysis, Luther retains many of the distinctive elements of the medieval exegesis of these messianic Psalms: the christological reading of the Psalms is understood to be the primary, literal meaning of the text. As was typical of "*loci exegesis*," the doctrines of the dual nature of Christ and of the Trinity are said to be expressly communicated by the Hebrew text. The Jews, furthermore, are portrayed as the enemies of Christ and of the church. Moving from Luther to Bucer, and then on to Calvin, this reading is gradually replaced by what Pak considers to be a more distinctively Reformed understanding. The experience of the church, represented by the life of David, becomes the

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61 Sebastian Münster, *Hebraica Biblia, latina planeque nova Sebastiani Munsteri tralatione post omneis omnium hactenus ubius gentium aeditiones euulgata et quoad fieri potuit, hebraicae veritati conformata: adiectis insuper e Rabinorum commentariis annotationibus haud poenitendis pulchre et voces ambiguas, et obscuriora quaeque loca elucidantibus: accesserunt in hac secunda aeditione multae novae annotationes, praesertim in Pentateucho, atque in multis locis textus clarior redditus est, et Hebraicae verittai magis quam antea conformatus; index quoque praecipuarum sententiarum et expositionum, toti operi praemissus, iam demum additus est.* (Basil: M. Isingrinus and H. Petrus, 1546).

62 Sebastian Münster, תּוֹרַת הַמַּטְיָהוּ *Evangelium Secundum Matthaeum in Lingua Hebraica* (Basel: H. Petrus, 1537).

63 Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*.

primary meaning of the text, and the prophecies pertaining to Christ are minimized. The doctrines of the Trinity and Christ's dual nature are no longer distinctly evident in the Psalms. Enmity with the Jews, likewise, becomes less of a theme. "That is to say," as Pak writes, "Calvin advances a particularly Reformed reading that begins to help buttress an emerging Reformed confessional identity."<sup>64</sup>

In her estimation, therefore, it would be better to understand the differences between the exegesis of the Hebraists of Wittenberg and that of the Hebraists of the upper Rhineland as the natural result of their varying confessional loyalties, rather than, as Friedman has cast them, as varying "schools" of exegesis. She argues that, given the Protestant church's emphasis on the authority of Scripture and the subjection of the church and its traditions to this standard, biblical exegesis itself became a key component to the formation of Protestant confessional identities.<sup>65</sup> She concludes with a survey of the disagreement between the Reformed theologian David Paraeus and the Lutheran Aegidius Hunnius, where Hunnius claimed that Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament and his reluctance to find the doctrine of the Trinity or a christological meaning in many of the texts which had been traditionally interpreted in that way was inherently judaizing. This debate, Pak concludes, marks a widening divide between Lutheran and Reformed principles of biblical interpretation and ". . . reveals the potential of ongoing and lasting effects from the use of biblical exegesis to maintain and promote certain confessional identities."<sup>66</sup>

Pak qualifies her conclusions. Rather than claiming to have proved her case entirely, her research has just made "tantalizing suggestions."<sup>67</sup> Additionally, she acknowledges the tremendous variety within the works of Reformed exegetes (i.e. Bucer, Calvin, Zwingli),

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64 *Ibid.*, 127.

65 *Ibid.*, 125–131.

66 *Ibid.*, 128.

67 *Ibid.*, 125.

suggesting that this can be explained by the great variety amongst the various Reformed confessions. Nevertheless, Pak speaks primarily of a broader “Reformed confessional identity,” which is slowly emerging over time, having been supported by an undifferentiated “Reformed” exegesis. The ongoing dispute between the Lutheran Hunnius and Calvin’s defender Paraeus seems, in Pak’s understanding, to be a clear illustration of this connection between confessionalization and exegesis.

However, as the following chapters will demonstrate, the dividing line between Lutheran and Reformed exegesis was not always as clear as the difference between the exegetical habits of Luther and those of Calvin. To be sure, the contrast between Luther’s “theological reading” (or the “*loci* method,” as Friedman described it) and the “grammatical reading” of Calvin is an accurate one. But the contrast between “Lutheran exegesis” and “Reformed exegesis” is less obvious, for the simple reason that Calvin’s “grammatical reading” was far from standard amongst the Reformed exegetes of the following generations. While it is easier to generalize about the typical Lutheran position, particularly in the period after the homogenizing effects of the *Formula of Concord* (1577), the convictions of the Reformed are much more difficult to summarize. In fact, when one considers the ways in which various Reformed theologians understood (or rejected) trinitarian and Christological references in the Old Testament (in contrast to post-*Formula of Concord* Lutheranism), the tremendous exegetical heterogeneity of the Reformed church becomes striking.

To those who have grown accustomed to the notion that the Lutheran and Reformed churches during these years were marked by confessional formation and confrontation, it will come as no surprise that the Lutherans seized upon Neuser’s scandalous comments as an opportunity to make clear the dangerous consequences of deviating from Lutheran

orthodoxy.<sup>68</sup> However, though acceptance or rejection of the doctrine of ubiquity could effectively serve as a dividing line between the Lutheran and Reformed camps, the second dimension of the accusation of Arianism, namely the claim that Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament weakened the church's ability to respond to the antitrinitarians, proved far less effective as a boundary between Lutheranism and the Reformed.

For instance, in 1572, the University of Heidelberg's Professor of Old Testament, Girolamo Zanchi, produced a defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Although aimed at exonerating the Reformed church of Heidelberg from the charges of having pushed Neuser and his companions into antitrinitarianism, it relied on a series of interpretations of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament which, while having been already embraced by Luther, had been called into question by Calvin. In fact, when the Lutheran Aegidius Hunnius listed the grievances that he had with the judaizing Calvin, he was able to point to Girolamo Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* as a positive example of faithful exegesis of the Old Testament and a notable testimony against the errors of Calvin. When David Pareus, a later member of the University of Heidelberg's Theology faculty and a former student of Zanchi's, responded to Hunnius, his attempt to defend Calvin from Hunnius' charge of "judaizing" required that he, in an effort to portray a united Reformed front, significantly misrepresented Zanchi's arguments as having been consistent with the position of Calvin.

This dissertation will provide a survey of Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*, situating it within the context of previous attempts made by Christian theologians to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Further, this dissertation will consider the reception that Zanchi's arguments received from various theologians within the Reformed

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<sup>68</sup> For a survey of the influence of the concept of "confessionalization," see Ute Lotz-Heuzmann, "Confessionalization," in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: a guide to research* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), 136–157.

church over several subsequent decades. Men like Franciscus Junius maintained a zealous agreement with Zanchi, and laboured to further his arguments in their own publications. Others, like David Pareus, tactfully (if somewhat disingenuously) attempted to sidestep Zanchi's arguments while still maintaining the impression of agreement with him. Others still, such as Johannes Drusius, expressed complete disagreement with Zanchi and published refutations of his arguments in defence of the Trinity. Throughout this survey a picture emerges of a Reformed church far more diverse and variegated than might have been expected within the "age of confessionalisation."

## II

### Violent Glosses and the Heidelberg Antitrinitarians

In the Summer of 1570 the shocking discovery was made that a handful of Palatinate ministers had converted to antitrinitarianism. What is more, they pinned their denial of the doctrine of the Trinity on the “Calvinism” that they had been taught in the Reformed church. Given the Palatinate’s already precarious position within the Empire, the discovery of the Heidelberg antitrinitarians and their claims about the inevitable trajectory of Calvinism created a pressing need for the Reformed theologians of Heidelberg to produce a definitive defence of the doctrine of the Trinity.

#### 2.1 *Sola Scriptura* and the Antitrinitarians

*From the 1550s onwards a series of Italian Protestant exiles, sojourning in centres of Reformed learning, applied the principle of sola scriptura in a more radical way than previous Reformed theologians, arguing that a consistent application of sola scriptura required that only terminology taken directly from Scripture should be allowed in theological discussion, thus radically undermining the doctrine of the Trinity.*

The Lutheran concern that Calvin’s theology led to Christological error was not just polemical posturing in the abstract. In addition to their suspicions about Reformed Christology and the accusation of Hunnius that Calvin’s exegesis was inherently “judaizing,” there was the simple fact that throughout the decades of the 1550s, 1560s, and 1570s, antitrinitarianism seemed to be a predominantly Reformed phenomenon. Neuser spoke truthfully when he observed : “No one in our time (that I know of) has become an Arian, who was not first a Calvinist: Servetus, Biandrata, Alciatus, Franciscus Davidis, Gentilis, Gribaldus, Sylvanus, and others.”<sup>1</sup> Despite fierce opposition from the leading theologians of the Reformed church, the antitrinitarianism which would become prominent in the churches of Poland and Transylvania seemed to have emerged primarily from the matrix of

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1 Gerlach, *Antidanaeus*, 39.

“Calvinism.”

Giorgio Biandrata, who would later prove instrumental in the rise of antitrinitarianism in both Transylvania and Poland, served as an elder of the Italian congregation in Geneva from 1557 to 1558, before fleeing the city because of his heterodox convictions.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after Biandrata’s departure, John Paul Alciati and Giovanni Gentile also fled Geneva following his example, having refused to accept a trinitarian confession imposed on the Italian congregation by the Genevan Senate. Alciati moved on to Basel and then to Poland. Gentile travelled to Poland as well, but returned to Bern where he was eventually executed for his antitrinitarianism. In Zurich, Lelio Sozzini penned his *Brevis explicatio in primum Iohannis caput* (c. 1561), in which he denied the eternally begotten nature of the Son. The work remained unpublished at his death, in 1562, but would later be printed with the work of Biandrata in *De falsa et vera unius Dei Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti cognitione libri duo*<sup>3</sup> (1568) and would become influential in the development of the antitrinitarian theology of his nephew, Faustus Sozzini.<sup>4</sup> Bernardino Ochino, minister to the Italian congregation of Zurich, published his *Dialogi XXX*<sup>5</sup> which aroused great suspicion and resulted in his expulsion from Zurich by the city council in 1563.<sup>6</sup> And in Basel, the professor of Old Testament, Caelius Secundus Curio, similarly contributed to the antitrinitarian cause.<sup>7</sup>

As antitrinitarianism took root in Poland and Transylvania in the 1560s and 1570s, the leading proponents of the antitrinitarian faith in these communities came directly from the centres of Reformed learning. These men presented their teachings as merely the next

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2 Joseph Tylenda, “The warning that went unheeded: John Calvin on Giorgio Biandrata,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 12, no. 1 (Ap 1977): 24-62.

3 Ferenc David and Laelius Socinus, *De Falsa et vera unius Dei Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti cognitione libri duo* (Alba Julia, 1568).

4 George Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 965–972.

5 Bernardino Ochino, *Dialogi XXX. in duos libros divisi, quorum primus est de Messia, continetque dialogos xviii.: Secundus est, cum de rebus variis, tum potissimum de Trinitate.* (Basel: Perna, 1563).

6 Mark Taplin, *The Italian Reformers and the Zurich Church, c. 1540-1620* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 111–169.

7 George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 953–956.

logical step in the ongoing reformation of the church and the consistent application of the Protestant notion of *sola scriptura*. For instance, antitrinitarianism became a significant threat to the nascent Polish Reformed church with the arrival of Giorgio Biandrata in November 1558. Hearing that Biandrata had been received by the Polish congregation, Calvin began writing a series of letters to the Polish leadership hoping to warn them of Biandrata's heterodoxy on the subject of the Trinity.<sup>8</sup> However, by the time the Polish church began to receive Calvin's letters, they had already been won over by the Italian's warmth and charisma. They began to defend Biandrata's orthodoxy to Calvin in the hopes that they might reconcile the two men. In fact, when Biandrata first arrived in Poland, he found the fledgling Reformed congregations already embroiled in a controversy relating to the two natures of Christ. The controversy was driven by the minister Francesco Stancaro, who argued that an erroneous subordination of the Son to the Father could only be avoided if the mediatorial role of Christ was restricted to his human nature alone. Stancaro's position had troubled the leadership of both the Genevan and Zurich churches, who suspected his teaching of leading to Nestorianism. Additionally, Stancaro tended to leave the three persons of the Trinity undifferentiated, resulting in what George Williams called "his implicit modalism."<sup>9</sup>

Calvin, though greatly troubled by Stancaro's teachings, still insisted that the newly arrived Biandrata posed a much more dangerous threat to the Polish church than Stancaro. Calvin dedicated his *Commentary on Acts* (1560) to Prince Mikołaj Radziwiłł, a Polish nobleman and a protector of the Reformed churches in Poland, and used the dedicatory epistle to urge the Prince to reconsider his friendship with Biandrata: "Consider, on the other hand, a certain physician Giorgio Biandrata, one worse than Stancaro, than whom is even

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8 Calvin's ongoing opposition to Biandrata is summarized in Tylenda, "The warning that went unheeded: John Calvin on Giorgio Biandrata."

9 George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 656.

more deeply soaked in detestable error and nurses a secret poison in his mind.”<sup>10</sup>

It is likely that the enthusiasm with which the Polish church received Biandrata, and their disregard for Calvin’s warnings, is due largely to the unpopular Stancaro’s hostility towards the Italian, which had the unwitting effect of preparing the other Polish ministers to more eagerly receive the seemingly humble irenicism of the newly arrived Italian doctor. Stancaro had made a particular nuisance of himself in his constant insistence on conducting the debate over the two natures of Christ using obscure scholastic terminology, earning for himself the reputation of a heated controversialist who tended more to enrage, than to refute his opponents. In one particular disputation, Stancaro so provoked John à Lasco that the protestant minister hurled a large Bible at his head, “failing in his rage,” as Williams notes “even then to impress the Word of God on the disagreeable, loquacious, but technically the more orthodox theologian.”<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Stancaro’s aggravating dialectical parsing, Biandrata entered the debate cautioning the Polish church against using any non-biblical terminology when defining the nature of God. Biandrata’s strict biblicist position proved effective in countering the scholasticism of Stancaro by refusing to admit any statement about the divine nature which wasn’t phrased in the simple language of Scripture. However, Biandrata’s biblicism also prompted a significant rethinking of the orthodox definition of the doctrine of the Trinity, since much of the vocabulary traditionally used to describe the triune nature had to be either abandoned or radically reinterpreted. *Homoousios*, the term which had been crucial to Athanasius in his fourth century defence of the unity of the divine essence, was reinterpreted by Biandrata in the context of Scripture and the Apostle’s Creed to refer more to a unity of

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10 ‘Ecce ex altera parte Medicus quidam Georgius Blandata, Stancaro deterior, quo magis detestabili errore imbutus est, et plus occultae virulentiae in animo alit.’ John Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, vol. 20 (Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1879), XVIII, 158.

11 Williams, 657.

purpose than a unity of essence. Although Biandrata's biblicism provided the Polish church with the means for dismissing the "popish" scholasticism of Stancaro, it also diminished the church's ability to explain precisely the unity of the three persons and led to what was seen in Geneva and Zurich to be a new form of tri-theism.<sup>12</sup>

The anti-scholastic biblicism of the Italian doctor soon won the majority of the Polish church over and in April of 1562 a synod of the Polish Reformed church, which met in Pińczów, agreed to restrict themselves to using only biblical language, combined with the Apostles' Creed, to describe the nature of God.<sup>13</sup> Though Biandrata left Poland for Transylvania in the summer of 1563, he left behind him a church that had become convinced by his biblicist approach and had been prepared for a radical rethinking of traditional trinitarian theology. Other men soon filled the gap left by Biandrata's departure; men like Gregory Paul, the superintendent of Cracow, as well as Alciati and Gentile, the two Italians who had been driven from the Italian congregation in Geneva, shortly after Biandrata's departure, for their refusal to sign the Genevan church's statement on the Trinity. A minority of ministers rejected the Pińczów confession and, in November 1562, Stanisław Sarnicki, a Reformed minister in Cracow, led this faction to split with the rest of the Polish church by professing their continued agreement with the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, as well as several statements on the Trinity issued by the churches of Geneva and Zurich.<sup>14</sup>

Prince Radziwiłł described the growing sect of antitrinitarianism within the Polish congregations in a letter written to Calvin in September, 1563.

There are others who, in an article about the Trinity, entirely reject as a human invention, not necessarily the thing itself, but those customary names for God: Trinity; Divine Essence; One God who reveals himself in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or shows himself in three Persons; similarly, One triune God; Three Persons in one

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12 Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 173–186.

13 Williams, 661.

14 John Calvin, *OC*, XIX, 572–580 (ep. #3875).

Essence; one Essence in three Persons; etc. And they think this should only be established by the explicit word of God, and by the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. They reject most of the Athanasian Creed. They say that "one threefold God," and "one in three" is nothing other than mere Sabellianism.<sup>15</sup>

Radziwiłł appended to the end of this letter a copy of another confession recently composed by the supporters of Biandrata. This confession concluded: "Among all the elect (among whom we do not refuse to be included) only the divine word is to be revered so that they believe it is unlawful to add or subtract anything."<sup>16</sup> *Trinitas, personae*, and *essentia* were, according to Biandrata, *papistica vocabula*.<sup>17</sup> This biblicism, which Taplin describes as a "persistent refrain for the Italian dissenters from Renato onwards,"<sup>18</sup> became an essential foundation to the antitrinitarian argument. By associating the theology of the papists with the traditional body of trinitarian vocabulary, amassed by the Christian church over more than a millennia of defining, disputing, and defending the doctrine, the antitrinitarians removed the possibility of clearly expressing the doctrine and rhetorically positioned themselves as the only consistent upholders of *sola scriptura*.

## 2.2 The Catholic Response

*The Antitrinitarian claim that their rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity had necessarily resulted from their submission to the Reformed insistence on sola scriptura afforded great opportunities to those hostile to the Reformed cause.*

The fact that the antitrinitarians could so easily pin the blame for their heterodoxy on the

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15 'Alii sunt qui in articulo de Trinitate, tametsi non rem ipsam, sed nomina illa usitata Dei, Trinitatis, Dei Essentiae, Dei unius qui se in Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto patefecit, aut in tribus Personis revelavit, Item: Unus Deus trinus, Tres Personae in una Essentia, una Essentia in tribus Personis, et id genus, prorsus tanquam humana inventa reiiciunt, et soli expresso Verbo Dei in hac parte standum esse statuunt, et symbolis Apostolico et Nicaeno. In Athanasii vero pleraque reiiciunt. Dicunt enim Deum Trinum unum, et unum trinum nihil aliud esse, quam merum Sabellianismum.' Ibid., XX, 328 (ep. #4125).

16 'Solius autem verbi divini ea est apud omnes electos reverentia (quorum de numero nos esse non diffitemur) ut illi nec addere, nec quicquam imminuere fas esse credant.' Ibid., XX, 350 (ep. #4125).

17 Ibid., XIX, 574 (ep. #3875).

18 Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 188.

teachings of the Reformed Church was not missed by Catholic polemicists. In 1565 a Catholic work was published in Cologne with the title *The Judgment and censure of a certain orthodox and Catholic man: concerning the Judgment and Censure of the Ministers of Zurich and Heidelberg, concerning the Teaching against the Worship of the Trinity which has recently spread throughout Poland*.<sup>19</sup> Although this work was published anonymously, Christopher Thretius, in a letter to Heinrich Bullinger dated 3 Oct., 1565, identified it as the work of Polish Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, a dedicated defender of the Roman Church against the advances of the Reformation.<sup>20</sup> In this attack on the Reformed church, Hosius assumed, for the sake of the argument, the voice of a hypothetical antitrinitarian. He insisted that the fundamental hermeneutical presuppositions of the antitrinitarians were no different than the hermeneutical presuppositions used by the Reformers in their fight with the Roman Catholics. Just as the Reformers had taken the theologians of Rome to task for their dependence on extra-biblical traditions and had insisted on a return to *sola scriptura*, so too the antitrinitarians were now challenging the doctrine of the Trinity, which they considered to be constructed solely of extra-biblical terminology and pagan philosophical concepts. Given the Reformed rejection of Rome, the Polish antitrinitarians could justly argue “Why shouldn’t your example be imitated by us?”<sup>21</sup> The antitrinitarians, according to Hosius, were merely being good disciples of their Reformed teachers.

Did you not teach us that the doctrine, without which Christianity cannot exist, has been rejected and buried in the papistry? Was it not (among others of yours) your fundamental position, just as it was of nearly every other heretic before you, that we should hold to nothing except Scripture? But if we, as we have been taught by you, reject all doctrine that rejects and buries Christianity, such as you yourselves claim the doctrine of the papacy is, then there would be among the chief doctrines rejected this

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19 Stanislaus Hosius, *Catholici cuiusdam et orthodoxi iudicium et censura: de iudicio et censura ministrorum Tygurinorum et Heydelbergensium, de dogmate contra adorandam Trinitatem in Polonia nuper sparso* (Cologne: Maternus Cholinus, 1565).

20 Theodor Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen* (Gräfenhainichen: Schulze, 1908), no. 344.

21 ‘Cur et nobis non liceat exemplum hoc vestrum imitari?’ Hosius, *Iudicium et censura*, 41–42.

one in particular concerning the Trinity: If then we ask you – as you never stop doing against the papists – ‘where in the Scriptures’ does the word “Trinity” appear, or “person,” or “essence”; and if it is not demonstrated according to the rule that you have proposed and that is frequently used against the Papists in examining other doctrines, we will refuse to believe it. We ask you by the immortal God, what are we doing that is at odds with your own rules and principles?<sup>22</sup>

Hosius’s *De iudicio et censura* could point to men in Zurich like Ochino who, in his *Dialogi* XXX (1563), had troubled both Bullinger and Beza with his reluctance to embrace traditional trinitarian vocabulary.<sup>23</sup> And Heidelberg would offer Hosius several examples of its own.

### 2.3 Heterodoxy on the Heels of Reformation

*The suspicions of anti-Reformed polemicists were subsequently confirmed when the Palatinate’s conversion to the Reformed faith was immediately followed by the discovery of antitrinitarianism within the University of Heidelberg.*

Shortly after coming to power, Frederick III, the Elector of the Palatinate (1559-1576), became convinced by the teachings of the Reformed Church. He underwent a dramatic conversion from the Lutheranism of the Augsburg Confession to a position much more sympathetic to the theology of Geneva, Zurich, and the other centres of Reformed teaching. This shift of one of the seven members of the *Kurfürstenrat* (the college of imperial electors) from the Lutheran to the Reformed position would hold significant repercussions for both Frederick’s own

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22 ‘Nonne vos docuistis nos, doctrinam citra quam Christianismus non constat, in Papismo totam explosam et sepultam esse? Nonne fuit et hoc inter alia vestrum, sicut ante vos aliorum haereticorum fere omnium axioma? Nihil esse recipiendum praeter scripturas? Quod si nos a vobis docti, reiicimus omnem doctrinam, quae Christianismum sepelit et explodit, qualem esse Papatus doctrinam ipsi profiteamini, et est inter illius capita praecipuum hoc de Trinitate: Si quod vos facere contra Papistas nunquam intermittitis, quaerimus et a vobis et ab illis ubi reperiatur in scripturis, vel Trinitatis, vel personae, vel essentiae nomen, ac nisi fuerit ostensum iuxta normam a vobis propositam, et in aliis dogmatibus examinandis, contra Papistas observari solitam, recepturos nos esse negamus, per Deum immortalem vos obsecramus, quid alienum a praeceptis et institutis vestris facimus.’ Ibid., 42–43. Hosius’s reference to the claim that the doctrine essential for the survival of Christianity having been rejected and buried within the papacy came from Calvin’s criticisms of the Catholic church in his *Institutes*. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.2.2.

23 Hosius, *Iudicium et censura*, 75–76. A full description of the growing concerns about Ochino’s *Dialogi* XXX is found in Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 111–169.

Palatinate, as well as for the broader Holy Roman Empire.<sup>24</sup>

Within the Empire, Frederick's disavowal of both Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism threatened to destabilize the only recently achieved Peace of Augsburg (1555). It established in his territories a theological system which was both novel and, according to the strictures of *cuius regio eius religio*, illegitimate. Within the Palatinate, Frederick's new convictions led to a reorganizing of the church by introducing into the celebration of the Lord's Supper the *fractio panis*<sup>25</sup> (signalling a clear break with the Eucharistic theology of Luther), thereby taking the first steps towards a Genevan-style consistory, and by dismissing the ministers whose Lutheran convictions were too strong to allow them to submit to Frederick's new convictions. By 1561, additionally, the Theology Faculty of the University of Heidelberg had been purged of instructors with Lutheran or anti-Reformed convictions (men like Einhorn and Heshus), who were replaced with men committed to the cause of the Reformed Church (such as Olevian, Tremellius, and Ursinus). Finally, in 1563, the Heidelberg Catechism was first published, having been commissioned by the Elector, propounding a distinctively Reformed explanation of the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper.<sup>26</sup>

To make matters worse, no sooner had Frederick completed the initial stages of reordering the church of the Palatinate according to the teachings of the Reformed faith, than Heidelberg became plagued by a series of increasingly public scandals surrounding students,

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24 For a general introduction to period under discussion, see Claus-Peter Clasen, *The Palatinate in European History 1555-1618* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966). Volker Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat. Regierung und Zentralbehörden der Kurpfalz 1559-1619* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1970). Dirk Visser, ed., *Controversy and Conciliation: The Reformation and the Palatinate 1559-1583* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986).

25 On the significance of the *fractio panis* in this context, see Bodo Nischan, "The 'Fractio Panis': A Reformed Communion Practice in Late Reformation Germany," *Church History* 53, no. 1 (March 1984): 17-29.

26 In the estimation of Emperor Maximilian, Frederick's catechism was clearly "Zwinglian." The princes of Württemberg, Zweibrücken, and Baden likewise considered the Catechism to be infused with the seductive and damnable errors of Zwingli and Calvin. A. Kluckhohn, ed., *Briefe des Friederich des Frommen Kurfürsten von der Pfalz* (Brunswick: Schwetschke and Son, 1868), I, 398-399 .

professors, and ministers who had begun to question some of the most fundamental dogmas of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In May of 1564 (hardly a year after the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism) a Polish student named Stanislaus Farnovius who had just matriculated at the University, began to challenge members of the faculty to debate on the doctrine of the Trinity. Farnovius denied that the Holy Spirit constituted a third person of the Trinity and insisted that the deity of the Son was subordinate to the deity of the Father. These assertions led to his rapid expulsion from the University of Heidelberg, in either July or August of 1564.<sup>27</sup> He subsequently became the leader of the ditheist movement, also called the Farnovians, a subset of the antitrinitarian movement which still considered the Son to be divine and eternal.

The day after Farnovius matriculated at the University, he was followed by Martinus Seidelius, a Silesian student who went on to become an instructor at the Heidelberg *Paedagogium*. However, on 6 November 1568, the Senate, at the request of the Kirchenrat, investigated the claim that Seidelius held to Arianism. During this investigation it was discovered that Seidelius had written his own defence of Arianism and sent it to Erastus, a member of the Medical Faculty, who insisted to the Senate that he had returned the defence to Seidelius with the admonition that it should be destroyed. The Senate concluded that Seidelius had indeed abandoned the orthodox faith by denying the deity of Christ as well as the authority of the New Testament. He was dismissed from his post and expelled from the town.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, despite the Kirchenrat's swift response to each of these situations, the fact that these episodes occurred shortly after Hosius's claim that the theology of Zurich and Heidelberg was to blame for the rise of Polish antitrinitarianism gave even more credence to

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27 Curt Horn, "Johann Sylvan und die Anfänge des Heidelberger Antitrinitarismus: Ein Beitrag zur pfälzischen Kirchengeschichte," in *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, vol. 17 (Heidelberg: Koester, 1913), XVII, 257–258.

28 *Ibid.*, XVII, 259.

suspicions about the trajectory of the Reformed church.

## 2.4 Zurich Attempts an Answer

*In 1568 two theologians of Zurich, Josias Simler and Heinrich Bullinger, attempted to distance the Reformed understanding of sola scriptura from that of the antitrinitarians.*

In the summer of 1567, the remaining Polish trinitarian ministers began searching Europe for a greater degree of assistance in refuting the antitrinitarianism that had taken a deep root within Poland.<sup>29</sup> John a Lasco, a minister of the Polish church, together with Christopher Thretius, who served as the rector of the Reformed college in Cracow, travelled to the centres of Reformed learning in Berne, Geneva, and Zurich. The request of the Polish ministers was eventually answered by Josias Simler, who had succeeded Peter Martyr Vermigli as Professor of Old Testament at the University of Zurich in 1563. Simler had already been involved in the trinitarian controversies of the Polish church, having previously weighed in on the Stancarist affair with *Responsio ad maledicum Francisci Stancari Mantuani librum*, 1563.<sup>30</sup> Now, at the request of Thretius and a Lasco, as well as other Polish ministers, such as Paweł Gilowski, and Stanislaw Sarnicki, Simler would write a lengthy refutation of the trinitarian errors threatening the Polish church, *De aeterno Dei Filio*, which appeared in print the following year (1568).<sup>31</sup>

Simler's preface to *De aeterno Dei Filio* opened with a short summary of the beginnings of antitrinitarianism in Poland, recalling the way in which the biblicist hermeneutic first appeared as merely an antidote to Stancaro's scholastic badgering.

<sup>29</sup> This project is described in much greater detail in Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 198–212.

<sup>30</sup> Josias Simler, *Responsio Ad Maledicum Francisci Stancari Mantuani Librum adversus Tigurinae ecclesiae ministros, de Trinitate et Mediatore Domino nostro Iesu Christo, auctore Iosia Simlero Tigurino* (Zurich: Christopherum Froschover, 1563).

<sup>31</sup> Josias Simler, *De aeterno Dei filio domino et servatore nostro Iesu Christo, et de Spiritu sancto, adversus veteres et novos antitrinitarios, id est Arianos, Tritheitas, Samosatenianos, et Pneumatomachos* (Zurich: Christopherum Froscho, 1568), 85.

At first they pretended that they were doing nothing other than refuting the madness of Stancaró, along with us, meanwhile nevertheless they gradually and secretly smuggled in the idea that the deity of Christ is less than the Father, and thus according to that nature he intercedes for us; and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not one God, but there is a kind of eternal division of them, and they are actually three spirits, of whom only the Father is ἀγένητος and one God, the Son and the Holy Spirit are two spiritual essences derived from that one high Father God, and depend on him.<sup>32</sup>

Simler went on to record his own initial reluctance to take on the task of refuting the antitrinitarians, having heard that Beza, Ursinus, and Zanchi had all begun similar works.<sup>33</sup>

Seeing the importance of not just defending the Reformed doctrine of the Trinity, but also of providing a defence for the use of extra-biblical language which seemed necessary in any discussion of trinitarian theology, Simler included two significant challenges to the strict biblicism of the antitrinitarians. The first challenge was not actually the work of Simler, but rather a short piece by Bullinger, which was included in the preface to *De aeterno Dei Filio* and was written as a response to Hosius's *De iudicio et censura ministrorum Tygurunorum & Heydelbergensium*.

Bullinger had responded to *De iudicio et censura* with his own *reductio ad absurdum*. Not even the antitrinitarians are consistent with their professed strict biblicism, he insisted, since they still conduct their theology in Latin, whereas a strict biblicist should only permit himself to speak about God using the Greek or Hebrew languages. To use the Latin tongue while speaking about the divine nature is, in principle, to concede the legitimacy of using words which agree with the message of Scripture, despite the fact that they cannot be found syllable by syllable in the biblical text. The biblicism of the antitrinitarians, Bullinger concluded, was

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32 'Hi primum simulabant se nihil aliud agere quam ut Stancari delirium una nobiscum refellerent, interea tamen sensim et clam animis multorum instillabant, Christum qua Deus est Patre minorem esse, ideoque secundum eam naturam pro nobis intercedere, neque Patrem, et Filium atque Spiritum Sanctum esse unum Deum, sed esse horum perpetuam quasi divisionem, et tres prorsus spiritus esse, e quibus solus Pater sit ἀγένητος et unus Deus, Filium vero et Spiritum Sanctum duos esse Spiritus a summo illo uno Deo Patre essentiatos, et ab eo dependentes.' Ibid., 84.

33 Ibid., 87.

an impractical absurdity. The Reformed churches maintained, on the other hand, that the principle of *sola scriptura* does not restrict the church to the exact syllables of the biblical text, but rather to the essential ideas which those syllables communicate. In so far as the technical terminology, generated by the church to express the doctrine of the Trinity, agreed with and faithfully represented the sense of Scripture, that terminology could be considered biblical and consistent with the principle of *sola scriptura*.<sup>34</sup>

Simler's second challenge to the hermeneutic of the antitrinitarians was his own discussion of extra-biblical terminology in Book 3, Chapter 3 of *De aeterno Dei Filio*. This chapter began with a summary of the antitrinitarian objections to traditional trinitarian terminology, the same summary as was already used in Prince Radziwiłł's letter to Calvin (mentioned above).

Teaching about God must be expounded according to Scripture, and must be established only by the express word of God. But the Scriptures on no occasion make use of the names of God – Trinity; Divine Essence; One God who reveals himself in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or has revealed himself in three persons. Similarly, one Triune God; One God in a Trinity; One threefold God; three persons in one essence; one essence in three persons: Therefore all these must be entirely rejected as human inventions.<sup>35</sup>

Simler's answer echoed Bullinger's preface, insisting that when the Reformers demanded that all theological teaching be conducted according to Scripture, this principle did not require a wooden repetition of Scripture "syllable by syllable," but merely that all teaching agree with the "sense of Scripture."

Either they are saying that one must speak about God according to the Scriptures, so that nothing may be taught which is different or foreign to the sense of the Scriptures, and we understand their proposition in this sense: or they are saying that one must

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34 Ibid., α 7–8.

35 'De Deo secundum scripturas docendum est, et soli expresso Verbo Dei in hac parte standum. Sed scripturae nusquam utuntur nominibus Dei Trinitatis, Dei essentiae, Dei unius qui se in Patre Filio et Spiritu Sancto patefecit, aut in tribus personis revelavit. Item Unus Deus Trinitas: Unus Deus in Trinitate: Unus Deus trinus: tres personae in una essentia: una essentia in tribus personis: Ergo haec omnia tanquam humana inventa reiicienda sunt.' Ibid., 249.

teach according to the Scriptures so that no word may be used which can not be shown syllable by syllable in Scripture: if this is what they mean, then their proposition is false . . . <sup>36</sup>

Theological discourse must be limited to the sense of Scripture, according to Simler, but not to the exact words of Scripture. Throughout *De aeterno Dei Filio* Simler argued as one who looked to find the doctrine of the Trinity in the general sense of Scripture, rather than in the explicit terminology of Scripture, essentially repeating the position outlined by Calvin in his *Institutes*.<sup>37</sup> This understanding of the principle of *sola scriptura* made room for the definitions of the church councils and the explanations of the church fathers, so long as these extra-biblical citations were consistent with the sense of Scripture.

## 2.5 Antidisciplinarians and Antitrinitarians

*In 1568, several Palatinate ministers, feeling more and more ostracised by the leadership of the Palatinate's Reformed theologians due to a controversy on church discipline, began questioning matters far more controversial than that of the Genevan consistory.*

Despite the efforts of men like Simler and Bullinger, the embarrassment of antitrinitarianism arising within the centres of Reformed learning continued. In the Spring of 1569 Simone Simoni, an Italian medical student, was expelled from the University of Heidelberg after his explanation of *creatio ex nihilo* and the eternal generation of the Son aroused suspicions that he too was in fact an Arian. A colleague of Simoni named Johann Sylvan (who would, the following year, take the centre stage in another Palatinate antitrinitarian controversy), maintained in a letter to Johannes Wolphius that he found it hard to believe that Simoni had

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<sup>36</sup> ' . . . vel enim dicunt secundum scripturas loquendum esse de Deo, ut nihil doceatur a sensu scripturarum dissentiens et alienum, et hoc sensu recipimus eorum propositionem: vel dicunt secundum scripturas ita docendum, ut nullo verbo utamur quod non totidem syllabis compositum in scripturis ostendi possit: atque si ita intelligent, falsa est eorum propositio . . . ' Simler, *De aeterno Dei filio domino et servatore nostro Iesu Christo, et de Spiritu sancto, adversus veteres et novos antitrinitarios, id est Arianos, Tritheitas, Samosatenarios, et Pneumatomachos*.

<sup>37</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.3–6.

really embraced Arianism. It was far more likely, insisted Sylvan, that Simoni had been smeared with the accusation because of his opposition to the University leadership on another, seemingly unconnected, issue. Simoni had been dismissed, Sylvan claimed, because “He refuted in private conversations the argument of the Genevan disciplinarians. He has seen through the shams and well investigated the mysteries of the Genevan elders.”<sup>38</sup>

Sylvan’s comments about the “Genevan disciplinarians” refer to a controversy over the question of church discipline which had begun in Heidelberg the previous summer. On June 10, 1568, George Withers, an English doctoral student at the University of Heidelberg, had defended a dissertation which advocated that the power of excommunication belonged to the ecclesiastical rather than civil authorities. Withers’s dissertation argued in favour of the consistorial system of church discipline, a system instituted in Geneva in the previous decade, which established a board of presbyters for individual churches, charged with guarding the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper from church members who were living dissolute lives. Taking the opposing position were Thomas Erastus and Adam Neuser, who insisted that the final arbiter of discipline cases and ecclesiastical matters should be the Prince and his council. Though Erastus was a member of the Medical Faculty and not the Theology Faculty, his opposition to the consistory, as established in Geneva, had been known for some time and had attracted a significant following within the ministers of the Palatinate. Nor was Neuser a member of the Theology Faculty, having been passed over for the position of Professor of Theology when Paul Einhorn left the post vacant in 1560. The position had been given instead to Olevian, and Neuser was left as minister of Heidelberg’s St. Peterskirche, where he served throughout the 1560s. The case for the Genevan system was argued by Immanuel

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38 Horn, “Johann Sylvan und die Anfänge des Heidelberger Antitrinitarismus: Ein Beitrag zur pfälzischen Kirchengeschichte,” XVII, 219–316. ‘Is cepit in privatis colloquiis reprehendere Genevensium disciplinandi rationem. Is enim perspectas habet fraudes et exploratissima Seniorum Genevensium mysteria.’

Tremellius, Zacharius Ursinus, and Girolamo Zanchi, all of whom were members of the University's Theological Faculty.<sup>39</sup>

Withers, having already earned a reputation for himself in England as a fierce protagonist for the theology of the Reformed church,<sup>40</sup> had first proposed a disputation on the topic of vestments. Zanchi, however, feared that this would prove to be unnecessarily controversial and urged that the topic of the disputation be changed.<sup>41</sup> Withers agreed to tone down his attack on vestments and shifted the focus of his disputation to the question of whether the church council or the prince stood as the final authority over matters of church discipline. Unfortunately, Zanchi's proposed shift in Withers's theses, from vestments to church discipline, failed to steer the disputation clear of controversy and, ironically, marked the beginning of Heidelberg's antidisiplinary controversy, drawing the battle lines for what would later become Heidelberg's antitrinitarian controversy.

The debate during Withers's disputation went clearly against Erastus and Neuser, the defenders of the antidisiplinary position. In the course of the proceedings, Neuser lost his temper and insulted the chairman of the disputation, Pierre Boquin, as well as the members of the Theological Faculty of the University – Tremellius, Ursinus, and Zanchi. As a result of his outburst, Neuser was dismissed from his position as minister at St. Peterskirche and was reassigned to oversee the early morning service at the Heiliggeistkirche. A continued hostility in his sermons toward the position of the disciplinarians, combined with repeated attacks on the Heidelberg catechism – as well as charges of drunkenness – invited even further censure

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39 Hans Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," in *Neues Archiv für die Geschichte der Stadt Heidelberg und der rheinischen Pfalz*, vol. IX (Heidelberg: Koester, 1911), 25–27 and 29–30. See also Burchill, *The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians*, 21. Robert Dan, *Matthias Vehe-Glirius: Life and Work of a Radical Antitrinitarian with his Collected Works* (Budapest: Brill, 1982), 19–22.

40 Withers had distinguished himself in his opposition to the idolatrous images used in church windows (see John Strype, ed., *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), II, 2.382.) as well as the use of clerical vestments (see *Ibid.*, 2:II, 1.374–375 and II, 2.394–395.).

41 Zanchi later described his reasoning in a letter to Conrad Hubert. Girolamo Zanchi, *Omnium Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva: Samuel Crispin, 1619), 106–107.

from the church council.<sup>42</sup> Other anti-disciplinarian ministers provoked a similar response. Sylvan, then serving as a minister at Ladenburg, had been originally slated to argue the antidisciplinarian position, but had been unable to travel to Heidelberg at the time of Withers's disputation. Sylvan was a graduate of the University of Vienna who had defected from the Roman Catholic church around the year 1560 to serve as a minister at Kaiserslautern and who eventually became a minister to the Reformed congregation in the town of Ladenburg. Over the two years following the Withers disputation, Sylvan would continue to identify himself as one of the antidisciplinarians and was also eventually brought before the council for discipline.<sup>43</sup> Sylvan's close friend Matthias Vehe, who had been a student of the University of Heidelberg and had served as deacon under Sylvan at Kaiserslautern, also attracted the attention of the church council with his continued attacks on the disciplinarian position. Vehe was eventually removed from his office in May 1570.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, there initially seems to be good reason to give credence to Sylvan's suspicion that the University had manufactured concerns about the trinitarian theology of Simoni in order to combat his opposition to the Genevan disciplinarians. However, the events of the following year would reveal that the University faculty and the Palatinate church had good reason for suspecting that the members of the Erastian circle had been secretly nursing antitrinitarian sympathies. In particular, Sylvan's indignation at the charge of "Arianism" having been levelled against one of his companions would soon appear quite hollow.

## 2.6 The Appeal to Sylvan

*When a petition was passed to a member of the antidisciplinarian party, looking for help for the Polish*

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42 See the minutes of the Heidelberg Church Council as published in Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," 23–26 and 29–32.

43 Ibid., 26–27 and 61–62.

44 Ibid., 27–28.

*church against the arguments of the antitrinitarians, rather than eliciting a rebuttal of the heresy, it became the catalyst for another apostasy into antitrinitarianism.*

When much later, in May 1590, the former minister of the Palatinate, Matthias Vehe, looked back some twenty-two years to the publication of *De aeterno Dei Filio*, he insisted that Simler's book had failed to fulfil the needs of the Polish church, having left the arguments of the antitrinitarians not only unchecked but indeed strengthened by Simler's inability to refute their interpretation of Scripture. Ignoring the distinction made by Bullinger and Simler between the words and the sense of Scripture, Vehe, now turned antitrinitarian, maintained that the chief shortcoming of Simler's work was his reliance on extra-biblical sources, rather than on close observation of the biblical text in its original languages – a shortcoming which stood in sharp contrast to the biblicism of the antitrinitarians.

This publication [*De aeterno Dei Filio*], when it was printed and then disseminated throughout Poland, did not refute Adam Pastor's opinion, but rather Pastor's opinion actually became much more supported and strengthened, for the reason that although their arguments were taken only from God's word, Simler did not refute them and brought no arguments against them, except the councils and explanations of the fathers, which were not founded in God's word in the original languages.<sup>45</sup>

It is unclear whether or not the remaining trinitarian ministers of Poland shared Vehe's negative assessment of Simler's finished product. Nevertheless, a little more than a year later John a Lasco was again sent on a mission to recruit help from the broader Reformed community for the beleaguered Polish trinitarians. Arriving in Heidelberg in the spring of 1570, with copies of Giorgio Biandrata's *De Regno Christi* and *De Regno Antichristi*, as well as a collection of Polish "*statuta*," a Lasco began searching for a theologian capable of refuting the heretical publications. According to Vehe, a Lasco asked throughout Heidelberg for its most

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45 'Welches schreiben, als es ist ausgegangen in truck und auch in Polen ist spargirt worden, ist durch es Adam Pastors meinung nit allein nit umbgestoßen worden, sonder viel mehr becräftiget und gestärckt worden, aus ursach, das er ihre argumenta allein aus göttlichem wort genomen, nit hat umbgestoßen und kein andere argumenta wider sie hat bringen, dan der patrum consilia und erklärung, die nit gegründet sein in göttlichem wort in ursprünglicher sprachen.' Matthias Vehe, "Apology," in *Matthias Vehe-Glirius* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 280.

learned theologian and received everywhere the same answer: the most capable Palatinate theologian was Johannes Sylvan, the minister of Ladenburg.<sup>46</sup> However, in a letter sent from Heidelberg to Johannes Wolphius on 10 May, 1570, a Lasco gave a more probable account of the recruiting of Sylvan. He described how he had travelled to Heidelberg originally with the intention of recruiting Ursinus for the writing project. But when Ursinus could find no time to help a Lasco with this task, the Polish emissary journeyed on to Ladenburg to request Sylvan's help.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that Sylvan was chosen to compose the response to Biandrata although he was already estranged from the Theology Faculty due to his siding with Erastus in the dispute over discipline may seem slightly suspicious. The Erastian circle had already produced several men with heterodox views on the Trinity and one wonders why Sylvan, another Erastian, was recruited to help direct the Polish in their fight against the antitrinitarians. However, the theologians of Zurich had been equally opposed to the consistories of the Calvinists and sided with the Erastian party. Nevertheless Bullinger and Simler had been some of the most outspoken opponents of the antitrinitarian movement. It is likely that for a Lasco there was no obvious reason to believe that Sylvan's antidisiplinarianism necessarily led to antitrinitarianism.

Vehe insisted that upon first reading Biandrata's works Sylvan was surprised and enraged at the strangely new and outrageous blasphemies contained therein.<sup>48</sup> Upset by the shocking assertions of the antitrinitarians, the minister of Ladenburg immediately set to work thinking through his refutation. Again, Vehe's recollection of the events leading up to the controversy seems slightly exaggerated. It would be difficult to think that Sylvan, a member of

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46 Ibid., 480.

47 Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen*, 327–328.

48 Vehe, "Apology," 280.

Erastus's circle of friends and companion of Simone Simoni, would have never encountered the arguments of the antitrinitarians before receiving Biandrata's books in 1570. However, despite its occasional embellishments, Vehe's account gives a helpful outline of Sylvan's dramatic shift. It is most likely that when Sylvan first received the task he truly intended to refute the antitrinitarian works. In Vehe's account, Sylvan immediately began to gather books which might be helpful in making his case.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, as Sylvan worked through Biandrata's works, he found himself troubled by the antitrinitarian's arguments and unsure if he could actually carry out the task assigned to him. Whether Biandrata's arguments provided the initial impetus for Sylvan's rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, or whether they only further confirmed preexisting suspicions, Sylvan became convinced that the arguments for the Trinity and the deity of Jesus could find no support in Scripture.<sup>50</sup> Sylvan shared his doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity with several of his fellow antidisziplinarians, who soon became sympathetic with his misgivings. In the context of these discussions, this collection of antidisziplinarians, now turning antitrinitarian, sent a question to the University of Heidelberg's Professor of Hebrew, Immanuel Tremellius in the spring of 1570. Vehe later recalled how Sylvan, who was unskilled in the Hebrew language, sent his question to Johannes Haller, an *auditor* of Dr. Tremellius, in the hope that Haller would pass the question on to Tremellius. Sylvan asked "if he could not find something strong in the old Hebrew writings, by which the divinity of Christ could and might be indubitably proven out of the Old Testament."<sup>51</sup> Haller reported back that he had been able to ask the Hebrew Professor the question and that Tremellius had

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49 One of Sylvan's close friends, the minister of Käfertal, later recalled that Sylvan had shown him a copy of Petrus Galatinus's *Opus de Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*, which he had obtained to help with this task. Galatinus, however, was not as convincing for Sylvanus as he would be for Zanchi. Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," 41.

50 Ibid., 33–34.

51 'Ob er nichts kräftiges finde in alten hebraischen scribenten, dorduch die gottheit Christi aus dem alten testament kont und mocht ohnumbstößig bewert werden.' Vehe, "Apology," 280.

replied in the negative. “He did not find anything strong in them to prove such a thing, therefore he believes it is founded on the writings of the New Testament and no other reason.”<sup>52</sup> As Sylvan already had his own conclusions about the lack of New Testament evidence for the Trinity, the admission from Tremellius that the doctrine of the Trinity could not be established from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament seemed particularly damning. Vehe later described seeing the manuscript of a work by Sylvan which revealed Sylvan’s new convictions. In this work, Sylvan argued that the Athanasian Creed had been falsely manufactured and was entirely opposed to the Apostles’ Creed.<sup>53</sup>

On 13 July 1570, Neuser and Sylvan, on a trip to Speyer, delivered to the ambassador of Transylvania a letter addressed to Giorgio Biandrata, who was then living in Transylvania. This letter professed Sylvan’s own rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and asked for ministerial appointments within Transylvania for Sylvan and other Palatinate ministers who were sympathetic with the antitrinitarian position.<sup>54</sup> However, these plans were interrupted when Sylvan’s letter to Biandrata was intercepted and brought to the attention of Elector Frederick III, who immediately launched an investigation into the matter. When the houses of the various antitrinitarians were searched, several incriminating discoveries were made; among them was Sylvan’s manuscript attacking the doctrine of Trinity, entitled:

*Wahre christliche Bekänntniß des urhalten Glaubens von dem einigen wahren Gott und von Messia Jesu der wahren Christus, wider den Dreypersönlichen Abgott und Zweygenaturten Götzen des Widerchrist, aus Gottes Wort mit Fleiss zusammen getragen, und in solcher Kürze beschreiben.*<sup>55</sup>

Also discovered was a letter from Adam Neuser to the Sultan of Istanbul, professing a degree

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52 ‘Er finde nichts kräftiges in inen solches zu beweren, dan das er es glaub glaube er es von wägen der schriften des newen testaments und sonst umb keiner andern ursach willen.’ Ibid.

53 Ibid., 281.

54 Burchill, *The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians*, 80–81.

55 Ibid., 72.

of like-mindedness with the faith of the Sultan and a desire to find asylum in Turkey.<sup>56</sup>

The first two men to be taken into custody were Johann Sylvan and Matthias Vehe, who were arrested as they returned from their journey to Speyer. Sylvan was held in prison for nearly a year and a half. Having made a complete retraction of his errors, Sylvan fully expected to be released. This expectation was tragically disappointed when, on 22 December 1572, Sylvan was suddenly tried for heresy and, on the following day, beheaded. Sylvan's body, along with the sole manuscript of his *Wahre christliche Bekantniß*, was subsequently burned, and the ashes were sprinkled into the Neckar River. Matthias Vehe was held until August 1572, when he was finally released and banished from the Palatinate. Adam Neuser initially eluded arrest, but was eventually captured and imprisoned in October of 1570. However, six months later, in May 1571, Neuser escaped from his prison in Seltenlehr and fled from the Prince's jurisdiction. Also implicated in the investigation was Jacob Suter, another graduate from the University of Heidelberg, who served as minister in Feudenheim on the Neckar, only a short journey from where Sylvan had lived in Ladenburg. Suter was eventually released along with Vehe in 1572. The last member of the antitrinitarian circle to have been arrested in the investigation of 1570 was a Bernese student at the University, Johann Hasler, who had come under the influence of the antitrinitarian ministers shortly after his arrival in Heidelberg in 1568. Hasler was held by the school beadle for six weeks before the Bernese council interceded on his behalf and secured his release.

## 2.7 The Erastian Circle

*Although the close correspondence between the Palatinate's circle of antidisziplinarians and its circle of antitrinitarians invites speculation as to whether the two positions might be inherently connected, no clear causal relationship has been established.*

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 124.

One common denominator linking the antitrinitarians of Heidelberg was their friendship with Erastus, the professor of the University's medical faculty who had stood at the centre of the antidisiplinarian controversy. In 1575 Erastus was again questioned regarding his connection with the antitrinitarian heresies which had surfaced in the Palatinate five years previously. During these hearings, the physician Pigafetta recounted an exchange that he had had with Erastus, as the two of them listened to a debate on the Trinity chaired by Zanchi. According to Pigafetta, Erastus had said ". . . he had gathered arguments against those propositions about the person of Christ, which Paul himself could not answer. When I asked that he share them, he said: Zanchi, and others, would interpret it unfavourably."<sup>57</sup> Pigafetta went on to admit, however, that he was unsure whether this had been said by Erastus or Simonius. Consequently, despite several examinations by the Kirchenrat, Erastus was never properly convicted of any unorthodox views of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the close correspondence within the Erastian circle of friends between the antidisiplinarians and the antitrinitarians remained suspiciously coincidental.

Noting this coincidence, Christopher Burchill comments:

Surely the major desideratum, which could provide the key to a better understanding of the whole group and its relation to the reformed tradition, would be to undertake a serious study on the 'religio Erasti'. Until such problems have been settled, it is difficult to see how an entirely convincing explanation for the dissident movement can be found.<sup>58</sup>

Burchill suspects that if one looks more carefully at their understanding of the Lord's Supper, there could be a connection between the Arianism of the Heidelberg antitrinitarians and the opposition of the Heidelberg antidisiplinarians to the Genevan model of church discipline.

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<sup>57</sup> '. . . Se habere argumenta contra propositiones illas de persona Christi adductas, quas nec ipse Paulus solvere posset. Cum ego peterem, ut proponeret, dixit: Interpretaretur Zanchus et alii in sinistram partem.' Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," 7.

<sup>58</sup> Burchill, *The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians*, 14.

It was Sylvan's objection to the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity, Burchill suggests, which drove both his Erastianism and his Arianism.

It would seem that like many of his contemporaries, his initial conversion to the reformed teaching was the result of a forthright opposition to the doctrine of ubiquity. It was only now that Sylvan came to realize the danger of any attempt to represent the sacred in concrete form. Thus even the Calvinist teaching on the spiritual presence of Christ was liable to compromise the transcendence of God and open the way to idolatry. While this view clearly undermined the justification for excommunication, it was at the same time to present the paradox of the incarnation in a new and troublesome light.<sup>59</sup>

Though the 'religio Erasti' may have provided some of the incentive for his transition from antidisiplinarianism to antitrinitarianism, clearly a significant factor in Sylvan's growing doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity was the request for help made by Christopher Thretius and John a Lasco, the Polish ministers eager to combat the influence of the growing Polish antitrinitarian movement.<sup>60</sup> Although Sylvan's encounter with the Polish antitrinitarian writings delivered to him by a Lasco may not have been his first substantive encounter with antitrinitarian arguments, the assignment to refute Biandrata's *De Regno Christi* forced Sylvan's hand and required that he come to a considered opinion as to where he stood on the issue.

## 2.8 The Antitrinitarianism of Heidelberg

*The Heidelberg antitrinitarians were characterized by a commitment to the following four points: biblicalism, attention to the original languages (especially Hebrew), a prioritizing of the Old Testament over the New, and a conviction that their antitrinitarianism was really just a logical extrapolation of Reformed theology.*

Generating a summary of the main tenets of the antitrinitarianism that appeared in

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>60</sup> Wotschke, 327-328.

Heidelberg in the summer of 1570 is a difficult task. Of the four ministers and one student to be arrested over the affair, only Sylvan and Vehe are known to have written at length on the topic. Sylvan's work, however, has been lost forever, the only known copy of his writing having been consigned to the flames at the end of 1572. Vehe's writings on the doctrine of the Trinity all postdate his time in Heidelberg by several years, his first work being the *Mattaniah*, published in Cologne in 1578. Thus, it is likely that many of the views expressed in the *Mattaniah* are conclusions that Vehe reached, or more fully developed, after his having fled Heidelberg and, therefore, are not necessarily representative of the views circulating amongst the antitrinitarian ministers of the Palatinate in 1570. However, that qualification having been made, the *Mattaniah*, written six years after Vehe's departure from Heidelberg, can still prove useful in shedding light on the newly emerging antitrinitarianism of the Palatinate. Additionally, one can distil several overarching themes descriptive of the Heidelberg antitrinitarians amongst the minutes of the *kirchenrat*, the extant letters of those who participated in the controversy or observed it from a safe distance, and the later recollections of Neuser and Vehe.

Firstly, the Heidelberg dissidents repeated the biblicist demand, already characteristic of the Polish antitrinitarians, that Scripture, and Scripture only, be the foundation for all descriptions of the divine nature. They disassociated themselves from the scholastic argumentation with which the late mediaeval church had buttressed the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with the vocabulary of the early trinitarian creeds. When Vehe later retold the story of Suter's examination at the hand of Zanchi, he cast the Theology Professor as conceding from the start that the doctrine of the Trinity could not be established strictly from Scripture alone, a concession which forced Zanchi to rely on what, Vehe felt, was the flimsiest of arguments.

Zanchi began: Mr. Suter, I can not think so poorly of you, that you would consider the divinity of Christ to be doubtful, like one of those who will only consider the verses of the Old and New Testaments, disregarding any further demonstration, by which the divinity of Christ is strongly proved. Then he said: I must admit, that this can not and may not be strongly proved from any such verses without a preceding proof. Therefore, I want you, before we move on to an explanation from verses, which are necessary to prove the deity of Christ, we will consider an argument, by which this can and may be strongly proved. Then, after this, no one will think poorly of us if we clarify and explain the doubtful sayings of Scripture about the deity of Christ.<sup>61</sup>

Vehe went on to describe the argument for the deity of Christ which Zanchi then advanced.

Zanchi insisted that: “Whoever gives and appoints a covenant sign is the true God. Christ has given and appointed a covenant sign. Therefore, Christ is true God.”<sup>62</sup> The Professor’s syllogism was considered by Vehe to be “a foolish sophism”<sup>63</sup> and a “feeble argument.”<sup>64</sup> Vehe emphasized the failure of the trinitarian theologians to base their proofs on the clear exegesis of Scripture. Countering Zanchi’s logical deductions, Vehe demanded: “who will prove to me from Holy Scripture, that . . .”<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, for the sake of winning his freedom, Suter submitted to Zanchi’s logic and declared his agreement with the Professor’s syllogism.

Related to the criticism that the trinitarian theologians were unable to produce a clear proof for the doctrine of the Trinity directly from the Holy Scriptures, was the charge that much of their inability to work from the biblical text stemmed from their inadequate grasp of the biblical languages, particularly the ancient Hebrew tongue. When Sylvan sent his fateful letter to Biandrata in the summer of 1570, the minister of Ladenburg boasted that there were

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61 ‘Fangt Zanchius an: Herr Sotere, ich kans euch nit für übel halten, daß irh die gottheit Christi in einen zweifel gezogen habt als denjenigen, der allein auf die sprüch des alten und neuwen testaments sihet, ohn einige fürgehende demonstration, dorduch die gottheit Christi kräftig bewert wird. Dan sagt er: Ich muß bekennen, daß solches nit kräftig aus einigen sprüch nit kön und nit mög bewert werden ohne vorgehende demonstration. Derhalben wil ich euch, eh wir von erklerung der sprüch handeln, die man braucht, die gottheit Christi zu beweren, eine demonstration anzeigen, dorduch dieselb kräftig kan und mag bewert werden. Dan nach disem würd es uns niemand für übel aufnehmen, wan wir zweifelhaltige sprüch der geschrift auf die gottheit Christi deuten und erklären.’ Vehe, “Apology,” 283.

62 ‘Ein jeder, der ein bundtzeichen gibt und einsetzt, der ist wahrer Gott. Christus hat ein bundtzeichen gegeben und eingesetzt. Derhalben ist Christus waherer Gott.’ Ibid.

63 ‘ein töpisch sophisma’

64 ‘kraftlose demonstration’

65 ‘wer will mir aus heil. Schrift beweren, das . . .’

many who were skilled in the biblical languages who were actually of the same opinion as the antitrinitarians and ready to respond to a summons. “I have still more brothers, who are in agreement with me on this matter, who are learned in Greek and Hebrew, if they are summoned somewhere, they will gather together there.”<sup>66</sup>

Vehe repeated this claim in his recollection of Sylvan’s letter.<sup>67</sup> At several points, Vehe charged that the Reformed theologians were incapable of careful consideration of the Hebrew text, without which it was impossible for the theologian to understand the true and genuine sense of Scripture.<sup>68</sup> His *Mattaniah* ended with a short closing letter to the reader, in which he again made the claim that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ cannot be found in the Holy Scriptures, at least not when Bible study was unsullied and uncorrupted by the false explanations of the Fathers and the Scholastic Doctors. Vehe blamed the Reformed church’s continuing trinitarianism partly on the fact that they “did not have such an understanding of the Hebrew language,” without which a true examination of the Scriptures was impossible.<sup>69</sup> Vehe later conceded, however, in his *Apology* that, by the summer of 1570, both he and Sylvan actually had only a rudimentary grasp of the Hebrew language.<sup>70</sup>

Next, the Heidelberg antitrinitarians began to question the tendency of the Christian Church to prioritize the New Testament over the Old Testament, a bias illustrated by the Christian assumption that the New Testament interpreted and brought into clearer focus the types and shadows of the Old Testament. Instead, it was suggested by the antitrinitarians that the Old Testament, particularly the Pentateuch, had served as God’s clearest and fullest

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66 ‘Ich habe noch mehr Brüder, die es mit mir halten, die da Griechisch und Hebräisch gelernt seynd, wo sie beruffen, werden sie dahin kommen allesamt.’ Ludwig Miel, *Monumenta Pietatis et Literaria Virorum in Re Publica et Literaria Illustrum, Selecta* (Frankfurt: Johannem Maximilianum, 1701), 323.

67 Matthias Vehe, “Matthias Vehe-Glirius Apology,” in *Matthias Vehe-Glirius*, n.d., 279. Vehe, 279.

68 Matthias Vehe, “Declamatiuncula contra praedestinationem neotericorum,” in *Matthias Vehe-Glirius* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 240.

69 ‘nit haben gehabt solche Erkantniß der Hebraischen Sprach.’ Matthias Vehe-Glirius and Robert Dan, “Mattaniah,” in *Matthias Vehe-Glirius* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 308.

70 Vehe, “Apology,” 270 and 280.

revelation. The rest of the Old Testament and the entirety of the New Testament might prove useful by giving a clearer understanding of the teachings contained in the Pentateuch, but they should not be given priority over the Law of the Hebrew Scriptures. This radical position was argued at length in Vehe's *Mattaniah*,<sup>71</sup> as well as appearing in some of the interactions with the antitrinitarians during the Heidelberg controversy. The fact that Sylvan specially sought out the testimony of Tremellius, the Theology Faculty's Professor of Old Testament, as he looked for biblical evidence to support the doctrine of the Trinity, suggests that he too had already become convinced of this preeminence of the Hebrew Scriptures. The minutes of the *kirchenrat* recount a conversation, which was reported during the subsequent investigation. The minister of Kefernthal, a close friend of Sylvan's, had told the minister of Mannheim of his own attempt to demonstrate the deity of Christ from the Old Testament. This line of argument was motivated, the minister of Mannheim explained, by the minister of Kefernthal's insistence that "What is not founded on the Old Testament, should not be accepted in the New Testament."<sup>72</sup>

Lastly, the antitrinitarian writings emerging from Poland had insisted that the rejection of the trinitarian creeds was really just a consistent continuation of the programme of reform which had been launched by the Protestant church. The antitrinitarians of Heidelberg similarly insisted that their own doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity had arisen merely through the consistent application of the hermeneutical principles which they had learned from Calvin. Vehe claimed that he had approached the controversy as "a *purus putus* Calvinist."<sup>73</sup> However, the Calvinism that Vehe had learned, with its emphasis on the literal / historical interpretation of the biblical text, and its habit of disregarding established

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71 Vehe-Glirius and Dan, "Mattaniah," 370–397.

72 'Was nit im alten testament gründet were, das solte im neuen nit angenommen werden.' Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," 42.

73 Vehe, "Matthias Vehe-Glirius Apology," 282.

church traditions, when consistently applied, had seemed to these several Palatinate ministers to lead straight to Arianism. Again we are reminded of Adam Neuser's boast to the Elector: "If I had not become a true Calvinist, I would never have been led to this,"<sup>74</sup> and also of his scribbled warning: ". . . he who fears falling into Arianism, let him beware of Calvinism."<sup>75</sup> Thus the blame for the rise of antitrinitarianism in Heidelberg was pinned on the Elector's own decision to embrace the Calvinist programme of reform.

## 2.9 An Answer is Necessary

*Given the precarious position of the newly reformed Palatinate within the Empire, the scandal created by the Heidelberg antitrinitarians and their claim that it was "Calvinism" that had brought them to their denial of the Trinity placed a unique burden on the theologians of the Palatinate to present a compelling defence of their trinitarianism.*

The sudden appearance of such an alarmingly developed pocket of heresy within the leadership of the Palatinate church, combined with the scandalous nature of Neuser's letter to the Sultan, cast a shadow of suspicion over the Reformed theology that the Elector had introduced to the Palatinate. The controversy was picked up and used by authors who were hostile to the Reformed church as a useful cautionary tale in the broader polemic against the radical form of Protestantism that had come to characterize the Palatinate Church. The rise of the Heidelberg antitrinitarians seemed to confirm the allegations in Hosius's *De iudicio et censura ministrorum Tygurinorum et Heydelbergensium*, that the theology of the Reformed church was inextricably linked to the newly emergent Arianism of Poland.

To the Lutheran church, the aggressive Palatinate had seemed ever willing to trade the fragile peace of the Empire for the advance of the Reformed movement in Lutheran and

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<sup>74</sup> 'Wann ich nicht wäre Calvinisch worden, wer ich dahin nimmer gerahten.' Gerlach, *Tage-Buch*, 35.

<sup>75</sup> '. . . qui timet sibi, ne incidat in Arianismum, caveat Calvinismum.' Gerlach, *Antidanaeus*, 39.

Roman Catholic territories within and without the Empire.<sup>76</sup> The appearance of the antitrinitarians amongst the ministers of Heidelberg gave credence to the theological criticisms which had been levelled by Lutheran and Roman Catholic polemicists against the Palatinate's Reformed trajectory, confirming that the Reformed faith was dangerous for the Empire. Stephen Gerlach was able to conclude from his own interaction with the apostate Neuser in Constantinople that there was a natural progression from Heidelberg's explanation of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper (described pejoratively as Zwinglian by Gerlach) to Arianism, and then on to Mohammadism.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, it became increasingly important that the theologians of Heidelberg, in particular the members of the Theology Faculty of the University of Heidelberg, produce a coherent and compelling defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, a defence consistent with the hermeneutic and theology of the newly emergent Palatinate church. This demand was soon to be met by the University's new Professor of Theology, Girolamo Zanchi, whose *De Tribus Elohim* was first published in 1572.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Clasen, *The Palatinate in European History 1555-1618*, 5–12.

<sup>77</sup> Gerlach, *Antidanaeus*, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Hieronymus Zanchius, *De Tribus Elohim, Aeterno Patre, Filio, Et Spiritu Sancto, Uno Eodemque Iehova* (Frankfurt: G. Corvinus, 1572). Subsequent references to this work will be taken from Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim* (Neustadt an der Weinstrasse: Matthaeus Harnisch, 1589).

## III

### Girolamo Zanchi

Zanchi, possessing a firsthand knowledge of the arguments of the antitrinitarians, was a natural choice for Frederick III to respond to the challenge of the antitrinitarians and produce a definitive defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Modern estimations of Zanchi's defence of the Trinity have been shaped by the notion that post-Calvin Reformed theologians, like Zanchi, betrayed Calvin's theology with a rationalistic Scholasticism and, therefore, conclude that Zanchi's defence of the Trinity was characterized by this rationalistic Scholasticism.

#### 3.1 The Italian Exile

*Girolamo Zanchi was uniquely suited to pen a response to the Heidelberg antitrinitarians, being an Italian exile who became a Reformed theologian and whose life both paralleled and intersected the lives of a number of the most influential and well-known antitrinitarians.*

Born in 1516 in Alzano, a small village in the northern Italian territory of Bergamo, Girolamo Zanchi entered the local Augustinian order of Regular Canons, shortly after losing both his parents to the plague in 1528.<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1541 he moved to the Priory of San Frediano, in the Tuscan city of Lucca. Zanchi's move to Lucca coincided with the arrival of the new prior of San Frediano, Peter Martyr Vermigli, a man who, having just spent three years in Naples with the Spanish reformist Juan de Valdés, was becoming increasingly outspoken about his own belief in the doctrines of the Reformation.<sup>2</sup> As Zanchi was challenged by the novel ideas interspersed throughout Vermigli's lectures and sermons on the Psalms and

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1 Dagmar Drüll, "Zanchi (Zanchius, Zanchus), Heironymus," in *Heidelberger Gelehrtenlexicon 1386-1651* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2002), 564–565.

2 John Farthing describes the high esteem with which Zanchi continued to regard Vermigli throughout his former prior's life. John Farthing, "Praeceptor Carissimus: Images of Peter Martyr in Girolamo Zanchi's Correspondence," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). See also Salvatore Caponetto, "Lucca and the Convent of San Frediano," in *The Protestant Reformation in sixteenth-century Italy*, trans. Anne Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 275-282. Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: An Anatomy of Apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

Pauline Epistles, he found himself sympathizing more and more with the controversial writings of the Reformers. According to Joseph Tylenda, during his studies with Vermigli, Zanchi “read Bucer’s *Treatises*, Melanchthon’s *Loci communes*, Bullinger’s *On the Origin of Error* as well as Calvin’s *Institutes*.”<sup>3</sup>

Vermigli was forced to flee San Frediano a little more than a year after his arrival, due to the reinstatement of the Roman Inquisition in 1542, but he left an indelible mark on the minds of a number of the canons who had served under him. Paolo Lacisio, the Latin instructor of San Frediano, fled along with Vermigli and took up a post lecturing in Strasbourg.<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Tremellius, a converted Jew who lectured on the Hebrew tongue, also fled from Lucca in July of 1542 and travelled to Strasbourg. In total, within a year of Peter Martyr’s leaving, eighteen of the friars of San Frediano had followed their former prior into exile.<sup>5</sup> Zanchi, however, stayed on at San Frediano long after Vermigli’s departure, continuing to lecture on theology as an Augustinian canon, though acting as something of a Nicodemite. Nevertheless, as the years progressed Zanchi could not shake the novel theological convictions planted in his mind by Vermigli. By the autumn of 1551, Zanchi finally followed the example of many of his colleagues and struck out for the Protestant north, joined as he travelled by his old acquaintance Celso Martinengo, the priory’s former Greek instructor, who was soon to take charge of the Italian congregation in Geneva.

After a nine month stay in Geneva, Zanchi travelled to Strasbourg where, in March 1553, he took up the position of Professor of Old Testament in the Strasbourg Gymnasium under the leadership of Johann Sturm.<sup>6</sup> In Strasbourg, Zanchi was reunited with Vermigli

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3 Joseph Tylenda, “Girolamo Zanchi and John Calvin,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 10, no. 2 (1975): 104.

4 M Young, *The Life and Times of Paleario* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1860), 412.

5 *Ibid.*, 422.

6 For Strasbourg and Sturm see James Kittelson, *Toward an Established Church: Strasbourg from 1500 to the Dawn of the Seventeenth Century* (Mainz: Zabern, 2000). *of the Seventeenth Century* (Mainz: Zabern, 2000). Barbara Tinsley, *Johann Sturm on Education: The Reformation and Humanist Learning* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1995). *and Humanist Learning* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1995).

who, having served almost six years as Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, had just been banished from England by Mary Tudor. In Strasbourg Zanchi signalled his complete departure from Rome by taking a wife. He married Violanthis Curione, the daughter of Celio Secondo Curione, a renowned humanist and another of the Italian immigrants who had briefly served alongside Zanchi in the priory of San Frediano.<sup>7</sup>

In 1553, as Zanchi arrived in Strasbourg and married Violanthis, the shocking news of the execution of Michael Servetus in Geneva swept through Europe. From Basel where he held the University's post of Professor of Old Testament, Zanchi's new father-in-law, Curione, heard the reports of Servetus's execution and was outraged by what he considered to be a great injustice carried out by the Genevan authorities and a violation of the hopeful expectation of free inquiry that the Reformation had seemed to promise. Curione began lending his aid to a growing movement of dissenters outraged over the execution of Servetus, unsuccessfully trying to keep his criticisms either secret or published under pseudonyms. For instance, the Basel copy of Matteo Gribaldi's *Apologia pro Serveto* contains Curione's corrections scribbled in the margins.<sup>8</sup> His notes were also found in the margins of Lelio Sozzini's *Theses de filio Dei et Trinitate*.<sup>9</sup> Beza suspected that Curione had similarly contributed to Sebastian Castellio's *De haereticis an sint persequendi*<sup>10</sup> and in 1557 Curione was brought to trial in Basel for his marginal notations in Gribaldi's heterodox *De vera cognitione Dei*.<sup>11</sup>

Zanchi, for his part, was decidedly opposed to the position held by his father-in-law

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7 Markus Kutter, *Celio Secundo Curione: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Basel und Stuttgart: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1955). George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 953–959. Delio Cantimori, *Italianische Haeretiker der Spätrenaissance*, trans. Werner Kaegi (Basel: Schwabe, 1949), 136–149.

8 The authorship of the *Apologia* itself was once ascribed to Curione because of the marginal notations in the manuscript in the hand of Curione and because he had passed on a copy of Servetus's *Restitutio* to his son. However, the consensus now is that the *Apologia* was the work of Gribaldi. A summary of this debate is provided in George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 956–957 n. 29. and Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 60–61.

9 George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 955. See also Kutter, *Celio Secundo Curione: Sein Leben und sein Werk*, 176–185.

10 Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 61.

11 George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 952.

and both lectured and wrote from Strasbourg defending the execution of Servetus. In 1554 Zanchi was urged by Bullinger to turn a series of his lectures, in which he had defended the death sentence for heretics, into a book in order to refute Castellio's *De haereticis an sint persequendi*. Bullinger's son, who was then studying in Strasbourg, was supposed to have worked as an assistant to Zanchi during this time, helping to speed up the publication of the manuscript. However, the young man's apparent ineptitude slowed rather than speeded the project. Before long, the work was soon made unnecessary by the more timely appearance of Beza's defense of Calvin.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Zanchi suffered the loss of his wife when, after a period of extreme illness, Violanthis died childless only three years into their marriage.

Delio Cantimori has divided the Italian emigrants of 1540-1560 into two categories: the orthodox and the heretical. The orthodox were comprised of those men who, like Zanchi and Vermigli, had come originally from the religious orders. These men, upon their arrival in the Protestant cities, were easily absorbed into the new church communities and were quick to shed their Italian characteristics. Cantimori stresses that these were men of the cloisters, men with a scholastic education who had only been superficially touched by humanism. The heretics, however, were comprised primarily of laymen, who had been more significantly shaped by the spirit of humanism and who held more firmly to their Italian heritage despite having abandoned their homeland.<sup>13</sup> However, this distinction between the orthodox and heretics, as propounded by Cantimori, was often far from obvious to men like Zanchi who, though actively campaigning on behalf of the Genevan agenda, maintained for a time a confidence in the orthodoxy of many of his Italian compatriots.

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12 Théodore de Bèze, *De haereticis a civili magistratupuniendis libellus, aduersus Martini Bellii farraginem, & nouorum academicorum sectam* (Geneva: Robert Stephanus, 1554). See Christopher Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1984): 190–191.

13 Delio Cantimori, *Italienische Haeretiker der Spätrenaissance*, trans. Werner Kaegi (Basel: Schwabe, 1949), 21–25. John Tedeschi, "Italian Reformers and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 2 (October 1974): 84.

Just as the execution of Servetus demonstrated the grim resolve of Calvin and his defenders to brook no dissent on the fundamental Christian doctrine of the Trinity, Zanchi began to discover that many of the men who had travelled what had seemed to be the same spiritual path as himself had arrived at a very different destination. In addition to his father-in-law, two of Zanchi's brothers-in-law became closely associated with the antitrinitarian movement. Orazio Curione, Celio's eldest son and an imperial privy councillor, had studied in Padua under Gribaldi, one of the antitrinitarians to have emerged from the Italian congregation in Geneva, and owned a manuscript of Servetus's *Christianismi Restitutio*. Another son, Agostino, who was the professor of rhetoric at Basel, was Gribaldi's amanuensis and the copyist of the sole surviving copy of the *Apologia pro Serveto*.<sup>14</sup>

Zanchi himself had at one time defended Matteo Gribaldi. In 1566, Zanchi wrote from Strasbourg to Beza in Geneva with the intention of defending Gribaldi from Beza's suspicions about the man's trinitarianism. "When I was in Zurich, I saw Gribaldi's handwritten confession, at Bullinger's house, which seemed to leave nothing to be desired."<sup>15</sup> Zanchi's letter then recounted the opinion of Musculus, who could also find no fault with Gribaldi's theology. The two men were apparently unaware of Gribaldi's *Apologia pro Serveto*, and were confident of Gribaldi's orthodoxy, though they would soon reverse their opinion. Zanchi had also injudiciously associated with Bernardino Ochino, the minister of the Italian congregation of Zurich who was later dismissed on account of his heterodox *Dialogi XXX* and was, at first, defended by Zanchi.<sup>16</sup> Zanchi subsequently withdrew his support for Ochino and even dedicated a significant portion of his *De Tribus Elohim* to refuting Ochino's *Dialogi XXX*.

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14 Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 61.

15 Tiguri cum essem, vidi apud D. Bullingerum Gribaldi confessionam ipsius manu scriptam, in qua nihil videbatur posse desiderari. . . ! Girolamo Zanchi, *Omnium Operum Theologicorum*, VIII, 168. Beza, however, was unconvinced and urged Zanchi, in his reply, to be more suspicious of Gribaldi's claims of orthodoxy. Ibid., 169–170.

16 For more on Ochino, see the chapter entitled "The Ochino Affair," in Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 111–169, 224.

Though the streams of Italian emigration can be nicely distinguished by Cantimori at a distance of several centuries, they seem to have been fairly difficult to distinguish for even the most zealous trinitarians in the turbulent decades of the 1550s and 1560s.

In the preface to *De Tribus Elohim*, Zanchi also felt compelled to distance himself from another Italian compatriot with whom he had at one time been closely associated: the antitrinitarian Lelio Sozzini. Zanchi insisted that when he had first met Sozzini, he had known him only as a seemingly blameless man, of a noble and honest family, well learned in Greek and Hebrew. In the early years of their friendship, Zanchi explained, Sozzini had regularly pressed him with questions about the Trinity. It had initially seemed that Sozzini's questioning was merely prompted by a hunger for good teaching. Eventually, however, it became clear that Sozzini's inquisitiveness was driven by more than a pious zeal for learning, and that the theological worlds of Sozzini and Zanchi stood diametrically opposed to one another. With this realization, Zanchi renounced his friendship with Sozzini and declared him a Samosatene, bound up in error and doomed to eternal destruction.<sup>17</sup>

By 1557 Zanchi, now remarried to Lydia Lumaga, found himself more and more ostracised by the leadership of Strasbourg, which had grown increasingly zealous in its support of the Lutheranism of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>18</sup> Zanchi resigned from the Strasbourg Gymnasium in September of 1563 and took up a position as minister to the Italian speaking

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17 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, xvii–xviii. The term *Samosatenus* refers to the error of the third century heretic Paul of Samosata, who taught an early form of adoptionism and was a forerunner of Arius, claiming that God was entirely one and that the man Jesus was infused with the divine *Logos* at his baptism. In the sixteenth century, *Samosatenus* became a favourite term for describing the *monarchian* wing antitrinitarians (as opposed to the tri-theists). See, for instance, the opening article of the Augsburg confession, which “. . . condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new; who, when they earnestly contend that there is but one person, do craftily and wickedly trifle, after the manner of rhetoricians, about the Word and Holy Ghost, that they are not distinct persons, but that the Word signifies a vocal word and the Spirit a motion created in things.” ‘*Damnant et Samosatenos, veteres et neotericos, qui, cum tantum unam personam esse contendunt, de Verbo et de Spiritu Sancto astute et impie rhetoricantur, quod non sint personae distinctae, sed quod Verbum significet verbum vocale, et Spiritus motum in rebus creatum.*’ Schaff, “The Augsburg Confession,” 8.

18 A helpful account of Zanchi's troubles in Strasbourg is given by James Kittelson, “Marbach vs. Zanchi: The Resolution of Controversy in Late Reformation Strasbourg,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 8, no. 3 (October 1977): 31–44.

Protestants in the town of Chiavenna, in the Rhaetian Freestate, on the Italian side of the Alps. During his brief term as pastor, Zanchi's ministry suffered from both plague and theological controversy.<sup>19</sup> In Chiavenna, Zanchi found himself surrounded by compatriots with an alarming proclivity for heterodoxy and became more and more suspicious of his fellow Italians. In August of 1565, he wrote to Bullinger and described for the Antistes of Zurich the sort of doctrinal confusion he dealt with daily as he ministered to his congregation. Having the previous Lord's Day excommunicated a man who had rejected the divinity of both the Son and the Holy Spirit, Zanchi expressed his suspicion that all Italy had been infected with the antitrinitarian heresy. He concluded his comments to Bullinger with a cynical admonition: "Beware of giving witness to the sound doctrine of our Italians, unless you have thoroughly examined their belief about God and original sin, about infant baptism, etc."<sup>20</sup>

Zanchi's rocky ministry in Rhaetia ended when factionalism between the native citizens of Chiavenna and the Italian exiles led to his dismissal in May 1567.<sup>21</sup> The dismissal, however, coincided with an invitation from Elector Frederick III to take up a position as lecturer at the University of Heidelberg, an invitation which Zanchi eagerly accepted. On 10 November 1567, Zanchi was appointed to be the third professor of Theology, succeeding Zacharius Ursinus, and receiving a salary of 160 Gulden, as well as housing.<sup>22</sup> Zanchi arrived in Heidelberg just in time to participate in George Withers's doctoral disputation in the summer of 1568, and was thereby dragged into the beginnings of the antidisiplinarian debate. Within two years the debate over church discipline had spilled over into yet another

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19 Taplin, *Italian Reformers*, 222–227.

20 'Cave, des testimonium sanae doctrinae Italis nostris, nisi bene perspectam habes illorum fidem de Deo et peccato originali, de baptism parvulorum etc.' Heinrich Bullinger, *Bullingers Korrespondenz mit den Graubündnern*, Quellen zur Schwizer Geschichte (Basel: T Schiess, 1904), 2.715.

21 In a 1571 letter to Bishop Jewel, Zanchi attributed this dismissal to the fact that the "... followers of Servetus united their forces at Chiavenna." Hastings Robinson, ed., *The Zurich Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1845), II no. 75.

22 Drüll, "Zanchi (Zanchius, Zanchus), Heironymus."

antitrinitarian controversy, with the new Professor of Theology joining in the fracas.

### 3.2 The Writing of *De Tribus Elohim*

*Although Zanchi had previously published very little and was known for his glacial pace when moving through theological questions, his firsthand experience with antitrinitarianism well equipped him to produce a monumental work in, relatively speaking, a brief period of time.*

In September 1572, Girolamo Zanchi published his work *De Tribus Elohim, Aeterno Patre, Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, Uno Eodemque Iehova*,<sup>23</sup> a tome of over seven-hundred folio pages defending the doctrine of the Trinity from the arguments of the antitrinitarians, both ancient and contemporary. In his dedication of the volume to Edmund Grindal (a former Bishop of London, then Archbishop of York, and soon to be Archbishop of Canterbury) Zanchi connected the publication of his new defence of trinitarian theology to the antitrinitarianism which had recently begun to threaten the Reformed churches of the Palatinate. Grindal had befriended Zanchi in Strasbourg when the Englishman's sojourn in Strasbourg as a Marian exile coincided with Zanchi's teaching at the Strasbourg Gymnasium.<sup>24</sup> Zanchi explained to the Archbishop how he had received a charge from Elector Frederick III, shortly after his arrival from Rhaetia, to explain and prove the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and to refute the arguments of the heretics who had recently emerged in Poland and Transylvania.<sup>25</sup> Since Zanchi took up his post at the University of Heidelberg at the end of 1567 and the antitrinitarianism of Sylvan, Neuser, and Vehe did not become public until the summer of 1570, it is possible that Frederick's request of Zanchi to write *De Tribus Elohim* was prescient, preceding the scandalous discovery of antitrinitarianism amongst the ministers of Heidelberg.

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23 Zanchius, *De Tribus Elohim*. All following citations are taken from Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*.

24 This friendship is illustrated in the correspondence between Zanchi and Grindal in Robinson, *The Zurich Letters*, II no. 37, 43, 46, and 108.

25 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, x.

It would, nevertheless, seem more likely that the task of penning the work that would become *De Tribus Elohim* fell on Zanchi as a result of the events of the summer of 1570.

It is strange, however, when one considers the polemical context of Frederick's request for this book, that Zanchi produced something like *De Tribus Elohim* – a book noted for the thoroughness of its explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Richard Muller, in the volume of *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* which is dedicated to the doctrine of the Trinity, describes Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* as the “most elaborate formulation” of the “traditional exegesis of trinitarian passages,” bringing with it a return to both patristic and medieval traditions.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* has been recognized as providing the foundation for Zanchi's much larger project of a Reformed systematic theology. John Patrick Donnelly portrays *De Tribus Elohim* as the first volume of what he believes Zanchi intended to be “a great Protestant *Summa*.”<sup>27</sup> If Zanchi's purpose had been merely to refute the arguments of the antitrinitarians of his day, his final product overshot this goal a good deal.

Furthermore, when one considers Zanchi's previous publishing record (or, rather, lack thereof), it is surprising that he was able to produce such an enormous project in such a brief time. During the entirety of his time at Strasbourg, Zanchi had published a single book (and only the preface of this work was written by Zanchi).<sup>28</sup> His plodding pace is reflected in his performance in the classroom as well. By the time he left Strasbourg, more than a decade after his arrival, Zanchi's Old Testament class had only managed to work through the first twelve chapters of Isaiah and the book of Hosea.<sup>29</sup> Though his time as an instructor at the Strasbourg Gymnasium had been fraught with complications, which must have seriously

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26 Richard Muller, “The Triunity of God,” in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 84.

27 J.P. Donnelly, “Calvinist Thomism,” in *Calvinism in Switzerland, Germany, and Hungary*, vol. 13, *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Garland, 1992), 444–447.

28 Girolamo Zanchi, *Aristotelis de naturali auscultatione, seu de principiis, cum praefatione Doctoris Zanchi* (Strasbourg: Vuendelinus Rihelius, 1554).

29 Burchill, “Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work,” 191–193.

impeded his attempts to publish,<sup>30</sup> nevertheless it would seem that Zanchi had not previously demonstrated the ability to write at the speed with which *De Tribus Elohim* was produced. Moreover, given that Zanchi was still a relatively new instructor at the University of Heidelberg and was in the midst of preparing a new course of lectures, the swift publication of such a substantial tome on the doctrine of the Trinity was particularly remarkable.

However, the explanation seems fairly obvious. We can confidently speculate that Zanchi had begun work on *De Tribus Elohim* long before the inauguration of Heidelberg's antitrinitarian controversy in the summer of 1570. Zanchi had hoped to produce a more general treatise defending the foundational doctrine of the Trinity, which would serve as the beginning of a larger theological project. Frederick's request merely gave Zanchi the necessary push to get his book finished and published. In his preface to *De Aeterno Dei Filio* (August, 1568) the Zurich theologian Josias Simler indicated that he was already aware of a soon to be published work on the Trinity by Zanchi. He explained that he had initially been reluctant to write against the new Arians and Tritheists of Poland, since he was sure that Zanchi, *acutissimum interpretem gravissimarum quaestionum*, would not leave the church any longer without his forthcoming work on this matter.<sup>31</sup> Zanchi must have spoken to Simler about his intentions to pen *De Tribus Elohim*, or have mentioned an early draft version of the work.

Combining Simler's suggestion that Zanchi had already begun work on a refutation of the new errors of the Arians and Tritheists as early as 1568 with Zanchi's intimate acquaintance with numerous antitrinitarians and antitrinitarians-to-be, it is clear that *De Tribus Elohim* was not solely inspired by the scandal of the discovery of Palatinate antitrinitarian ministers in 1570. Rather, Zanchi had long been rehearsing his arguments

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30 Zanchi's difficulties in getting anything published during his time at Strasbourg are further discussed in John Patrick Donnelly, "A Sixteenth Century Case of Publish or Perish/Parish," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 6, no. 2 (October 1975): 112-113.

31 Simler, *De aeterno Dei filio domino et servatore nostro Iesu Christo, et de Spiritu sancto, adversus veteres et novos antitrinitarios, id est Arianos, Tritheitas, Samosatenianos, et Pneumatomachos*, lxi.

against the positions of the antitrinitarians and had already begun labouring on a text that would address the new forms of trinitarian heterodoxy, which had surfaced in Poland and Transylvania. Thus, when Elector Frederick III pressed Zanchi for a response to the claims of Sylvan, Vehe, and Neuser, the new Professor of Theology was able to make use of a work which was already well underway at the very outbreak of the controversy.

Zanchi's dedicatory letter to Archbishop Grindal, printed along with *De Tribus Elohim*, divided the enemies of Christ into two categories: those who had never truly known him (a category which included many of the Jews and almost all of the Turks) and those who had once known the truth about the Son and had even been sealed by the sign of the new covenant (a description of the antitrinitarians).<sup>32</sup> Zanchi, reminded of the baptism of the antitrinitarians, brought in briefly an argument that would be developed at length later on in his text. The fact that the antitrinitarians had been baptised into the name of Jesus was, in and of itself, already an admission of the divinity of the Son. Just as no devout Jew could have ever been circumcised in the name of any god but *Jehovah*, so too no devout Christian could take the sign of the New Covenant, baptism, by any name other than the name of the one true *Jehovah*. Since Christian baptism was performed, according to the Great Commission given in Matt. 28:19, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this implied that the baptism which the antitrinitarians had already received testified to the triunity of God.<sup>33</sup> *De Tribus Elohim* would take aim at this second category of men, namely those such as Francis David and Giorgio Biandrata, who had received trinitarian baptism.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout his work Zanchi never mentioned the Heidelberg antitrinitarians by name. Instead, he described his opponents under the general headings of "Arians,"

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32 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, iv.

33 Vehe would later recall Zanchi's unconvincing explanation of this argument while being examined in Heidelberg Castle. Vehe, "Apology," 283.

34 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, v.

“Sabellians,” and “Samosatenians,”<sup>35</sup> or the heretics that came from Poland and Transylvania.<sup>36</sup> Of course the scandal of antitrinitarianism appearing amongst the ministers of the Palatinate, a scandal made all the more embarrassing by seemingly coming right on the heels of the Elector’s provocative deviation from the strictures of the Peace of Augsburg and the publication of the Heidelberg catechism, had provided the necessary impetus to get his work published. Nevertheless, Zanchi wrote throughout *De Tribus Elohim* as if the substantive arguments against the Trinity had emerged from Poland and Transylvania, and not from within the Palatinate.

### 3.3 Zanchi as a Reformed Scholastic

*The sole book length treatment of the theology of Girolamo Zanchi has been the 1961 dissertation, by Otto Gründler, later published in German, which cast Zanchi as a rationalistic scholastic who, along with Beza and Vermigli, had betrayed the Christ-centred theology of John Calvin and replaced it with a lifeless scholasticism.*

Following the publication of *De Tribus Elohim*, Zanchi wrote other lengthy theological tomes.

He completed three works – *De Natura Dei seu, De Divinis Attributis*,<sup>37</sup> *De operibus Dei intra spacium sex dierum creatis opus*,<sup>38</sup> and *De primi hominis lapsu, de peccato et de lege Dei*<sup>39</sup> – before his efforts were interrupted by the death of Elector Frederick III and the subsequent eviction

from Heidelberg of the Reformed ministers and theologians by the new Elector, the Lutheran

Ludwig VI.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned above, in the estimation of John Patrick Donnelly S.J. this series

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35 Ibid., viii, 1.

36 Ibid., xii.

37 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Natura Dei seu, De Divinis Attributis* (Heidelberg: Iacobus Mylius, 1577).

38 Girolamo Zanchi, *De operibus Dei intra spacium sex dierum creatis opus* (Neustadt: Matthaeus Harnisch, 1591).

39 First published as *Tractationum Theologicorum volume de statu peccati et legali* (Neustadt: Matthaeus Harnisch, 1597) and subsequently included in Girolamo Zanchi, *Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva: Stephan Gamonet, 1605), IV: 1–872.

40 Further detail on Zanchi’s publishing efforts is supplied by Burchill, “Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work,” 202–206. Burchill sees a blueprint of Zanchi’s own intended four part “Summa” in Zanchi’s description of the study of Theology as a study that moves from the triune nature of God, to his divine attributes, to his work of creation, and then to his work of redemption. Ibid.,

of volumes amounted to an attempt to produce a systematization of Reformed theology which could serve as “a great Protestant ‘summa’ modelled after the *Summa theologiae* of Saint Thomas.”<sup>41</sup> Donnelly further demonstrates, by a close comparison of the twenty-three questions in Aquinas’ tract on the divine attributes with the chapters Zanchi’s *De Natura Dei*, in which Donnelly finds nineteen close parallels between the two theologians’ works,<sup>42</sup> that Zanchi’s theological system was significantly indebted to Aquinas. Thus Zanchi provides, according to Donnelly, a prime example of “Calvinist Thomism.”

For Donnelly, the observation that Zanchi was able to make significant use of the Thomistic method carried no negative judgement, indeed it was proof of the happy fact that “Protestant fruit grows quite well on the Thomist tree. . .”<sup>43</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, however, most accounts of the rise of Reformed Scholasticism<sup>44</sup> have interpreted the return to Aristotle and Aquinas in the works of men like Zanchi as a tragic betrayal or a compromise of the fresh biblical insights of Luther and Calvin. A discussion of the works of Girolamo Zanchi is thus necessarily complicated by this tendency of the past century and a half to characterize negatively post-Calvin Reformed theology, or the age of Reformed Scholasticism, as an age of rationalism driven by a revival of Thomism and an inordinate confidence in the power of human reason to pry into the secret things of God.<sup>45</sup> Beza’s infamous decision to place the doctrine of predestination under the doctrine of God and providence (a decision with which Zanchi agreed), as opposed to under the doctrine of

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203. cf. Girolamo Zanchi, *Omnium Operum Theologicorum*, III. 218.

41 JP Donnelly, “Calvinist Thomism,” 444.

42 Ibid., 446.

43 Ibid., 454.

44 Muller’s explanation of the phrase “Reformed Scholastic” serves as a helpful definition at this point. “Thus, ‘scholastic’ indicates an academic style and method of discourse, not a particular theology or philosophy. The denominator ‘Reformed scholastic’ refers to a writer or a document belonging, confessionally, to the Reformed as distinct from the Lutheran wing of the magisterial Reformation, and characterized by the use of an academic or scholastic method.” Richard Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology*, vol. 1, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 30.

45 See Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism: an Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 16–21.

salvation, has been taken as a clear sign that an arid metaphysical speculation had displaced Calvin's close attention to the biblical text, and that the central dogma of the Reformed church had now become determinism rather than the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup>

The notion that the teaching of the generation which followed Calvin really constituted a deviation, or even a reversion, from the teaching of the Reformers was summarized by the title of a paper presented by Basil Hall to the Huguenot Society of London in 1961, entitled: "Calvin against the Calvinists."<sup>47</sup> Hall maintained that Calvin's successors, particularly Beza, Zanchi, and Perkins, had distorted the balance of the Genevan's theology, had subordinated biblical exegesis to Aristotelianism and had placed a speculative determinism at the centre of their new system.<sup>48</sup> Brian Armstrong followed Hall's central thesis in his *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (1969),<sup>49</sup> in which he placed Zanchi, along with Beza and Vermigli, in "an unholy triumvirate of men"<sup>50</sup> who had compromised Calvin's biblical theology by introducing a preoccupation with metaphysical speculation and systematization, a preoccupation which eventually led to the Synod of Dort's decree regarding the doctrine of 'limited atonement.'

For his evaluation of Zanchi's theology, Armstrong relies entirely on the work of Otto Gründler, whose 1961 Princeton doctoral dissertation, entitled *Thomism and Calvinism in the Theology of Girolamo Zanchi (1516-1590)*,<sup>51</sup> was later published in German translation as *Die*

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46 A helpful summary of this debate, as well as a survey of the literature behind the "central dogma" thesis is provided in Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 1:1:1–84.

47 Basil Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* 20 (February 1961): 284–301.

48 *Ibid.*, 90–91.

49 Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 136–140. Armstrong's work provides the most developed critical account of Beza's teaching on predestination.

50 "An unholy triumvirate" is John L Farthing's caricature of Armstrong's disparaging comments about the theology of Beza, Vermigli, and Zanchi. See Farthing, "Praeceptor Carissimus," 5.

51 Otto Gründler, "Thomism and Calvinism in the Theology of Girolamo Zanchi (1516-1590)" (unpublished thesis, Princeton, 1961).

*Gotteslehre Girolamo Zanchis und ihre Bedeutung für seine Lehre von der Prädestination.*<sup>52</sup> Gründler's work, which is unfortunately the only book length treatment of Zanchi's theology, focuses primarily on Zanchi's *De natura Dei* (1577) and sees in this work evidence of a shift away from what he considered to be the Christ-centred theology of Calvin and towards an Aristotelian / Thomistic rationalism. Gründler described a tension between Aquinas and Calvin which, he insists, can be simplified as a tension between "faith and reason," "revealed and natural knowledge," and "between God as revealer and man as knower."<sup>53</sup> Gründler concluded that Zanchi's theology (mainly his teaching regarding the doctrine of God and Providence / Predestination) marked a significant departure from, and corruption of, the teaching of Calvin, a departure which reverted back to this late medieval form of rationalism. He writes: "In the theology of Zanchi, at the very point of transition from Reformation to Orthodoxy, the spirit of medieval Scholasticism has thus begun to replace that of the Reformers at a point where it counted most."<sup>54</sup>

Gründler's negative assessment of Zanchi's supposed departure from Calvin was criticized by Norman Shepherd in a 1973 review, which appeared in the *Westminster Theological Journal*.<sup>55</sup> Shepherd argued that Gründler's portrayal of Zanchi's departure from the theology of Calvin was largely dependent on selective quotations which created the illusion of divergence rather than establishing its fact.<sup>56</sup> In addition to Shepherd's objections, it should be pointed out that Gründler's criticisms of Zanchi presuppose that the theology of

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52 Otto Gründler, *Die Gotteslehre Girolamo Zanchis und ihre Bedeutung für seine lehre von der Prädestination* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965).

53 Gründler, "Thomism and Calvinism," 25–26.

54 Ibid., 159.

55 Norman Shepherd, "Zanchius on Saving Faith," *Westminster Theological Journal* 36, no. 1 (Fall 1973): 31–47.

56 Additional critical treatments of Gründler's work can be found in Patrick O'Banion, "Jerome Zanchi, the Application of Theology and the Rise of the English Practical Divinity Tradition," *Renaissance and Reformation* XXIX, no. 2-3 (2005): 97-120. Harm Goris, "Thomism in Zanchi's Doctrine of God," in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. van Asselt and Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 121-139. Richard Muller, *The Triunity of God*, vol. 4, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 85, 416.

Calvin must stand as the one true archetype of “Reformed Theology” from which any deviation must be considered a corruption – a presupposition which ignores the theological variety of the Reformed church of the sixteenth century.<sup>57</sup> More recently this negative estimation of the contributions of Reformed Scholasticism has been superseded, as the works of Richard Muller, Eef Dekker, Carl Trueman, Willem van Asselt, and others have cast the Reformed Scholastics in a much more positive light.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Gründler’s analysis of Zanchi still stands as the only lengthy evaluation of the Italian Professor’s work and some of Gründler’s conclusions still feature prominently in modern accounts of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Reformed theology. It is therefore important to consider them more closely.<sup>59</sup>

Gründler’s dissertation begins with what is admittedly a very helpful analysis of Zanchi’s exegetical method, drawn largely from Zanchi’s own description of what he believed to be proper theological method in his inaugural lecture at the University of Heidelberg, delivered in 1568.<sup>60</sup> Zanchi’s method is shown to closely resemble a two-fold process of “resolution” and “composition” used by the Paduan Aristotelians of the fifteenth and

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57 This point has been made repeatedly by Richard Muller, most recently in Richard Muller, “Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and Its Antidotes,” in *Seeing Things Their Way*, ed. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Gregory (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2009), 147.

58 See Muller’s essay on this question entitled “The Problem of Protestant Scholasticism – A Review and Definition,” in van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism: an Ecumenical Enterprise*, 45–64, as well as the introductory essay, by the editors, van Asselt and Dekker in the same volume. See also Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25–46. Muller, *After Calvin*. van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism: an Ecumenical Enterprise*. And the essay by Muller, mentioned in the note above, “Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and Its Antidotes” together with “Scholasticism Revisited: Methodological Reflections on the Study of Seventeenth-century Reformed Thought,” by van Asselt in Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Gregory, eds., *Seeing Things their Way: Intellectual Tradition and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2009), 134–174.

59 Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 130. Lynn Boughton, “Supralapsarianism and the Role of Metaphysics in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986): 65, 77–78. Timothy George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 63. Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 213.

60 Printed as a preface to Zanchi’s *De Sacra Scriptura* in Girolamo Zanchi, *Operum Theologicorum*. For more on the influence of Paduan Aristotelianism on the method of Zanchi see Neal Ward Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). See also the section “Ramus, Zabarella, and the Use of Analytic and Synthetic, Resolutive and Compositive Methods” in Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 1:1:181–189.

sixteenth centuries.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the popularity of the philosophical method of the Paduan Aristotelians, Jacopo Zabarella in particular, within the Reformed church has been credited to the influence of the learned Italian emigrants, men like Vermigli and Zanchi (as well as to the fact that the Paduan Aristotelians offered a compelling alternative to Ramism).<sup>62</sup> The first German text of Zabarellian logic, Crellius's *Isagoge logica* (1581), was published featuring a preface by Girolamo Zanchi.<sup>63</sup>

When applied by Zanchi to the study of Scripture the result of the twofold Paduan process was an initial analytical stage of “resolution” in which a close reading of the biblical text moves from exegesis of the passage to the creation of a list of questions or propositions addressed by the author of the text. This resulted in a *locus communis* for the particular passage, and represented the “resolution” of the text. The next step, the “composition” stage, involves the elucidation of a particular *locus*, moving from that general principle back to an assortment of biblical passages for “confirmation and illustration” of the proposition. The result of Zanchi's approach is a method that hovers between, and draws from, both the synthetic elements of Scholastic theology and simple textual exegesis. Gründler points out that Zanchi's use of the terms *resolutive* and *compositive*, juxtaposing them with *analytical* and *synthetical*, makes clear that the Italian was deliberately drawing on the Paduan method. This method allowed him to displace the confidence of medieval Scholasticism in the intellect's ability to recognize intuitively the veracity of the *principia*, with a Protestant assertion that all theological speculation must be founded on Scripture.<sup>64</sup> By returning from the “resolution” back to the text of Scripture for confirmation and further illumination, Zanchi insisted that the entire theological investigation be bounded by the limits of God's revelation in Scripture.

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61 Gründler, “Thomism and Calvinism,” 27–29.

62 Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 127–132. Howard Hotson, *Commonplace Learning: Ramism and its German Ramifications, 1543-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

63 Burchill, “Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work,” 190 n19.

64 Gründler, “Thomism and Calvinism,” 29–30.

This had the effect of resisting some of the overly speculative elements of medieval scholasticism and demonstrated Zanchi's commitment to the Protestant mantra of *sola scriptura*.

Although his description of Zanchi's view of the Bible as foundational for all theological speculation may sound as if Gründler is establishing Zanchi's basic allegiance to the hermeneutical principles of the Reformation, in fact Gründler finds in Zanchi's prioritizing of Scripture a marked departure from the teachings of Calvin.<sup>65</sup> Gründler, furthermore, objects to Zanchi's claim that the doctrine of Scripture (as opposed to the doctrine of God) should precede all other theological *loci*:

With obvious reference to Calvin's *Institutes*, Zanchi criticizes those theologians who begin their *loci* with the doctrine of God on the grounds 'that the knowledge of God is the first and chief part of the whole of Christian wisdom.'<sup>66</sup>

This 'bibliocentrism,' as Gründler terms it, became characteristic of the Reformed Orthodox.

There can be no doubt that Calvin's view of faith is strongly christocentric, and that he, like Luther, "found Christ and not a book the real center and object of faith." Zanchi, on the other hand, shows a marked tendency toward the bibliocentric position characteristic of reformed orthodoxy.<sup>67</sup>

Gründler sees a significant gap between the theology of Calvin and that of Zanchi in the way that the two men describe the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Christian's mind as he comes to the text of Scripture. According to Gründler, Calvin insisted on an "indissoluble bond" between Word and Spirit, and equated all certainty in the authority of the Bible with the immediate witness of the Spirit.<sup>68</sup> Zanchi, on the other hand, teaches that by the power of

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65 If, however, there is any truth to Donnelly's suggestion that *De Tribus Elohim* was intended by Zanchi to serve as the beginning of his own comprehensive Protestant *Summa*, then Zanchi's own theological project would have violated Gründler's understanding of Zanchi's point by beginning with the doctrine of the Trinity rather than the doctrine of Scripture.

66 Gründler, "Thomism and Calvinism," 27.

67 *Ibid.*, 62.

68 *Ibid.*, 39–41.

the Spirit Christian readers are given the *facultas videndi*, “the capacity of seeing for ourselves the heavenly truth and excellence of Scripture which we were unable to see before due to our blindness.”<sup>69</sup> Though in Zanchi’s explanation the *facultas videndi* is supplied by the Spirit, Gründler still feels that Zanchi has granted too much to the illuminated mind, resulting in the destruction of Calvin’s “indissoluble bond” between word and Spirit. Zanchi, though basing his argumentation on Scripture (revelation), conducted his theological speculation in the realm of natural human understanding (reason). The Bible merely acted as the point of departure for the human intellect.<sup>70</sup> To Gründler this was a “dangerous step,”<sup>71</sup> with the result that “the Reformers’ view of Scripture suffered a first and serious damage.”<sup>72</sup>

Thus Gründler’s negative portrayal of Zanchi’s Thomistic system has dominated accounts of Zanchi’s contributions to the development of Reformed Scholasticism for the past four decades, serving as a helpful footnote for those who wished to pit the theology of Calvin against the more rationalistic, systematizing “Calvinists” who followed shortly after the Genevan’s death. What is curious, however, is that Gründler has somehow managed to maintain that Zanchi’s theological system was marked by a predominant “bibliocentrism,” while simultaneously (and quite paradoxically) concluding that Zanchi was guilty of allowing his theological system to be directed by human reason to such an extent that from Zanchi onward “. . . Reformed theology ceased to be a theology of revelation.”<sup>73</sup>

### 3.4 Zanchi’s Scholasticism and the Antitrinitarians

*J.P. Donnelly and Christopher Burchill have both argued, although with fairly different estimations of his motivation, that Zanchi’s response to the antitrinitarians was essentially framed as a scholastic*

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69 Ibid., 47.

70 Ibid., 96.

71 Ibid., 42.

72 Ibid., 53.

73 Ibid., 159.

*argument.*

It was noted above that Donnelly sees in Zanchi's works an attempt to compose a Protestant equivalent to Aquinas's *Summa*. For Donnelly, Zanchi's reliance on Aristotle and Aquinas played an important role in his ability to respond coherently to the challenges of the antitrinitarians.

A more serious threat for Zanchi was posed by Italian radicals, some of them former friends, who attacked the doctrine of the Trinity partly on scriptural grounds, partly for philosophical reasons . . . Aristotle and Aquinas were invaluable allies against these new opponents who put great store on reason in theology and who opened up for debate a whole series of inherently metaphysical questions.<sup>74</sup>

Donnelly assumes that the antitrinitarians were driven by rationalism and metaphysical speculation and that this must have shaped Zanchi's scholastic response. In Donnelly's account the exegetical arguments of both Zanchi and the antitrinitarians are minimized and the focus is primarily on their rationalistic and metaphysical speculation.

Christopher Burchill's account similarly focuses on the scholasticism of Zanchi's refutation of the antitrinitarians. Describing Zanchi's response to the antitrinitarians, he writes: ". . . he began with a systematic account of the Trinitarian doctrine, an account that was heavily dependent on scholastic terminology."<sup>75</sup> In a 1999 conference paper, however, Burchill expanded on his characterization of Zanchi's approach in *De Tribus Elohim* by describing his method as one carefully picked to exclude rather than to interact with the antitrinitarians: "Moreover, despite the considerable attention that the adoption of a more scholastic methodology has received, it has never been sufficiently emphasized that this was also a language of exclusion, one designed to impress and to intimidate as much as to convince."<sup>76</sup> Burchill maintains that Zanchi's method and language were essentially scholastic,

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74 JP Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism," 52.

75 Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work," 202.

76 Christopher Burchill, (1999), "Heidelberg and the Trinity: comments on the ideological formation of the

and that scholasticism was a language which “confined the intellectual discussion of politically sensitive issues to a very narrow group of those approved by the church authorities.”<sup>77</sup>

Donnelly and Burchill are in agreement in their estimation of Zanchi’s work, in so far as both consider Zanchi’s response to the antitrinitarians to be primarily marked by scholastic tendencies. They disagree, however, in their judgement of how effective this approach was in responding to the concerns of the antitrinitarians. Donnelly sees in Zanchi’s work a method crafted to suit the sort of objections that the antitrinitarians were raising, while Burchill sees a method crafted to avoid interaction with the heretics and merely to silence them with intimidation. In the previous chapter, however, we saw that the arguments of the antitrinitarians to which Zanchi was responding tended to deal less with questions of logic and philosophy and much more to do with questions of the exegesis of Scripture. If *De Tribus Elohim* is primarily a scholastic text, a rehashing of Aristotle and Aquinas, then Burchill’s criticism of Zanchi seems valid: that he picked a method which ignored the arguments of the antitrinitarians and merely sought to silence them. However, a closer examination of *De Tribus Elohim* will lead us to a reconsideration of Donnelly and Burchill’s characterization of Zanchi’s work. In the next chapter it will be demonstrated that, rather than deliberately selecting a language of exclusion and intimidation, Zanchi structured his argument in *De Tribus Elohim* to address the biblicism of the antitrinitarians.

Having considered a handful of modern estimations of Zanchi’s work, we now turn to a closer study of *De Tribus Elohim*, a work almost completely overlooked in Gründler’s study of Zanchi’s theology, despite being the first piece in what appears to have been Zanchi’s intended “Summa.”

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Palatinate Reformation.” Paper presented at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from <http://www74.homepage.villanova.edu/christopher.burchill>. 1.  
77 Ibid., 12.

## IV

### *De Tribus Elohim*

In *De Tribus Elohim* (1572), Girolamo Zanchi provided an immensely influential defence for the doctrine of the Trinity which, though seeking to defend the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, catered to the biblicism of the antitrinitarians. Zanchi's willingness to express the doctrine of the Trinity in purely scriptural language has often been overlooked due to the tendency of previous scholarship to portray Zanchi's work as given over to rationalistic scholasticism.

#### 4.1 *Jehovah Elohim*<sup>1</sup> Introduced

Zanchi built his defence of the Trinity around the biblical divine names, *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, arguing from passages like the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 that the Trinity had been apparent to the Old Testament saints.

Several pages into his dedicatory letter for the first volume of *De Tribus Elohim*, Zanchi summarized the argument that would become the centrepiece of his work.

. . . and let us confess that *Jehovah* is one, although we teach that there are plural and distinct *Elohim*. But this is impossible [ἀδύνατόν]. Would you call impossible that which the word of God teaches is so? "Hear O Israel, *Jehovah* אלהינו *Jehovah* is one." See, there are plural *Elohim*, and they are all ours: however there is one *Jehovah*. But I cannot grasp this.<sup>2</sup>

Zanchi has seized on the admittedly peculiar morphology of the Hebrew word for "God"

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1 The Reformed generally rejected the Jewish tradition of not pronouncing the divine name. In a chapter on the *Tetragrammaton*, in his *De Natura Dei*, Zanchi discussed the question of whether or not the name should be pronounced. Zanchi dismissed the Jewish tradition of substituting *Adonai* for the *Tetragrammaton* as "mere superstition" and insisted that the pointing preserved in the Hebrew text was accurate. Girolamo Zanchi, *Omnium Operum Theologicorum*, 32. Though I am aware of the sensitivities that some readers may have regarding the use of *Jehovah*, as well as questions regarding the accuracy of such a rendering of the divine name, I will use *Jehovah* throughout this dissertation in order to reflect accurately my sources. I trust that the reader will see that to do otherwise would be unduly awkward.

2 ' . . . unumque Iehovam esse fateamur, liceet plures, distinctosque Elohim esse doceamus. At hoc ἀδύνατόν est. Αδύνατόν vocas quod ita se habere, docet verbum Dei? Audi Israel, Iehova אלהינו. Iehova unus est. En plures Elohim omnesque nostros: unum autem Iehovam. At hoc capere non possum.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, ix.

*Elohim* – אֱלֹהִים – a noun which is written with a masculine plural ending, despite being treated as if grammatically singular when it is used to refer to the one God of Israel. Zanchi strategically located his argument in the *Shma* of Deut. 6:4, a passage of central importance to the Jewish faith (recited in the morning and evening prayers) and the premier text from which to demonstrate the doctrine of divine oneness. Despite the text’s insistence that God is one – אֶחָד – Zanchi highlighted how the biblical passage also indicates that there is a plurality of persons or *Elohim* (“Gods”) within the one godhead. Zanchi only briefly mentioned this argument from the Hebrew text in his dedicatory letter and then quickly moved on to rebuke the intellectual pride of those who have dismissed the doctrine of the Trinity on the grounds that this interpretation of the text should be rejected because of its incomprehensibility.

In the ‘Preface to the Reader,’ which followed the dedicatory letter, Zanchi brought up this argument from the divine names once more, asserting that the biblical phrase *Jehovah Elohim* summarized the argument of his entire work and provided the structure of the following books.

Moreover, this is the sum of this doctrine, there is only one true and eternal God – truly distinguished in three *Elohim* or ‘persons,’ Father, Son and Holy Spirit: of which each is God, *Jehovah*, such that there are not many *Jehovahs*, but they are all together simultaneously only one *Jehovah*. When this summary has been explained, it can be broken down into five propositions: the first of these concerns the one sole God. The second is about the number and about the true ὑποστάσις of *Elohim* or “persons” in God. The third is about the real distinction of these three ὑφισταμένων. The fourth is about the true and eternal deity of each. The fifth and last is about the one and same οὐσία of all.<sup>3</sup>

He then explained that the work has been split into two volumes – the first dedicated to setting forth the correct doctrine of the Trinity, the second aimed at countering the claims of

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3 'Doctrinae porro summa haec est: unum tantum esse verum, et aeternum Deum, tribus Eloim, seu personis vere distinctum, Patre, Filio, spiritu Sancto: quorum quisque ita Deus est, Iehova, ut non multi tamen sint Iehovae, sed omnes simul, unus tantum Iehova. Quae summa explicata, in quinque resolvitur propositiones: quarum prima, de uno solo est Deo: altera de numero, deque vera ὑποστάσει τῶν Elohim seu personarum in Deo: tertia de reali horum trium ὑφισταμένων distinctione: Quarta, de vera et aeterna cuiusque Deitate: Quinta ac postrema, de una et eadem omnium οὐσία.' Ibid., xv.

the antitrinitarians.<sup>4</sup> The first volume was divided into eight books, book one providing a *prolegomenon* for the entire work and an exposition of the first four (of five) propositions listed in the preface. In book two, Zanchi argued for the deity of the Son by means of Old Testament citations. Here it was asserted that the divinity of the Son had been made clear by God to Moses and all the prophets. Book three argued again for the deity of the Son, but this time relying on New Testament citations. Books four and five, structured according to the Apostle John's description of three heavenly witnesses and three earthly (1 John 5:7-8), provided a two part defence for the eternal generation of the Son. Book six concluded the defence of the deity of the Son by reviewing all the New Testament passages where the Son is referred to as God in order to demonstrate that the Son is generated from the substance of the Father. Zanchi turned his attention, briefly, to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in book seven, which combined passages from the Old and New Testament to argue for the deity and procession of the Holy Spirit. In book eight, Zanchi took his readers back to the five propositions about the Trinity, which were introduced in the preface. The first four of these propositions had been introduced in book one and argued for in the subsequent six books (books two through seven). The last proposition, the assertion that all three persons share one and the same essence, was then picked up in book eight and argued from Old Testament, New Testament, and patristic sources.

Zanchi's second volume began with a separate letter of dedication to another Englishman, Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford, who was a privy councillor to Queen Elizabeth and an ardent supporter of the Reformed faith. The five books of the second volume moved from the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, to an attack on the teachings of those who deny the Trinity, particularly Bernardino Ochino and his work *Dialogi XXX*.<sup>5</sup> After an

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4 Ibid.

5 Ochino, *Dialogi XXX*.

introduction to the topic in book one, Zanchi addresses the distinction of persons in book two, the eternal deity of Christ in book three, the deity of the Holy Spirit in book four, and the common essence of the three persons in book five.

#### 4.2 Significance of the Hebrew Language and the Divine Names

*Zanchi insisted that the Hebrew language held a special rank as the most ancient and most semantically accurate of all languages, giving a special significance to the Hebrew divine names and providing the necessary foundation for his assertions about the divine names Jehovah and Elohim.*

It is important to fully notice the prominent and novel role which Zanchi gave to the Hebrew names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, particularly as the two were linked together in the *Shma*.

Throughout *De Tribus Elohim*, Zanchi argued that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is implicit in the combination of these two Hebrew names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, and that through this Hebrew phrase the doctrine of the Trinity had been clearly revealed to the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament. Much of Zanchi's confidence in his ability to derive the doctrine of the Trinity from these Hebrew names had less to do with his overweening confidence in human reason (as described by Gründler), and more to do with what he believed were the unique qualities of the Hebrew language.

Zanchi maintained, as did many Hebraists in his day,<sup>6</sup> that Hebrew had been the one common language used by all mankind prior to God's confusion of human speech at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), making Hebrew the most ancient of all languages. Since every language but Hebrew had been introduced as a result of the sin of the profane people at Babel, all other languages were necessarily profane, leaving Hebrew alone as the holy tongue. Further, since Hebrew was the language used by God to speak with the Patriarchs, to give the

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6 For instance, Robert Wakefield, *On the Three Languages [1524]*, trans. G. Lloyd Jones (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989), 106–108.

law to Moses, and was used by Jesus in the preaching of the Gospel, clearly, Zanchi concluded, this divine preference indicated that Hebrew was also the most excellent of all languages.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the *antiquissima* and *excellentissima* tongue, the holy Hebrew vocabulary was, to Zanchi's mind, capable of more effectively communicating the divine message. Because Hebrew held this primacy over all other languages, when God revealed his own names to his people in Hebrew he did so in a vocabulary which was uniquely suited to convey a description of the divine nature.

In his *De Natura Dei* (1577),<sup>8</sup> Zanchi provided a more in depth description of some of the reasoning that had informed *De Tribus Elohim*. He devoted the first book of the *De Natura Dei* to a discussion of the divine names and to what could be learned from these names about the divine nature. This concentration on the divine names, particularly in the context of a discussion about the divine nature, calls to mind Aquinas's *Summa*, where the conclusion of his treatment of the divine essence is composed of a series of investigations into the meanings of the divine names.<sup>9</sup> Harm Goris, noting this parallel, sees not just a reliance on Aquinas in Zanchi's work, but a return to the three ways of speaking about the divine nature (*via causalitatis*, *via negativa*, and *via eminentiae*) which were first expressed by pseudo-Dionysius, whose work *De Divinis Nominibus*<sup>10</sup> played a significant role in the theology of Aquinas.<sup>11</sup>

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7 See Zanchi's comments in the prefatory chapter entitled: *De Linguis Sacrae Scripturae: et quod Hebraica sit omnium antiquissima: et cur sancta vocetur*. Girolamo Zanchi, *Miscellaneorum Tomus Alter: In quo ss theologiae loci et quaestiones plurimae, tum et controversiae quaedam cognitu dignissimae solide pertractantur* (Neustadt: Nicolas Schrammius, 1608), 32–33.

8 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Natura Dei seu, De Divinis Attributis*. Published five years after *De Tribus Elohim*, this work is considered by Donnelly to be the second contribution to Zanchi's proposed "Protestant *Summa*" and was the focus of Gründler's study of Zanchi's theology. An abridged English translation of *De Natura Dei* composed by Robert Hill has often been mistakenly listed as a translation of *De Tribus Elohim*, a confusion arising from a superficial reading of the title and the first few chapters of the work (which repeat closely the argument for the Trinity from the phrase *Jehovah Elohim*): Jerome Zanchi, *Life everlasting, or The true knowledge of one Jehovah, three Elohim, and Jesus Immanuel* (Cambridge: Legat, 1601).

9 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Timothy McDermott O.P. (Cambridge University Press, 2006), prima pars, 1a. 12–13.

10 pseudo-Dionysius, "The Divine Names," in *The Complete Works of pseudo-Dionysius* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 49–131.

11 Goris, "Thomism in Zanchi's Doctrine of God," 128.

Nevertheless, without denying the close parallel between Zanchi and Aquinas, as well as the common inspiration of pseudo-Dionysius, it is important to note that Zanchi himself began his discussion of the divine names with a description of the contributions of pseudo-Dionysius which is both critical and dismissive. Zanchi considered Dionysius (whose works he recognized to be a forgery) to be “a disciple of Plato rather than a disciple of the Apostle Paul”<sup>12</sup> and was disparaging of Dionysius’ tendency to depend heavily on philosophical speculation rather than on biblical exegesis. He wrote: “Although the things that are signified by those names can be drawn and confirmed from Holy Scripture: nevertheless not all the names themselves, in fact very few of them, are found in Holy Scripture.”<sup>13</sup> Contrary to pseudo-Dionysius, Zanchi denied that any name which did not appear in Scripture could be accurately designated as a “divine name.”

Further, Zanchi asserted that amongst the divine names which appear in Scripture a further division must be recognized between those names which had been spoken immediately by God to men and those names which had been spoken about God by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul, he argued, had made an analogous distinction when he had distinguished between those precepts that he had given to the church at Corinth and those precepts Jesus himself had immediately given to the church (1 Cor. 7:12). Even though Paul had been guided in his own words by the Holy Spirit, and his command to not depart from an unbelieving spouse was binding on all Christians, still it seemed to Zanchi that a violation of a command which had come immediately from the mouth of the Lord would be a more serious sin than a violation of a command from Paul. The apostle Paul’s precepts were not divine in the same way that Jesus’ precepts had been.

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12 '... sed Platonis potius, quam Pauli Apostoli discipulus ...' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Natura Dei seu, De Divinis Attributis*, 3.

13 'Etsi vero res quae illis nominibus significantur, e sacris literis erui possunt et confirmari: nomina tamen ipsa non omnia, imo admodum pauca in sacris literis reperiuntur.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De natura Dei, seu, divinis attributis* (Neustadt: Matthäus Harnisium, 1590), 4.

In Zanchi's estimation, the names of God worked similarly. Since God had only spoken directly to men in the Hebrew language (including, he claimed, during the age of the New Testament), Zanchi concluded that all of the Greek names for God in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, names like θεός, κύριος, πνεῦμα ἅγιον, πατήρ, θεός ἄόρατος, ἀθάνατος, and many others, could only be considered to be divine names of a second and lesser order, despite the fact that the men who spoke them had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Although the Septuagint may not have been directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless Zanchi assumed that the Spirit's approval of this Greek translation could be inferred from the use of the Septuagint by the New Testament Apostles.) Even the Hebrew names for God, which had not been directly spoken by God, were to be considered members of this second order.

The first order of divine names was reserved for those names which had been directly spoken by God to his prophets in the Hebrew language, names like יהוה אֱלֹהִים, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ (which Zanchi would render as “*Jehovah Elohim*,” “I am who I am,” and “the Almighty”). These divine names, names of this first order and spoken in the language of Hebrew, the *sacra lingua*, signified God's true nature more effectively than any other words.

Therefore should it not seem remarkable what I say: that some sort of distinction should be made between the names which God himself has applied to himself and those by which the saints, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have called him. For it would seem that the former ones, should be regarded by us as having more majesty and reverence, than the latter: as the former also have, as I do not doubt, a greater degree of efficacy in signifying meaning, than the latter: although that efficacy might not be as perceptible to us as it is to God, the one who applied the names. Just as the name of Jehovah is most sacred, which God everywhere throughout the Prophets says is his own name: that is – it is so particular to him that it cannot fit another. For when God himself assigns to himself both this and other names of this first order: who could doubt, that they signify most exactly [*propriissime*] that which God wanted to signify by those names? Therefore they have some sort of greater majesty, than the rest, although all of them are truly divine . . . <sup>14</sup>

14 'Ergo mirum videri non debet, quod dico, discrimen aliquod faciendum esse inter ea nomina, quae Deus sibi ipse imposuit: et inter illa, quibus eum sancti viri, Spiritu sancto adflati nominarunt. Videntur enim illa

Zanchi did not entirely dismiss pseudo-Dionysius's method of speaking about the divine nature by means of the divine names, nevertheless, he emphasized the fact that the discussion of the divine nature must not be driven by philosophical speculation, but rather by close exegesis of the Scriptures. By claiming for the Hebrew language the rank of *antiquissima* and *excellentissima* of all languages, Zanchi had reserved for the Hebrew text of the Old Testament a unique ability for communicating divine truth, one that outstripped the Greek of the New Testament in its accurate portrayal of the nature of God. More than any other language, Hebrew spoke of divine things *proprie* – a word which Zanchi's uses throughout his description of the Hebrew language to mean something like: “plainly,” “properly,” “particularly,” “precisely,” “literally,” or “in a grammatically accurate fashion.” And those names that had been delivered from God to man in the Hebrew language spoke *propriissime* about the divine nature.

Although it was far from an original claim for Zanchi to describe the Hebrew language as *antiquissima* and *excellentissima*, this presupposition about the nature of the Hebrew language provided the necessary foundation for his very systematic exegesis of the biblical text. Zanchi's use of the two-fold Paduan method of *resolution* and *composition*, as described by Gründler (in chapter three of this dissertation), required a text that could be subjected to close scrutiny, a text where every element of the morphology and of the syntax of each verse could be expected to reveal deeper insights into the nature of God. Emboldened by this confidence in the Hebrew vocabulary, Zanchi turned to the combination of the Hebrew

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priora, plus debere apud nos habere maiestatis et reverentiae, quam ista: sicut etiam plus habent, ut non dubito, efficacitatis in significando, illa, quam ista: quanquam ea efficacitas nobis non sit ita perspecta, ut nominum impositori Deo. Velut est sacrosanctum illud nomen Iehovae, quod passim apud Prophetas Deus ait, suum esse nomen: hoc est, ita proprium, ut non conveniat alteri. Quum enim Deus, et hoc, et alia huius primi ordinis nomina per sese sibi indiderit: quis dubitet, quin propriissime significant id, quod Deus iis nominibus voluit significare. Habent igitur haec nescio quid amplius maiestatis, quam reliqua: Quam quam omnia sint verè divina . . . ! Ibid., 5.

words *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, two divine names of the first order, expecting that a thorough and systematic unpacking of this phrase would provide a concise and orthodox defence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

#### 4.3 The Argument Developed

*Zanchi then demonstrated how by close attention to a proprie reading of the Hebrew text it could be shown that the Old Testament authors had clearly used the words Jehovah and Elohim to indicate the mystery of the Trinity.*

*Jehovah*

Zanchi defined his terms more closely in the first book of *De Tribus Elohim*, the *prolegomenon* of his work. Beginning with the single divine *essentia* or ὄντα, which Zanchi believed was identified by the name *Jehovah*, he wrote:

When I say and name God, I understand that eternal, invisible, immortal, most simple, and most perfect in every way – ὄντα; whom the Scriptures call *Jehovah*, by whom, existing through himself, all other things are and exist, and through whom enduring in himself, all things are governed and sustained, and towards whom, who is in Himself most blessed, all things aim and are directed; in whom we live and move and exist . . .<sup>15</sup>

For the most part, Zanchi's words were predictable and commonplace for an early leader of Protestant Scholasticism – insisting that God is the only being to exist through himself and making his being the source of all other existence.<sup>16</sup> Zanchi's indebtedness to Thomism is immediately detectable at this point and one can perhaps understand Gründler's concerns

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15 Cum dico et nomino Deum intelligo illum aeternum, invisibilem, immortalem, simplicissimum, omnibusque modis perfectissimum - ὄντα; quem scripturae vocant Iehovam, a quo per se existente, alia etiam sunt, et existunt omnia : et per quem per se manentem reguntur, et sustentantur omnia; et in quem per se beatissimum tendunt, et diriguntur omnia; in quo et nos vivimus, movemur et sumus. . . ! Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.12.

16 See Muller's "Protestant Scholasticism and the Doctrine of God: The Early Orthodox Achievement," which emphasizes the relative continuity of Zanchi's explanation of the significance of the divine name "Jehovah" with the late medieval scholastics, as well as the magisterial reformers and the Protestant orthodox to come. Muller, "The Triunity of God," 95–107.

that Zanchi's theology is essentially a revival of the Thomistic system.<sup>17</sup> An acknowledgement of Zanchi's clear debt to Aquinas, however, does not necessitate the conclusion that Zanchi has forsaken the vibrant theology of the early reformation for a lifeless Thomism or that, by his reliance on Aquinas, Zanchi has poisoned Reformed theology with rationalism. This rush to judgement, from which Gründler's work suffers, misses the new direction that Zanchi's works have taken with these old arguments.

Although Aquinas too had seen in passages like Exod. 3:14 and the *Tetragrammaton* a connection between God's name and the divine *essentia*, his discussion of the names of God did not appear until the very end of his discussion of the Divine *essentia*. These passages, furthermore, appeared there only to confirm what Aquinas had already deduced from general principles. Zanchi, although in many ways coming to the same conclusions as Aquinas, reoriented the discussion by beginning with the divine names and bringing the scriptural *loci communes* to the forefront. Rather than making Jehovah the one First Mover, the one being without composition, whose existence could be inferred from consideration of the rest of creation, Zanchi instead began with the biblical claims about God's being, derived from the divine names. Zanchi returned to his discussion of *Jehovah* in book eight of his first volume, again insisting that the name *Jehovah* (which he understood to be the correct pronunciation of the *Tetragrammaton*) properly signified *essentia*.<sup>18</sup> In making this claim Zanchi relied on the etymological connection between the *Tetragrammaton* and the Hebrew verb for being, יהיה.

And for good reason therefore we want to include the word *essentia*, or rather *Jehovah*, for by this name the divine *essentia* is properly [*proprie*] signified: as the Hebrew root, from which it is derived, easily demonstrates. But since there is only one *essentia*, and that most perfect, most simple, and indivisible, in no way can it be said that there are plural Gods, in nature and in essence, that is, plural *Jehovahs*.<sup>19</sup>

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17 See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.3.4.

18 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.297.

19 'Non sine causa igitur adiectum voluimus essentiae, imo et Iehovae nomen. hoc enim nomine proprie divina significatur essentia: sicut radix, unde derivatur, Hebraica, facile docet. Cum essentia tamen sit una tantum, eaque perfectissima, et simplicissima, et impartibilis: nullo modo possunt dici plures esse dii,

Finding evidence in the Hebrew Scriptures for the oneness of the divine essence was not difficult. From the clear insistence of the *Shma* that Jehovah was one [יהוה]<sup>20</sup> to the common use of the singular verb for divine actions,<sup>21</sup> to the prophet Isaiah's urgent declaration that Jehovah alone was God,<sup>22</sup> to the symbolism of one tabernacle and one altar,<sup>23</sup> – the overwhelming testimony of Scripture was that Israel had one God. But the oneness was restricted to the divine *essentia*, which Zanchi considered to have been indicated in Scripture by the name *Jehovah*.

The one who created heaven and earth and then men in his own image and likeness: was only one God. It is clear first of all by the verb in the singular, which Moses uses in the first chapter when he not only said in general, 'God created heaven and earth': but also when enumerating the particular works of God, he uses the singular number, and says 'And God said, let there be light.' Also 'And God saw that it was good.' He clearly intends, with verbs of the singular number, to declare only one creator of heaven and earth and only one God. Then he joins the name *Jehovah* with *Elohim*, saying, 'In the day when *Jehovah Elohim* made heaven and earth.' This passage teaches that there is not only one creator of heaven and earth: but also that those three *Elohim* are one *Jehovah*. . .<sup>24</sup>

Zanchi filled the third and fourth chapters of his eighth book with biblical *loci* drawn from the Old and New Testament respectively, demonstrating that there was one single divine essence, signified by the name *Jehovah*, which subsisted in the three persons of the Trinity. He argued that the name *Jehovah* most properly referred to this single divine substance – the *essentia* or *ὄντα*, which had been used in the early Christian creeds to define the unity of God.

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natura, et essentia, hoc est, plures Iehovae.' Ibid., 1.296.

20 Ibid., 1.304, 305.

21 Ibid., 1.304.

22 Ibid., 1.305.

23 Ibid., 1.13.

24 'Qui creavit caelum, et terram, et deinde hominem ad suam imaginem, et similitudinem: unus tantum fuit Deus. Liqueo primo ex verbo singulari, quo utitur Moses in primo cap. quum non solum in genere dicit, Creavit Deus caelum et terram: verum etiam, quum singula Dei opera recensens, singulari utitur numero, et ait, Dixitque Deus, fiat lux: et, Viditque Deus, quod esset bonum. Voluit certe his singularis numeri verbis, unum tantum creatorem caeli et terrae eoque unum tantum Deum praedicare. Deinde coniungit cum Elohim, nomen Iehovae, dicens, In die, qua fecit Iehova Elohim caelum et terram. Hic locus non solum docet, unum tantum esse creatorem caeli, et terrae: sed illos tres Elohim; esse unum Iehovam . . .' Ibid., 1.304.

Although the length of this argument, together with the extent of the biblical defence which *De Tribus Elohim* gave for this use of *Jehovah*, both served to make Zanchi's work unique in its day, there was little to this argument that was original or unique to Zanchi (or, for that matter, to Aquinas). Even Calvin, in his exposition of Exod. 3:14, insisted that this passage described God as the only self-existent being and that all creatures derived their existence from his eternal existence and at the pleasure of his sovereign will. Calvin asserted that the same truth is likewise derived from the name *Jehovah*, which he describes as God's essential name (due to its derivation from the root [הוה]).<sup>25</sup>

### *Elohim*

Girolamo Zanchi, however, disagreed with Calvin as to the true significance of the Hebrew name *Elohim*. Zanchi grouped Calvin's explanation (that *Elohim* communicated the divine power) together with the explanation given by Kimhi (that *Elohim* was a *pluralis maiestatis* or *excellantiae*) and dismissed both as blind, baseless, and without any support from the biblical text.<sup>26</sup>

For what several of the Hebrews write that God was called by the plural name *Elohim* – for the sake of respect or in order that it might be signified that his perfections are many – is trifling, since it is not supported by the authority of Scripture or by reason.<sup>27</sup>

Zanchi argued, in his *De Tribus Elohim*, that by paying close attention to the plain grammar of the Hebrew text it could be demonstrated that the biblical name *Elohim* was intended to communicate the plurality of persons within the singular divine essence, confident that “It will never be disproven by firm arguments, that the name *Elohim* being joined with *Jehovah*,

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<sup>25</sup> Jean Calvin, *Commentarii In Quator Reliquos Libros Mosis* (Amsterdam: Schipperus, 1671), Ex. 3:14; 6:2.

<sup>26</sup> Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 2.26.

<sup>27</sup> 'Nam quod Haebraei nonnulli, Deum nomine plurali Elohim, appellatum fuisse scribunt honoris causa aut, ut multas esse illius perfectiones significaretur: frivolum est: cum nulla fulciatur vel auctoritate Scripturae, vel ratione.' Ibid., 1.22.

indicates plural ὑποστάσεις, or persons, just as the most ancient Hebrews had interpreted. . .”<sup>28</sup> Calvin had warned readers against *violentis eiusmodi glossis*; Zanchi intended to demonstrate that his exegesis was neither a violent gloss nor an imaginative interpretation, but rather a careful reading of Scripture according to the plain meaning of the Hebrew text, a reading that, Zanchi believed, had been readily apparent to its original Jewish audience.

There is a degree of irony in the fact that the central argument of Zanchi’s work, a work intended to vindicate the Reformed churches from Catholic and Lutheran slanders, was an argument which Calvin had explicitly scorned. This is a good illustration of how the theology of the Reformed churches in the late sixteenth century was far from homogenous and resisted being defined solely by the works of a supposed Genevan figurehead. Nevertheless, Zanchi’s divergence from the position of Calvin would, in the following decades, be frequently cited by some as a strike against Zanchi and by others as a strike against Calvin.

Though Zanchi occasionally found meaning in the symbolism of the text (like his conclusion that the divine unity was symbolized by the existence of only one altar and one tabernacle),<sup>29</sup> the vast majority of his arguments were founded on what he described as interpreting Scripture *proprie*: plainly, properly, particularly, precisely, literally, and in a grammatically accurate fashion. Zanchi acknowledged that cabbalistic and other more creative readings of the text could be used to support his argument, but he made this acknowledgment dismissively.<sup>30</sup> He derided such exegesis as “human reason” and the “testimony of men.”

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28 'Neque vero, firmis unquam rationibus evincetur, quin nomine Elohim cum nomine Iehovae coniuncto, plures in Deo ὑποστάσεις, seu personae, significantur, quemadmodum etiam antiquissimi Hebraei interpretati sunt. . .' Ibid., 1.15.

29 Ibid., 1.13.

30 Though dismissive of the cabbalistic method, Zanchi still recited the arguments, making use of the material by way of *paralipsis*: “In a thing of such great importance I would not want to rely on either human reason or the testimony of men, nor as well on the testimony of Scripture passages, which are not clear and sure. So then, to prove my proposition I omit the fact that Targum Jerusalem translates ‘God the Father created heaven and earth’ בראשית as ‘with wisdom’ and that many assert that this is the λόγος or the Son of God: and therefore understand that everything was created in the Beginning or by means of this Beginning,

Instead of relying on such questionable exegesis, he was convinced that his careful attention to a plain reading of the Hebrew text was the surest way to understand the clear testimony of Scripture. By paying careful attention to the Hebrew Old Testament, by reading the text *proprie*, Zanchi was confident that the three persons of the Trinity were clearly revealed throughout the biblical text.

He devoted the second book of *De Tribus Elohim* to the exegesis of a series of Old Testament *loci*, which were intended to demonstrate the deity of the Son. Zanchi had already spoken of the imaginative cabbalistic attempts to find allusions to the Son in the Old Testament and he now intended to put forth a reading of the Old Testament text that could prove the deity of the Son without resorting to such easily abused allegorical and typological exegetical methods. Instead, he intended to show that a plain reading of the Old Testament, a reading which understood the Hebrew text *proprie*, could demonstrate the deity of the Son without any resort to allegory or typology. This was accomplished by pointing out grammatical constructions which required that the divine name *Elohim* be understood as truly plural, indicating a plurality of persons within the Godhead and making room for the doctrine of the deity of the Son and Holy Spirit. Additionally, Zanchi sought to prove the doctrine of the Trinity by showing that Scripture applied to the Son and to the Spirit titles which belonged to

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which is the *λόγος*, and the Son of God. I also omit that cabbalistic mystery: though some make so much of it of course that *בראשית* is nothing other than a second principle since *ב*, the second letter of the alphabet, signifies second, and *ראשית* is the beginning and the head. This second beginning is Christ. There is also another cabbalistic mystery that I know of, which I don't adopt in which of course they say that from the three letters of the verb 'create' – *ברא* three persons in God can be drawn: the Son from the first letter: since the Hebrew word for son is *בן*, which begins with the letter *ב*. The Holy Spirit is from the second, since that letter is the beginning of the word *רוח*. And the Father, who is called *אב* from the last letter *א*." Neque enim in re tanti momenti; niti volo, aut humanis rationibus, aut auctoritatibus hominum: nec vero etiam testimoniis Scripturarum, quae perspicua et firma non sint. Proinde ad probandum nostrum assumptum, omitto, quod Thargum Hieros. Deum Patrem, creasse caelum et terram *בראשית* interpretatur in sapientia: et hanc contendunt multi esse *λόγον* seu Filium Dei: et idcirco intelligunt, in hoc principio, seu per hoc principium, quod est *λόγος*, Filiusque Dei, omnia esse creata. Omitto et illud Cabalisticum mysterium: quod nonnulli tamen magni faciunt: nimirum quod *בראשית* nil aliud sit, quàm secundum principium: nam *כ* altera litera alphabeti, secundum notat: et *ראשית* principium, ac caput est. Hoc autem alterum principium esse Christum. Illud etiam alterum Cabalisticum Sacramentum mihi non assumo: quo nimirum dicunt ex tribus literis, verbi creandi, *ברא*, tres erui personas in Deo: Filium ex prima litera: nomen enim Filii apud Hebraeos *בן*, incipit a litera *ב*. Spiritum sanctum ex altera. Illa enim initium est nominis *רוח*. Et Patrem, qui dicitur *אב* ex postrema litera *א*." Ibid., 1.21–22.

God alone, such as the name *Jehovah* or the Angel of *Jehovah*, and roles which belonged to God alone, such as the act of creation and the making of covenants with Israel.

In most instances in the Old Testament where the Hebrew word *Elohim* appeared to be referring to the God of Israel, even though it contained a plural ending, it was treated as if it were grammatically singular by the author (meaning all adjectives and verbs paired with the noun *Elohim* appeared in the singular). But Zanchi found throughout the Old Testament a small assortment of plural verbs, participles, and adjectives which had been paired with *Elohim*, from which he concluded that these texts had been deliberately crafted by the biblical authors to reveal that the plural ending of *Elohim* was actually a plural *proprie*, an ending which indicated that the noun was indeed plural. For instance, in Gen. 20:13, the subject אֱלֹהִים was joined to a plural verb - הִתְעוּ אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית אָבִי - “God made me to wander from the house of my father.” Zanchi translated the text and treated the peculiar form הִתְעוּ (a form which would normally require a plural subject) as a deliberate attempt to reflect the plurality that he believed was hinted at in the subject אֱלֹהִים. Zanchi rendered the verse: “That is ‘Gods made me to wander from the house of my Father.’”<sup>31</sup>

In Josh. 24:19, Zanchi found another hint that the original Hebrew authors were aware of God’s triune nature. In the Hebrew text Joshua warned the Israelites that they would not be able to serve the one true God, and the reason was כִּי אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים הוּא “for God is holy.” Here the adjective קְדוֹשִׁים had been given a plural ending, apparently agreeing with the subject אֱלֹהִים and suggesting that the subject too is meant to be understood as plural (disregarding, that is, the singular הוּא). Zanchi concluded from this that Joshua’s intentional use of the plural adjective indicated that the biblical author must have been aware of God’s triune nature, including the deity of the Son. “The Holy Gods: since he also knew that the

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31 . . . hoc est ‘errare fecerunt me Dii de domo Patris mei.’ Ibid., 1.23. cf. 1.27.

Son himself was *Jehovah*.”<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, 2 Sam. 7:23 paired אֱלֹהִים with the plural verb הִלְכוּ.

וּמִי כְעַמְךָ כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶתְד בְּאַרְצֵךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ אֱלֹהִים לְפָדוֹת לוֹ לְעַם

“And who is like your people, like Israel, one nation in the land, whom God went to redeem as a people for himself?” Again, Zanchi maintains that the plural ending of the verb was deliberately chosen to indicate that the plural *Elohim* reveals a true plurality of divine persons. He writes: “. . . whom Gods went to redeem to themselves for a people. . .’ Therefore, David certainly knew that there was one *Jehovah*, who was the chooser and redeemer of all the people of Israel: but this God was not only the Father, but also the Son.”<sup>33</sup> Zanchi concluded: “Certainly, unless someone were to want to be openly and purposefully contentious and to draw a shadow over the shining sun: these clearly confirm, that there is a plurality of persons in God, which are signified through Moses by the name *Elohim*, who created heaven and earth.”<sup>34</sup>

Having insisted on translating אֱלֹהִים as plural *proprie*, and not as a *pluralis excellentiae* or *maiestatis*, Zanchi was now equipped to describe the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost using biblical terminology. These three *personae* could actually be called three אֱלֹהִים. The singular of אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, however, was אֵל, *El*, which was usually translated as *deus*. This meant, as can be seen in his translations above, that Zanchi was arguing that according to biblical language Scripture taught that there were three *dei* – three Gods, a highly problematic implication. Zanchi clearly sensed that this argument would leave him open to the charge of

32 'Deos sanctos ipsum: agnoscens ipsum etiam Filium esse Iehovam.' Ibid., 1.32.

33 ". . . quam iverunt dii ut redimerent sibi in populum. . .' Novit igitur David, unum quidem esse Iehovam totius populi Israëlitici electorem, et redemptorem: sed hunc esse, non Patrem solum, verum etiam Filium.' Ibid., 1.33.

34 'Certe nisi quis velit esse ex professo, et de industria contentiosus, et Soli lucenti tenebras obducere: haec aperte confirmant, plures in Deo esse personas, quae per Mosen nomine Elohim significatae, caelum et terram crearint.' Ibid., 1.23.

tritheism and so he carefully qualified the sense in which one could say that there were three Gods. One could refer to *dei*, provided that what were signified by the word *dei* were the three distinct persons of the deity and not the single divine essence. Zanchi then argued that the careful wording of the *Shma* of Deut. 6:4 helped to make his point.

Thus Moses from the beginning followed this description of God himself which God himself had revealed: as when he said 'Hear Israel, *Jehovah Elohenu*, *Jehovah* is one.' Where it must be noted, that he did not say then *Elohim* or *Eloha*, but only, *Jehovah* is one. Therefore, he teaches that there are indeed plural *Elohim*, but only one *Jehovah*: and that each of these *Elohim* is *Jehovah*.<sup>35</sup>

Zanchi assumed that Moses had been intentionally precise when he had proclaimed that *Jehovah*, rather than *Elohim*, was one. From this Zanchi concluded that the *Shma* restricted the unity of God to his single divine essence, but still made room for a plurality of persons within that one divine essence. Zanchi also claimed that there was patristic precedent for his interpretation: "let us not deny that it is possible to speak about there being three Gods according to the thing: just as Justin and a few others have said: that is that there are three persons, each one of whom is God."<sup>36</sup> But in all of these cases the word "Gods" was referring to a plurality of divine persons and not a plurality of divine essences. In other words, Zanchi claimed that the Hebrew name *Elohim* corresponded exactly to the Latin term *personae* which had appeared in the creeds of the early church.

When Scripture referred to God by the name *Elohim* rather than the name *Jehovah*, Zanchi was convinced that the biblical authors were using this name in order to focus deliberately their readers' attention on the three persons of the Trinity and their actions. For instance, Zanchi argued that there was a particular emphasis on the distinct roles of the

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35 'Ita deinceps semper Moses, hanc, quam Deus ipse patefecit sui descriptionem sequutus est: ut, Audi Israë!, Iehova Elohenu, Iehova unus est. Ubi notandum, non postea dixisse, Elohim seu Eloah unus est. sed tantum, Iehova unus est. Docuit igitur, plures quidem esse Elohim, sed unum tantum Iehovam: ac proinde, quenque ipsorum Elohim, esse Iehovam.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.31.

36 '. . . non inficiamur posse dici κατὰ τὴν tres esse Deos: sicuti Iustinus, et aliquot alii loquuti sunt: hoc est, tres personas, quarum quaeque Deus est.' Ibid., 1.296.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the biblical accounts of creation, an emphasis which was reflected in a tendency to use the name *Elohim* more frequently than *Jehovah* in descriptions of creation.

Because Moses perpetually expresses the name of God as *Elohim*, in the plural: whenever he speaks of the creation of the world, let my opponents say whatever they want, all of their diversions are worthless and childish. For in those places where neither Angels, nor Judges can be understood by this name: the persons which are in God are necessarily understood to be revealed: as even the most ancient Hebrew interpreters agree.<sup>37</sup>

This tendency to bring the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all into the creation narrative was, for Zanchi, an important argument for the full divinity of each divine person, an argument that Zanchi had inferred from Jer. 10:11. Zanchi explains: “However, Jeremiah says that the gods who did not create heaven and earth must be destroyed from the earth. For he cannot be God who did not create heaven and earth” (cf. Jer. 10:11).<sup>38</sup> Therefore, since participation in the act of creation was an essential way of distinguishing between a false god and a true god, it was crucial that Scripture call attention to each individual person of the Trinity in the act of creation in order for the entire doctrine of the Trinity to be true. This would explain why Zanchi’s exposition of Gen. 1:1-2 was one of the most developed of all the biblical *loci* within *De Tribus Elohim*.

Although Calvin had argued that the בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים of Gen. 1:1 held no implicit trinitarian significance, Zanchi insisted that Moses, who had conversed with God more familiarly than any other man and who was fully aware of God’s triune nature, had deliberately begun his account of the six days of creation by using the plural subject *Elohim*, in

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37 'Quod Moses nomen Dei expressit perpetuo per Elohim, in plurali: quum egit de creatione Mundi. Dicant quicquid velint adversarii, omnia illorum effugia vana sunt, et puerilia. Nam in iis locis, cum neque Angeli, neque Iudices possint hoc nomine intelligi: necessario personae, quae in Deo sunt patefactae intelliguntur: consentientib. antiquissimis quoque interpretibus Hebraeis.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.296.

38 'Ierem. autem Deos qui non crearunt caelum et terram; e terra perdendos esse ait. Non enim Deus esse potest, qui non fecerit caelum et terram.' Ibid., 1.22.

order that he might clearly indicated that creation was the work of three divine makers.<sup>39</sup>

Echoing the Johannine comma, Zanchi wrote, “And these three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: are that *Elohim*, who created heaven and earth: about whom Moses said ‘*Elohim* created heaven and earth.’”<sup>40</sup> Although the singular verb *בָּרָא* indicated that the three divine persons were united in one essence, the focus of the passage, according to Zanchi, was on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and their works as creators.

Beyond Gen. 1:1, Zanchi found a selection of other Hebrew texts which he felt supported his claims that the doctrine of the Trinity had been plainly revealed to the original Hebrew speaking audience of the Old Testament and that the three persons of the Trinity were particularly manifested in descriptions of creation. For instance, in Isa. 54:5 the Hebrew text read – *יהוה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ – כִּי בְעֲלֵיךְ עֲשִׂיךְ יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ*, which Zanchi translated “your husbands, your makers, Jehovah of hosts is his name.”<sup>41</sup> And again from Psa. 149:2, he cited *יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֲשֵׂיו* and gave the translation “Let Israel rejoice in its makers.”<sup>42</sup> The unexpected plural form of the noun “husbands” and the participle “makers” in the Hebrew text acted, according to Zanchi, to draw the readers’ attention to the fact that it was the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who had been responsible for creation.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, Zanchi was convinced that the accounts of God’s creative acts, which were preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures, placed a special emphasis on the three persons of

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39 Ibid., 1.21–22.

40 'Atqui ii tres, Pater, Filius, Spiritus sanctus: sunt ille Elohim, qui creavit caelum, et terram.' Ibid., 1.14.

41 'mariti tui, factores tui, Iehova Zebaoth nomen eius.' Ibid., 1.22. Zanchi also cites the phrase *עֲשִׂיךְ*, ‘your makers’ in Isa. 44:24, an uncommon textual variation.

42 'Laetetur Israëel, בעשׂיךְ, in factoribus suis.' Ibid.

43 Gesenius explains that the plurality of *עֲשִׂיךְ* and *עֲשִׂיךְ* is only apparent and merely the result of various attempts at the awkward task of attaching a suffix to a word ending with the Hebrew letter ה. This would explain why it is the lamed hey verb *עָשָׂה* (“to make”) which Zanchi has repeatedly discovered with the anomalous plural ending. Gesenius then argues that *בעלֵיךְ*, in Isa. 54:5, is merely formed on analogy, since it is placed in parallel with *עֲשִׂיךְ* in that passage. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. by E. Kautzsch, trans. by A.E. Cowley (Oxford, 1910), 273, 399. A more recent, and more extensive, treatment of the significance of the name can be found in Joel Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, SBL Dissertation Series 183 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

the Trinity. Clearly, the *antiqui Hebraei* had read and understood that the *ruah*, which hovered on the face of the waters in Gen. 1:2, was not just a ‘wind,’ but none other than the life giving Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, who hovered on the face of the deep and imparted life to all creation.<sup>44</sup> That this had been evident to the early Hebrew readers was apparent from the testimonies of Rabbi Simeon and Rabbi Salomoh, whose interpretations Zanchi found in Galatinus’ *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis* (1518).<sup>45</sup> Simeon had interpreted the *ruah* of Gen. 1:2 in light of Isa. 11:2, and understood it to be the Spirit of the coming Messiah. Salomoh had also insisted that the *ruah* was the Spirit of God, but saw in the participle מְרַחֶפֶת, “hovering” the imagery of a mother bird brooding over her eggs with a life-giving warmth.

Similarly, Zanchi asserted that John’s description of the Son as the *λόγος* of God, through whom everything which has been made was made (John 1:1-3), was no different than the description of the wisdom described in Prov. 8. Arius had misunderstood this passage, due to his reliance on the Septuagint and his ignorance of the Hebrew language, and had understood this passage to teach that the Son had been created just prior to the Father’s creation of the world. Zanchi argued, however, that anyone who had tasted even a small morsel of Hebrew learning could clearly see that the verb קָנָה had been erroneously translated by the Septuagint to mean “created.”<sup>46</sup> Clearly, Eve’s use of this verb in Gen. 4:1 (קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת) (יהוה) to describe the birth of her son Cain supplied the necessary clue to see that Prov. 8:22 referred to the begetting of the Son by the Father.<sup>47</sup> Not only did Solomon clearly teach the world had been created through the Father’s begotten Son, Zanchi continued, it was also

44 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 265–266.

45 Petrus Galatinus, *Opus toti christiane, Republice, maxime utile, de arcanis catholicae veritatis, contra obstinatissimam Iudeorum nostre tempestatis perfidiam: ex Talmud, aliisque hebraicis libris nuper excerptum: et quadruplici linguarum genere eleganter congestum* (Ortona: Suncinus, 1518), 40.

46 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 34 and 239.

47 Zanchi went on to claim that הוֹלֵלֵתִי in verses 24 and 25 should be translated *proprie*, not just as *formata*, but as *concepta et genita sum*, “I was conceived and begotten.”

evident from the Hebrew text that Solomon understood the Son to be co-eternal with the Father.

But in order that you may not think that this wisdom began to be with God from the creation of the world, he adds **קדם מפעליו מאז** as if to say 'already there before all his works, from eternity.' For before all creation, there was nothing but eternity. Therefore, he concludes that it is eternal. In agreement with this is that statement, 'In the beginning was the *λόγος*.'<sup>48</sup>

By demonstrating that all three members of the Trinity were clearly revealed in God's creation of the heavens and the earth, Zanchi moved discussions about references to the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament out of the realm of types and shadows and into the realm of historical narrative. The Son and the Holy Spirit had not been merely prefigured and hinted at in the Hebrew Scriptures, they had been clearly revealed to, and been worshipped by, the Old Testament saints. Moses had once prohibited the Israelites from worshipping **הדשים**, "new" or "recent" gods.

And Moses brought against the Israelites that they had sacrificed to new **הדשים** gods, whom their fathers had not known, in which place it is taught in God's law to be careful lest any recent god, that is not eternal, be supplicated, worshiped, or called upon.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Zanchi insisted, could not be new gods, that is gods who had been previously unknown to the Israelites. Rather, the three persons of the Trinity had been revealed to the early Hebrew saints under the divine name *Elohim* and had been remembered and worshipped by the ancient Israelites as the Creators of heaven and earth.

David himself understood that Jehovah was the triune *Elohim* when he composed Psa.

102. Otherwise, the author of Hebrews would have been twisting the Psalm when he cited v.

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48 'Sed ne putes, coepisse hanc sapientiam esse apud Deum a creatione Mundi. subdit **קדם מפעליו מאז**, quasi dicat, iam inde ante omnia opera sua, ab aeterno. Nam ante opera creationis nihil fuit, nisi aeternitas. Concludit igitur eam esse aeternam. Consentaneum est cum hoc illud Iohannis, e In principio erat *ó λόγος*.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.34.

49 'Et Moses obiicit Israelitis, quod sacrificarint Diis **הדשים** novis, quos non noverunt Patres eorum. quo loco docetur, caveri lege Dei, ne ullus recens Deus, hoc est, non aeternus, adoretur, colatur, invocetur.' Ibid., ix.

25-27 and applied these verses to the Son (Heb. 1:10-12)?

David, in Psalm 102, thus begins his prayer: 'Jehovah, hear my prayer.' Later, in verse 26, he says, 'In the beginning you founded earth and the heavens are the work of your hand.' Here he attributes creation clearly to none but Jehovah. But the Apostle applies this entirely to Christ. Therefore, in this Psalm David either, agreeing with the understanding of the Apostle, truly recognized the Christ as the Creator of Heaven and Earth: or the Apostle has abused this passage . . . Therefore, among the faithful this passage will confirm that the Christ is included in the name *Elohim* when Moses said 'In the beginning *Elohim* created heaven and earth.'<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.4 The Trinity in Antiquity

*Zanchi was made confident in his explanation of the divine names Jehovah and Elohim by the testimony of Petrus Galatinus, whose De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis claimed to find support for this interpretation in the works of some of the most ancient rabbis.*

Because Zanchi believed that the doctrine of the Trinity could be proven from a literal, or *proprie*, reading of the Old Testament text, he concluded that the basic doctrine of the Trinity had been understood by the Old Testament saints. Moses must have been fully aware of the reality of the Trinity, since "we read that God never spoke with anyone more familiarly or revealed himself more clearly than to Moses."<sup>51</sup> David and Isaiah would not have described God as *לְעֹשֵׂיךָ* (your makers) had they not understood that there was a plurality within the godhead. Passages like Psa. 33:6, *בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָל צְבָאָם* – made it clear that David himself understood that heaven and earth had been created not just by the Father, but by the Son and the Spirit as well.

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50 'David in Psal. 102 sic incipit precationem suam: Iehova audi precationem meam. Postea vers. 26. ait, In principio terram fundasti, et opera manuum tuarum sunt caeli. Hic certe creationem rerum non adscribit, nisi Iehovae. Apostolus autem totum hoc tribuit Christo. Aut igitur David in eo Psalmo, de Apostoli sententia, vere agnovit Christum pro creatore caeli, et terrae: aut Apostolus abusus est hoc loco . . . Apud pios igitur locus iste confirmabit, Christum in nomine Elohim contineri: quum dixit Moses: In principio creavit Elohim caelum et terram.' Ibid., 1.23.

51 '. . . legamus, Deum cum nemine familiarius loquutum fuisse unquam, et sese clarius patefecisse, quam Mosis.' Ibid.

‘By the word of God the heavens were made: and by the breath of his mouth, all of their hosts.’ Clearly even the ancient Hebrews understood this (as is seen in Galatinus), to be about the word, that is, about the Wisdom, the Son of God, and about the Holy Spirit.<sup>52</sup>

For Zanchi, the Old Testament’s teaching on the Trinity was made even more certain by the testimony of the ancient Hebrews as reported by Petrus Galatinus in his *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*.<sup>53</sup> Galatinus had collected a number of cabbalistic Jewish sources which, though he claimed they predated Jesus, interpreted the Hebrew Old Testament in such a way that God was explicitly described as triune. For instance, Galatinus listed a multitude of Jewish sources confirming Zanchi’s reading of Gen. 1:1.

In Chap. 8 and 9, he shows from many Rabbis, that אלהים indicates in name more than one מדות, or attributes, which we call Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and altogether of the plural number and indicates Gods: however, the singular verb ברא ‘he created’ indicates his unity of substance and essence.”<sup>54</sup>

Galatinus had included the testimony of R. Isaac Benschola, who described the Father, or “the beginning,” the Son of God, “the wisdom,” and the Holy Spirit “the fear of God,” as three distinct *personae*.<sup>55</sup> Though clearly uncritical of Galatinus’s work, Zanchi did not adopt these Cabbalistic arguments himself. In fact, he began *De Tribus Elohim* by dismissing this method of reading the text.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that these Jewish sources seemed to have gleaned an understanding of the Trinity from the Hebrew text still proved to Zanchi that his expectation of finding the Trinity in the Old Testament was justified and no more than the early Hebrew reader would have understood from the text. Throughout *De Tribus Elohim*, he regularly ended his treatment of various Old Testament texts with the assertion that his

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52 'Verbo Domini firmati sunt caeli: et Spiritu oris eius, omnis virtus eorum. Hoc certe antiqui etiam Hebraei (ut apud Galatinum videre est) interpretati sunt de verbo, id est, de Sapientia, Filio Dei; et de Spiritu sancto.' Ibid., 1.264.

53 Galatinus, *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*.

54 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.313. referring to Galatinus, *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*, 227–274.

55 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.313. referring to Galatinus, *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*, 41.

56 Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, 1.21–22.

interpretations were “just the same as the ancient Jews understood.”

#### 4.5 *Jehovah Elohim* as a Trinitarian Confession

*By placing the doctrine of the Trinity in the divine names, Zanchi was able to seek doctrinal unity amongst the Reformed by speaking in purely scriptural terminology.*

Zanchi’s conviction about the significance of the phrase *Jehovah Elohim* as an explicitly trinitarian confession is well illustrated by another project, published many years later. In September of 1577, Count Johann Casimir convened a synod in response to the recently published Formula of Concord. Consisting of theologians and ministers representing the Protestant churches of the Empire, the Swiss cantons, France, Poland, Hungary, and the Low Countries, as well as Sir Philip Sidney representing England, the synod commissioned Zanchi to produce a pan-Reformed confession which could be subscribed to by all Reformed congregations. The hope was that one common confession might help promote unity and doctrinal orthodoxy within the Reformed churches.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the confession that Zanchi produced ultimately failed to gain the support of all the churches and the hoped-for unity never materialized. Zanchi, however, later published this confession as a private statement of faith under the title *De Religione Christiana Fides*, in two editions, both without dates, in either 1585 or the following year. In addition to two other independent Latin editions and an appearance in all three editions of Zanchi’s *opera*, this confession was printed in an English translation by John Legate of Cambridge in 1599 under the title *Confession of Christian religion*, and again by John Redmayne of London in 1659.<sup>58</sup>

At the end of his confession Zanchi appended a collection of opinions on various

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<sup>57</sup> An account of this synod is preserved in Rodolphus Hospinian, *Concordia Discors* (Tiguri, 1607), 89. See also the introductory essay to Girolamo Zanchi, *Girolamo Zanchi, De religione christiana fides - Confession of Christian Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 14–30.

<sup>58</sup> Details regarding the various printings of Zanchi’s confession can be found at *Ibid.*, 20–21. However, the editors fail to mention Redmayne’s second English edition.

matters of controversy penned throughout his career at Heidelberg and at Neustadt. Zanchi introduced this section with the explanation that he was attaching these opinions to his larger confession in order to demonstrate that at no time had he consented to any of the heresies that had surfaced in these controversies.

The first topic addressed, dated 1572, deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. Zanchi writes:

Thesis 1

Theses concerning the one true God, eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 1572

1. There is only one *Jehovah*, the creator of Heaven and Earth and the God of Israel.
2. And truly that God, although he is only one *Jehovah*, nevertheless he is not one, but several *Elohim*, whose number and names the Son of God, who is God made manifest in the flesh, has clearly and without any ambiguity revealed to us, namely the eternal Father, the eternal Son and the eternal Holy Spirit.
3. Additionally, these three *Elohim* are true subsistences and they are indivisible, living, understanding, willing and (as the church has always said) true persons.
4. And the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct from one another, such that one is not the other.
5. However, each one of them is truly *Jehovah*.
6. And neither are there several *Jehovahs*, but only one *Jehovah*.<sup>59</sup>

Zanchi's understanding of the real significance of the divine names allowed him to use *Jehovah* and *Elohim* as confessional terminology, replacing, at several key points, with biblical language the controversial and divisive extra-biblical terms like *personae* and *essentia*.

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<sup>59</sup> *Theses 1. De uno vero Deo, aeterno Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto theses. Anno 1572*

I. Unus tantum est Iehova, creator coeli et terrae et Deus Israelis.

II. Iste vero Deus, etsi unus tantum est Iehova, non unus tamen est, sed plures Elohim, quorum numerum et nomina Filius Dei, Deus in carne manifestatus, nobis clare et sine ulla ambiguitate revelavit, nempe aeternus Pater, aeternus Filius et aeternus Spiritus sanctus.

III. Porro hi tres Elohim vera sunt ὑφιστάμενα eaque individua, viventia, intelligentia, volentia eoque verae (ut hactenus loquuta est ecclesia) personae.

IV. Atque ita inter se sunt distincti Pater, Filius et Spiritus sanctus, ut unus non sit alius.

V. Ipsorum autem unusquisque verus est Iehova.

VI. Neque ideo tamen plures sunt Iehovae, sed unus duntaxat Iehova.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Religione Christiana* (London: Rimeus, 1605), 394.

#### 4.6 *De Tribus Elohim* and the Antitrinitarians

*Previous assessments of Zanchi's works, distracted by Gründler's charges of scholastic rationalism, have missed the fact that by placing the orthodox definition of the Trinity in the Hebrew divine names, Zanchi was able to cater to the biblicism of the antitrinitarians as he confronted their heresy.*

It is surprising to contrast Zanchi's approach to trinitarian terminology with the approach taken by Josias Simler in *De aeterno Filio Dei* (1568), as well as the preface to Simler's work, which had been supplied by Heinrich Bullinger. Responding to the biblicist criticisms of the antitrinitarians, which had demanded that the terminology of trinitarianism (words like *persona, substantia, essentia*, etc. . .) be rejected because of their lack of biblical precedence, Simler had argued that in so far as trinitarian terminology reflected biblical truth, those terms should be considered perfectly biblical. Bullinger had employed his own *reductio ad absurdum* of the antitrinitarian argument and had insisted that if their claims were true, then theological terminology would need to be conducted in the original biblical languages in order to stay accurate. In Bullinger's estimation the antitrinitarians' willingness to pen their disputes in Latin was proof of their own inconsistency.

In this context, Zanchi's claims about the divine names sound surprisingly far more like those of the antitrinitarians than the trinitarians. Although, unlike the antitrinitarians, he has left room for the legitimate use of extra-biblical terminology in descriptions of God, still the import of his treatment of the divine names is that Latin theological terminology falls short of the Hebrew language in signifying what God is like. Whereas Simler and Bullinger both wanted to downplay the significance of moving from the language of the biblical text (in its original languages) to the language of theological discussion (in Latin), Zanchi magnified the importance of staying faithful to the original Hebrew vocabulary, claiming that the

Hebrew names for God conveyed his nature in a manner that no other language could equal.

By doing so, Zanchi essentially agreed to conduct the debate over the doctrine of the Trinity in a way that met the antitrinitarians on their own terms. It should be emphasized that Zanchi in no way conceded that the extra-biblical trinitarian terminology was hopelessly inaccurate or that its use was inappropriate (*De Tribus Elohim* would still defend the use of *persona, substantia, essentia*, etc. . .), only that they needed to remain secondary (or perhaps even tertiary) to the Hebrew divine names. Unfortunately, Gründler's estimation of *De Natura Dei* has become the standard summary of the entirety of Zanchi's theological project and has resulted in a tendency to prejudice or, at the very least, confuse modern readings of Zanchi's other works. Unnoticed is the significance of Zanchi's insistence, in *De Tribus Elohim*, on the trinitarian implications of the divine names *Jehovah Elohim*. Here Zanchi constructed an exegetical defence of the doctrine of the Trinity that was uniquely shaped to meet the particular objections of the antitrinitarians. The preceding study of the antitrinitarianism embraced by the ministers of Heidelberg in the summer of 1570 concluded with a summary of the major objections that the antitrinitarians had levelled against the doctrine of the Trinity (chapter two of this dissertation). A glimpse at the arguments of the antitrinitarians reveals that the unique argumentation of *De Tribus Elohim* had been carefully tailored to the objections of his antitrinitarian opponents.

First, these men required a strict Biblicist reading of Scripture, arguing that the vocabulary of the trinitarian creeds was utterly foreign to Scripture and had been drawn from pagan philosophical systems. Vehe claimed to have personally issued the challenge to Zanchi, dismissing the Theology Professor's sophisms one night behind the walls of Heidelberg Castle and demanding - "who will prove to me from Holy Scripture, that . . ." <sup>60</sup> Bullinger and Simler

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<sup>60</sup> Vehe, "Apology," 283.

had attempted to answer this standard antitrinitarian objection in *De aeterno Dei Filio* when they wrote against the antitrinitarianism that had taken root in Poland. They had argued that if their creedal vocabulary conveyed a biblically sound idea, then words like *personae* and *essentia* remained biblical. Provided they had demonstrated that the general truth of the Trinity was taught in Scripture (despite the fact that trinitarian terminology was absent), they could still claim that their teaching was in accordance with the Protestant mantra of *sola scriptura*. Bullinger and Simler's defence of the Trinity may have lost the *authoritas verborum* of Scripture, but it maintained the *authoritas rerum*.

Zanchi, however, argued that the Hebrew phrase *Jehovah Elohim* corresponded precisely to the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This allowed Zanchi to go one step further than Bullinger and Simler and claim that his definition of the Trinity, one *Jehovah* in three *Elohim*, conformed to both the *authoritas verborum* and the *authoritas rerum* as well. In doing so, Zanchi did not distance himself from the traditional trinitarian terminology throughout *De Tribus Elohim*, he continued to speak in terms of *personae*, *essentia*, *subsistentia*, *homoousios*, etc. And in addition to his exegetical proofs for the doctrine of the Trinity, he frequently appealed to the church fathers and devoted large sections of his work to their arguments. The overall effect of Zanchi's approach was as if to say, "Here is the traditional way of describing the Trinity. But if you would prefer to hear this doctrine expressed in biblical terms alone, then here is another way of describing the Trinity from the Hebrew."

J.P. Donnelly's brief summary of *De Tribus Elohim* mischaracterizes the nature of the objections that the Heidelberg antitrinitarians had raised. He writes: "A more serious threat for Zanchi was posed by the Italian radicals, some of them former friends, who attacked the doctrine of the Trinity partly on scriptural grounds, partly for philosophical reasons."<sup>61</sup>

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61 JP Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism," xiii, 52.

Donnelly goes on to describe the antitrinitarians as men “who put great store on reason in theology and who opened up for debate a whole series of inherently metaphysical questions.” Donnelly’s assertion is in keeping with the common assumption that antitrinitarianism was invariably the result of reason triumphing over dogma.<sup>62</sup> As the earlier survey of the characteristics of the antitrinitarianism held by Neuser, Vehe, Sylvan, et al has shown, it was just this sort of metaphysical speculation that the antitrinitarians of Heidelberg had rejected. Far more important to these men, than any rational proof, was the clear testimony of Scripture. And though Zanchi benefitted greatly from the careful method of inquiry that he had inherited from Thomism, at the centre of *De Tribus Elohim* was an argument drawn from the Hebrew text and carefully forged to confront the strict biblicism of his opponents.

Next, the antitrinitarians maintained that the Reformed theologians, who had retained a dogged faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, all suffered from a lack of familiarity with the Hebrew text. Zanchi, however, was intent on answering this objection and placing a careful consideration of the Hebrew text at the very centre of his case for the Trinity. Of course, it becomes clear over the course of *De Tribus Elohim* that, though his grasp of the language was sufficient to make general exegetical observations about the text, Zanchi’s grasp of the language was not that of a studied linguist, but rather a general (albeit functional) understanding of the rudiments of Hebrew grammar. His analysis of the Hebrew text fails to go beyond noticing irregular placements of plural endings on an assortment of verbs and nouns. His interaction with Kimhi’s description of the *pluralis maiestatis* or *excellantiae*, which amounted to a dismissal rather than a refutation, revealed his inability to think in terms comparable to the Jewish grammarian. Nevertheless, Zanchi’s attempt to return to the Hebrew

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<sup>62</sup> For a summary of this prevailing, yet often faulty, assumption see the opening pages of Howard Hotson, “Arianism and Millenarianism: The Link Between Two Heresies From Servetus to Socinus,” in *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, vol. IV (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 9-36.

grammar in his defence of the Trinity, despite its many shortcomings, constituted a legitimate effort to respond to the antitrinitarians according to their demands. Zanchi drew from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Syriac, the Aramaic translations of the Targumim, and assorted Midrash throughout his work.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, over the subsequent decades, Zanchi's claims about *Jehovah* and *Elohim* would push later Reformed Hebraists to examine more critically the notion of what it means to read the Hebrew text in a *proprie* fashion.

Lastly, the Heidelberg antitrinitarians denied a primacy of the New Testament over the Old Testament and argued, as the minister of Mannheim had explained: "What is not founded on the Old Testament, that should not be accepted in the New Testament."<sup>64</sup> In response to this, Zanchi, instead of portraying the doctrine of the Trinity as something that had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament and then revealed in the New, insisted that the Trinity had been plainly revealed to Abraham, Moses, and King David. Clearly, Zanchi would claim, the ancient Hebrews had been fully aware that the one God, *Jehovah*, subsisted in three divine persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the three *Elohim*. In fact, by making the phrase *Jehovah Elohim* into a trinitarian confession, Zanchi was able to turn the *Shma* of Deuteronomy 6:4, into a fundamental *locus communis* for the explication of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Christopher Burchill argues that, in Zanchi's arguments with the antitrinitarians, his Scholasticism equipped the University's Professor of Theology to conduct the debates in a "language of exclusion, one designed to impress and to intimidate as much as to convince."<sup>65</sup> Of course, the fact that Zanchi was able to conduct this debate as a free man, untouched by the threat of imprisonment or execution, certainly put the Professor in a privileged position

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63 See Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, I. 15, 22, 32, 34–35, 83–84, 87, 91–92, 94, 191, 244, 264–266 304, 313; II. 22, 25–28, 31, 66, 73–74, 92, 149, 152.

64 Rott, "Neue Quellen für eine Aktenrevision des Prozesses gegen Sylvan und seine Genossen," 42.

65 Burchill, "Heidelberg and the Trinity: comments on the ideological formation of the Palatinate Reformation," 11.

with respect to his imprisoned and fugitive opponents. Still, it is clear that Zanchi did shape his discourse to directly address the particular objections that had been raised by the antitrinitarians and not merely to speak loudly over the top of them. That is not to say that Zanchi's arguments necessarily prove that he was personally interested in the conversion, rather than mere silencing, of men like Sylvan, Vehe, and Neuser. But they do demonstrate that the scandalous connection between Reformed theology and Arianism, a connection made by antitrinitarians, Lutherans, and Catholics alike, required a substantive and comprehensive answer if the Reformation project of the pious Kurfürst was to succeed.

#### 4.7 A Reassessment of Gründler's Conclusions

*In making his case that Zanchi represented a significant departure from the theology of Calvin, Otto Gründler mischaracterised Zanchi's theological method as given over to rationalism.*

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, it seems most likely that *De Tribus Elohim* was a work that had been in the making for some time; a work begun even before Heidelberg had been scandalised by the heresies of Sylvan, Neuser, Vehe, et al. This volume was Zanchi's first contribution to what was to be an ambitious lifelong project, an attempt to produce a comprehensive system of theology for the newly emergent Protestant church. J.P. Donnelly surmises that *De Tribus Elohim* was actually the first volume of what Zanchi had intended to be "a great Protestant *summa* modelled after the *Summa theologiae* of Saint Thomas."<sup>66</sup>

Interest in Zanchi's massive project, however, has tended to pass over *De Tribus Elohim* and, due largely to the influence of Gründler's work, has focused primarily on Zanchi's *De Natura Dei*. Since Gründler's objective was to consider the role of Thomism in Zanchi's theology his selection made good sense. In focusing almost exclusively on *De Natura Dei*,

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<sup>66</sup> JP Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism," xiii, 46.

however, Gründler has weakened his ability to make broad characterizations about the whole of Zanchi's theology. Of course every study must have its boundaries and it would be tedious to fault Gründler merely for covering X instead of Y. But a scholar must fit his conclusions to the boundaries of his research. In order to make a judgement about the complete lack of a christocentric focus in the theology of Zanchi, then surely Zanchi's monumental defence of the doctrine promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon, *De Tribus Elohim*, should have provided essential reading. It is difficult for the reader of *De Tribus Elohim*, with its several hundred pages devoted to the deity of Jesus Christ, to recognize Gründler's summary judgement on Zanchi's theology, when he writes: ". . . it would be quite possible to present Zanchi's entire doctrines of Scripture, God, creation, providence and predestination without ever mentioning Christ, and they would suffer little or no distortion from doing so."<sup>67</sup> Contrary to Gründler's claims, Zanchi demonstrated in *De Tribus Elohim* a significant interest in the person of Jesus Christ and his creative and redemptive works.

Additionally, Gründler's assertion that Zanchi's theology has shifted from faith to reason, from revealed knowledge to natural knowledge, and from God as revealer to man as knower, must also be qualified with the theological method of *De Tribus Elohim*.<sup>68</sup> Gründler's criticisms of Zanchi on this point can be a bit difficult to address, since he casts Zanchi's works as simultaneously rationalistic and bibliocentric, two seemingly mutually exclusive adjectives.

We can say, then, that for Zanchi the role of Scripture consists in providing the proper point of departure for all theological inquiry in the sense that it poses the very objects to be obtained and embraced by our understanding. From there on, however, it falls upon the intellect to provide the means as well as to determine the way of approach toward obtaining those objects intelligently.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Gründler, "Thomism and Calvinism," 139.

68 Ibid., 25–26.

69 Ibid., 96.

In so far as Zanchi always begins with Scripture, his theology is “bibliocentric.” But as he proceeds, Gründler insists that there is a transition of emphasis from the revealed word to human reason. When the distinction is phrased this way, when the progression from biblical text to reasoned argument produces the charge of rationalism, then it would seem that the charge of rationalism is being used more loosely than is helpful. In *De Tribus Elohim*, Zanchi carefully bounded his debate within the parameters of what he believed was clearly revealed in the text of the Scripture, as opposed to what he believed could be inferred via an overly speculative natural theology.

Zanchi taught that the Trinity, contrary to what Gründler’s comments may have led the reader to expect, was an incomprehensible doctrine beyond the limits of human understanding; a teaching which had to be received as revealed in Scripture, despite the doubts that human reason might cast up against it. Zanchi believed that the idea of three persons who are one God, even after having been revealed to the mind of man by Scripture, cannot be grasped by the human reason. Furthermore, he said that to deny this doctrine because of its incomprehensibility is to fall into deep sin, to fail to deny oneself as Christ had commanded, and to become a Sabbath breaker. To the one who might reject the teaching of the Trinity, Zanchi warned:

This is the cause of all this trouble: your obvious blindness, joined with your pride of heart: But then what God affirms shouldn’t be denied, should it: just because you can’t understand how it can be? Christ has made the best medicine for this sickness, when he says if we want to be his disciples we must deny ourselves and especially whatever wisdom is in us, which fights diametrically opposed to the word of God. For it is, as the Apostle says, enmity against God. And this is the Sabbath which is so enjoined by the Prophets, that nothing is more wicked than violating the Sabbath. For the Lord should be heard and not the wisdom of our flesh.<sup>70</sup>

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70 'Haec totius mali causa est: tua nimirum caecitas, cum animi supercilio coniuncta. Sed num ideo tibi negandum est, quod Deus affirmat: quia illud quomodo se habeat, percipere nequis? Huic morbo medicinam facit Christus optimam, quum ait, Si velimus eius esse discipuli, debere nos abnegare nos ipsos: atque inprimis quidquid prudentiae in nobis est, quae cum Dei verbo ex diametro pugnat. Ea enim est, ut Apostolus docet, inimicitia adversus Deum. Atque hoc est sabbathum, quod ita apud Prophetas urgetur, ut nihil sceleratius illis sit, quam Sabbathi violatio. Est enim audiendus Dominus: non autem prudentia carnis

#### 4.8 The Appearance of *De Tribus Elohim*<sup>71</sup>

Soon after its publication, *De Tribus Elohim* received an Imperial Privilege, confirming Zanchi's success in producing a defence of the Trinity that transcended certain party lines and guaranteeing a much wider reception of the work.

Zanchi was rewarded handsomely for his troubles, receiving a payment of 300 florins from the Elector for *De Tribus Elohim*, as well as another 600 florins from the publisher, Georg Corvinus, in Frankfurt (a combined sum of more than triple Zanchi's yearly salary from the University).<sup>72</sup> Just before the actual publication of the book, Zanchi began attempting to secure an imperial privilege for his work. Zanchi's colleague, Ursinus, then the head of the *Collegium Sapientiae*, aided him in this search, writing to Crato von Crafftheim to recruit help for Zanchi in his request for the privilege. Ursinus explained to Crato, who was serving as physician to the Emperor, that Zanchi had hoped that *De Tribus Elohim* would be strengthened by an imperial privilege and would thus be more readily received throughout the Empire, particularly in Italy, where the antitrinitarian heresies had first appeared.<sup>73</sup> That a theological text from Reformed Heidelberg would receive an imperial privilege was certainly the exception.<sup>74</sup> However, with Crato's aid, Zanchi's petition was successful, and an Imperial privilege for *De Tribus Elohim* was received within a month of the first publication. In 1573, Zanchi's defence of the Trinity was reissued by Corvinus in Frankfurt, this time featuring the Imperial privilege. Now Zanchi's trinitarian defence carried the impressive recommendation of the Emperor himself. In the privilege, the reader was promised:

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nostrae.' Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, ix.

71 I am grateful to Professor Ian Maclean, who read an earlier draft of this chapter and made some very helpful contributions. His own research on the initial publication of *De Tribus Elohim* and the peculiar circumstances surrounding the Imperial privilege which Zanchi's work received was particularly enlightening.

72 Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work," 203.

73 Hans Rott, ed., "Briefe des Heidelberger Theologen Zacharias Ursinus aus Heidelberg und Neustadt," in *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher* (Heidelberg: G. Koester, 1905), 83. See also Karl Sudhoff, *Crato von Crafftheim und Sein Freunde* (Frankfurt: H. L. Bronner, 1860), I. 166.

74 George Putnam, *Books and their makers during the middle ages: a study of the conditions of the production and distribution of literature from the fall of the Roman empire to the close of the seventeenth century* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1896), II.421-423.

. . . no teaching is contained in this book, which is not also approved by the church of Rome itself: since it has been judged to be pious and orthodox after diligent examination by the Theologians themselves of his Imperial majesty, and has been confirmed and sealed by the witness and Privilege of the Emperor.<sup>75</sup>

This Imperial promise, namely that Zanchi taught nothing to which Rome herself did not hold, testifies to the broadness of the audience for which Zanchi wrote. Throughout *De Tribus Elohim*, the Reformed Zanchi said nothing with which a Catholic or a Lutheran could not agree. *De Tribus Elohim* was republished in 1589, now by Matthew Harnisch in Neustadt. Harnisch republished the work again in 1597, with a number of reissues trickling out over the next several years. Finally, the work was republished again in Neustadt by Schramm in 1604. *De Tribus Elohim* then appeared in the subsequent editions of Zanchi's *Opera*, published in 1605, 1613, and 1619.<sup>76</sup>

Over the following decades, Zanchi's work gained a tremendous deal of fame in two respects. First, *De Tribus Elohim* soon became widely accepted throughout the Protestant churches as a definitive refutation of the antitrinitarian position; a refutation which provided the extensive exegetical and patristic defence of the doctrine of the Trinity necessary to demonstrate the continued orthodoxy of the Reformed church. Zanchi's work was favourably cited by both Lutheran and theologians who later considered the exegetical arguments of *De Tribus Elohim* to provide an irrefutable summary of the biblical evidence for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Second, *De Tribus Elohim* served as the introduction to Zanchi's much larger theological system, a system which was subsequently continued with the publication of *De Natura Dei*.<sup>77</sup> Zanchi's ambitious attempt to set forth a systematic exposition of Reformed

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<sup>75</sup> Zanchius, *De Tribus Elohim*, i. ' . . . hoc libro non contineri doctrinam, quae non ipsi etiam Romanae Ecclesiae probetur: quando ea ab ipsis Caesareae Maiestatis Theologis post diligentem examinationem pia et orthodoxa esse iudicata fuit, et vero etiam testimonio, Privilegioque Caesaris confirmata et obsignata.'

<sup>76</sup> Girolamo Zanchi, *Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva: Stephan Gamonet, 1605). Girolamo Zanchi, *Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva: Gamonet, 1613). Girolamo Zanchi, *Omnium Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva: Samuel Crispin, 1619)

<sup>77</sup> Girolamo Zanchi, *De natura Dei, seu, divinis attributis*. For an account of the rest of Zanchi's system, published posthumously, see Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His

theology, though not surprisingly unfinished at his death, marked the beginnings of Protestant scholasticism and secured for Zanchi a place of pre-eminence amongst the theologians of Reformed orthodoxy.

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Work," 203.

## The Hunnius / Pareus Debate

The fact that Zanchi used the divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, despite Calvin's rejection of the argument, was cited by the Lutheran polemicist Aegidius Hunnius in his own attack on Calvin. To Hunnius's mind, the fact that other Reformed exegetes also saw a testimony of trinitarianism in these Hebrew names was further confirmation of the fact that Calvin's exegesis had deviated from orthodoxy. Modern summaries of Reformed exegesis in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries have taken Calvin's deviation as normative for the Reformed world, citing the debate between Hunnius / Pareus as an illustration of confessionalization in the realm of exegesis. However, given the arguments put forward by Zanchi and other Reformed exegetes, this notion must be reconsidered.

### 5.1 The Reception of *De Tribus Elohim*

*Zanchi's work was soon regarded by Christian theologians throughout Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, as an invaluable resource for making the case for the doctrine of the Trinity. One notable exception to the warm reception De Tribus Elohim received, however, was in Heidelberg itself.*

When Girolamo Zanchi published *De Tribus Elohim* in 1572, he placed the argument for the Trinity from the plural ending of the word *Elohim*, at the centre of his work. In so doing, he drew on over four centuries of Christian tradition in assuming that the grammatical oddity of the divine name indicated a sublime mystery in the divine nature. Zanchi's understanding of the text would receive considerable support from many of his Reformed colleagues at Heidelberg over the next several decades, as the following chapter will demonstrate, with special reference to the works of Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius. In addition to Zanchi's like-minded Reformed colleagues, a large number of Lutherans and even Roman Catholics similarly asserted that the word *Elohim* specifically and properly indicated the plurality of persons within *Jehovah*, the singular divine essence.

The antitrinitarians also considered Zanchi's argument from the word *Elohim* to be a critical component in the case for the doctrine of the Trinity, thus necessitating a refutation

of the Heidelberg professor's argument. The Greek antitrinitarian, Jacob Palaeologus, focused largely on refuting Zanchi's argument as he penned his own antitrinitarian polemic, *Disputatio Scholastica* (c. 1575), shortly after the publication of *De Tribus Elohim*.<sup>1</sup> In this unique work, Palaeologus described a formal debate held in the assembly of the celestials, convened by God the Father in order to determine the cause of recent turbulent movements in the heavens. The cause of this disharmony was the persecution of true believers on earth (the antitrinitarians) at the hands of trinitarians. A young martyr, Vilielmus Poena, appeared before the celestials to tell his story of having been burned at the stake in Rome. He had suffered martyrdom for having refused to agree that the doctrine of the Trinity was clearly evident in the plural divine name *Elohim*, as well as several other more ludicrous testimonies which had been presented to him as proof of God's triune nature such as the threefold cock-crow.<sup>2</sup> Palaeologus described how these arguments had all been scraped together into one place by Zanchi, making it easier now for the true believers to refute the arguments of trinitarian theology all together at once.<sup>3</sup> A heavenly city, Ianopolis, was then constructed in order to host the ten day debate, while messengers were sent throughout the world to gather together a host of representatives, both living and dead, of the various positions. The antitrinitarians Ferenc David and Giorgio Biandrata, the popes Gregory VII and Boniface VIII, medieval scholar Peter Lombard, protestant theologians Martin Luther, Theodore Beza and Ulrich Zwingli, emperor Maximilian II, and a peculiarly honoured guest, Suleiman the Magnificent, all played their part in the debate.

On the first day of the *disputatio* the discussion turned to the correct interpretation of the biblical names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*. Niccolò Paruta, a Venetian antitrinitarian, began the

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1 The text for the *Disputatio*, which was not initially published, has been preserved in two manuscripts (neither in Palaeologus's hand) and has only recently appeared in print in a series published by the Bibliotheca Unitariorum. Iacobus Palaeologus, *Disputatio Scholastica*, ed. Juliusz Domanski and Lech Szczucki, vol. 3, Bibliotheca Unitariorum (Utrecht, 1994).

2 Ibid., 3:21.

3 Ibid., 3:59.

debate, asserting at the outset that the cause of the trinitarians' confusion was their lack of skill in the biblical languages.<sup>4</sup> Paruta continued on to give six theses on the correct understanding of the word *Elohim*, which pointed out that the plural Hebrew word *Elohim*, when quoted in the New Testament, was regularly translated by a singular Greek noun.<sup>5</sup> Following Paruta, Johann Sommer, a Greek scholar who had served amongst the Transylvanian antitrinitarians, presented another list of six theses, which also took aim at the trinitarian interpretation of the word *Elohim*. In his sixth thesis, Sommer used Elijah's charge to the Israelites on Mt. Carmel in order to demonstrate the absurdity of Zanchi's argument. If the name *Elohim* was intended by the Hebrew authors to convey the three persons in the Trinity, then Baal must have been triune, ". . . since Elijah said either Jehovah was *Elohim* or Baal was that same *Elohim*; which absurdity overcomes the absurdity of the book which was titled *De Tribus Elohim*. . ."<sup>6</sup>

The question of the right interpretation of the phrase *Jehovah Elohim* then reoccurred throughout the short work as Pope Gregory the Great gave a set of theses in defence of its trinitarian import,<sup>7</sup> as did Peter Lombard,<sup>8</sup> and Ulrich Zwingli.<sup>9</sup> Paruta then returned towards the end of the first day of the disputation and addressed the question once more.<sup>10</sup>

Palaeologus's *Disputatio*, despite the initial plan to last for ten full days, ended abruptly on the morning of the second day of the celestial debate and the work was neither completed nor published. Therefore, it is difficult to consider the *Disputatio* to be any sort of substantive contribution to the broader conversation, but it does testify to the prominence of the simple argument for the Trinity from the phrase *Jehovah Elohim* which had been advanced by Zanchi.

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4 Ibid., 3:53–54.

5 Ibid., 3:73–73.

6 '. . . cum diceret Helias aut Iehovah Israelis esse Elohim aut eundem Elohim esse Baal; quae absurditas superat absurditatem libri cuiusdam inscripti *De tribus Elohim* . . .' Ibid., 3:86.

7 Ibid., 3:101–103.

8 Ibid., 3:103–106.

9 Ibid., 3:109–113.

10 Ibid., 3:121–128.

Antitrinitarians presupposed that toppling trinitarianism was largely a matter of toppling Zanchi's argument from the divine names in Hebrew.<sup>11</sup>

Over the following several decades, while this central argument of *De Tribus Elohim* would be repeated by many Reformed exegetes and Hebraists, as well as many prominent Lutheran authors,<sup>12</sup> a number of Reformed theologians continued to side with John Calvin's skepticism towards it. Even though Zanchi had been anxious to defend the theological orthodoxy of the Reformed church (what Neuser had referred to as "Calvinism"), it is critical to remember that he had not felt a need to walk lock-step with Calvin in the matter of his exegesis. Indeed, Zanchi's insistence that the plural ending on the divine name *Elohim* indicated the plurality of persons within the Trinity was an interpretation that had been expressly rejected by Calvin (and had been accepted by Luther). Thus, Zanchi's position could not be hemmed in by confessional boundaries. Though it had been widely embraced by the Lutherans, no consensus emerged within the Reformed church on the question of the trinitarian significance of the divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim*.

In fact, Zanchi's interpretation of the name *Elohim* became more of a factional shibboleth within the Reformed church, indicating fundamental differences regarding the correct way of exegeting the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Zanchi, and those in agreement with his reasoning, presupposed the theological orthodoxy of the authors of the text, in the Old Testament perhaps as much as in the New, and expected to find the elements

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11 Faustus Socinus interacted with Zanchi's argument in some detail. See Faustus Socinus, "De Coena Domini Tractatus Brevis," in *Fausti Socini Senensis Opera omnia in duos tomos distincta* (Amsterdam, 1656), 789–791. as well as Faustus Socinus, "Christianae Religionis Brevissima Institutio, per Interrogationes et Responsiones, quam Catechismum Vulgo Vocant," in *Fausti Socini Senensis Opera omnia in duos tomos distincta* (Amsterdam, 1656), 686–688.

12 On the Lutheran side, see Nicholas Selnecker, *Annotationes in Genesin* (Leipzig, 1579). Johann Gerhard, *Locorum Theologicorum Cum Pro Adstruenda Veritate, Tum Pro Destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per Theses nervosè solidè & copiosè explicatorum, Tomus .../ 1, In quo continentur haec Capita: 1. De Scriptura sacra. 2. De legitima Scripturae Interpretatione. 3. De Natura Dei, hoc est, De essentia & attributis divinis. 4. De tribus Elohim sive de SS. Trinitatis mysterio. 5. De Deo Patre & aeterno eius Filio. 6. De Spiritu sancto. 7. De Persona & Officio Christi.* (Jenae: Steinmann, 1610). Jakob Martini, *De Tribus Elohim* (Wittenberg, 1619).

of the Reformed faith expressed throughout the text, in the obvious verses and in the less obvious verses. This theological reading is contrasted to the grammatical reading of various prominent Reformed authors like Calvin, who, though no less theologically orthodox, did not feel as keenly the need to find this orthodoxy throughout Scripture, but were concerned primarily to identify the original intent of the Hebrew authors.

This division within the Reformed was effectively exploited by the Lutheran theologian Aegidius Hunnius, who was convinced that Calvin's conservative use of the Old Testament in his defence of the Trinity would open wide the door for Arianism to enter the church.<sup>13</sup> For Hunnius, Zanchi's agreement with the standard Lutheran interpretation of the word *Elohim* was clear proof of the wrongheadedness of Calvin's position. In Zanchi's work, Hunnius had found the testimony of one of Calvin's own Reformed comrades proving that Calvin had twisted the Hebrew text to the benefit of the antitrinitarians. Another of Zanchi's colleagues, a Reformed theologian named David Pareus, who had been a onetime student of Zanchi's at the University of Heidelberg, answered Hunnius in Calvin's defence. This polemical exchange between the Lutheran Hunnius and the Reformed Pareus has been cited often as evidence of confessionalization, the creation of distinct confessional identities, working its way into the realm of exegesis. However, despite Pareus's attempts to hide his divergence from his former instructor, when his position is considered in light of Zanchi's work it becomes clear that the Reformed world was not nearly so monolithic.

## 5.2 Aegidius Hunnius

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13 The most recent biographical work on the life of Hunnius is Markus Matthias, *Theologie und Konfession: Der Beitrag von Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603) zur Entstehung einer lutherischen Religionskultur* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004). Matthias dwells primarily on Hunnius's career at Marburg and the tremendous influence that Hunnius had on Lutheran *Konfessionsbildung* in Hesse. See also Theodor Mahlmann, "Hunnius Aegidius (1550-1603)," in *Theologen Lexikon* (München: CH Beck, 1994), 142-145.

*Hunnius first made the case in his Articulus (1589) that John Calvin's grammatical reading of the Old Testament had weakened the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way that the Reformed church had become a conduit to antitrinitarianism.*

Hunnius, having his initial theological formation at the University of Tübingen, was a devout Lutheran and a leading proponent of Lutheran *Konfessionsbildung*. He served as Professor of Theology at the University of Marburg (1576-91), where he was a key figure in the suppression of crypto-Calvinism throughout the state of Hesse.

Duke Frederick William, the regent of Saxony during the minority of Elector Christian I, called Hunnius to the University of Wittenberg (1591-1603) in an attempt to counteract the inroads that crypto-Calvinism had made in Saxony. Here Hunnius took the lead in authoring the *Saxon Visitation Articles* (1592), a set of four articles prescribing a strict gnesio-Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the person of Christ, Baptism, and predestination and the providence of God.<sup>14</sup> Subscription to these articles was required of all clergymen throughout Saxony, with those who refused to comply being ejected from office. The *Articles* were subsequently regularly published as an appendix to the *Formula of Concord*. In sum, Hunnius played a central role in the defining and defending of Lutheran orthodoxy against the crypto-Calvinism of the Philippists, and counter-acted the influence of places like Geneva, Heidelberg, and other centres of Reformed theology. In this context, the fact that Hunnius could lean on the works of men from the University of Heidelberg theological faculty, like Zanchi, provided the Lutheran orthodox the opportunity to challenge the "Calvinists" with their own arguments.

Hunnius began his attack on Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament while he was still at the University of Marburg, with his *Articulus de Trinitate* (1589).<sup>15</sup> This short treatise on the

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14 See the introductory essay, "The Saxon Visitation Articles," by Charles P Arand, in Robert Kolb and James Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 256–257.

15 Aegidius Hunnius, *Articulus de Trinitate, per quaestiones et reponsiones pertractatus solide, et indubitatis*

doctrine of the Trinity began with a relatively lengthy preface (thirty-six pages) detailing how over the previous generation the exegesis of John Calvin had significantly weakened the church's arguments for the Trinity. The composition of Hunnius's *Articulus*, he explained, had been made necessary by the fact that the ancient errors of the Arians and the Sabellians had resurfaced more recently in the works of Servetus, Gentile, Biandrata, David, Gribaldi, Alciati, and the former ministers of Heidelberg – Adam Neuser and Johannes Sylvanus. The fact that each of these men had emerged from Reformed congregations did not escape Hunnius's attention and provided an opportunity for Hunnius to hint at a connection between heterodoxy and the *extra Calvinisticum*.

The thing we congratulate ourselves most on is that not a single one of them [the aforementioned antitrinitarians] has gone over from the schools or from the churches that have sincerely professed the *Augsburg Confession*. For if one example could be cast up against us, then would not the Calvinists be dancing against us? Although, we who uphold the doctrine concerning the majesty of Christ at the right hand of the God of omnipotence, would not be afraid to level the charge of Arianism against the testimony of their heart and conscience.<sup>16</sup>

To Hunnius it was clear that the Reformed deviation from Augsburg was a slippery slope to Arianism.

Hunnius argued not so much that Calvin himself held heretical views about the doctrine of the Trinity, but that in his commentaries on the Old Testament Calvin's reluctance to embrace anything other than the reading most obvious to the original Hebrew audience had weakened the church's ability to defend herself from the blasphemies of the Jews and the exegetical challenges of the Arians. This concern to stay close to the historical meaning of the text had required that Calvin essentially jettison the theological

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*testimonies sacrarum literarum contra quavis haereticorum veterum et recentium blasphemias strophas et corruptelas firmissime communitus* (Frankfurt am Main: Spiessius, 1589).

16 'Quorum ne unicum quidem e Scholis vel Ecclesiis Augustanam confessionem sincere professis prodiisse, est quodmaximopere nobis gratulemur. Si enim exemplum unicum nobis posset obiici, quam non tripudiarent adversum nos Calviniani? Cum alioqui nos, qui doctrinam de Maiestate Christi ad dextram omnipotentiae Dei tuemur, Arianismi reos agere contra cordis et conscientiae suae testimonium non vereantur.' *Ibid.*, 7.

interpretations of the church fathers in favour of his “lucid brevity.”

Although in the opposing of the Arians he seems occasionally to produce not a bad work: nevertheless having been carried away by his eagerness to pander his wisdom and desire to gain glory, he often painstakingly undermines those testimonies of Holy Scripture, that do much to either illustrate the mystery of the Trinity, or to show the divine nature of the Son, or to testify to the Deity of the Holy Spirit. He robs Christians of their own weapons, and conversely he approves the glosses of the Arians, by which they are accustomed to elude our interpretations by the most flagrant reckoning and judgement.<sup>17</sup>

The preface continued with a selection of texts drawn from the commentaries of Calvin, each one illustrating the damage that Hunnius felt Calvin had done to the case for the Trinity.

Unsurprisingly, Hunnius’s first example was Gen. 1:1 and Calvin’s dismissal of the trinitarian implications of the word *Elohim*. Here, Hunnius argued, the pious, holy, and truest interpretation of the passage, the interpretation most consistent with the text of Moses, had been utterly corrupted by the glossing of Calvin.<sup>18</sup>

### 5.3 David Pareus

*The Heidelberg theologian David Pareus came to Calvin’s defence, initially insisting in his response to Hunnius that the argument from Gen. 1:1 was really an unimportant part of the exegetical defence for the doctrine of the Trinity.*

Hunnius’s *Articulus de Trinitate* soon elicited a defence of Calvin from David Pareus, then an instructor at Heidelberg’s *Collegium Sapientiae*. The two continued wrangling back and forth in a series of contentious publications over the next decade.<sup>19</sup> Pareus had begun his studies in

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17 'Is licet in oppugnandis Arianis nonnunquam operam non malam praestare videatur: Tamen venditandae sapientiae studio, captandaeque gloriae cupiditate, abreptus, scripturae sacrae testimonia, quae vel ad mysterium Trinitatis illustrandum, vel divinam naturam Filii demonstrandam, vel Spiritus sancti Deitatem evincendam, faciunt plurimum, data opera saepenumero depravat Christianis sua tela eripit, et vicissim Arianorum glossas, quibus interpretationes nostras solent eludere, suo calculo suffragioque manifestissime comprobant.' *Ibid.*, 9.

18 *Ibid.*, 10–11.

19 The biography of Pareus is provided in John Philipp Pareus, “Narratio historica de Vita et Obitu D. Davidis Parei,” in *Operum Theologicorum, tomus primus* (Geneva: Peter Chovet, 1642), i-li. The debate between Hunnius and Pareus is summarized in David Steinmetz, “The Judaizing Calvin,” in *Calvin in Context*,

1566 as a member of the *Collegium Sapientiae*, a preparatory academy and seminary in Heidelberg, where he sat under the teaching of Ursinus.<sup>20</sup> Pareus continued with his studies at the University of Heidelberg and, within six months of the completion of his university studies, took a position as a lecturer at the *Collegium*. He left Heidelberg in 1573 to take a calling as a minister to the village of Hemsbach. Driven from this office at the accession of Ludwig VI, Pareus was called back to Heidelberg by Johann Casimir in 1584, to serve as a lecturer in the *Collegium Sapientiae* once more. In 1591, he was promoted to rector of the *Collegium* and served in that capacity until 1598 when he moved to the University Theology Faculty.<sup>21</sup>

Pareus first responded to Hunnius's criticisms in a work appended to Ursinus's lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism. These were edited by Pareus and were published in 1591.<sup>22</sup> The immense popularity of Ursinus's lectures, both in England and on the continent, ensured that Pareus's response to Hunnius was read throughout Europe.<sup>23</sup> Although Pareus briefly mentioned the Lutheran apologists Schmidlinus and Selneccerus,<sup>24</sup> the bulk of his

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Second Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 207-216. The subject has also been considered by G. Sujin Pak, a student of Steinmetz, in a chapter of her doctoral dissertation at Duke University, subsequently published by Oxford Press: G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 103–124. Ken Schurb also focused on Hunnius' and Pareus' disagreement on the correct interpretation of Gen. 3:15. Ken Schurb, "Sixteenth-Century Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict on the Protevangelium," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1990): 25-47.

20 For the *Collegium Sapientiae* see Eike Wolgast, "Das Collegium Sapientiae in Heidelberg im 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 147 (1999): 303-318.

21 Dagmar Drüll, "Pareus (eigentlich Wängler; Paraeus, David)," in *Heidelberger Gelehrtenlexicon 1386-1651* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2002), 433–435. See also Howard Hotson, "Irenicism and Dogmatics in the Confessional Age: Pareus and Comenius in Heidelberg, 1614," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, no. 3 (July 1995): 432-456.

22 David Pareus, *Miscellanea Catechetica, seu Collectio Eorum, quae catecheticae explicationibus prius sparsim intexta fuerunt* (Heidelberg: Iona Rosa, 1621). This work was appended to Zacharias Ursinus and David Pareus, *Corpus doctrinae christinae, ecclesiarum a papatu reformatarum, continens Explicationes Catecheticas D Zachariae Ursini* (Heidelberg: Iona Rosa, 1621). A detailed bibliography of this work, and a description of its numerous editions in English as well as in Latin, is supplied in Hotson, "Irenicism and Dogmatics in the Confessional Age: Pareus and Comenius in Heidelberg, 1614," 437 n16.

23 On the influence of Pareus's edition of Ursinus' commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, particularly in England, see Howard Hotson, "'A General Reformation of Common Learning' and its Reception in the English-Speaking World, 1560-1642," in *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208–211.

24 'Qua de funestis quorundam theologorum seculi huius scriptionibus disseritur: et Iohannes Calvinum fortissimus Christi Gloria assertor a calumnia Arianismi paucis vindicatur.' David Pareus, *Miscellanea*

short response was directed primarily at Hunnius, in particular what Pareus took to be Hunnius's calumnious charge that Calvin taught Arianism. Pareus began with Hunnius's objection to Calvin's exegesis of Gen. 1:1 and the question of whether or not the joining of a singular verb with a seemingly plural noun was a clear testimony of the Trinity.

In his commentary on the book of Gen., Calvin had dismissed the trinitarian interpretation, not necessarily as being entirely false, but as being too uncertain a proof for such an important doctrine. In his response, Pareus provided no substantive argument for Calvin's position, but countered Hunnius's accusation by challenging him as to whether or not this was really such an important point. Pareus asked: "If this is such a strong and obvious argument for the Trinity, why do you, O Hunnius, in your tract about the Trinity, not place it in the first position; why do you omit it entirely?"<sup>25</sup> He then pointed out the numerous instances in Calvin's works where the Genevan clearly opposed the teachings of Servetus, Gentile, Alciata, and Biandrata, making clear that Calvin had not in fact embraced Arianism.

#### 5.4 Calvin the Judaizer

*Hunnius responded to Pareus with Calvinus Iudaizans (1593), in which he pointed out how the case against Calvin was essentially spelled out in Zanchi's De Tribus Elohim.*

Hunnius, occupied in 1592 with the Saxon visitation, took some time to respond. The Lutheran, now a Professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg, had clearly been provoked and replied in 1593 with a work dedicated to Pareus: *Calvinus Iudaizans*.<sup>26</sup> The full

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*Catechetica*, 188–203.

25 'Si vero tam firmum, et tam evidens hoc est Trinitatis argumentum, cur, tu Huni, in tractatu tuo de Trinitate illud primo loco non posuisti; cur totum omisisti?' Ibid., 189.

26 It should be noted that in Hunnius's title, *Calvinus Iudaizans*, and throughout the work, the slur of "Judaizer" refers neither to any actual dialogue with or proselytizing by Jews, nor to the ancient heresy identified by the Apostle Paul in the book of Galatians. Hunnius used the term with the polemical sloppiness common to the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Jerome Friedman well describes the inexactitude with which sixteenth century theologians were accustomed to use the term "Judaizer": "The term was often used as a catchall epithet to describe the religious views of all opponents no matter how

title was:

Calvin the Judaizer, That is: Jewish glosses and corruptions, with which John Calvin has not been afraid to pervert in a detestable manner the most illustrious passages and testimonies of Holy Scripture about the glorious Trinity, deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, with the prophecies of the Prophets about the coming of the Messiah, his birth, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and seating at the right hand of God. Included is a refutation of his corruptions.<sup>27</sup>

In this dedication, Hunnius corrected the summary that Pareus had given of Hunnius's objections to Calvin's works. Contrary to Pareus's accusations, Hunnius had been concerned not so much about Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity (he was willing to grant that Calvin was essentially orthodox here), but rather about a tendency in Calvin's commentaries (particularly the Old Testament commentaries) to be reluctant to find substantial exegetical support for the Trinity. Hunnius feared that this reluctance would result in a slow erosion of the doctrine of the Trinity. The problem was not that Calvin himself was an Arian, but that his hermeneutic tended towards it.

I do not accuse Calvin of Arianism . . . I say, however, that an opportunity is being given, a road is being paved, a window is being opened, a foundation is being poured for Arian impiety, I say that a certain passage is being prepared, since so many testimonies of sacred Scripture or safeguards and bulwarks of Christians are being struck down and overturned.<sup>28</sup>

These testimonies and safeguards of sacred Scripture were, however, the same passages, for the

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incongruous the charge. Thus the Lutheran author Hunnius described John Calvin as a Judaizer much as Calvin believed Lutheran liturgy was highly judaistic. On the other hand, Roman Catholic spokesmen thought Lutheran preoccupation with literalism was judaistic while both Reformed and Lutheran thinkers assumed Roman Catholic interest in ceremony and ritual reflected judaizing tendencies. Expressing a rare ecumenism, all agreed that Michael Servetus was a severe Judaizer by any and all standards. For his part, Servetus lamented his being persecuted by judaizing Christians, Calvin in particular." Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony*, 182.

27 Aegidius Hunnius, *Calvinus Judaizans, Hoc est: Iudaicae Glossae et Corruptele: Quibus Iohannes Calvinus illustrissima Scripturae sacrae loca et Testimonia, de gloriosa Trinitate, Deitate Christi, et Spiritus sancti, cum primis autem vaticinia Prophetarum ed Adventu Messiae, nativitate eius, passione, resurrectione, ascensione in coelos et sessione ad dextram Dei, detestandum in modum corrumpere non exhorruit. Addita est corruptelarum confutatio.* (Wittenberg: Seuberlich, 1593). The 1595 edition of this work is often mistakenly identified as the first edition.

28 'Non accuso Calvinum Arianismi . . . Dico autem ansam praeberi, viam sterni, fenestram aperiri; fundamenta poni Arianae impietatis, dico quendam parari transitum, tot scripturae sacrae testimoniis ceu praesidii, atque propugnaculis Christianorum concussis et eversis.' Hunnius, *Calvinus Judaizans*, 5.

most part, that Zanchi had collected in his own defence of the Trinity. For instance, in the first section of *Calvinus Iudaizans*,<sup>29</sup> Hunnius presented a series of Old Testament *loci*, which Hunnius insisted Calvin had corrupted by minimizing their trinitarian significance. Without exception, Hunnius's explication of these passages was matched in Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* with a similar trinitarian interpretation.<sup>30</sup> The testimonies abandoned by Calvin, with the approval of Pareus, were the testimonies on which Zanchi had founded his defence of the Trinity.

Hunnus's first example of this weakening of the exegetical defence of the Trinity was, predictably, from Gen. 1:1. To Pareus's claim that Hunnius must not have thought much of the argument since he had "entirely omitted it," Hunnius answered that Pareus had either told "a six hundred foot long lie" or he was so lazy that he had not bothered to even read the book. Hunnius most definitely had included this argument and proceeded to give page numbers and excerpts from his previous work, illustrating Pareus's error.<sup>31</sup> Choosing what he believed to be the more charitable of the two options, Hunnius concluded that Pareus was too lazy to have read the book and went on to give three reasons why Gen. 1:1 should be considered to be a clear proof of the Trinity. First, he argued that the consensus of Christian writers throughout the history of the church had been that the plural subject *Elohim*, in Gen. 1:1, being linked to a singular verb, indicated a plurality of persons in a singular essence. Second, from verses two and three of Gen. 1 it was clear that the Son and the Spirit were contained within the *Elohim* of verse one. And lastly, Pareus's own colleague, Girolamo Zanchi, had held and taught this very position. Pareus could not attack Hunnius's position

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29 pp. 1-41.

30 Gen. 1:1 (*Calvinus Iudaizans* 8-14, *De Tribus Elohim* I.21-26), Gen. 4:1 (*CI* 14-15, *DTE* II.91), Gen. 19:24 (*CI* 15-16, *DTE* II.12), Gen. 35 (*CI* 16-18, *DTE* I.28), Psa. 2 (*CI* 18-24, *DTE* I.32), Psa. 33 (*CI* 24-30, *DTE* I.264), Psa. 45 (*CI* 30-32, *DTE* I.32), Psa. 68 (*CI* 32-33 [a pagination error occurs at this point and the numbers 29-32 are repeated in this section], *DTE* I.32), Mic. 5:2 (*CI* 33-36, *DTE* I.45), Isa. 6:3 (*CI* 36-40, *DTE* I.35, II.57-58).

31 Hunnius, *Calvinus Iudaizans*, 12-14.

without attacking a member of his own party.

There could be no good explanation, argued Hunnius, for Moses to have spoken such a grammatically awkward sentence as *Creavit Dei* except to call attention to the plurality of persons within the divine unity. Given that the Hebrew word *Elohim* was not without a singular form in the Hebrew language (which, had that been the case, would have left Moses with no option but to use the plural), the use of the plural was obviously intentional and not without significance. Clearly, Gen. 1:1 was a confession of the venerable mystery of the Trinity and this was the consensus of faithful Christian interpreters, both ancient and modern. But, Hunnius continued, John Calvin, with his “oracular-like” and “otherworldly wisdom,” had taken up the side of the Jews rather than the side of the Christians, despite this clear testimony of the *Hebraica veritas* and the agreement of many ancient and modern commentators. Hunnius quoted the offending words of Calvin: “because the proof of such a great matter seems TO ME insufficiently solid, I don’t stand on the expression. But rather the readers should be warned that they beware of VIOLENT interpretations of this sort.”<sup>32</sup>

Hunnius was outraged at Calvin’s words and summoned the testimony of none other than Girolamo Zanchi to strengthen his case: “O Pareus . . . go and ask Zanchi, your comrade, whom you consider to be among the faithful servants of God, whose book *De Tribus Elohim* will give clear testimony, whether it is such a violent interpretation.”<sup>33</sup> Hunnius’s facetious charge to Pareus, that he familiarize himself with Zanchi’s argument, was of course hardly necessary. During the formative years of his university education, Tremellius and Zanchi constituted two thirds of the Professors of the University’s Theological faculty that had been responsible for Pareus’s education. Pareus had surely heard an explanation of the text from

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32 Ibid., 10. The emphasis is Hunnius's.

33 'O Parae . . . vade et sciscitare ex Zanchio gregali tuo, quem in classem fidelium Dei servorum reponis, cuius liber de tribus Elohim, perspicuum dicet testimonium, sitne glossa tam violenta . . .' Ibid.

Zanchi himself. Additionally, since he moved from the *Collegium Sapientiae* to the university proper in 1569 and graduated from the university in 1571, the years of Pareus's advanced theological study at the University of Heidelberg coincided closely with the discovery and prosecution of the antitrinitarian ministers of the Palatinate. Pareus had undoubtedly been more than familiar with Zanchi's defense of the Trinity.

Calvin, in addition to his dismissal of the evidence for seeing an explicit reference to a plurality of persons in the word *Elohim*, had given one compelling argument why the word should not be understood this way. If the word *Elohim* had, by its plural ending, necessarily referred to the three persons of the Trinity, Calvin maintained, this would then lead inevitably to the error of Sabellianism, removing any real distinction between the three divine persons. His reasoning was that in Gen. 1:2 the Spirit that hovered on the waters was the Spirit of *Elohim*. If the word *Elohim* necessarily included the person of the Spirit, then the Spirit would be the Spirit of itself. In Gen. 1:3 it was *Elohim* that spoke. If, however, the subject *Elohim* already included the Son, then the speaking would be performed in part by the Son, who was also the word that was spoken, therefore making the Son begotten of himself and of the Spirit. And, if the Son was begotten of all three persons of the Trinity, instead of the Father alone, and if the Spirit had proceeded from all three persons of the Trinity, instead of from the Father and the Son, then the *relatio personalis* of the persons of the Trinity would be dissolved. Without these personal relations within the Trinity – the *filatio* of the Son and the *processio* of the Spirit – no meaningful distinction within the persons of the Trinity could be made and Sabellianism would become inevitable.<sup>34</sup>

Zanchi had briefly addressed this objection – although without noting that the objection had been expressed by Calvin. The answer given by Zanchi, however, was somewhat

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<sup>34</sup> John Calvin, *OC*, XXIII, 15.

less than compelling.<sup>35</sup> Hunnius countered with a more theologically informed answer, drawing from the doctrine of *perichoresis* – the notion that each member of the Trinity is indwelt by, or inter-penetrated by, the other two members of the Trinity.<sup>36</sup>

The Father is called *Elohim*, because he is not solely God without the Son and the Holy Spirit, but is one with them and is truly God in the Trinity: such that the word *Elohim* also encompasses here in this personal signification the relationship and plurality of the divine hypostasis.<sup>37</sup>

Hunnius contended that although the word *Elohim* refers primarily to the triunity of persons within the godhead, it could also be faithfully used to refer to a single person of the Trinity who is indwelt by the other two members of the Trinity. This interpretation of the word *Elohim* therefore, according to Hunnius, did not necessarily lead to Sabellianism.

## 5.5 Calvin the Orthodox

*Pareus soon answered Hunnius, refuting the Lutheran's claim that Calvin had weakened the Protestant defences against Arianism and reclaiming Zanchi as an ally.*

In 1595 Pareus responded to Hunnius in kind, publishing:

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35 “It does not escape me that *Elohim* is sometimes used for a singular person: sometimes for the Father, sometimes for the Son, sometimes for the Holy Spirit. But it is not always so: just as when a plural verb is linked with the noun *Elohim*. Then from this comes a greater confirmation of our opinion. Therefore it is used sometimes for the Father, sometimes for the Son, and sometimes for the Holy Spirit: in order that we might understand that by the noun *Elohim* several are to be understood, so that the singular individuals of these several also retain the same name *Elohim*.” ‘Non me latet, *Elohim* aliquando pro singulari persona accipi: modo pro Patre: modo pro Filio: modo pro Spiritu sancto. Sed non semper id fit: ut quum verbum plurale cum nomine *Elohim* coniungitur. Deinde hinc magis confirmatur sententia nostra. Ideo enim modo pro Patre, modo pro Filio, modo pro Spiritu sancto sumitur: ut intelligamus, nomine *Elohim* ita plures intelligi, ut horum etiam plurium singuli, idem retineant nomen *Elohim*.’ Girolamo Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim*, II, 27.

36 *Perichoresis* or *emperichoresis* is also known by the Latin *circumincessio*. For more on this doctrine as understood by the Reformed, see Muller, *The Trinity of God*, 4:185–189. Calvin himself used this doctrine as he responded to the Lutheran Andreas Osiander, in his description of the doctrine of Justification in his *Institutes*: “. . . the Father and Spirit are in Christ, and even as the fullness of deity dwells in him [Col. 2:9], so in him we possess the whole of deity.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III.XI.5.

37 *Pater Elohim dicitur, quia non solitarie Deus est sine Filio spirituque sancto, sed una cum his adeoque in Trinitate Deus est: ita ut vox Elohim in hoc quoque personali significato respectum mutuum illum pluralitatemque divinarum hypostaseon involvit.* Hunnius, *Calvinus Iudaizans*, 10–11.

Two Books: Calvin the Orthodox, that is, the Orthodox Doctrine of John Calvin regarding the Holy Trinity: And regarding the eternal Divinity of Christ: And an explanation and vindication of the 38 most difficult Scriptural passages and prophecies: and regarding the correct manner in which prophecies should be applied to Christ.<sup>38</sup>

In the first of these two books, Pareus made the positive case for Calvin's trinitarianism, working through selections from the *Institutes* and from Calvin's Old Testament commentaries in which the Reformer had found a Christological meaning in the Hebrew text. In the second book, Pareus turned to a refutation of Hunnius's specific charges, working through thirty-eight specific texts which Hunnius had focused on in his indictment of Calvin.

In order to refute Hunnius's claim that the consensus of Christian writers had been that Gen. 1:1 encapsulated the mystery of the Trinity in the pairing of the plural *Elohim* with the singular verb, Pareus rattled off a list of counter examples to illustrate that the consensus was not nearly as complete as Hunnius had suggested.<sup>39</sup> From Augustine's *De Trinitate* to Jerome's *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*, from Ambrose to Cyril, the trinitarian interpretation of the word *Elohim* was entirely absent in the church fathers. Therefore, the assertions of Hunnius were but "vapours mixed with abuse." In fact, not only did these fathers not find a Trinity in the word *Elohim*, the consensus seemed to be that the *Elohim* of Gen. 1:1 referred specifically to the person of the Father. The early Christian commentators did have a habit of finding the Trinity in the first few verses of Gen.. They did so, however, by identifying the *Elohim* of v. 1 as the Father, noting the Spirit hovering over the waters in v. 2, and then seeing the Son in the speaking of v. 3. Therefore, Pareus concluded, the testimony of the early church fathers was on the side of Pareus and Calvin, not on the side of Hunnius.

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38 David Pareus, *Libri Duo: Calvinus Orthodoxus, hoc est, Doctrina Orthodoxus Johannis Calvini de sacrosancta Trinitate: Et de aeterna Christi divinitate: Itemque solida expositio et vindicatio XXXVIII difficiliorum Scripturae locorum et oraculorum: et de recta ratione applicandi oracula prophetica ad Christum* (Neustadt: Harnisch, 1595).

39 Ibid., 116ff.

More recently, Pareus continued, Christian authors had begun to argue that all three persons of the Trinity were referenced under the name *Elohim* in Gen. 1:1. Such was the case with Girolamo Zanchi, who had not been a colleague of Pareus, as Hunnius had claimed, but had actually been his revered teacher.<sup>40</sup> And though Hunnius may have read Zanchi's arguments in *De Tribus Elohim* and in *De Natura Dei*, Pareus had not only read these works, he had also heard the content of these works elaborated in the lectures that he had once attended. Pareus assured Hunnius and his readers that the argument made by Zanchi was one with which Pareus was in complete agreement. The impression of Hunnius that Pareus was at odds with Zanchi was due to Hunnius's failure to understand Zanchi's argument, a mistake made all the more clear to Pareus with his firsthand knowledge of Zanchi's teaching.

Whereas Hunnius taught that a plurality of persons was necessarily implied by the plural noun *Elohim*, Zanchi had demonstrated that the plurality of divine persons in *Elohim* could be derived by comparison with other biblical texts. Zanchi had most definitely not argued, Pareus claimed, that the mere plural ending of the noun *Elohim* was a self-standing argument for the Trinity. Pareus insisted, "by no means was it by the strength of the word or the number, but through a certain deduction."<sup>41</sup> Zanchi's clear focus on the act of creation was, to Pareus's mind, the crux of his argument. That the Son and the Holy Spirit could both be demonstrated, from other biblical texts, to have been involved in the act of creation had motivated Zanchi to conclude that the Son and the Holy Spirit were both included under the noun *Elohim*. This was not an argument from the grammar, like that of Hunnius, but was deduced by comparison with other passages.

What Pareus's claim about his like-mindedness with Zanchi lacked in veracity, he made up for with vehemence. Contrary to Pareus's insistent claims, Zanchi most definitely

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40 'non gregalis, sed praeceptoris mei reverendi. . .' Ibid., 118.

41 '. . . verum nequaquam vi vocis aut numeri, sed per collectionem quondam.' Ibid.

had argued that the plural ending of *Elohim* referred *proprie* to the plurality of divine persons within the godhead. This had been, in fact, the very centrepiece of Zanchi's argument. Nevertheless, Pareus was not manufacturing the difference between Zanchi and Hunnius entirely.

It should be remembered that this entire discussion had been prompted by Calvin's concern that the argument for the doctrine of the Trinity from the word *Elohim* in Gen. 1:1 would lead to Sabellianism. Calvin had warned that if all three of the divine persons were necessarily referred to in each and every occurrence of the word *Elohim*, then the Son would become the Son of himself and of the Spirit, and the Spirit would proceed from itself, as well as from the Father and the Son. Hunnius had answered this argument, by invoking the doctrine of *perichoresis*. Because all three persons of the Trinity indwelt one another, the plural noun *Elohim* could still accurately refer to any one member of the Trinity. In Hunnius's understanding, however, the noun *Elohim* always referred to all three members of the Trinity – sometimes by pointing to the entire Trinity and sometimes by pointing to one individual member of the Trinity who was perichoretically indwelt by the other two members.

Zanchi, however, having never explicitly acknowledged Calvin's objection, gave a fairly vague answer to this problem. He had conceded that the word *Elohim* was often used to refer to singular individuals within the Trinity. In these instances, however, he avoided the error of Sabellianism by maintaining that the singular divine person retained the plural name *Elohim* in order to remind the reader that the singular individual was a member of the divine plurality. Therefore, in Zanchi's understanding, the noun *Elohim* could be used to refer to all three members of the Trinity, sometimes just to two of the divine persons, sometimes to only one (although even then the plural ending on the word was supposed to call the reader's mind back to all three persons of the Trinity).

Pareus insisted that this slight variance between the position of Hunnius and that of Zanchi proved that the two men held two entirely different opinions. If Zanchi was willing to grant that the word *Elohim* could sometimes be used to refer to just two members of the Trinity or sometimes to even just one divine person, then Zanchi must not have thought that the plural ending necessarily referred to all three persons. To make this inference, of course, Pareus needed to ignore Zanchi's own qualifications of this statement and hundreds of folio pages in *De Tribus Elohim* in which Zanchi argued the contrary. It did, however, help to establish Pareus's claim that Zanchi had understood the noun *Elohim* differently than Hunnius. Because Zanchi did not clearly invoke the doctrine of *perichoresis* in his explanation of how the word *Elohim* could refer to just one member of the Trinity, Pareus was able to say that Zanchi did not believe that a plurality of divine persons was necessarily implied in the word *Elohim*. Thus, Pareus could boast at the end of his treatment of Gen. 1:1 that the authority of Zanchi "has already been turned back against my opponent's throat."<sup>42</sup>

## 5.6 Pareus on Genesis

*Despite his opposition to Hunnius, Pareus's position was marked by a pragmatic irenicism, which abandoned the notion that the meaning of the text was necessarily singular and sought to incorporate both the interpretation of Calvin and that of Zanchi.*

The feud between Hunnius and Pareus raged on. Hunnius responded to Pareus in two more books – *Antipareus* (1598)<sup>43</sup> and *Antipareus Alter* (1599).<sup>44</sup> Pareus, for his part, tackled the subject at least one more time in his commentary on the book of Genesis (1609), where he recounted the debate between himself and Hunnius at length in a *Quaestio* on the proper

42 '... iam ante in adversarii iugulum retorsi.' Ibid., 116.

43 Aegidius Hunnius, *Antipareus, Hoc est: Invicta Refutatio Venenati Scripti AD. Davide Pareo, Heidelbergensi Theologo, Editi In defensionem stropharum et corruptelarum, quibus Iohannes Calvinus illustrissima Scripturae Testimonia de mysterio Trinitatis, nec non oracula Prophetarum de Christo, de testandum in modum* (Frankfurt: Spiessius, 1598).

44 Aegidius Hunnius, *Antipareus alter* (Frankfurt: Spiessius, 1599).

interpretation of the phrase “*Elohim* created” in Gen. 1:1.<sup>45</sup> Though the polemical language and rancorous jabs were evenly distributed throughout the works of both men, there does appear an important distinction between the two. The Lutheran church, given the promulgation of the *Formula of Concord*, was being shaped by a pressure from Lutheran theologians for a common acquiescence amongst their churches with the goal of rooting out “crypto-Calvinism.” As a result of this pressure, Lutheran “anti-Calvinist” literature redoubled and the suspicion that “Calvinism” led inevitably to Arianism, or even to Islam, received a significant amount of attention. Hunnius, in his concern to define and defend post-*Formula of Concord* Lutheranism against the Calvinists and crypto-Calvinists, displayed throughout his exchange with Pareus a narrow vision of Lutheran orthodoxy, from which any deviation was in need of condemnation. On the other hand, Pareus, a significant contributor to the “irenic theology” of Heidelberg,<sup>46</sup> aimed at carving out room for Calvin and the Reformed church within a broader Protestantism. It was fitting then that in the less contentious setting of a biblical commentary (as opposed to his previous explicitly polemical responses to Hunnius) Pareus sought to counter Hunnius’s position with a broad-minded irenicism.

In his exegesis of the first verse of the book of Genesis, Pareus digressed for eighteen columns to pose and answer the question “Whether the plural אלהים reveals a Trinity of persons in the one essence of God?”<sup>47</sup> He began by listing eight arguments in favour of

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45 David Pareus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius* (Frankfurt: Iona Rosa, 1609). Secondary literature on Pareus’s commentary on Genesis has focused on the significant usage that the English poet Milton made of the work and on the disfavour into which Pareus’s works fell when his commentary on Romans was cited as the source for an anti-monarchical sermon preached in Oxford in 1622 (resulting in a decree from James I to have the works of Pareus burned). Arnold Williams, “Commentaries on Genesis as a Basis for Hexaemeral Material in the Literature of the Late Renaissance,” *Studies in Philology* 34, no. 2 (April 1937): 191-208. Arnold Williams, “Renaissance Commentaries on ‘Genesis’ and Some Elements of the Theology of Paradise Lost,” *PMLA* 56, no. 1 (March 1941): 151-164. George Whitling, “Pareus, the Stuarts, Laud, and Milton,” *Studies in Philology* 50, no. 2 (April 1953): 215-229.

46 See, for instance, David Pareus, *Irenicum sive de unione et synodo evangelicorum concilianda liber votivus paci ecclesiae et desiderii pacificorum dictatus* (Heidelberg: Iona Rosa, 1614). And Hotson, “Irenicism and Dogmatics in the Confessional Age: Pareus and Comenius in Heidelberg, 1614.”

47 David Pareus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius*, col. 89. ‘An vox pluralis אלהים insinuet Trinitatem personarum in una Dei essentia?’

answering the question positively, all of which could have been drawn from Zanchi as much as from Hunnius. Pareus's ability to suddenly give an accurate and relatively even-handed summary of the strengths of the opposing argument is striking.

1. Because no reason can be easily given why sacred Scripture speaks about God with words in the plural number, except a Trinity of persons: since that name is not lacking in the singular number, and אֱלֹהִים is found a number of times in the singular, such as Psa. 114:7, Job 12:4, Job 36:2, Hab. 1:11 and 3:3.
2. Moses, in this passage, would not have joined a noun in the plural with a verb in the singular against the laws of grammar, unless he wanted to suggest a mystery.
3. Moses himself declares, just who these *Elohim* are, when he introduces God the Father, and his λόγος, through whom he creates everything, and the Holy Spirit, hovering over the mass of water created by his power, as the maker of all things.
4. *Elohim* here is said to have created heaven and earth. Yet the Father through his word and Holy Spirit created: just as it is said: By the word of Jehovah the heavens were created and by the Spirit of his mouth all their host. Therefore, etc.
5. Moses was neither ignorant nor silent about the mystery of the Trinity in one God. Therefore by no means does he reveal it here doubtfully.
6. Moses knew and taught that the author of the world was not only the Father, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, indicating here the author of the world by the name *Elohim*, he understood the divine persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
7. The one who called Moses in Exod. 3 and later transmitted the law, is called *Jehovah Elohim*, by which name the creator of heaven and earth is also called in Gen. 2 and 3. Yet he was the Son of God, 1 Cor. 10:9. Therefore Moses understood here the Son and his Spirit by the name *Elohim*.
8. Lastly the ancient faithful interpreters as much as the moderns (says the Calvin-hater) confirm that this confession concerns the mystery of the venerable Trinity.<sup>48</sup>

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48 '1. Quia cur sacrae literae de Deo loquantur vocabulo pluralis numeri, causa nulla facile dari potest, praeter personarum Trinitatem: cum nomen illud singulari numero non destituatur, et אֱלֹהִים [typo in text reads צְלִיחַ] singulare aliquoties reperiatur, ut Psa. 114.7 Iob. 12.4 Iob. 36.2 Hebr. 1.11 and 3.3.

2. Moses hoc loco non copulasset nomen plurale cum verbo singulari contra leges grammaticae, nisi mysterium insinuare voluisset.

3. Moses ipse declarat, quinam sint illi Elohim, dum Deum Patrem, eiusque λόγον, per quem creat omnia, et Spiritum sanctum, creatae moli aquae virtute sua incubantem, rerum omnium opificem introducit.

4. Elohim hic dicitur creasse coelum et terram. Atqui pater per verbum et Spiritum sanctum creavit: sicut dicitur: Verbo Iehovae creati sunt coeli, et spiritu oris eius omnes exercitus eorum. Ergo etc.

5. Moses nec ignoravit nec tacuit Trinitatis mysterium in uno Deo. Ergo id haud dubie indicavit.

6. Moses novit et docuit authorem mundi esse non tantum patrem, sed et Filium et Spiritum sanctum. Ergo hic nomine Elohim mundi authorem indicans, personas divinas Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum intellexit.

7. Qui Exod. 3 vocavit Mosen, et postea tulit legem, vocatur Iehova Elohim, quo nomine etiam vocatur creator coeli et terrae Gen. 2 et 3. At ille fuit Filius Dei, 1 Corinth. 10.9. Ergo et hic Moses nomine Elohim intellexit filium et eius spiritum.

8. Denique pii interpretes prisci pariter ac neoterici (ait Calvinomastix) hoc symbolum mysterii adorandae Trinitatis esse confirmant.'

Ibid., col. 90–91.

He then listed nine arguments opposing this reading. In this second list, Pareus included Calvin's concern that this argument would lead to Sabellianism. Added to this were several of the objections that he had already made in his previously published interactions with Hunnius, as well as several new arguments against this position drawn from the Jesuit theologians Benedict Pereira<sup>49</sup> and Cardinal Robert Bellarmine,<sup>50</sup> who had also recently answered in the negative the same question regarding the inference of the doctrine of the Trinity from the name *Elohim*.

1. The word אֱלֹהִים signifies a Trinity of persons neither by the strength of its etymology nor by the strength of the plural number. For in its grammatical origin *Elohim* expresses *powerful ones*. By reason of number, the plural is indefinite. Therefore it does not indicate a Trinity any more than it indicates a quaternity.
2. If *Elohim* by the strength of the plural number or if because it is a word in the plural signifies the Trinity of persons: then it would signify this everywhere and always: because if that particular reason has been placed in the number of the verb, then it always brings about this result. But writers of the other persuasion admit that it does not always signify the Trinity: but sometimes two persons, and other times only one: otherwise it would result in the Sabellian confusion of persons, just as *Calvin* warns. Two are signified in Gen. 1:2. "Spirit of Elohim," that is, of the Father and of the Son. This sense does not depend on the number, but on the context of the word and the analogy of Scripture. It indicates one at Psa. 45:7. "Your throne, O Elohim," that is O Son, "is forever": that sense is deduced from the argument of the Psalm: not from the sense of the word. And v. 8 "Therefore, O Elohim, your Elohim has anointed you:" Here the fact that Elohim first signifies the person of the Son, and then later the person of the father is apparent not from the plural number, which rather rejects the singular meaning: but from the meaning of the verse, and from the analogy of Scripture and of the faith. Therefore Elohim does not signify a Trinity of persons by the strength of the plural number.
3. If *Elohim* properly expressed the Trinity, then it could not be used in an orthodox manner of only one or two of the persons: because if it is said that the Father is Elohim, the Son is Elohim: then the Father is the Trinity, the Son is the Trinity, which the faith rejects, etc. But individual persons, two, and three are all simultaneously truly and properly Elohim, that is God. Therefore, etc.
4. The construction of the plural noun *Elohim* and *Adonim* with a singular verb, is common in the Hebrew Scriptures, whether the discussion be about God, or men or

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49 Benedict Pereira, *Commentariorum et Disputationum in Genesim* (Lyon, 1594), 40–42.

50 Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationum De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 1 (Ingolstadt: David Sartori, 1588), col. 383–388.

even false gods. Examples are provided above: Gen. 42:30. Gen. 39:20. Exod. 21:4. Isa. 19:4. Ex. 20:3. Thus Gen. 24:9 “He placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham אֲדֹנָי his masters.” Gen. 15. “And no more יהיִם הַמַּיִם will the waters be upon the earth”: for the waters would be [plural verb], Gen. 39:16. “While אֲדֹנָי בָּרוּךְ his Lords came,” for his Lord. Gen. 42:33 “He said to us אֲדֹנָי the lords of the land.” Luther in his commentary on Gen. 42, page 110.b. affirms that this is a Hebraism. Therefore such a construction has more to do with the colloquialisms of the Hebrew language than it does to some mystery.

5. If Scripture, by an expression of this sort, wanted to indicate a plurality of persons and a unity of divine essence, then it would not elsewhere unite *Elohim* with a plural verb, as it is read in Gen. 20:13 הִתְעוּ אֵתִי “Elohim caused [plu] me to wander.” And Gen. 35:7 נִגְלוּ הָאֱלֹהִים “Elohim appeared [plu] to him,” and 2 Sam. 7:23 “Who is a nation, for whom Elohim came [plu].” For thus it seems also to signify a diversity of the divine nature along with a plurality of persons.

6. *Elohim* in the plural with a singular verb cannot be rendered in the plural in an orthodox manner in this and similar passages: because it will signify either a plurality of Gods: and thus Moses would be introducing a plurality of Gods, which Scripture will not allow, or plural persons, and thus the verb בָּרָא does not fit: because it would not be correct to say: “Divine persons creates [sing] the world,” but “create” [plur]. John does not say: “This three, the Father, Word, and Holy Spirit is one,” but “are one.” Therefore *Elohim* ought not to be rendered in the plural: “Gods created.” The LXX did not translate this way, nor Jerome: but in the singular: “God created [sing].”

7. If this method of speaking (says Pererius) was bizarre and uncommon in the Hebrew language, then it would have been a new and remarkable occurrence to the Hebrews. Therefore the Rabbis would have said something about this, and they would not have suppressed a thing so significant and so full of mystery and wonder with such a great silence.

8. The same man [Pererius] says that there has not been sufficient consideration of the ignorance and slowness of the Jews and their propensity towards idolatry: as they would have drawn from this an excuse for supposing that there are many Gods.

9. Finally, if this is a very clear testimony of the Trinity and an argument against the Jews, as some think, then it is remarkable that none of the ancient writers, who have commented on this passage, not even Origen nor Jerome, who were most learned in Hebrew and most inquisitive investigators of the mysteries of the faith, have suspected that a thing of so great a mystery was contained here. Because not even Augustine, who explained this passage of Moses around twenty times, nor Ambrose, neither Hillary, nor Cyril, nor Chrysostom, nor Eucherius, nor Procopius Gazaus, nor anyone of the ancients has observed such a thing: but the first of all, Lombard, the Master of Sentences, whom Lyra, Burgensis and the Scholastic theologians have later followed, uncovered this mystery. Consider Bellarmine, bk 2 *de Christo* ch. 6, Pererius in this passage, Sixtus Senens, bk 5 Annot. 1 Biblioth.<sup>51</sup>

51 '1. *Elohim* vox neque vi suae originis, neque vi numeri pluralis significat Trinitatem personarum. Nam grammatica origine *Elohim* sonat *potentes*. Ratione numeri pluralitatem indefinite. Non magis igitur Trinitatem quam quaternitatem definit.

2. Si *Elohim* vi numeri pluralis, seu ideo, quia est vocabulum plurale significaret Trinitatem personarum: ubique et semper eam significaret: quia posita causa propria in actu, semper ponitur effectus. At fatentur authores alterius sententiae, non semper significare Trinitatem: sed aliquando duas personas, aliquando

The discussion here, as opposed to Pareus's previous treatments of the question, was marked by an irenic even-handedness, a willingness to hear both positions out. In fact, before moving on to give his own answer to the question, Pareus listed five hypotheses concerning how Christians ought to reconcile varying interpretations of the same passage. First, as Augustine had taught, it was important to realize that the meaning of any particular text was not necessarily limited to one single interpretation.

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- unam tantum: alioqui sequeretur Sabelliana personarum confusio, ut monuit *Calvinus*. *Duas* significat Gen. 1.2. *Spiritus Elohim*, hoc est, Patris et Filii. Hic sensus non pendet ex numero, sed ex adiuncto vocis et analogia scripturae. *Unam* significat. *Psa.* 45.7. *Solium tuum o Elohim*, id est, o fili, in *seculum seculi*: qui sensus colligitur ex argumento Psalmi: non ex vi vocis. Et ver. 8 *Propterea unxit te, o Elohim, Elohim tuus*: Hic prius *Elohim* filii: posterius patris personam significare manifestum est non ex numero plurali, qui singularem sensum potius respuit: sed ex sententia versus, et ex analogia scripturae ac fidei. Non igitur *Elohim* vi numeri pluralis Trinitatem personarum significat.
3. Si *Elohim* proprie exprimeret Trinitatem, non posset uni aut duabus tantum personis orthodoxe tribui: nam dicere Pater est Elohim, Filius est Elohim, esset dicere: Pater est Trinitas, Filius est Trinitas, quod fides respuit etc. At singulae personae et duae et tres simul vere ac proprie sunt *Elohim*, id est, Deus. Ergo etc.
  4. Constructio nominis pluralis *Elohim* et *Adonim* cum verbo singulari, in scriptura Hebraica est usitata, sive de Deo, sive de hominibus aut falsis etiam diis sit sermo. Exempla supra sunt allata: Genes. 42.30. Genes. 39.20. Exod. 21.4. Ies. 19.4. Exod. 20.3. Sic Genes. 24.9. *Posuit manum sub foemore Abraham* אֲדָנָי *dominorum suorum*. Gen. 9:15. *Et non amplius יהיה המים erit aquae super terra*: pro, erunt aquae, Gen. 39:16. *Donec בוא אֲדָנָי venerit Domini sui*, pro, Dominus suus. Genes. 42.33. *Dixit ad nos ille אֲדָנָי domini terrae*. Lutherus Comm. In Gen. Cap. 42. pag. 110.b. Affirmat esse Hebraismum. Ergo potius ad idiotismum linguae Hebraeae, quam ad mysterium aliquod pertinet talis constructio.
  5. Si huiusmodi locutione scriptura pluralitatem personarum et unitatem essentiae divinae indicare vellet, non coniungeret alibi *Elohim* cum verbo plurali, sicut legitur Genes. 20.13. *התעו אתי Errare fecerunt me Elohim*. Et Gen. 35.7. *נגלו האלהים Apparuerunt ei Elohim*, et 2. Samuel. 7.23. *Qua est gens, propter quam הִלְכּוּ האֱלֹהִים iverunt Elohim*. Nam sic cum pluralitate personarum etiam diversitatem naturae divinae significare videretur.
  6. *Elohim* plurale cum verbo singulari hoc loco et similibus pluraliter orthodoxe reddi non potest: quia vel significabit plures Deos: et sic Moses pluralitatem Deorum inveheret, quam scriptura non admittit: vel plures personas, et sic verbum בָּרָא non conveniret: quia non recte diceretur: *Personae divinae creavit mundum*, se *crearunt*: Iohannes non dicit: *Hi tres, Pater, Sermo, et Spiritus sanctus unum est*, sed, *unum sunt*. Non igitur *Elohim* plurale reddi debet pluraliter: *Dii creavit*. Sicut nec LXX reddiderunt, nec Hieronymus: sed in singulari: *Deus creavit*.
  7. Si hic modus loquendi (inquit *Pererius*) insolens et inusitatus fuisset in lingua Hebraea, novus et admirandus Hebraeis accidisset. Quare Rabbini aliquid circa hoc fuissent comenti, nec tanto silentio rem tanti momenti, plenamque mysterii et admirationis suppressissent.
  8. Parum bene, inquit idem, consultum fuisse Iudaeorum ruditati atque tarditati, et ad idololatriam proclivitati: quia hinc illi occasionem cepissent existimandi, multos esse Deos.
  9. Denique si hoc est illustrissimum Trinitatis testimonium, et contra Iudaeos argumentum, ut quidam putant, mirum est neminem veterum scriptorum, qui in hunc locum sunt commentati, ne quidem *Origenem* et *Hieronymum* Hebraice doctissimos, et mysteriorum fidei indagatores curiosissimos, hic tantae rei mysterium contineri esse subodoratos. Nam neque *Augustinus*, qui plus minus vicies hunc locum Mosis explanavit, neque *Ambrosius*, neque *Hilarius*, neque *Cyrillus*, neque *Chrysostomus*, neque *Eucherius*, neque *Procopius Gazaus*, neque quisquam priscorum tale quid observavit: sed primus omnium Magister sententiarum *Lombardus*, quem postea Lyra, Burgensis, et scholastici Theologi secuti sunt, hoc mysterium aperuit. Videatur Bellarm. Lib. 2. de Christo cap. 6. *Pererius* in hunc locum. *Sixtus Senens*. Lib. 5. Annotat. 1. Biblioth. David Pareus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius*, col. 91–94.

So great is the fruitfulness of divine Scriptures that often the very same words understood in several ways, can receive several different senses without falsity. The rule is in Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* (bk. 3, ch. 27) and *Confessions* (bk. 12, ch. 24).<sup>52</sup>

Granted, there was only one interpretation that was correct according to the mind of the author. However, if an interpretation of a passage was consistent with the analogy of Scripture and the analogy of faith, then that understanding of the text was true regardless of whether it had been the meaning in the mind of the author. The idea that the biblical text could support multiple meanings had already been advanced by Pareus in his *Calvinus Orthodoxus*.<sup>53</sup> However, in the commentary on Genesis this understanding of a biblical text with multiple meanings was more developed and played a more central role in his conclusion about what the word *Elohim* actually meant.

After having worked through the eight arguments for the trinitarian interpretation of *Elohim* and having refuted each of them, Pareus finally concluded that it was not the intention of the author to signify a plurality of divine persons by the plural noun *Elohim*. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the claim was entirely false. It was merely false in so far as the mind of the author was concerned. Even if the author had not intended to indicate the trinitarian nature of God in Gen. 1:1, the doctrine of the Trinity was still true as far as the analogy of faith and the analogy of Scripture were concerned. Therefore, the trinitarian reading of Gen. 1:1 remained, in a sense, true, despite being false.

. . . this disagreement of the learned men is not about the truth of the thing itself or about the faith itself, but only about the intention of the author: neither is it being asked, whether it is true, but whether it is truer. Therefore this disagreement does not divide the faith: nor should it divide the charity of those disagreeing: but along with Augustine it is truly fitting for us to be fed here with the latitude of charity.<sup>54</sup>

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52 'Tanta est ubertas divinarum scripturarum, ut saepe eadem verba pluribus modis intellecta plures sensus sine falsitate recipiant. Haec regula est Augustini lib. 3. De doctrina Christiana cap. 27. et lib. 12. Confess. C. 24.' Ibid., col. 94.

53 David Pareus, *Calvinus Orthodoxus*, 84–85.

54 '. . . non esse hanc dissensionem doctorum de veritate rei vel de fide ipsa, sed tantum de voluntate scriptoris: nec quaeri, utrum verum sit, sed utrum verius. Non igitur dissensio haec scindit fidem: nec

This meant that the opinion of Girolamo Zanchi, which had been flung at Pareus by Hunnius, did not necessarily contradict the position of Calvin or Pareus. With only a slight qualification, Zanchi's position could be understood as being in perfect harmony with the rest of the Reformed.

The opinion of *Zanchi* does not contradict us at all. Although he repeatedly infers a plurality of persons from the plural *Elohim*, nevertheless he does not rely on the word: but he everywhere adds arguments based on God's attributes, on the grounds that they are sounder. The mystery of the word *Elohim* he calls *sounder* than the Cabalistic mystery of the word *ברא*, but he does not call it *sounder* on its own. Something which is weak can be more sound, even though it is not simply sound.<sup>55</sup>

According to Pareus, Zanchi had argued from the analogy of Scripture, and not from the word *Elohim* itself. Therefore Zanchi had argued for what was true, and Pareus for what was truer. Zanchi argued for what was relatively sound, and Pareus for what was sound in and of itself. They were both correct. Hunnius, however, in failing to see the distinction between what was true in the mind of the author and what was true according to the analogy of faith, missed the distinction between what was true and what was truer and therefore suffered from the lack of charity against which Augustine had warned.

## 5.7 Unconfessionalized

*The controversy between Hunnius and Pareus has often been cited as a clear example of the growing divide between Lutheran and Reformed confessional identities. However, once the exchange between these two is placed within the context of Heidelberg's antitrinitarianism and Zanchi's De Tribus Elohim, Reformed confessionalization becomes less clearcut.*

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scindere debet dissidentium charitatem: sed cum Augustino hic pasci nos convenit veritate in LATITUDINE charitatis.' David Pareus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius*, col. 101.

55 'Nihil etiam nos laedit Zanchii sententia. Etsi enim pluralitatem personarum ex plurali Elohim aliquoties colligit, tamen non subsistit in voce: sed argumenta ex attributis Dei ut firmiora ubique coniungit. Firmius vocat mysterium vocis Elohim, quam Cabalisticum sacramentum vocis *ברא* sed non vocat firmius simpliciter. Potest vero aliquid esse infirmo firmius, quod tamen non sit simpliciter firmum.' *Ibid.*, 105.

Pareus's ability to shift back and forth between a hotly partisan, anti-Lutheran, polemical tone, and a more broadly tolerant, easy irenicism has been previously noted. Howard Hotson pointed out this tendency in an article critiquing the supposition that the Reformed intellectual Johann Amos Comenius was inspired to pursue an agenda of irenicism by the teaching and example of Pareus, who taught him at the University of Heidelberg.<sup>56</sup> Comenius matriculated at the University in 1613 (one year before the publication of Pareus's *Irenicum*) and, in the years 1613-1614, engaged in a disputation under Pareus arguing for a Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper. From Comenius's disputation it would appear that Pareus, in spite of his concurrent interests in Lutheran / Reformed irenicism, had taught his pupils all of the standard anti-Ubiquitarian arguments and fired them with an anti-Lutheran zeal. Hotson concludes that a proper understanding of Pareus's irenicism must be situated in an understanding of the political world in which Pareus laboured – namely that of a Reformed theologian working from within the Empire and attempting to deal with the strictures of the Peace of Augsburg. In this context, Pareus's irenical theology becomes less a matter of a good-natured disposition and more a matter of what Hotson has described as a “tough-minded pragmatism.”

It would appear that a good deal of “tough-minded pragmatism” lies behind Pareus's exegesis of Gen. 1:1 as well. It is impossible to read Pareus's summary of Zanchi's argument regarding the word *Elohim* and not notice the wide divergence between Zanchi's insistence that the word *Elohim* referred *proprie* to the plurality of persons in the godhead and Pareus's claim that Zanchi did not argue for the Trinity from the word *Elohim*, but from other passages. One is reminded of Hunnius's earlier dilemma, when he tried to decide whether Pareus was purposefully giving such a blatant misrepresentation of Hunnius's works or had simply failed

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<sup>56</sup> Hotson, “Irenicism and Dogmatics in the Confessional Age: Pareus and Comenius in Heidelberg, 1614.”

to read his book at all. In the end, Pareus's apparent blindness to the irreconcilable differences between the position he and Calvin held and the position maintained by other members of the University of Heidelberg theology faculty, men like Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius, can only be explained by a powerful need for Pareus to maintain a united front against the hostilities of Lutheran aggressors like Hunnius.

That Hunnius could so thoroughly lay claim to the exegetical work of several prominent Reformed theologians of Heidelberg in a polemical assault on Calvin is, perhaps, startling. This tremendous variety within the world of Reformed exegesis is testimony to the fact that, sectarian loyalties and hostilities of the "age of confessionalisation" notwithstanding, the boundaries between theological categories like Gnesio-Lutheran, Philippist, and Calvinist were perhaps more permeable than one might expect. Modern accounts of the Hunnius / Pareus debate have tended to tell the story by moving straight from the exegesis of Calvin to the objections of Hunnius. In doing so, these accounts have paid little attention to the crisis of antitrinitarianism within the Reformed church and the several decades of Reformed exegesis, shaped significantly by that crisis, which intervened between Calvin and Hunnius and followed immediately after them. This oversight has made it easy to portray the Hunnius / Pareus debate as a clear picture of the growing chasm between Lutherans and the Reformed, as well as an indication that confessional communities were growing more and more rigid. Ken Schurb's study of the varying explanations given by Calvin and Hunnius for the *proto-euangelion* (Gen. 3:15) illustrates this well. Schurb follows a course largely parallel to this study of the two men's disagreement over the interpretation of Gen. 1:1 and discovers the same contrast between Hunnius's insistence that the passage must have only one Christological meaning and Pareus's understanding of multiple, layered meanings. However, Schurb then assumes that Pareus's position was normative for the Reformed church, radically

simplifying the Reformed position. With regard to Hunnius's requirement that the text have a singular Christological meaning, Schurb erroneously concludes: "On the Calvinist side nothing quite compares with this attitude."<sup>57</sup>

On the contrary, Hunnius's Christological reading of the text is completely consistent with Zanchi's approach in *De Tribus Elohim*. A virtually identical notion that the text has but one meaning was defended at length in Junius's *Sacrorum Parallelorum*, which will be discussed in the following chapter. And, what's more, the Christological reading of Gen. 3:15 is clearly provided in the immensely popular *Biblia Sacra* of Tremellius and Junius, also discussed in the following chapter.

More recently, G. Sujin Pak devotes the penultimate chapter of her book *The Judaizing Calvin* to the debate between Hunnius and Pareus.<sup>58</sup> Pak concludes her study, by far the most thorough treatment of this episode in English to date, with the suggestion that the difference between the foundational principles of biblical interpretation of Hunnius and Pareus and the subsequent diverging traditions of exegesis of the Lutheran and Reformed churches constitute "defining aspects in confessional identities," leading to "emerging distinctive aspects of Lutheran and Reformed identities."<sup>59</sup> Pak's suggestion is insightful in that it leads the somewhat worn out discussion of confessional identity into the greener pastures of biblical exegesis. Pak demonstrates that Calvin's interpretation of Scripture (his interpretation of the traditionally messianic Psalms, in particular) was a fundamentally different approach to the biblical text.<sup>60</sup> This could not help but advance ". . . a particularly Reformed reading that begins to help buttress an emerging Reformed confessional identity."<sup>61</sup>

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57 Schurb, "Sixteenth-Century Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict on the Protevangelium," 42.

58 Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin*, 103–124.

59 Ibid., 125.

60 Ibid., 123.

61 Ibid., 127.

However, it is difficult to maintain that this confessional identity was emerging very successfully when a substantial portion of the Heidelberg faculty was publishing works that defended what Schurb and Pak would consider to be the “Lutheran” side. When Hunnius can so easily claim the support of Zanchi, the notion that exegesis has become confessionalized must be re-examined. In fact, it could be argued quite easily that at least half of the prominent theologians from Heidelberg in the years 1570-1622 would have been willing to affirm the “Lutheran” position in this debate. And it was the “Lutheran” confessional identity that was being promulgated throughout the Reformed churches of the continent and in England via the *Biblia Sacra* of Tremellius and Junius, to which we now turn.

## VI

### Franciscus Junius and Johannes Drusius

The continuing debate over whether or not the divine names, *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, revealed God's triune nature extended into the Dutch Republic with the two Hebraists, Franciscus Junius and Johannes Drusius. Although both men were professors in prominent Reformed Universities, they exemplified two very different approaches to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament: Junius echoed the theological reading of Zanchi, while Drusius continued in the footsteps of Calvin's grammatical reading. Curiously, the grammatical reading of Drusius renewed the same concerns and accusations of arianism which Calvin had once provoked with his Old Testament exegesis.

#### 6.1 Contrasting Parallels

*Franciscus Junius and Johannes Drusius, two well known Reformed Hebraists, both published, in the same year, widely diverging studies of the "parallels" of the Old and New Testament.*

In 1588 a novel exegetical project was published in Heidelberg, *Parallelorum Sacrorum libri tres*,<sup>1</sup> written by Franciscus Junius, who was then Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Heidelberg.<sup>2</sup> In this work, Junius studied the use of Old Testament quotations by the authors of the New Testament, seeking throughout to reconcile apparent contradictions between the manner in which the New Testament authors employed these quotations with what had seemed to be the original intentions of the Old Testament authors. 1588 also saw

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1 Franciscus Junius, *Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres: id est, Comparatio locorum Scripturae sacrae, qui ex Testamento vetere in Novo adducuntur. summam utriusque in verbis convenientiam, in rebus consensum, in mutationibus fidem veritatemque breviter et perspicue ex fontibus Scripturae S. genuinaque linguarum Hebraeae et Graecae conformatione monstrans: et contra Atheos, Arianos, Iudaeos, Mahumedistas, aliosque asserens simplicitatem Evangelistarum et Apostolorum Christi* (Heidelberg, 1588). This same text was published in London in the same year. Franciscus Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum libri tres: id est, Comparatio locorum Scripturae sacrae, qui ex Testamento vetere in Novo adducuntur* (London: Bishop, 1588). It then appeared in Junius's *Opera*, Franciscus Junius, *Opera Theologica* (Geneva: Caldorianus, 1607), I. 980–1265. All subsequent citations for the *Sacrorum Parallelorum* will be taken from the *Opera* of 1607. The English text will be taken, where available, from the translation provided by Douglas Judisch's dissertation (that is, for the preface to the work and for the parallels taken from the Gospels and the book of Acts; translations for the rest of Junius's explanations of the New Testament parallels will be my own).

2 I am particularly grateful to Theodor Dunkelgrün, who was able, in just a few brief conversations, to steer my research on Drusius in a much more fruitful direction.

the publication of a somewhat similar study under the title *Parallela Sacra*,<sup>3</sup> by the Professor of Hebrew at the University of Franeker, Johannes Drusius.

The fact that these two well known Hebraists of the Reformed world published, in the same year, studies on the “parallel passages” of Scripture, is remarkably coincidental and would seem to suggest a deep similarity between the minds of the two men and their interest in the Hebrew language. However, even the briefest examination of the two works quickly reveals how dissimilar were their approaches to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This dissimilarity is all the more important as we consider how both men made substantial but conflicting contributions to the ongoing debate over the question of the true significance of the divine name *Elohim*. Whereas Junius supported Zanchi’s theological reading, Drusius, the consummate grammarian, agreed with Calvin’s skepticism towards this reading and furthered his argument by highlighting the grammatical inconsistencies of the opposing position. The contrast between Junius and Drusius is striking and beyond what could be expected if confessionalization had truly begun to normalize the exegesis of the Old Testament.

This chapter will provide a brief study of the two men’s lives and an introduction to their exegetical distinctives, followed by an examination of their conflicting contributions to the question of the proper interpretation of the Hebrew name *Elohim*.

## 6.2 Franciscus Junius

*A brief summary of Junius’s biography suggests that he was both an accomplished linguist and an enthusiastic supporter of the Reformed agenda.*

Franciscus Junius (François Du Jon) was born in Bourges, France, on 1 May 1545.<sup>4</sup> Of noble

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3 Drusius, *Τὰ Ἰεραὶ Παράλληλα. Parallela Sacra, Hoc est, Locorum veteris Testamenti cum iis, quae in novo citantur, coniuncta commemoratio, Ebraice et Graece.* (Franeker: Radaeus, 1588).

4 Junius's *Vita* was published with his works, an autobiography styled heavily after Augustine's *Confessions*. Franciscus Junius, “Vita,” in *Opera Theologica* (Geneva: Caldorianus, 1607), 6-22. See also Dagmar Drüll, “Junius, Franz (du Jon, Jong, Dujon),” in *Heidelberger Gelehrtenlexicon 1386-1651* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2002), 344–346. And FW Cuno, *Franciscus Junius de Ältère, Professor der Theologie und Pastor (1546-1602)sein Leben und Wirken, seine Schriften und Briefe* (Amsterdam, 1891). The most recent survey of

birth and benefiting from the personal tutelage of his father through his childhood, Franciscus was originally intended to follow his father in a career of law. In 1560, Junius travelled to Lyon, intending to join an embassy en route to Constantinople and thus to gain valuable experience for his intended profession. He arrived too late to join the embassy, but he stayed on in Lyon where he was able to continue his study of law. When riots against the Protestants broke out in Lyon in 1562, taking the life of his tutor, Barthélemy Aneau, Junius left and returned to Bourges. He was then offered by his father the choice of continuing his studies in Paris or Geneva. Choosing the Genevan Academy, but by the same token abandoning his study of law, he now turned to theology, with a particular focus on languages. During his time at Geneva, the years 1562-1565, Junius would have had opportunity to hear the lectures of Theodore Beza, then rector of the Academy, and, for a brief time, the teaching and preaching of John Calvin before his death in 1564. Junius noted in his *Vita* that Calvin's *Institutes* became a focus of his own personal study during his time in Geneva.<sup>5</sup>

Of particular significance for our investigation was Junius's attention to the Hebrew language during these several years. Junius applied himself to the study of Hebrew, particularly by applying himself to *Rudimenta Hebraicae Linguae*<sup>6</sup> (1560) by Antoine Chevallier. Chevallier was then teaching Hebrew at the Genevan Academy, but was not offering his introductory course in the year that Junius arrived in Geneva. Working therefore through Chevallier's grammar on his own, Junius occasionally found additional assistance from Philipus Bignoneus, Chevallier's assistant.<sup>7</sup>

In 1565, Junius began his career as a minister to the Walloon community in Antwerp, and spent the next two years preaching to the persecuted Protestant churches, while

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Junius's theology is Tobias Sarx, *Franciscus Junius: ein reformierter Theologe im Spannungsfeld zwischen spathumanistischer Irenikund reformierter Konfessionalisierung* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

5 Junius, *Opera Theologica*, I. 12.

6 Antoine Chevallier, *מִדְּבַר אֱלֹהִים מוֹעֵד Rudimenta Hebraicae Linguae* (Geneva: Crispinus, 1560).

7 Junius, *Opera Theologica*, I. 12.

endeavouring to elude the authorities himself.<sup>8</sup> The Catholic opposition to his preaching, however, grew too intense and in 1567 Junius finally fled to Germany.<sup>9</sup> He ministered to the French speaking refugees in Schonau, in the Palatinate, from 1567 to 1573. During this time, at the request of Elector Frederick III, he also briefly served as the Field Preacher for Prince William of Orange in his revolt against the Spanish authorities.

Frederick III, aware of Junius's growing skill as a Hebraist, called him to Heidelberg in 1573 in order to assist Immanuel Tremellius, then Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at the University of Heidelberg, with a translation and thorough annotation of the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> Junius had already been considerably influenced by Tremellius, albeit indirectly: Chevallier's Hebrew grammar began with a preface by Tremellius – a contribution to that grammar which marked the deep impact that Tremellius had had over the years on Chevallier's own education. Years before, at Cambridge, Chevallier had been Tremellius's student, his boarder, his teaching assistant, and lastly his son-in-law, marrying his daughter Alice in 1550. Now Junius, called to assist Tremellius, would have the opportunity to work shoulder to shoulder with the man who had been Chevallier's own mentor in the Hebrew language.<sup>11</sup>

The latter half of this publishing project was severely hampered by the fact that in 1576 Elector Frederick III died and was succeeded by his son Ludwig VI, an ardent Lutheran. Upon taking office, Ludwig swiftly reversed the course that the Palatinate had taken during

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8 Ibid., I. 14. On the state of the Protestant church in Antwerp at this time, see - Guido Marnef, *Antwerp in the Age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis 1550-1577* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

9 Junius, *Opera Theologica*, I. 21.

10 The most recent survey of the life of Tremellius is Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510-1580)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). See also G. Lloyd-Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 50–53. And Robert Wilkinson, "Immanuel Tremellius' 1569 Edition of the Syriac New Testament," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58, no. 1 (July 2007): 9-25.

11 G. Lloyd Jones, who claims that Junius was Tremellius's son-in-law when the two laboured together on the *Biblia Sacra*, seems to have confused Junius with Chevallier. Lloyd-Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language*, 51.

his father's reign, dismissing the Reformed instructors of the Theological Faculty and replacing them with men of Lutheran convictions. Tremellius left Heidelberg in 1577. Junius, who evidently had means of provision outside the control of the new Elector, stayed on to complete the project on his own.

In 1578, Junius became the Professor of Hebrew and Exegesis at the *Casimirianum*, a temporary oasis for the Reformed faculty of the University of Heidelberg who had been evicted from their posts by Ludwig VI. The *Casimirianum* had been established in the small town of Neustadt by Johann Casimir, Frederick III's younger son, who, unlike his older brother Ludwig VI, wanted to continue his father's devotion to the cause of protecting and advancing the Reformed church. Junius continued in this position until 1580, although in the Spring of 1579, he stayed for several months in the Strasbourg home of Andreas Wechel to supervise the completion of the printing of the *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra*.<sup>12</sup> When Junius left the *Casimirianum* in 1580, he pastored another Walloon church in Otterberg for two and a half years. He then returned to the *Casimirianum* as Professor of Hebrew and Theology, from 1582 to 1584.<sup>13</sup>

During the regency of Casimir (1583-1592), Junius was called back to the University of Heidelberg, where he was made a Doctor and given the third lectureship. Additionally, he served as a pastor to the Walloon congregation in Heidelberg and was a member of the Church Council from 1584 to 1591. In 1589, he was promoted to the second lectureship - Old Testament. Junius served briefly as a minister under Henry IV of France in 1591. He then took a position as Professor of Theology at the University of Leiden, which he held from 1592 until 1602 (serving as a minister to the Walloon community in Leiden as well). He died

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12 R.J.W. Evans, in his survey of the Wechel Press, refers to Tremellius's and Junius's *Biblia Sacra* as "the most important book they ever published." R.J.W. Evans, "The Wechel Presses: Humanism and Calvinism in Central Europe 1572-1627," *Past and Present: Supplement 2* (1975): 41.

13 Douglas Judisch, "A Translation and Edition of the 'Sacrorum Parallelorum Liber Primus' of Franciscus Junius: A Study in Sixteenth Century Hermeneutics" (DPhil, University of Saint Andrews, 1978), 25.

in Leiden during the plague on 13 October, 1602.

### 6.3 Junius and the Hebrew Language

*Junius, like Zanchi, described the Hebrew language as the most ancient, most precise, most divine language on earth, giving it a unique power to convey biblical truth.*

At his inauguration at the *Casimirianum* in 1578, Junius presented an oration before Prince Casimir entitled *Oratio de Linguae Hebraeae Antiquitate, Praestantiaque*. This oration was printed in 1579 and then again in 1580 as a preface to Junius's Hebrew grammar, *Grammatica Hebraeae Linguae*, which he dedicated to the Englishman Sir Philip Sidney.<sup>14</sup> In this oration, as he extolled the excellence of the Hebrew tongue, Junius described the way in which the Hebrew language differed from all other languages. Much like Zanchi, Junius insisted that Hebrew stood as the first of all languages.

Since this language is the most ancient, which the Lord used first of all and delivered to Adam: which the whole human race held in common all the way up until the establishing and founding of Babylon: which while some because of their sin had variant languages (that I may speak in accordance with Augustine), the sons of God preserved in the house of Shem, Heber, and Abraham: which God and the Angels used in the most holy affairs, and the Israelites used in everything: which we see and read was given over inspired [*theopneustus*] from God to Angels and to men, and we see and we read this language, sealed with the most trustworthy monuments of letters. . .<sup>15</sup>

Junius maintained that the Hebrew language – the Edenic language and the inspired tongue – was also, by virtue of its divine origin, uniquely able to convey God's message to men with an exactitude that other languages lacked. Just as Zanchi had argued in his discussion of the

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14 Franciscus Junius, *De linguae Hebraeae Antiquitate, praestantiaque oratio habita in illustri schola Neapolitana* (Neustadt: Johanus Meyerus, 1579). Franciscus Junius, *Grammatica Hebraeae Linguae* (Frankfurt: Wechel, 1580), iii–xiv.

15 'Cum enim hæc lingua sit antiquissima, quam primam omnium usurpavit et tradidit Adamo Dominus: quam communiter humanum genus totum obtinuit usque ad institutam et cœptam ædificationem Babylonis: quam dum alii propter peccatum suum voces dissonas (ut cum Augustino loquar) habuerunt, filii Dei in domo Semi, Heberi, et Abrahami conservarunt: quam Deus et Angeli in rebus sanctissimis, Israelitæ in omnibus coluerunt: quam a Deo, Angelis hominibusque theopneustus traditam, fidelissimisque literarum monumentis consignatam videmus legimusque. . .' Ibid., v. Junius's claim to agreement with Augustine refers to Augustine's comments in the *City of God*, XVI. 11, where it is argued that the Hebrew language preserved the antediluvian tongue and escaped the confusion innate in other languages because of the curse at Babel.

divine names that the Hebrew vocabulary more precisely communicated the referent than any other human tongue, so too Junius claimed a greater aptness and precision for the Hebrew language.

First, therefore, I assert that there is the greatest specificity in Hebrew words both in particular and proper names and in those that are called common nouns [καθόλον]. For what language has assigned names so appropriately, so fittingly, so purely, so piously to both men and places? . . . And this is not only true of proper nouns, but also appellative words and words which are spoken generally have an incredible specificity. But what would be so surprising about the fact that the names attributed are suited to and appropriate to the things that they signify, since God is the same author of both the things and the names and Adam is the interpreter by God's command!<sup>16</sup>

Thus Junius placed Hebrew as the first of all languages, both in terms of chronology and in terms of ability to communicate. In a chapter surveying Junius's *De Linguae Hebraeae* as well as his *Oratio ad lectionem veteres testamenti*,<sup>17</sup> Tobias Sarx summarizes Junius's high estimation of the Hebrew language.

Without doubting the authority of the New Testament, he names two crucial disadvantages of the Greek portion of the Bible in comparison with the Hebrew text: First of all, the latter contains immediate divine statements in the original wording. And second, Hebrew is the language of God, the angels, the first humans in paradise, and of all humans up to the building of the Tower of Babel. . . The repeated reference to the building of the Tower of Babel, carries an additional symbolic character: With the learning of the Hebrew language it becomes possible to return to the state of things before the confusion of language and to learn to understand communication in its original clarity.<sup>18</sup>

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16 'Primum ergo proprietatem Hebraeis vocibus maximam inesse assero cum singularibus et propriis tum καθόλον dictis. Quae enim lingua tam proprie, tam convenienter, tam caste, tam sancte hominibus locisue imposuit nomina? . . . Neque haec modo propriarum vocum est ratio, sed etiam appellativa et universe dicta vocabula proprietatem habent incredibilem. Quid enim mirum tam convenientes aptasque rebus suis appellationes attributas esse, cum idem rerum autor appellationumque sit Deus et interpres Adam ex mandato Dei?' Ibid., x.

17 Franciscus Junius, "Oratio ad lectionem veteris testamenti," in *Orationes Duae* (Neustadt: Harnisch, 1582).

18 'Ohne die Autorität des Neuen Testaments anzuzweifeln, nennt er zwei entscheidende Nachteile des griechischen Teils der Bibel gegenüber dem hebräischen Text: Zum einen enthalte Letzterer direkte göttliche Aussagen im Originalwortlaut und zweitens sei Hebräisch die Sprache Gottes, der Engel, der ersten Menschen im Paradies und überhaupt aller Menschen bis zum Turmbau zu Babel gewesen. . . Der mehrmalige Bezug auf den Turmbau zu Babel hat dabei symbolischen Charakter: Mit dem Erlernen der hebräischen Sprache werde es möglich, vor die Sprachverwirrung zurückzukehren und Kommunikation in ihrer ursprünglichen Klarheit kennen zu lernen.' Sarx, *Franciscus Junius: ein reformierter Theologe im Spannungsfeld zwischen spathumanistischer Irenikund reformierter Konfessionalisierung*, 193–194.

All language, post-Babel, was corrupted and fallen. Only Hebrew pierced through the confusion of Babel, conveying divine truth with a clarity and precision that preceded Babel and even the fall of Adam. Sarx sees in Junius's usage of Hebrew not just a conviction that Hebrew was unaffected by the confusion of Babel, but also a confidence that the Hebrew language offered a vehicle for theological discussion which could transcend the divisive bickering which inevitably ensued when theological terminology, rather than a biblical vocabulary, was used in controversies between Protestant theologians with varying confessional loyalties.<sup>19</sup>

#### 6.4 Johannes Drusius

*Drusius, the consummate grammarian, though moving through many of the same circles as Junius, was far more concerned with the grammatical reading of the Hebrew text than the theological.*

Johannes Drusius (Jan van den Driesche) was born on 28 June 1550, in the Flemish city of Oudenarde.<sup>20</sup> He was sent by his father to study Greek and Latin at Ghent, under the tutelage of Petrus Dickelus, and then on to the Collegium Trilingue in Louvain. Attempts by the Spanish to suppress the nascent Protestant church in the Low Countries, however, drove Drusius's father to England. Johannes soon joined Clement Drusius there in 1567 and eventually took up studies at Cambridge. Chevallier had taken up a post teaching Hebrew at Cambridge in 1569, having left Geneva after the death of Calvin. Drusius excelled in his study of languages under Chevallier's tutelage. Drusius's biographer included a letter of commendation from Chevallier, dated 15 September, 1570, praising Drusius's skill in both

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19 See "Auswertung: Bedeutung von Sprache für Konfliktlösung," *Ibid.*, 199–201.

20 For the details of Drusius's life, see his biography: Abelus Curiandrus, *Vitae, Operumque Ioh. Drusii* (Franeker: Fredericus Heynsius, 1616). See also Lloyd-Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language*, 23 and Johannes Tromp, "The Treatise on the Patriarch Henoah by Johannes Drusius (1550-1616)," in *Studies in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Culture* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 103-150. Drusius's brief career at Oxford, which is only mentioned in passing by Curian, is covered in John Fletcher and Christopher Upton, "John Drusius of Flanders, Thomas Bodley and the Development of Hebrew Studies at Merton College, Oxford," in *Academic Relations Between the Low Countries and the British Isles 1450-1700* (Gent, 1989), 111-129.

Hebrew and Greek.

It is worth noting again the influence that Immanuel Tremellius had once had on Chevallier, and the influence Chevallier later had on both Drusius and Junius (along with the direct influence that Tremellius had had on Junius). In fact for a time, at Cambridge, Drusius boarded with Chevallier just as Chevallier had once boarded with Tremellius. The world of Hebrew scholarship which Drusius was beginning to inhabit was inevitably quite small. Nevertheless, as a comparison of the exegetical works of Junius and Drusius will demonstrate, the closeness of this world did not result in homogeneity.

Discouraged from returning to the continent by the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572, Drusius accepted a post teaching Hebrew at Merton College, Oxford. He was subsequently enlisted by Magdalen College to teach Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic and, in 1574, at the instigation of the Earl of Leicester, was also employed by the University to lecture on Syriac. Several years later, however, in the wake of the advances by William of Orange in the Low Countries and the Pacification of Ghent (1576), Drusius was able to return home and take up an appointment at the newly founded University of Leiden, teaching Oriental languages.<sup>21</sup> He held this post until 1585, when he moved to Friesland to become the Professor of Hebrew at the University of Franeker, where he remained for thirty years until his death in 1616.

While still in Leiden, Drusius began what would become an extensive publishing career, spanning well over forty books and focused almost exclusively on matters of grammar in the ancient oriental and biblical languages.<sup>22</sup> In 1600, the States General, in preparation for an upcoming Dutch translation of the Bible, commissioned Drusius to prepare

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21 For the formation of and the initial character of the University of Leiden see Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), 45–55. See also J.J. Woltjer, "Introduction," in *Leiden University in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1-19.

22 A bibliography of Drusius's works was included in the 1616 biography by Abel Curiandrus. Curiandrus, *Vitae, Operumque Ioh. Drusii*, 16–20.

explanatory notes on the passages of the Old Testament which were more difficult to understand. Though the work was unfinished by his death, the notes were eventually incorporated in the third edition of the *Critici Sacri* (1698).<sup>23</sup> Drusius's zeal for studying the biblical text from the perspective of a grammarian won him renown as one of the most skilled oriental linguists of the Protestant church but also a reputation for being far more concerned about the grammatical legitimacy of his interpretations than about the theological orthodoxy of his opinions.

H.J. De Jonge, in his treatment of the study of the New Testament at Leiden University, describes Drusius as “. . . freer from dogmatic objectives than anyone else.”<sup>24</sup> For instance, in 1582 Drusius published a work entitled *Quaestionum ac responsionum liber*,<sup>25</sup> in which he considered eighty-three passages of Scripture in need of elucidation or emendation. In question 47 Drusius identified the *Asidaei* from 1 Macc. 7:13 and 2 Macc. 14:6 as Pharisees, provoking a response from the Jesuit Nicolaus Serarius, a professor at the University of Mainz. Serarius insisted that the term *Asidaei* actually referred to the Essenes, and that they were forerunners of the monastic orders. But the exchange turned polemical when Serarius went beyond merely disagreeing with Drusius and insisted that Drusius's error was heretical.<sup>26</sup> To Drusius, the idea that a charge of heresy could be levelled at him was absurd. His work had been that of a historian and a grammarian – categories which, it would seem, should be immune from charges of heresy. He answered Serarius in 1603 with *De Hasidaeis*: “All my meagre knowledge revolves around Grammar and History. Religious

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23 *Critici Sacri: Sive Annotata Doctissimorum Virorum in Vetus ac Novum Testamentum* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1698).

24 H.J. De Jonge, “The Study of the New Testament” (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 67.

25 Johannes Drusius, *Quaestionum ac Responsionum Liber* (Leiden, 1582).

26 A summary of the exchange is provided in Johannes van den Berg, “Proto-Protestants? The Image of the Karaites as a Mirror of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents: Essays on Early Modern Protestantism and the Protestant Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-56. The entirety of the published exchange between Drusius and Serarius was printed in Jacobus Triglandius, ed., *Trium Scriptorum Illustrium de tribus Judaeorum sectis Syntagma*. (Delft: Adrianum Beman, 1703).

dogmas I leave to others to handle. In History there is no heresy, much less in Grammar.”<sup>27</sup>

### 6.5 Junius’s *Parallels*

Convinced that the meaning of Scripture was always singular and that the parallel passages of the Old and New Testaments conveyed a single meaning, Junius believed that the entire Christian *analogia fidei* had been obvious to the Old Testament saints, according to a *proprie* reading of the Hebrew text.

It was mentioned above that Junius spent a brief portion of his studies in Lyon before enrolling in the Genevan Academy. Though his time in Lyon was short, less than two years, it was a formative period. In retrospect, in his *Vita*, Junius described the city as vile and full of vice. In Lyon he had met lascivious women, and men with heads full of dangerous ideas. The former he successfully resisted. To the latter, however, he succumbed. Encountering in his studies the arguments of Cicero against the foreknowledge of God, and in his conversations with certain atheists whom he described as having been steeped in the works of the “Epicureans,” Junius temporarily abandoned his faith.<sup>28</sup> Although his brief apostasy ended shortly after his return home, this period of doubting shaped Junius’s later work in an important way. In the preface to his *Parallels*, Junius described the nature of one of the arguments which had caused him to stumble.

. . . they were bringing forward passages in heaps from the Old Testament which are applied in the New; they would chatter that things clearly divergent were confused in this process. They would shout that the process had been conducted without knowledge by the [authors of the New Testament] and that we act impiously since we put confidence in such ignorant authors and craftsmen, composers of snares more than of speeches, something which most of antiquity recognized and which posterity would recognize.<sup>29</sup>

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27 'Tenuis mea scientia versatur tota circa Grammaticam et Historiam. Dogmata fidei aliis tractanda relinquo. In Historia nulla haeresis, multo minus in Grammatica.' This quote appears in Johannes Drusius, *De Hasidaeis, quorum mentio in libris Machabaeorum libellus ad Iohan. Utenbogardum*. (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1603), 22.

28 Junius, *Opera Theologica*, I. 9–10.

29 ' . . . acervatim proferebant ex vetere Testamento locos qui adducuntur in novo: garriebant res plane diversas in eum modum confusas esse: imperite ab illis factum clamitabant: et fieri a nobis impie, qui autoribus et artificibus adeo imperitis fidem haberemus, retium magis quam orationum concinnatoribus; quod pleraque antiquitas vidit, et visura sit posteritas.' Ibid., I. 982.

The fact that the New Testament often quoted the Old Testament in a way which seemed to violate or ignore the original context in the Hebrew Scriptures had been a powerful argument, in Junius's estimation, against the veracity of both texts. Later he would describe the doubts he had entertained during this time in Lyon as "a creeping poison," "a horrible impiety," and "a vast pit of perdition."<sup>30</sup>

Years later, while serving as a minister in the Palatinate, Junius encountered this argument once more. As a justification for his own defection to Istanbul, Adam Neuser, the former minister of Heidelberg's Peterskirche, claimed that the New Testament either misquoted or incorrectly interpreted the Old Testament. Junius later explained how it was that in the hands of the antitrinitarians of Heidelberg this argument had become a weapon in the arsenal of Jews and Muslims in their rejection of the New Testament:

A notable witness is that notorious good-for-nothing who, sixteen years ago, deserting to the Turks, promised them that in some public document he would expose to the eyes of all the falsehood, deceit, and impiety of the apostles and evangelists and the whole New Testament, and that he would do this by means of this one argument alone: that they had in their writings adduced passages from the Old Testament in a sense contrary to that which Moses and the prophets themselves had originally intended.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the scandalous events of the summer of 1572 proved to Junius, once more, the need for a thorough defence of the New Testament's use of the Old. The *Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres* constituted his effort to refute his previous doubts as well as the argument that had recently been advanced by the antitrinitarians. Although not published until 1588, this book had been underway for well over a decade. William IV, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, who was aware

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30 'Venenum serpens . . . horribilis impietas . . . immani perditionis barathro' Ibid., I. 10.

31 'Testis est insignis ille nebulo, qui ante 16 annos ad Turcos abiens spondebat eis se scripto quodam publico vanitatem, mendacium, et impietatem Apostolorum Evangelistarumque, et totius Testamenti novi in oculis omnium expositurum esse: idque vel unico hoc argumento solum, quod locos e Testamento vetere suis scriptionibus in illi adduxissent, contra quam sibi olim Moses et Prophetæ ipsi voluerant.' Ibid., I. 982–983. I have corrected the text of the *Sacrorum Parallelorum* drawn from Junius's *Opera* with Junius, *Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres* (1588), v-vi.

of Junius's hopes to produce this work, began pressing him as early as 1576 to complete the treatise. William IV wrote to Frederick III in the same year to urge the Elector that he hasten Junius, then busy with Tremellius and the *Biblia Sacra* project, to complete his *Parallels*.<sup>32</sup> When the work was finally published in 1588, Junius dedicated it to William IV, insisting that the Landgrave's continued zeal for the completion of the book had made the work as much his as it was Junius's.

*Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres* was a novel approach to the exegesis of the Old Testament in the sixteenth century. In it Junius considered each New Testament citation of the Old Testament and examined the extent to which the New Testament version departed from the original meaning of the Hebrew text.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the direct exegesis of these *Parallels*, or what Judisch termed "bi-testamental passages,"<sup>34</sup> Junius included a number of lengthy asides in which he examined the broader question of how it was that the Old Testament saints could have understood from the Hebrew text the meaning which the New Testament authors would later claim that those words communicated.<sup>35</sup> The *Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres*, therefore, consider the tensions between the Old and New Testaments, address the difficulty of finding a Christian understanding of the divine nature in the Hebrew Scriptures, and provide Junius's explanation of the proper method for resolving these tensions and difficulties. As such, the work makes clear some of the fundamental presuppositions and motivations that Junius brought to his reading of the Old Testament, as a Christian and as a theologian of the Reformed church.

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32 The account of Junius's interaction with William IV is described in his preface to the *Sacrorum Parallelorum*. Ibid., I. 984.

33 Douglas Judisch maintains that Junius was the first to publish a study of New Testament quotations of the Old Testament, noting that the next work to be published on this subject was a set of notes by Drusius in 1594: Judisch, "A Translation of *Sacrorum Parallelorum*," I.iv. However, it should be pointed out that Drusius actually printed his own *Parallela Sacra* in Franeker concurrent with Junius in 1588. Johannes Drusius, *Τὰ Ἑρὰ Παραλληλα. Parallela Sacra, Hoc est, locorum veteris Testamenti cum iis, quae in novo citantur, coniuncta commemoratio, Ebraice et Graece* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1588).

34 Judisch, "A Translation of *Sacrorum Parallelorum*," I.iv.

35 See, for instance, parallels 6, 8, and 24. Junius, *Opera Theologica*, I. 999–1007, 1009–1016, and 1026–1029.

Throughout his *Parallels*, Junius laboured to demonstrate that the authors of the New Testament did not use Old Testament quotations to signify anything other than that which had been the original intent of the Hebrew passage. He insisted that the Old Testament passages “. . . have been cited in accordance with the literal [*proprie*], genuine, and true sense and goal of those passages, without any violence or injury.”<sup>36</sup> Many of these citations were perfectly straightforward, such as John’s quotation of Psa. 78, “. . . and he gave to them the grain of Heaven” (*parallel* 69). When Jesus quoted this passage in John 6:31, he was merely recounting God’s provision of manna during the Israelites’ time in the wilderness – intending with those words the same thing that had been intended by the Psalmist. Other passages proved more difficult, such as Matthew’s usage of Hos. 11:1 (“. . . out of Egypt I called my son”) quoted in Matt. 2:15 as a prophecy fulfilled in the infancy of Christ (*parallel* 6); or Matthew’s reference to a seemingly nonexistent Old Testament passage when he explains that Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth in order to fulfil a prophecy that the Messiah would be a Nazarene (Mat. 2:23; *parallel* 8). Nevertheless, in all of these passages, from the simple and straightforward to the enigmatic and possibly even non-existent, Junius regularly concluded that the New Testament passages quoted the Old Testament with an identical *finis*, “purpose” or “goal,” as that intended by the Old Testament authors.

Junius accomplished this harmonization of meanings by giving a strong preference to the New Testament interpretation of the text. Whenever there was a tension within a parallel passage between the Old Testament and New Testament meanings, Junius assumed that it had been the intention of the Old Testament author to enigmatically prefigure the New Testament meaning. Therefore, when the New Testament authors quoted the Old Testament, they did so in a way that was entirely in keeping with the original author’s intended meaning,

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<sup>36</sup> 'Ex proprio, germano, et vero illorum sensu ac fine, citra violentiam aut iniuriam ullam citatos esse.' Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum*, 285 .

and their usage of the Old Testament was, therefore, proper or literal, and not figurative.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, when the Gospel of Matthew quotes from Hosea 11:1 (“. . . out of Egypt I called my son”), Junius argues that the prophet Hosea had been specifically speaking of the deliverance that would be brought about for God’s people by the coming of the future Messiah, namely Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, when the Evangelist Matthew quoted this passage, he was not employing the phrase allegorically or typologically. He was actually interpreting and applying the phrase according to the original intentions of the prophet Hosea.<sup>38</sup>

Junius dealt with the seemingly non-existent prophecy, referred to in Matt. 2:23, that Christ would be a “Nazarene,” by suggesting that the name “Nazarene” pointed back to the Hebrew word *netzer* – נֶצֶר “branch,” which appeared in messianic prophecies in Isa. 11:1 and 60:21. The prophecy then became a pun, making the fact of Jesus being a “Nazarene” into the fulfilment of Isaiah’s promise that a “branch” would rise up out of the roots of Jesse. Therefore, in Junius’s estimation, Matthew spoke in clear words, explaining what the prophet Isaiah had intended to communicate through his figurative language.<sup>39</sup>

The strength of Junius’s commitment to preserving a singular meaning in the parallel passages is remarkable. When his interpretations are compared and contrasted with several of Calvin’s interpretations, a clear divergence between the two men’s fundamental exegetical presuppositions begins to emerge. Junius was similar to Calvin in that he was disdainful of the multiple meanings found in Scripture by the medieval *quadrige* and was, therefore, compelled to find one unified meaning of Scripture.<sup>40</sup> However, when Calvin came to the

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37 Judisch, “A Translation of Sacrorum Parallelorum,” 1.158–190.

38 See parallel 6: Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum*, 1.999–1007.

39 Ibid., 1009–1015.

40 In his exposition of Galatians 4:22 and the “allegory” of Sarah and Hagar, Calvin described the allegorical method of Origen as having been contrived by Satan in order to undermine the authority of Scripture. “Scripture, they say, is fertile, and thus it begets a multitude of meanings. I admit that Scripture is the most fertile and inexhaustible fount of all wisdom: but I deny that its fertility consists in multiple meanings, which anyone may supply according to his pleasure. Let us therefore know that the true sense of Scripture is the one which is germane and singular, and let us embrace it and hold it tightly.” John Calvin, *OC*, L 237. ‘Scriptura, inquit, fecunda est, ideoque multiplices sensus parit. Ego Scripturam uberrimum et

parallel passages, his concern to identify the meaning of the Old Testament passage as that which had been originally intended by the author, situated in the author's historical context,<sup>41</sup> often caused him to conclude that the New Testament authors were using the text in such a way as to deviate from the original intention of the Old Testament author.

For instance, when the Apostle Paul cited Moses in Rom. 10:6 (cf. Deut. 30:12), Calvin granted that the passage "seems improperly distorted by Paul, and the words themselves seem changed into a foreign sense," but he continued to justify the distortion: "If anyone should accuse this interpretation of being too forced and cunning, let him understand that it was not the intention of the Apostle to treat meticulously Moses's passage but merely to apply it to the discussion of the present matter."<sup>42</sup> Junius on the other hand, insisted that:

Moses's words are spoken regarding the doctrine of the Gospel properly [*proprie*] and particularly: we must take care to approve by fixed and clear teaching the adaptation of the apostle in this passage. For we judge that the goal and the argument in both cases are one and the same.<sup>43</sup>

Calvin expressed a similar qualification about his understanding of Paul's quotation of Psalms 68:18 in Eph. 4:8. "Paul has distorted this testimony somewhat from the genuine sense, in order that he might fit it to his purpose."<sup>44</sup> But Junius differed again:

Is there anyone, I ask, who asserts that this passage is being used with a different goal

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inexhaustum omnis sapientiae fontem esse fateor: sed eius fecunditatem in variis sensibus nego consistere, quos quisque sua libidine affingat. Sciamus ergo eum esse verum Scripturae sensum, qui germanus est ac simplex: eumque amplectamur et mordicus teneamus.'

- 41 In a prefatory letter to Simon Grynaeus, published with his 1539 commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Calvin maintained that it was "... nearly the entirety of his [the commentator's] duty to open up the mind of the author whom he has taken up to exposit": "... quum hoc sit prope unicum illius officium, mentem scriptoris, quem explicandum sumpsit, patefacere.' Ibid., X 403.
- 42 '... et improprie videtur a Paulo detortus, et verba ipsa in alienum sensum commutata ... Si quis istam interpretationem nimis coactam et argutam esse causetur, intelligat non fuisse Apostolo propositum, Mosis locum anxie tractare, sed ad praesentis causae tractationem duntaxat applicare.' Ibid., XLIX 198–199.
- 43 '... Mosis verba ad doctrinam Evangelii dicuntur proprie et singulariter pertinere: videndum nobis est, ut in hoc loco probemus documentis certis et evidentibus hanc Apostoli accommodationem. Nam finem utrobique et argumentum commune idemque esse statuimus.' Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum*, 1.1102.
- 44 '... nonnihil a genuino sensu hoc testimonium detorsit Paulus, ut proposito suo accommodaret. ...' John Calvin, *OC*, IL 198. See also Calvin's explanation of the citation of Psalms 8:5 in Hebrews 2:6–8, which he likens to Paul's quotation of Deut. 30:12 in Rom. 10:6. Calvin again insisted that the New Testament author did not intend his quotation of the Old Testament passage to be in keeping with the intended meaning of the Old Testament author.

and argument? The Apostle teaches entirely the thing itself that the Prophet formerly meant to teach to him, showing (that we might use the words of Athanasius) that the old is the witness of the new and the new of the old.<sup>45</sup>

Although Calvin regularly sought to find a singular meaning to the text, his concern to interpret the Old Testament text according to the intention of its authors, even within the parallel passages, at times trumped his preference for a singular meaning.<sup>46</sup> This resulted in Calvin's reluctant admission that the New Testament authors occasionally employed Old Testament citations in such a way as to neglect or even twist the passage's original meaning. When Junius encountered this dilemma, however, his deep and abiding concern to find a singular meaning within the two parallel passages pushed him to insist that the Old Testament authors foresaw the teaching of the New Testament and therefore intended their passages to communicate exactly the same meaning given to them by the New Testament authors. The singular meaning of the parallel texts, functioned as a higher priority for Junius than for Calvin.

By reading the interpretation of the New Testament text back into the Old Testament, Junius had to presuppose that the broader system of Christian doctrine or the *analogia fidei*, including the Christian understanding of the divine nature, be found back in the Old Testament. For instance, when Paul cited the second Psalm in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-41), Junius insisted that the phrase "You are my Son, today I have begotten You" (Acts 13:33 cf. Psalms 2:7) not only indicated the Messiah, Jesus Christ, but also described the two natures of Christ - namely, his humanity and divinity.<sup>47</sup> The phrase "You are my Son" referred to his eternal generation from the Father as one of the divine persons. The phrase

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45 '... an quisquam est, obsecro, qui locum hunc diverso fine et argumento contendat allegari? Omnino enim id ipsum quod sibi olim Propheta voluit, docet Apostolus, demonstrans (ut verbis utamur Athanasii) vetera ex novis, et nova ex veteribus esse contestata.' Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum*, 1140.

46 See David Puckett's treatment of this tension in the section entitled "Problems with the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, 91-100. Also: Thompson, "Calvin as a Biblical Interpreter," 58-73. De Greef, "The Psalms," 90-95.

47 See parallel 95. Junius, *Sacrorum parallelorum*, 1.1084.

“today I have begotten You,” then spoke of the Son’s temporal generation as a man. To neglect to see the two natures of Jesus in this Psalm would be neglecting the *analogia fidei*. Not only did David understand the two natures of Christ, he understood clearly the triune nature of the godhead:

When he said, ‘I saw the Lord, or Jehovah, always before me,’ David testified that the person of Christ already existed at that time, as he who is the eternal Son of God and is likewise Jehovah in the unity of essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup>

Convinced that the New Testament Christological interpretation of the Old Testament did not bring anything to the text that had not already been there, Junius concluded that the doctrine of the Trinity had been entirely clear to the Old Testament reader. Therefore, as the rest of this chapter will indicate, Junius found himself in complete agreement with Zanchi’s argument for the doctrine of the Trinity from the Hebrew Scriptures. This agreement notwithstanding, it should be noted that Zanchi and Junius were driven to this consensus by differing motivations. For Zanchi, the conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity was succinctly confessed by the Hebrew phrase *Jehovah Elohim*, and had been understood as such by the Old Testament saints, provided a fitting answer to the strict biblicism of the antitrinitarians, which he had battled throughout his slow progression from northern Italian Catholicism to the Reformed church of the Palatinate. Buttressed by the testimony of Galatino, and the occasional hint in the Hebrew text that *Elohim* was intended to be understood *proprie*, Zanchi was convinced that the triunity of God had not been a novelty of the Apostles and Church Fathers, but had once been obvious to the Jewish reader by a plain reading of the Hebrew text and had been confessed by Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the saints of the Old Testament. Junius, although entirely like-minded on the question of whether *Jehovah Elohim* implied the doctrine of the Trinity, was less concerned with

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48 Ibid., 1.1070–1071.

accommodating the biblicism of the antitrinitarians, and was more driven by a desire to demonstrate that the Old and New Testaments both proclaimed the Christian faith in one simple and unified voice.

## 6.6 Drusius's *Parallels*

*On the other hand, in his Parallels, Drusius is uninterested in demonstrating a unity of meaning between the two testaments and indeed goes as far as describing the New Testament parallels as being completely divergent from the original Hebrew text.*

Drusius's interest in questions of grammar and his disinclination to become bogged down in the wranglings of theologians becomes very apparent when one contrasts his own *Parallela Sacra* with the *Sacrorum Parallelorum libri tres* of Junius. It is remarkable that both men composed and published in the same year (1588) such a unique and previously unattempted project, a text solely dedicated to comparing and contrasting Old Testament passages cited in the New Testament. Strangely, there appears to be no correspondence between the two men or any discussion of one another's work on the parallels.<sup>49</sup> However, although they had come from such similar worlds and published commentaries on parallel passages in the same year, their finished projects are dramatically dissimilar. Even the lists of passages considered to be "parallels" are at odds, as the two men differed on what constituted a parallel, and on which Old Testament passages the New Testament authors were citing. But even more significantly, whereas the work of Junius was clearly theologically motivated, driven by a desire to reconcile apparent contradictions in the New Testament citation of Old Testament texts, Drusius was far more interested in identifying and describing the kinds of variations between the texts, rather than he was in reconciling the contradictory interpretations.

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<sup>49</sup> FW Cuno, *Franciscus Junius de Ältere, Professor der Theologie und Pastor (1546-1602) sein Leben und Wirken, seine Schriften und Briefe* (Amsterdam, 1891), 203, n. 67.

Drusius began his *Parallela Sacra* with thirteen brief rules which he insisted should be kept in mind by the audience in order to read his parallels fruitfully.<sup>50</sup> Drusius points out that when the New Testament authors cited the Old Testament they were more concerned with preserving the sense of the Old Testament text than the exact words, since the sense was what mattered (canons 1, 5, and 7). He notes that the New Testament authors were prone to using the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew (canon 2). He concedes that many of the contradictions between the Old Testament passages and the New Testament citations of those passages had resulted from straightforward mistakes in the text (canons 6 and 11). After the thirteen rules, Drusius listed each of the Old Testament passages which appeared in the New Testament. The passages were listed in the order of their New Testament appearance, beginning with the Hebrew text, paralleled by Drusius's own Latin translation of the Hebrew. On the next page was Drusius's Latin translation of the corresponding New Testament citation, alongside the Greek original. His brief explanatory comments appear at the end of the entire work, taking up fewer than fifty pages. His comments focused almost entirely on the question of the nature of the variations between the Old Testament text and the New Testament citation of it, along with suggestions for how the variations may have come about. Drusius appears to have been rather indifferent to Junius's need to reconcile these variations.

For instance, Junius had laboured long to find an Old Testament source for Matt. 2:23, where the Gospel described Joseph's return to Nazareth as a fulfilment of a prophecy which could not actually be found in the Old Testament. Drusius began by dismissing the "branch" interpretation, which Junius had advocated (perhaps a clue that Drusius was aware of Junius's *Parallels*). Paying close attention to the morphology of the term, it was clear to Drusius that the prophecy had concerned a Nazarene, that is someone from the town of

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<sup>50</sup> Drusius, *Parallela Sacra*, 6–7.

Nazareth.<sup>51</sup> This meant that, despite Matthew's claim that Joseph's selection of Nazareth for a new home was a fulfilment of prophecy, according to Drusius's understanding of the text, this prophecy could be found nowhere in the Old Testament. Considering the citation of Hos. 11:1, ". . . out of Egypt I called my son . . ." quoted in Matt. 2:15, Junius took several pages to explain how it was that an Old Testament text, which seemed to be about the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, was actually a plain prophecy foretelling Jesus' travels from Egypt to Nazareth. When Drusius tackled the same text, however, his focus was on explaining the variations in the text between the Old Latin, the translation of Aquila, and Jerome. Drusius was unconcerned with the actual exegesis of the passage or with reconciling the New Testament's usage of the Old Testament passage with the Old Testament text's original context.

## 6.7 *Biblia Sacra*

*Together with Immanuel Tremellius, Junius published the immensely influential Biblia Sacra (1575-1579), which provided significant support for Zanchi's trinitarian reading of the Hebrew text, promulgating throughout its footnotes the exegetical arguments of De Tribus Elohim.*

The approaches of Junius and of Drusius to these parallel passages illustrate the tension between the theological and grammatical readings. Junius came to the Old Testament text presupposing the theology of a Christian informed by the New Testament. Drusius exemplified the grammatical approach – reluctant to affirm anything that could not be demonstrated from a plain reading of the text, situated in its historical context. That these two men approached the Hebrew Old Testament text with such varying presuppositions about the proper way to exegete the Old Testament goes some way towards explaining why they had such divergent opinions on this question of interpretation of the name *Elohim*. The following several sections focus on a handful of works by Junius and Drusius which address the

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51 Ibid., 82.

question of the proper interpretation of the name *Elohim*, illustrating just how widely the approaches to the Old Testament taken by these two men diverge.

The first significant piece of exegetical work to be published by Junius was the *Biblia Sacra*,<sup>52</sup> produced when he served as an assistant to the Old Testament Professor of the University of Heidelberg, Immanuel Tremellius. This new Latin translation of the Old Testament was published by Andreas Wechel in Frankfurt in five volumes – the first (containing the Pentateuch) appearing in 1575 and the second (containing the historical books) appearing in 1576. The third volume (poetical books), fourth volume (prophetical books), and the fifth volume (Apocrypha) all appeared in 1579.<sup>53</sup> This translation of Tremellius and Junius was paired with Tremellius’s Latin translation of the New Testament from the Syriac, as well as (in later editions) Beza’s translation of the New Testament from the Greek.

Each book of the Old Testament began with an *argumentum*, a short summary of the main points of the book to follow. Each chapter was then introduced with an additional heading, giving a summary of the argument of the chapter. In the margin of each page, Junius and Tremellius included notes, referenced within the text with superscript letters, which supplied more literal approximations of the Hebrew text and cross references to other relevant biblical passages. Then, at the end of each chapter (or at the end of several chapters) appeared the *annotatio*, a collection of brief comments on individual verses of the text, referenced within the text with superscript numbers.

Aside from the fifth volume of the Tremellius-Junius Bible (the Apocrypha, which Junius produced on his own after Tremellius’s departure from Heidelberg) the *Biblia Sacra* was

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52 Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra, sive, Libri canonici priscae Iudaeorum ecclesiae a Deo traditi* (Frankfurt: Wechel, 1575).

53 For more on the publication of the Junius-Tremellius Bible, see R.J.W. Evans, “The Wechel Presses: Humanism and Calvinism in Central Europe 1572-1627,” *Past and Present: Supplement 2* (1975): 41–42. Kenneth Austin, “Immanuel Tremellius’ Latin Bible (1575-79) as a Pillar of the Calvinistic Faith,” in *Print and Power in France and England, 1500-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 27-38.

a shared project and it is impossible to distinguish the contributions of Tremellius from the work of Junius. Kenneth Austin, though acknowledging Junius's expertise in the Hebrew tongue, notes that Tremellius was clearly the senior member of the team, and he then carries on to treat the text as if it were primarily the work of Tremellius.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, during the years 1573 to 1578, Junius was solely occupied with this mammoth translation project, while Tremellius was forced to split his time between teaching Old Testament and Hebrew to the students of the University and overseeing the Bible translation. Even if Tremellius's role was the more senior, the *Biblia Sacra* still represented five years of Junius's focused labour. The comments interspersed between the *argumenta* and the *annotatio* represent at most the actual view of Junius and at least the teaching of the man whom Junius closely assisted for five years.

The *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra*<sup>55</sup> would soon become the most popular Protestant Latin Bible outside of the Vulgate. In Kenneth Austin's study of the *Biblia Sacra*, he concludes that the *Biblia Sacra* of Junius and Tremellius was "the foremost Protestant Latin translation of the period."<sup>56</sup> The lasting significance of this work of Junius and Tremellius can be illustrated by a short summary of the many subsequent editions that the translation went through. Austin records thirty-four editions, beginning with the first edition of 1575-1579 and stretching to the last appearance in 1715, published in Frankfurt, London, Geneva, Hanau, Amsterdam, and Zurich.<sup>57</sup>

The fact that this project was begun the year following the publication of *De Tribus Elohim*, and little more than a year after the execution of Sylvan, places the Old Testament exegetical labours of Junius and Tremellius for their *Biblia Sacra* in the context of Heidelberg's

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54 Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 146–147.

55 Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra, sive, Libri canonici priscae Judaeorum ecclesiae a Deo traditi, latini recens ex hebraeo facti, brevibusque* (Frankfurt: Wechel, 1575). All subsequent citations of the *Biblia Sacra* are taken from Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius, *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra* (Frankfurt: Wechel, 1609).

56 Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510-1580)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 145–146.

57 Austin, "Immanuel Tremellius' Latin Bible (1575-79) as a Pillar of the Calvinistic Faith," 32–33.

antitrinitarian controversy. Given this context, Kenneth Austin's observations about the trinitarian focus of the annotations in the *Biblia Sacra* are particularly significant. Austin observes that although the comments of Junius and Tremellius are marked by a ". . . disinclination to become involved in confessional polemic . . ."58 he finds that the one significant exception to this rule is the constant discovery of references to the deity of Christ and to the three persons of the Trinity throughout the commentary. Austin concludes his description of the Trinitarian references in the *Biblia Sacra* with the observation that ". . . given the low level of exegesis throughout his annotations, this is still highly noteworthy."59

It was mentioned in the first chapter that a decade after the execution of Sylvan, Matthias Vehe insisted that the antitrinitarians had once inquired of Tremellius whether the doctrine of the Trinity could be proven from the Old Testament. In that account, Vehe had claimed that Tremellius had answered: "He did not find anything strong in them to prove such a thing, therefore he believes it is founded on the writings of the New Testament and no other reason."60 However, as Austin's comments above indicate, the *Biblia Sacra* reveals a very different answer. A comparison of Junius and Tremellius' *Biblia Sacra* with Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* shows that there was actually a close correspondence between the trinitarian arguments of Zanchi (third professorship of Theology) and the exegesis of Tremellius (second professorship of Theology) and his assistant Junius.

Right from the start, the *annotatio* of the *Biblia Sacra* for Gen. 1:1 explained that the name *Elohim* should be understood as signifying "One essence, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: as is demonstrated by the Hebrew expression."61 Throughout the *Biblia Sacra*,

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58 Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 166.

59 Ibid., 165.

60 'Er finde nichts kräftiges in inen solches zu beweren, dan das er es glaub glaube er es von wägen der schriften des newen testaments und sonst umb keiner andern ursach willen.' Matthias Vehe, "Apology," in *Matthias Vehe-Glirius* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 280.

61 'Unus essentia, personae tres, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus: ut Hebraea voce ostenditur.' Tremellius and Junius, *Biblia Sacra*, 1.

the reader was continually reminded of this Trinitarian interpretation. In book two of Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*, a book dedicated to demonstrating the deity of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, of the fifty-seven different Old Testament *loci* used by Zanchi to make his point, forty-four of those passages are picked up in the *annotatio* of Junius and Tremellius to make the same point about the deity of the Christ.<sup>62</sup> From the plural noun *Elohim* joined to a singular verb in Gen. 1:1, to the eternally begotten wisdom of Prov. 8:22, Tremellius and Junius were in full agreement with Zanchi's arguments for the deity of the Son drawn from the Old Testament. Of those thirteen passages where Tremellius and Junius do not follow Zanchi's interpretation, several of them are still taken messianically in the comments of the *Biblia Sacra*. They merely fail to use those passages to draw attention to either the dual nature of the Messiah or the plurality of persons within the one divine essence (for instance – Ezek. 36:22 and Mic. 7:18). All of the texts in which Zanchi found a plurality of divine persons in the grammar of the Hebrew text (by means of a plural verb or adjective joined with the name *Elohim*) appear with an identical interpretation in the notes of Tremellius and Junius. Thus they take the plural verb in Gen. 20:13 to be a direct reference to the three divine persons, just as Zanchi had – *התעו אתי אלהים*, “Gods made [plu.] me to wander.” The same plurality was declared by the adjective in Josh. 24:19 – *כי אלהים קדשים הוא*, “For Gods is holy [plu.].” And again by the plural verb in 2 Sam. 7:23 – *הלכו אלהים* “Gods went [plu.].” And the plural noun “makers” also served to confirm the doctrine of the Trinity in Psa. 149:2 – *ישמחו ישראל* “Let Israel rejoice in its makers” and Isa. 54:5 – *כי בעליך עשיך יהוה צבאות שמו*, “For your

<sup>62</sup> The passages which Junius and Tremellius interpret the same way as Zanchi are – Gen. 1:1 (including Zanchi's further references to Gen. 20:13, Psa. 149:2, and Isa. 54:5, but not Isa. 44:24), Gen. 12:1, Gen. 17, 18, Gen. 22:1, Gen. 31:11, Gen. 32:9, 24, Gen. 48:15, Exod. 3:2 (w/ Exod. 20:2), Josh. 1:1 (w/ Jos. 24:19), Judg. 6:12, 2 Sam. 7:23, Psa. 2:7, Psa. 45:1, Psa. 68:8, Psa. 95:8, Pr. 8:22, Pr. 30:4, Job 19:25, Isa. 6:1, Isa. 7:14, Isa. 8:13, Isa. 9:6 [misprinted as 6:9], Isa. 25:7, Isa. 35:45, Isa. 40:3, 10, 12, Isa. 43:10, 11, 23, Isa. 44:6, Isa. 45:22, Isa. 54:1, Isa. 62:1, Jer. 23:14, Jer. 31:31, Dan. 2:1, Hos. 1:7, Hos. 12:4, Obad. 17, Mic. 4:1, Mic. 5:2, Hag. 2:10, Zec. 2:8, Zec. 3:1, Zec. 12:10, Mal. 3:1, and Mic. 7:18. Junius and Tremellius don't include Zanchi's interpretation at Gen. 26:2, Num. 12:6, Judg. 2:1 (w/ 4:14), Jer. 9:23, Ezek. 16:60, Ezek. 36:22, Hos. 2:19, Hos. 6:1, Hos. 13:4, 14, Hos. 14:2, Mic. 7:18, Joel 2:28, and Mic. 2:12.

husbands are your makers, Jehovah of hosts is his name.”

In fact, the *Biblia Sacra* included a number of other similar arguments which had been overlooked by Zanchi. For instance, Job 35:10 reads – ולא אמר איה אלוה עשי , “But no one says, ‘where is God my makers [plu].’” The marginal notation in the *Biblia Sacra* reads, “According to the Hebrew, ‘Who made [plu.] me’: as in Gen. 1:26, indicating the persons of the holy Trinity.”<sup>63</sup> Another hint at the plurality of persons within the divine essence is seen in Jer. 10:10, where the Hebrew has הוא אלהים חיים ומלך עולם “He is the living [plu] *Elohim* and the eternal king.” Tremellius’s and Junius’s notes call attention to the fact that חיים, “living,” is literally *viventes*.<sup>64</sup> At Gen. 35:7, כי שם נגלו אליו האלהים, “because there *Elohim* appeared [plu] to him,” another note in the margin explains that the phrase should literally be rendered *revelavissent*, the plural verb having been intended to communicate the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>65</sup> Either Tremellius’s opinion had shifted significantly over the few years between his initial answer to the questions of the antitrinitarians in Heidelberg and the publication the first volume of the *Biblia Sacra* or, more likely, Vehe’s later recollection of Tremellius’s answer was less than accurate.

The fact that Tremellius and Junius placed many of these comments in the margin, a position used primarily to provide more literal approximations of the Hebrew text, suggested to their readers that the triunity of God was not just their interpretation of the text, but was actually made clear by a more literal reading of the Hebrew text. Furthermore, the immense popularity of the *Biblia Sacra* throughout the Protestant world ensured broad and lasting adherence amongst Protestant churches to the notion that the trinitarian reading of the word *Elohim* was the proper interpretation of the word.

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63 'He. qui fecerunt me: ut Genes. 1:26. respiciens ad personas sanctae triadis.' Tremellius and Junius, *Biblia Sacra*, 467.

64 Ibid., 709.

65 Ibid., 47. cf. Ibid., 29.

## 6.8 Junius's *Defensio*

With greater skill as a Hebraist, Junius was well equipped to further the exegetical argument of Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*.

Having returned from Neustadt to Heidelberg in 1584 in order to take up his professorship in the theology faculty of the university, Junius continued to defend the course set by Zanchi. As a more accomplished Hebraist than Zanchi, Junius was better equipped to deal with some of the antitrinitarian responses to the arguments set forth by Zanchi in *De Tribus Elohim*. In

1590, Junius published three volumes under the title *Defensio Catholicae doctrinae de S.*

*Trinitate personarum in unitate essentiae Dei*,<sup>66</sup> which responded to three different antitrinitarian polemical works. The first volume answered an antitrinitarian work entitled "An

Enumeration of the Chief Reasons Why Christians, whilst Shifting and Changing in Many Religious Doctrines, Are Nevertheless Constant in Retaining the Doctrine of the Trinity."<sup>67</sup>

This work has been alternatively attributed to Lelio Sozzini, Fausto Sozzini, and Christian

Francken.<sup>68</sup> The second volume was in answer to "A Letter Which the Arian Student Writes to his Orthodox Instructor,"<sup>69</sup> often attributed to Christian Francken.<sup>70</sup> The third volume

addressed "A brief exposition of the first chapter of the Gospel of John, by an unnamed

author."<sup>71</sup> Mihály Balázs has identified this *Explicatio* as a variation of a work that first

appeared in the Transylvanian city of Gyulafehérvár, in the printing shop of Hoffhalter, a

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66 Franciscus Junius, *Defensio Catholicae doctrinae de S. Trinitate personarum in unitate essentiae Dei* (Heidelberg: Commelinus, 1590) and subsequently appearing in Junius's *Opera*: Franciscus Junius, "Defensio Catholicae Doctrinae de S Trinitate Personarum in Unitate Essentiae Dei," in *Opera Theologica*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Geneva: Caldorianus, 1607), 1-228 and Franciscus Junius, "Defensio Catholicae Doctrinae De S. Trinitate," in *Opera Theologica*, vol. 1 (Geneva: Peter & Jacob Chovet, 1613), 3-228. Subsequent citations of Junius's *Defensio* will be taken from the *Opera* which appeared in 1613.

67 *Praecipuarum Enumeratio Causarum, Cur Christiani, Cum In Multis Religionis Doctrinis Mobiles Sint Et Varii, In Trinitatis tamen retinendo dogmate sint constantissimi.*

68 See Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography, or Sketches of the lives and writings of Distinguished Antitrinitarians* (London: Whitfield, 1850), 94.

69 *Epistola quam Praeceptoris orthodoxo scripsit Discipulus Arianus.*

70 See Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, 206–207.

71 *Brevis Explicatio in primum caput Evangelii Ioannis, sine auctoris nomine.*

shop known for printing antitrinitarian works. The *Explicatio* was later printed in 1618 in Raków and in the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, listed as the work of Fausto Sozzini.<sup>72</sup>

In the second of these three volumes, Junius dealt with several objections which were levelled specifically at Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim*. Here Junius's superior skill as a Hebraist began to show. Aware of the argument once made by the Jewish grammarian David Kimhi, who had insisted that the plural ending of *Elohim* was merely a *pluralis maiestatis* or *excellantiae* rather than a plural *proprie*, Junius provided a more elaborate and more grammatically focused defence for his interpretation of the name *Elohim*.<sup>73</sup> First, Junius granted the possibility of Kimhi's explanation, admitting that the plural was often used for Hebrew nouns for the sake of honour or for the sake of *sylllepsis* (in this context, a situation where one word is joined to two others despite the fact that it only fits one grammatically).<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, it also remained true, obviously, that plural Hebrew nouns could still be used to indicate a true plurality. In fact, when one studied the language closely, a simple rule would be discovered which would demand that any plural noun in the first person be interpreted

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72 Mihály Balázs, *Early Transylvanian Antitrinitarianism (1566-1571): From Servet to Palaeologus.*, trans. Öyörgy Novák (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1996), XXX.

73 Kimhi's argument had appeared in his *Miklol*.

"And some use the language of respect for the singular, such as - ". . . gain understanding and then we will speak" (Job 18:2), ". . . we are regarded as a beast, we are considered unclean in your eyes" (Job 18:3). "Draw me, we will run after you. . . We will be glad and we will rejoice. . . we will remember your love more than wine. . ." (Song 1:4). "And Absalom said to Ahithophel, 'You [pl] give counsel what we should do.'" (2 Sam. 16:20). And some interpreters understand also - "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." (Gen. 1:26) My master, my father of blessed memory, interpreted it that he was speaking about the four foundations, when he said (at the hour of creation). "Let the earth send forth" (Gen. 1:12), "Let the earth sprout" (Gen. 1:11), "Let the waters swarm" (Gen. 1:20), But with Adam he desired to give him the most high spirit. Therefore he said "let us make" and thus "in our image." The spirit is the image of the heavenly beings and the body is the image of the earthly beings. Also the language of respect is used in Aramaic. "We will tell its interpretation before the king," (Dan. 2:36). And other ones beside it. And thus it is the practice in other languages to use language of respect for the singular. And so the singular speech is applied to the plural. And this manner of speaking is a common practice."

ויש שיבואו בלשון תפארת ליחיד כמו תבינו ואחר נדבר נחשבנו כבחמה נטמינו בעיניכם משכני אחרך גרוצה נגילה ונשמחה נזכירה דודיך מין ויאמר אבשלום אל אחיתופל הבו לכם עצה מה נעשה ויש מפרשים כן נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו ואדוני אבי זל פירשו כי הוא מדבר נגד ארבעה יסודות כי אמר (בשאר הבריות) תוצא הארץ תדשא הארץ ישרצו המים ובאדם רצה לתת בו רוח עליונה לפיכך אמר נעשה וכן בצלמנו הרוח בצלם העליונים והגוף בצלם התחתונים וכן יבא בלשון תפארת בארמי ופשרה נאמר קדם מלכא ואחרים זולתו וכן מנהג בשאר לשונות לדבר בלשון תפארת ליחיד ויש שיבא לשון יחיד על רבים והוא דרך כלל

David Kimhi, *Sefer Miklol*, ed. Eli Levita (Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1545), 8.

74 For *sylllepsis* Junius provides the example of Isa. 1:3. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass knows the manger of his masters."

*proprie*.

In Hebrew, you can never speak about the singular in the first person with the plural, in other persons you can and it is used elegantly: However, in Hebrew the plural in the first person is used for God . . . While the Hebrews affirm this first proposition, so also teaches Ibn Ezra, easily the best of the Hebrew Grammarians: and many passages in Scripture also clearly testify. The first person to have opposed this well known and thoroughly established rule was R David Kimhi, having been carried away by a hatred of the Holy Trinity: for he both denies and fights the Trinity everywhere, and distorts some examples in order to weaken this rule in his *Miklol*.<sup>75</sup>

In his *Miklol*, Kimhi supplied four examples which seemed to violate Ibn Ezra's rule that the plural could not be used figuratively in the first person: Job 18:2-3, 2 Sam. 16:20, Dan. 2:24, and Song of Songs 1:4. The first three of these texts, Junius insisted, used the plural *proprie*, since the speaker was referring to himself and his companions together. For instance, when Bildad spoke in Job 18:2-3, saying תְּבִינּוּ וְאַחַר כֵּן נִדְבַר - "gain understanding and afterward we will speak," the plural verb "we will speak" was not indicating Bildad's great splendour, but rather was referring to Bildad and his companions. And in the last example, Song of Songs 1:4, Junius understood the plural subject in the response of the Shulamite to the king אֶחָדֶיךָ נָרוּצָה נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בְּךָ . . . . . "we will run after you . . . we will be glad and rejoice in you . . ." to be used by way of *syllipsis*, an individual speaking as a representative member of a larger body; in this case, an individual saint speaking on behalf of the church. With Kimhi's four counter examples dismissed, Junius insisted that Ibn Ezra's rule still stood: any plural noun in the first person, must be understood *proprie*. Having re-established Ibn Ezra's rule, Junius could continue to the second half of his syllogism.

But it is thoroughly established that this name, as well as others, is spoken by God

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75 'Plurale de singulari Hebraice in prima persona dici nunquam potest, in aliis personis potest, eleganterque dicitur: Plurale autem de Deo etiam in prima persona dicitur Hebraice . . . Priorem propositionem cum Hebraei confirmant, tum Hebraeorum Grammaticorum facile princeps Abben Hezra docet luculentissime: et loci quoque Scripturae evincunt manifesto. Primus huic certissimae exploratissimaeque regulae est adversatus R. David Kimchi, abreptus sanctae Trinitatis odio: nam et Trinitatem passim negat oppugnatque, et ad infirmandum hanc regulam nonnullis exemplis in suo Miclol abutitur.' Junius, "Defensio Catholicae Doctrinae De S. Trinitate," 70–71.

himself in the plural first person, as when God said, “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness”: Gen. 1:26. “Behold, man is like one of us”: Gen. 3:22. “Come let us go down that we may confuse their language.” Gen. 11:7 etc. “I am Jehovah your God” Exod. 20:2. . . . And therefore, the plural is used of the singular, and the singular is used of the plural truthfully and properly. . .<sup>76</sup>

This plural must be *proprie*, indicating a true plurality of persons.

Once it had been established that the name *Elohim* was plural *proprie*, Junius considered the particular significance of its use in the Hebrew text. Just as Zanchi had seen a special focus on the works of the three persons of the Trinity when the name *Elohim* appeared in passages describing creation and redemption, Junius also concluded that the use of the name *Elohim* was intended to focus the reader’s attention on the individual works of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Junius demonstrated this by discussing the use of repetition in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew authors made use of repetition for one of four reasons: in order to intensify a word or phrase, to avoid ambiguity, to demonstrate the distribution of a preceding noun, or for the sake of *hyperbaton* (the fronting of a word for the sake of emphasis). Each of these repetitions Junius considered to be figurative, a repetition which, although serving a rhetorical end, gave no new information about the word repeated. If a repetition did not fit one of these four purposes, Junius contended, the repetition was *proprie*, meaning that the repetition added significant new meaning.

In Deut. 6:1-2 (leading up to the *Shma* in 6:4), the Hebrew text reads: וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֲקִים

וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם ... לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ

– “and this is the commandment, the statutes, and the judgements which Jehovah your *Elohim* has commanded to teach you . . . in order that you might fear Jehovah your *Elohim*.”

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76 'Plurale autem hoc nomen aliaque in persona prima ab ipso Deo enunciari omnino constat: ut quum Deus diceret, faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram, secundum nostram similitudinem: Genes. 1.26. Ecce homo sicut unus e nobis: Genes. 3.22. agite descendamus, ut confundamus linguam eorum etc. Genes. 11.7. Ego sum Iehova Elohim tuus, etc. Exod. 20.2. . . . Ac propterea plurale de singulari, et singulare de plurali vere atque proprie enunciat. . . ' Ibid., 71.

Here the repetition of *Elohim* fit none of Junius's four purposes, leading him to conclude that the repetition was intended as a plural *proprie*.

So you will say why did Moses not say plainly that you are to fear him? Naturally he seeks to impress upon us the distinction of persons and the divine economy or arrangement: because God does not only teach and instruct us with his laws as one in essence merely that we are to fear him, but, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as they are distinct persons, teaches the laws of the divine essence and of the persons, whereby we may fear those persons in one essence. And without this repetition as used by Moses, this entire distinction, however crucial, would have been hardly noticed by the faithful: and how much less would it have been believed by the unfaithful and contentious?<sup>77</sup>

This deliberate stress on the plurality of *Elohim* in verses 1-2, combined with the assertion of the divine unity in the *Shma* of verse 4 therefore created a complete statement of the mystery of the Trinity in the first few verses of Deuteronomy 6.

When the anonymous antitrinitarian, presumably Christian Francken, accused Zanchi of advocating tritheism (since to him the phrase *tribus Elohim* surely meant nothing less than three Gods), Junius responded by asking if his opponent had read any more of Zanchi's work than the title page.<sup>78</sup> Zanchi had insisted throughout his work, Junius explained, that God was one. The "three-ness" of God described in the phrase *tribus Elohim* therefore, must have been referring to a plurality that did not violate the divine unity. The name *Elohim*, a common name and not proper to God, denoted the eminence or majesty of a ruler. As a plural noun, the name indicated a common property shared equally between a plurality of persons. Nevertheless, there was still only one common eminent and majestic essence, which was shared by these plural persons. Junius then paired a list of passages in which the divine name

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77 'Cur ergo, inquires, non dixit Moses simpliciter, ut reverearis ipsum? Nempe ut hanc ipsam distinctionem personarum et oeconomiam seu dispositionem divinam inculcaret: quia Deus non solum ut essentia unus praecipit et docet iura sua ut revereamur ipsum, sed Deus Pater, Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, ut personae distinctae sunt, iura divinae essentiae personarumque docet, quo revereamur personas ipsas in unitate essentiae. Sine hac autem repetitione quam adhibuit Moses, tota haec distinctio, quamvis pernecessaria, vix animadversa a piis esset: quanto minus ab impiis et contradicentibus credita?' Ibid., 72.

78 Ibid., 81.

*Jehovah Elohim* was treated as grammatically singular (Gen. 1:1, 2:1, Isa. 52:12) with a list of passages where the phrase was treated as plural, that is passages which linked plural adjectives and verbs with the name *Elohim* (Gen. 20:13, Josh. 24:19, Isa. 54:5, Jer. 10:10), thus demonstrating that the plurality of *Elohim*, though plural *proprie*, was unlike any other plurality in that it combined multiple persons in one singular essence.

Although Junius's confidence that the phrase *Jehovah Elohim* indicated the triunity of God was identical to Zanchi's position, his ability to make the case from the Hebrew grammar exceeded that of his Italian colleague. Zanchi had contented himself with dismissing the arguments of Kimhi as "trifling" and "not supported by Scripture." Junius, on the other hand, appealed to a difference of opinion between the Hebrew grammarians Kimhi and Ibn Ezra, and sided with Ibn Ezra after demonstrating that Kimhi's exceptions failed to overturn Ibn Ezra's rule. Junius also provided a more sophisticated description of precisely how a plural noun could describe a singular essence. He thus strengthened the argument that the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than being discovered in the Old Testament by means of allegory, could be derived from a *proprie* reading of the Hebrew Scriptures according to the simple rules of the Hebrew language. The words of Hamon L'Estrange, though spoken in another context, summarize the role of Junius well: "Where Zanchy brake off, the explication is continued and supplied by the thrice-excellent Junius, who resolveth it thus. . ." <sup>79</sup>

### 6.9 Drusius's *Elohim*

*In 1604, Drusius described the question of whether or not the Hebrew divine name Elohim indicated a plurality of persons within the divine nature as having provoked an ugly controversy that raged within the small world of Reformed exegesis. Drusius, himself, published several works defending a more grammatical reading of the Hebrew text.*

Given Drusius's reputation as a skilled Hebraist, it is unsurprising that he was eventually

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<sup>79</sup> Hamon L'Estrange, *God's Sabbath* (Cambridge: Rodger Daniel, 1641), 37.

dragged into the debate over whether or not Zanchi's defence of the doctrine of the Trinity from the name *Jehovah Elohim* was tenable. In 1604, Drusius published two books, one entitled *Tetragrammaton* and the other entitled *Elohim*. In the first, Drusius addressed a group of men whom he dubbed the *Jehovistae*,<sup>80</sup> who followed Galatinus in asserting that the four letters of the divine name should be pronounced *Jehovah*. Drusius insisted that prior to Galatinus, this pronunciation had been unknown and furthermore, that the pronunciation was erroneous. In the second book, Drusius tackled the question of the implication of the plural ending on the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Here he challenged the opinion of the *Elohistaе*, his nickname for his opponents on this matter,<sup>81</sup> who argued that the apparent plurality of the Hebrew word *Elohim* implied the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>82</sup>

Drusius's *Elohim*, a short work barely exceeding one hundred pages including front matter and footnotes, began with a dedicatory letter to Paul Scovartus and a letter to the reader. Both letters described Drusius's various interactions over the preceding years with the argument for the Trinity from the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Drusius recalled having first been consulted sixteen years previously (roughly 1588, the same year that the texts of Junius and Drusius on the parallel passages appeared), about the significance of the word *Elohim* by a certain doctor of Theology who had been influenced during his time in Germany by the teachings of Zanchi and Junius. Drusius had responded at that time that the argument for the trinitarian reading of *Elohim* was weak and he had briefly given the arguments for his opinion. Drusius went on to explain how, several years later, he received an inquiry from Jacob Montanus, a former student of his, on the subject of the word *Elohim*. He responded to Montanus with six arguments against the trinitarian reading of *Elohim* and the letter was

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80 Joannes Drusius, *Tetragrammaton: sive de nomine Dei proprio, quod Tetragrammaton vocent: accesserunt additamenta epistolarum aliquot et notae* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1604), 12.

81 Johannes Drusius, *Tetragrammaton sive de Nomine Dei Proprio, quod Tetragrammaton vocant* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1604), iv.

82 Johannes Drusius, *Elohim sive de nomine Dei אלהים* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1604).

subsequently printed in his *De Quaesitis per Epistolam* (1595).<sup>83</sup>

In this letter to Montanus Drusius argued, in the first instance, that the word *Elohim* was often used in Scripture to refer to angels, judges, and even idols. How could the word be used to refer to these beings if the word was specifically intended to reveal God's triune nature? Secondly, in Exod. 32:4 the single golden calf was introduced by Aaron with the plural *Elohim*. Surely, Aaron did not intend to communicate that the calf was triune?<sup>84</sup> Thirdly, it would seem that Psa. 45:8 used the word *Elohim* to refer exclusively to the Father<sup>85</sup> (particularly in light of Heb. 1:8-9), and Hos. 1:7 used *Elohim* for the Son.<sup>86</sup> How could the Father on his own, or the Son on his own, be referred to by a word intended to signify a plurality of persons? Fourthly, the testimony throughout Scripture is that God is one. Therefore, *Elohim* must truly be singular. Fifthly, *Elohim* has always been translated in the singular – as God and not as Gods. If the word *Elohim* really did indicate plurality, then the best translation would be “Gods.” And lastly, *Elohim* is almost always treated as grammatically singular, which would indicate that the word was actually intended to be understood as a simple singular.<sup>87</sup>

In his preface to the book *Elohim*, Drusius maintained that his initial impression had been that he alone was unconvinced by the argument for the Trinity from the word *Elohim*. The question had been debated for six hundred years and almost every theologian to have offered his opinion on it had weighed in on the side of Lombard and Lyra, for whom the plural ending on *Elohim* did refer to a plurality of persons within the godhead. Drusius insisted that he had stood alone as the self-proclaimed “critical grammarian,”<sup>88</sup> who had

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83 Johannes Drusius, *De Quaesitis per Epistolam* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1595).

84 Drusius had previously made this argument at greater length in: Johannes Drusius, *Miscellanea Locutionum Sacrarum* (Frankfurt: Radaeus, 1586).

85 עַל כֵּן מְשַׁחֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵיךְ

86 וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּים בְּיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

87 Johannes Drusius, *De Quaesitis*, 128–131.

88 *grammaticus criticus* Johannes Drusius, *Elohim*, 3.

stepped wide of the traditional interpretation and had seemingly stumbled into heresy. After the publication of *De Quaesitis*, however, although many of the “unlearned” were displeased by his arguments, Drusius began to hear of various theologians who were in agreement with his position. Through correspondence, Drusius was supplied with a number of citations from other theologians supporting his skepticism about the trinitarian reading of the word *Elohim*, which enabled him to strengthen his position.

At this point, a “not very beautiful controversy” arose within the circle of scholars inhabited by Drusius. Despite the fact that Drusius had said nothing about the word *Elohim* other than that which had been said by Bellarmine, Calvin, Daneau, and Cajetan,<sup>89</sup> still his denial of any trinitarian implications of the word had earned him the condemnation of many theologians. In the aforementioned *De Hasidaeis* (1603), Drusius described how his opinion regarding the word *Elohim* had earned this censure for himself. He lamented the proclivity of theologians to quickly resort to charges of heresy: “. . . if someone writes or says something, which they do not understand, or which they did not learn from their Teachers, the name heresy will soon appear. They protect themselves by this shield, since they cannot defend themselves in another way.”<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, Drusius could now claim the support of a number of theologians throughout the Christian church. He was able to draw from the testimony of the Dominican Thomas Cajetan, whose commentary on Genesis (1531) began with a negative evaluation of the argument for the Trinity from the Hebrew name *Elohim*.<sup>91</sup> Soon he was also able to claim

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89 Johannes Drusius, *De Hasidaeis, quorum mentio in libris Machabaeorum libellus ad Iohan. Utenbogardum.*, 24.

90 '. . . si quis aliquid scribat aut dicat, quod isti non intelligunt, aut a Magistris suis non didicerunt, in promptu esse nomen *haeresis*. Hoc scuto se tuentur, cum aliter se defendere non possunt.' *Ibid.*, 24–25.

91 Thomas Cajetan, *In Pentateucham Mosis iuxta Sensum quem dicunt literalem commentarii* (Rome: Antonius Bladus, 1531), 2–3. For more on Cajetan's treatment of *Elohim* and the subsequent charges of “judaizing” that his exegesis gave rise to, see Jared Wicks, “Catholic Old Testament Interpretation in the Reformation and Early Confessional Eras,” in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Saebo, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vadenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008), 617–623.

the support of another Catholic, the Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine.<sup>92</sup> An acquaintance passed on several references within the commentaries of Calvin where the Genevan gave a similar opinion: another friend passed on helpful citations from the works of Lambert Daneau, of the University of Leiden, whose commentary on Lombard's *Sententiae* expressed doubts about the Master of Sentences's interpretation of the word *Elohim*.<sup>93</sup> And in the commentary on Genesis by Jean Mercier, a tremendously influential Hebraist from the Collège de France, Drusius found additional support for his position.<sup>94</sup> Jacob Montanus, his former student, pointed out the argument which Junius had made in his *Defensio* from Ibn Ezra's rule, that the Hebrew plural cannot be used for a singular in the first person, while another acquaintance, Daniel Plancius, suggested an answer to Ibn Ezra's rule. And in the commentaries of both Ibn Ezra and Kimhi, Drusius gathered a number of other arguments for the proper interpretation of the name *Elohim*. Thus ecumenically buttressed by the testimonies of Catholics, Protestants, and Jewish rabbis, Drusius was prepared to produce a fuller defence of his position – though it would be almost a full decade between the appearance of his brief letter in *Quaesitis* and the publication of its expansion in *Elohim*.

Drusius began the body of *Elohim* with a few initial comments about the orthography of the word, and a discussion of whether or not the word *Elohim* was a common or proper noun. He then turned his attention to the significance of the plural ending of the word. First, Calvin and Zanchi had to be corrected. Both of these men had mistakenly followed Lombard's claim that *Elohim* was the plural form of the singular noun *El*. More precisely, Drusius insisted, the singular of *Elohim*, אֱלֹהִים, was the rare form *Eloha*, אֱלֹהַ.<sup>95</sup> And the

92 Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes Roberti Bellarmini* (Paris: Tri-Adelphorus, 1608), 1.322–326.

93 Lambert Daneau, *In Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis (qui Magister Sententiarum appellatur) librum primum Sententiarum, qui est de vero Deo, essentia quidem uno: personis autem trino* (Geneva: Vignon, 1580), 42.

94 Jean Mercier, *In Genesin* (Geneva: Matthaeus Berjon, 1598), 6–7.

95 For examples of this form see Deut. 32:17, Psa. 32:18, and Job 12:6.

plural form of *El*, אֱל, would in fact be *Elim*, אֱלִים.<sup>96</sup> The name *Elohim*, derived from an entirely different root than *El*, was a noun, sometimes proper and sometimes not, which communicated the idea of “judgement.” So taught R. Salomo in his commentary on Exod. 14:19, R. Kimhi in his commentary on Psa. 4, and Ibn Ezra in his comments on Gen. 1:1.<sup>97</sup> The word communicated care or attention to the things of mankind.

The word *Elohim* sometimes referred to truly plural entities – pagan gods who were not really gods (Exod. 22:20, Psa. 96:5, Isa. 44:6, and 45:5), stars (Job 38:7), angels (Psa. 97:7), and men when they stood in the office of judge (Psa. 82:6). But Drusius also insisted that the word *Elohim* could be used to refer to singular beings. The angel of the Lord was described as *Elohim* (Judg. 13:22), just as the golden calf wrought by Aaron (Exod. 32:31), the idol Dagon (Judg. 16:17), and possibly the god Chemosh (Ruth 1:16). Moses had been designated as *Elohim* to Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1), as was the singular ark to the camp of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:7). And in these instances where *Elohim* described a singular being, the word could also be constructed as singular or plural.

To illustrate this, Drusius took several of the Hebrew passages which Zanchi had used to show that the Old Testament authors were aware that the word *Elohim* was plural *proprie*, and then paired them with other passages that were nearly identical, save that they treated *Elohim* as grammatically singular. For instance, 2 Kings 19:16 referred to אֱלֹהִים חַי (living [sing.] *Elohim*), in comparison to אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים (living [pl.] *Elohim*) in Deut. 5:26. 1 Sam. 6:20 described God as אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשׁ הוּא (the holy [sing.] *Elohim*), which was nearly replicated in Josh. 24:19 as אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים הוּא (the holy [pl. *Elohim*]). Nevertheless, in all of these passages the meaning of the word *Elohim* is singular, despite the sometimes plural construction.

Had the plural name *Elohim* been intended to signify a plurality of persons, Drusius

<sup>96</sup> For examples of this form see Exod. 15:15, Psa. 29:11, and Job 41:17.

<sup>97</sup> Johannes Drusius, *Elohim*, 4–6.

argued, the result would be a confusion of the persons of the Trinity, rather than an elucidation of their distinction. Following Calvin's concern that this argument would actually lead to Sabellianism, Drusius cited Psa. 45:7, "*Elohim*, your *Elohim*, has anointed you," as evidence against the trinitarian interpretation of the word *Elohim*. If the plural ending of *Elohim* necessarily referred to the three persons of the Trinity, then the Father's anointing of the Son would be changed into all three persons anointing all three persons and the inter-trinitarian distinctions would be lost. The Spirit of *Elohim* would become the Spirit of himself. And the Son of *Elohim* would become the Son of himself, etc. To drive this point home, Drusius quoted at length Calvin's cautions against this argument from his commentary on Gen. 1:1.<sup>98</sup>

Drusius then turned to an argument which had been made by Junius in his *Defensio*, though he left Junius unnamed: "But I hear of some making distinctions between the first person and the others."<sup>99</sup> Junius, in his attempt to refute Kimhi's claim that *Elohim* was merely a *pluralis maiestatis* or *excellantiae*, had anticipated a likely antitrinitarian objection. If Junius accepted the existence of Kimhi's category of *pluralis maiestatis* or *excellantiae*, which he did, then how could he suddenly insist that *Elohim* could not be interpreted in this way? Surely, the antitrinitarians would demand consistency from him. "But, you will say, an account of similar things is similar."<sup>100</sup> In order to defend himself against this objection, Junius introduced the rule which he had found in Ibn Ezra stating that a plural in the first person was never figurative, but rather always proper. Therefore, by distinguishing between the first person and the others, Junius had a consistent rule by which he could establish that *Elohim* referred to a true plurality of persons.

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98 Ibid., 16.

99 'Sed audio quosdam distinguentes inter primam personam et alias.' Ibid., 15.

100 'At similitum, inquires, ratio est similes.' Franciscus Junius, *Opera Theologica* (Geneva: Caldorianus, 1607), 2.70.

Drusius was unconvinced by Junius's argument. An exception to this rule had been pointed out to him by Daniel Plancius, "a youth of the sharpest mind,"<sup>101</sup> by which Drusius could turn Junius's own precept against him.

On account of the word, they say, when we read, "I am *Elohim*," the mystery of the Trinity is contained in that expression. Why in that one any more than in this "*Elohim* created?" Or in this, "I am *Adonim*?" which is read in Mal. 1:6. About similar things the judgement must be similar. If *Elohim* indicates τὴν τριάδα, then so does *Adonim*. For the reasoning is the same. Now truly if the Father said "I am *Elohim*," would it then have once again a singular sense? Why do you lead yourself into these narrow places when there are other more solid arguments?<sup>102</sup>

In Mal. 1:6, God had rebuked the Israelites. "A son honours his father, and a servant his master. Yet if I am a father, then where is my honour? And if I am a master [*Adonim*, a plural noun], then where is my fear?"<sup>103</sup> Drusius's argument was that in this passage the "master" [*Adonim*] was also identified as the "Father." If *Adonim*, as a plural noun describing the first person, must necessarily be treated as plural *proprie*, then that would make the Father into a plurality of persons, since "similar things must be treated similarly." Therefore, Junius's rule could not be consistently applied and should be dismissed.

Far more likely, in Drusius's opinion, was the claim of Kimhi that this was merely an idiom of the language, used to indicate respect and honour. In addition to *Elohim*, *Adonim* (Gen. 23:9, Isa. 23:2, Hos. 12:14, Gen. 24:52, and 39:3) and *Baalim* (Isa. 1:3, 19:4, and Exod. 21:19) were both often used this way.<sup>104</sup> In a footnote to this section Drusius included a quotation from his former Hebrew instructor, Antoine Chevallier, in which the Frenchman

101 Johannes Drusius, *Elohim*, xii.

102 'Verbi causa cum legimus, *ego* ELOHIM, in eo, inquit, sermone continetur mysterium trinitatis. Cur in illo magis quam in hoc, *creavit* ELOHIM? Aut in isto, *ego Adonim*? Quod legitur Malach. 1:6. De similibus similiter iudicandum est. Si *Elohim* denotat τὴν τριάδα, ergo etiam *Adonim*. Nam eadem ratio. Iam vero si pater diceret *ego Elohim*, an tunc rursus haberet sensum singularem? Cur in has angustias te adducis, cum alia sint argumenta solidiora?' Ibid., 15.

103 בֵּן כְּכַד אָב וְעָבֵד אֲדֹנָיו  
וְאִם אָב אֲדֹנִי אֵינָהּ כְּבוֹדִי  
וְאִם אֲדֹנִים אֲדֹנִי אֵינָהּ מוֹרְאִי

104 Johannes Drusius, *Elohim*, 15.

denied the trinitarian implications of the plural ending to *Elohim*, explaining the plural ending as a convention of the language which indicated power and dominion. Chevallier pointed to the words *Adonim* and *Baalim* as similar instances of this convention.<sup>105</sup> Drusius's opponents regularly claimed that "all the fathers" agreed that the word *Elohim* was intended to communicate the idea of the Trinity, a claim that was easier to make than to prove.<sup>106</sup> But Drusius could cite Calvin, Daneau, Bellarmine, Cajetan, and Ibn Ezra in support of his opinion that the plural was intended to convey respect or honour.<sup>107</sup> Besides, the earliest "father" whom Drusius could actually find making the argument for the Trinity from the word *Elohim*, was the twelfth century Peter Lombard.<sup>108</sup> None of the ancients, not even Jerome, had made mention of the argument from *Elohim*.

The second half of Drusius's book listed a host of various passages in which the name *Elohim* occurs, along with a brief explanation of the meaning of the name in each passage. He then concluded with a summary of his judgement on the question of the word *Elohim*, a summary which could have been taken straight from the commentaries of Calvin.

I don't deny here that there are three persons in the Godhead, I would be impious if I denied it: but that this be inferred from the plural noun *Elohim* seems to me hardly appropriate. It is preferable to prove it from other arguments which are many. For arguments of this sort have been exposed to the mockery of the Jewish doctors, to whom we ought not to provide an opportunity of mocking and deriding us.<sup>109</sup>

Two years later Drusius followed with another short work on the question of the correct interpretation of the divine name *Elohim*, meant to be read in conjunction with his

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105 Ibid., 55. The passage is quoted from Mercier, *In Genesin*, 105–106. That Drusius was able to quote his own former instructor on this question would, of course, call into doubt his claims of having thought he was entirely alone in his objection to Zanchi's argument.

106 Johannes Drusius, *Elohim*, 17.

107 Ibid., 16–23.

108 Ibid., 17.

109 'Non hic nego tres in Deitate personas esse, impius futurus, si id negem: sed hoc ex nomine plurali ELOHIM parum mihi videtur apte colligi. satius est aliis argumentis, quae plurima sunt, id probare. Nam haec genera argumentorum exposita sunt doctioribus Ebraeis ad subsannationem, quibus ansam vel calumniandi nostri, vel deridendi praeberere non debemus.' Ibid., 48. This discussion of Exod. 32:31 is actually an excerpt taken from *Miscellanea Locutionum Sacrarum*, 2.36–37. The concluding summary appeared in this work as an appendix.

previous book. *Responsio Quaestiones Anonymi Theologi e Germania*<sup>110</sup> was published in Franeker in 1606 and was dedicated to Franciscus Gomarus.<sup>111</sup> Here Drusius considered fourteen further questions on the proper interpretation of the name *Elohim*, which had been sent to him by a German youth who had gathered them from an unnamed theologian. Though the theologian who had originally posed these questions remained unnamed, the youth had assured Drusius that he was a well known and prestigious theologian and that the anonymity had been necessary to protect the man's reputation. As well as including several new exegetical arguments to his case as he worked through the questions, Drusius was able to add to his previously published list of sympathetic theologians the name of the Spanish exegete, Alphonsus Tostatus, bishop of Ávila. Tostatus had, in the fifteenth century, composed a refutation of the trinitarian interpretation of the name *Elohim*. A manuscript of Tostatus's work had only recently found its way to Drusius, having been copied from "a certain Oxford library."<sup>112</sup> That Drusius felt compelled to continue publishing books solely devoted to the question of the proper exegesis of the biblical name *Elohim* testifies to the significance of this question for the Hebraist at this time.

#### 6.10 No Heresy in Grammar?

*As if to come full circle, just as Calvin's hermeneutic had been accused of "judaizing" by his many*

110 Johannes Drusius, *Responsio ad quaestiones anonymi theologi e Germania: jungi debet libello de nomine Elohim* (Franeker: Radaeus, 1606).

111 The decision to dedicate this text to Gomarus, a zealous opponent of the Remonstrant party, was certainly curious. The controversy over the teaching of Arminius had begun several years previously and Drusius had been suspected of having been sympathetic to the Arminian position. Years later Sibrandus Lubbertus, another significant adversary of the Remonstrants, would level the accusation of Arianism at Drusius due to his role in a thesis defence on the correct interpretation of Prov. 8:22. Tromp, "The Treatise on the Patriarch Henoch by Johannes Drusius (1550-1616)," 104–106. Suspicions of Arianism or Socinianism were often closely associated with the Remonstrant party, particularly with regard to their hermeneutics. Kęstutis Daugirdas, "The Biblical Hermeneutics of Socinians and Remonstrants in the Seventeenth Century," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 89-113; Jan Rohls, "Calvinism, Arminianism and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort," in *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3-48.

112 Johannes Drusius, *Responsio ad quaestiones anonymi theologi e Germania: jungi debet libello de nomine Elohim*, 25–32.

*detractors, now Drusius's grammatical reading of the Hebrew text and his rejection of many of the trinitarian arguments provided from the Old Testament by Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius (combined with his association with the Remonstrants) now invited the accusation of Socinianism from his own antagonists.*

Despite Drusius's personal conviction that in the realm of grammar charges of orthodoxy or heresy were irrelevant, his work still aroused a number of concerns regarding his own orthodoxy, particularly with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as Lutherans like Hunnius had once pointed to Calvin's grammatical method as the inspiration for the antitrinitarians' skepticism regarding the biblical support for the doctrine of the Trinity, so too Drusius's detractors began to see his grammatical exegesis as a gateway to antitrinitarianism. Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius had published their interpretations of phrases like *Jehovah Elohim* in the context of a turbulent debate over the doctrine of the Trinity. These interpretations could not be rejected without in some way favouring the antitrinitarian position. Other proponents of the grammatical method, men like Calvin and Pareus, had been either cited favourably by the antitrinitarians or accused by Lutherans of being traitors to the trinitarian faith, despite the fact that these men had also composed detailed defences of the doctrine of the Trinity, built on other biblical texts. Drusius, however, published in much greater detail and with significantly greater expertise against the exegetical foundation of the trinitarian arguments of Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius. Yet, Drusius, the consummate grammarian, published no defence of trinitarianism. In fact, he showed little interest in the subject beyond stating that he did in fact believe the doctrine of the Trinity to be true. Thus it is unsurprising that accusations of Arianism and Socinianism plagued Drusius in his later years.

The years of Drusius's service at the University of Franeker overlapped closely with the Arminian controversy and the tumult leading up to the Synod of Dort (though Drusius died in 1616, shortly before the synod). Jacob Arminius considered Drusius to be a good friend,

expressing deep admiration for Drusius's enduring open-mindedness in matters of great controversy like that of the Remonstrants.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, Arminius had high praise for Drusius's grammatical method and wrote to his fellow Remonstrants extolling the greatness of Drusius's skill as a Hebraist, commenting on what a valuable asset his linguistic expertise was.<sup>114</sup> In 1599, Arminius pushed vigorously to have Drusius appointed to produce a new Dutch translation of the Bible, drawn from the original languages. This particular translation project had been begun some five years previously by Philip Marnix, Count of Aldegonde, but had been interrupted by the death of Marnix not long into the work. To Arminius's mind, no one was better suited for this task than Drusius.<sup>115</sup> Marnix himself had also recommended Drusius for this task, some years before.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, skepticism about Drusius's orthodoxy led to his being passed over for this project,<sup>117</sup> though he was asked the following year to compose notes to aid the translators on the more difficult passages of the biblical text. These notes were later incorporated in the third edition of the *Critici Sacri*.

Given the association between the theology of the Remonstrants and Socinianism, it was inevitable that Drusius, with his closeness to the Remonstrants, would be branded a Socinian as well.<sup>118</sup> Kęstutis Daugirdas's study has provided a summary of the wealth of

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113 See the letter from Arminius to Drusius dated 6 April 1608, in which Arminius expresses his lasting admiration for Drusius's open-mindedness and for his willingness, though advanced in years, to change his mind on controversial matters. Bertius, ed., *The Works of James Arminius, D.D.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 168.

114 See, for example, Arminius's correspondence with Uytenbogaert. Arminius also expressed his very high regard for Drusius's expertise as a Hebraist in a 1599 letter to Uytenbogaert on the subject of the Trinity. Jacobus Arminius, Konrad Vorst, and Simeon Episcopius, *Praestantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolae ecclesiasticae et theologicae* (Amsterdam: Dendrinus, 1660), 106.

115 *Ibid.*, 119–120.

116 Marnix's recommendation is included in Drusius's *Vita*. Curiandrus, *Vitae, Operumque Ioh. Drusii*, 13.

117 Arminius, Vorst, and Episcopius, *Praestantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolae ecclesiasticae et theologicae*, 122–124.

118 On the connection between the Remonstrants and Socinianism, see Martin Muslow and Jan Rohls, eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists, and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). In particular, see the chapter by Rohls, entitled "Calvinism, Arminianism and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort," 2–48. See also Richard Muller, "The Christological Problem in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 62, no. 1 (1988): 145–163. And Marius van Leeuwen, Keith Stanglin, and Marijke Tolsma, eds., *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

research connecting the Remonstrants to the Socinians via their shared interest in a plain and historical hermeneutic.<sup>119</sup> The general similarity of the exegesis of the Socinians and the Remonstrants having been noticed for some time, Daugirdas looks to identify the specific points of contact between the two. Pointing to the influence that the *De Auctoritate Sacrae Scripturae* of Sozzini<sup>120</sup> had amongst the Remonstrant theologians, Daugirdas establishes a clear connection between the exegetical teachings of the Socinians and that of the Remonstrants. In 1611, Conrad Vorstius, professor of Theology at the Steinfurt gymnasium academicum and one time candidate to be the successor of Arminius at Leiden, published *De Auctoritate Sacrae Scripturae* from Steinfurt. Daugirdas demonstrates how, through the edition of Vorstius, the text became known to the preacher Johannes Uytenbogaert and Simon Episcopius, the Remonstrant who succeeded Franciscus Gomarus to the chair of Theology at the University of Leiden.<sup>121</sup> Thus the Socinian hermeneutic became closely associated with that of the Remonstrants.

However, the exegetical works of Drusius open up another avenue of influence upon the Remonstrants, an avenue independent of the Socinians and, most interesting of all, an avenue which can legitimately claim to be descended from within the Reformed church, having been maintained by men like Calvin and Pareus. Here, in Drusius, is the same grammatical reading that had once convinced the antitrinitarians like Biandrata, Gentile, Gribaldi, Silvanus, Neuser, and Vehe, that they, in their antitrinitarianism, were only applying more consistently the hermeneutic of the reformers. In 1615, Sibrandus Lubbertus, a rabid contra-Remonstrant, charged Drusius with Arianism after Drusius presided over a disputation involving the Christological implications of Prov. 8:22.<sup>122</sup> Lubbertus had studied at

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119 Daugirdas, “The Biblical Hermeneutics of Socinians and Remonstrants in the Seventeenth Century.”

120 *De Auctoritate Sacrae Scripturae* was first published in 1588, under the name Dominicus Lopez, with a fictitious printer and place of printing. A French translation was published in Basel in 1592. And Conrad Vorstius republished the Latin in Steinfurt, in 1611. For more on the publication history see Ibid., 92–93.

121 Ibid., 96–101.

122 The controversy is described in Tromp, “The Treatise on the Patriarch Henoch by Johannes Drusius

Wittenburg, Geneva, and Neustadt, and finally received his doctorate from the University of Heidelberg under Franciscus Junius in 1587.<sup>123</sup> He served as Professor of Theology alongside Drusius at the University of Franeker and would later be a prominent participant in the Synod of Dort. Lubbertus was convinced that Drusius's grammatical reading of Prov. 8:22 and his support for Arminius's understanding of the subordinated nature of the Son, were undermining the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, in much the same way as Hunnius had once accused Calvin.<sup>124</sup> Once more the grammatical reading was considered to be the source of trinitarian error.<sup>125</sup> The same hermeneutic that had once evoked accusations of "judaizing" from Aegidius Hunnius was now evoking accusations of "Socinianism" from Lubbertus. However, just as Hunnius rightly argued against Pareus, the accusations of heresy hurled at Drusius by theologians like Lubbertus landed just as squarely on Calvin as they did on Drusius.

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(1550-1616)," 104–105. See also Peter Van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century: Constantijn L'Empereur (1591-1648)* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 64.

123 Gustav Toepke, ed., *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg* (Heidelberg, 1886), II. 602.

124 Drusius described the accusation levelled against him in a letter published in Arminius, Vorst, and Episcopius, *Praestantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolae ecclesiasticae et theologicae*, 416.

125 For his part, Drusius was convinced that Lubbertus had actually done more for the Socinian cause than himself. In 1611, Lubbertus had published a copy of Fausto Sozzini's *De Iesu Christo Servatore* along with his own refutation of Sozzini's position. Sibrandus Lubbertus, *De Iesu Christo servatore, hoc est, cur, et qua ratione Iesus Christus noster Servator sit, libri quator. Contra Faustum Socinum* (Franeker: Radaeus, 1611). Drusius insisted that firstly, the arguments of Sozzini had not been widely known in the Low Countries until their dissemination by Lubbertus. Secondly, in Drusius's opinion, Lubbertus's refutations of Sozzini's arguments had been entirely insufficient and had, in fact, had the unwitting effect of leaving Sozzini's position looking stronger than before. See Arminius, Vorst, and Episcopius, *Praestantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolae ecclesiasticae et theologicae*, 442–445.

## Conclusion: Theology vs. Grammar

Within the Protestant church, the argument for the doctrine of the Trinity from the Hebrew phrase *Jehovah Elohim* became for many an essential part of the argument for the Trinity from Scripture. Using the Hebrew divine names to describe the triune nature of God overcame the biblicism of the antitrinitarians, transcended the partisanship of many of the divisions within the Protestant church (despite revealing another division), and demonstrated that the teaching of the Reformed church on the doctrine of the Trinity was none other than the ancient and orthodox faith. The Imperial privilege, which appeared on the front page of *De Tribus Elohim*, and the endorsement from the Emperor's theologians testifying that Zanchi's teaching did not deviate at all from the ancient teachings of the Roman Catholic church, were certainly a triumph for the nascent Reformed church in Heidelberg at a critical moment of theological scrutiny.

In Zurich, Marcus Baeumler borrowed heavily from Zanchi within his *Theses Theologicae De Deo, uno Jehova, et tribus Elohim* (1596). At Leiden, the Professor of Theology, Lucas Trelcatius the younger, who had sparred with Arminius on the nature of the Son's deity,<sup>1</sup> maintained that the names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* referred specifically to the singular divine essence and the plurality of persons respectively (1604).<sup>2</sup> The great Lutheran systematizer in Heldburg, Johann Gerhard, in a chapter of his *Locorum Theologicorum* (1610), followed closely Zanchi's argument for the Trinity and referred his readers to Zanchi's work

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1 Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), 281–282.

2 Lucas Trelcatius, *Scholastica et methodica, locorum communium s. theologiae institutio, didactice et elenctice in epitome explicata* (Leyden: Johannes Patius, 1604). The work was then translated into English as Lucas Trelcatius, *A Briefe Institution of the Common Places of Sacred Divinity*, trans. John Gawen (London: Francis Burton, 1610).

for confirmation. Gerhard's chapter was entitled "De Tribus Elohim Unius Indivisae Deitatis Sive De Sacrosancto Trinitatis Mysterio."<sup>3</sup> Jakob Martini, a professor at Wittenberg, also wrote a work entitled *De Tribus Elohim*,<sup>4</sup> which refuted the antitrinitarian Adam Goslavius (who had attacked the trinitarian theology of Keckerman).<sup>5</sup> Martini's work was entirely consistent with that of Zanchi, although throughout his *De Tribus Elohim* he referred to the Lutheran Hunnius (who had been his own instructor at Wittenberg), not to Zanchi, for confirmation of his arguments.<sup>6</sup>

Zanchi's work found a considerable following in England throughout the seventeenth century, as the rise of Socinianism created a fresh need for a defence of the Trinity which took into account the radical biblicism of the antitrinitarians. The theologian and Hebraist Hugh Broughton, a former student of Chevallier at Cambridge, relied on the trinitarian interpretation of *Jehovah Elohim* in his controversial *Concent of Scripture* (1588), as well as in several later publications.<sup>7</sup> The Cambridge Puritan William Perkins repeated the argument in his study on the order of salvation – *A Golden Chaine* (1591).<sup>8</sup> The eccentric Henoah Clapham published, as a Brownist, a lengthy poem summarizing Scripture which used the word *Elohim* as a synonym for "triune" throughout. Then after his recantation of his schism, and his return

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3 Johann Gerhard, *Locorum Theologicorum Cum Pro Adstruenda Veritate, Tum Pro Destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per Theses nervosae solide et copiose explicatorum, Tomus 1, In quo continentur haec Capita: 1. De Scriptura sacra. . . . 4. De tribus Elohim sive de SS. Trinitatis mysterio* (Jenae: Steinmann, 1610), 227–230.

4 Jakob Martini, *De Tribus Elohim* (Wittenberg, 1619).

5 Adamus Goslavius, *Refutatio eorum, quae Bartholomaeus Keckermannus in libro primo Systematis sui theologici disputat, adversus eos, qui solum Patrem Dominum nostri Jesu Christi, esse illum Deum Israelis* (Racovia: Sebastianus Sternacius, 1613). For more on Keckermann see Howard Hotson, *Commonplace Learning: Ramism and its German Ramifications, 1543-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 127–168.

6 Fritz Gerlich Maximilian II, *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* (Duncker and Humblot, 1884), XX. 514.

7 Hugh Broughton, *A Concent of Scripture* (London: White, 1588), 6. Hugh Broughton, *Observations vpon the first ten fathers*, 1612, 14–17. Hugh Broughton, *An exposition vpon the Lords Prayer*, 1613, 4–6. (which includes a letter in the preface from Broughton to Prince Henry requesting leave to travel to Germany where he might be able translate the work into Hebrew).

8 William Perkins, *A golden chaine: or The description of theologie containing the order of the causes of saluation and damnation, according to Gods word. A view whereof is to be seene in the table annexed. Hereunto is adioyned the order which M. Theodore Beza vsed in comforting afflicted consciences* (London: Alde, 1591), 1.

to England from the Low Countries, he penned another poem, entitled *Elohim*, still relying on the trinitarian interpretation of the divine name.<sup>9</sup> The immensely popular devotional manual *The Practice of Piety* (1611), by Lewis Bayley, followed Zanchi closely.<sup>10</sup> Zanchi's understanding of *Jehovah Elohim* was used in a 1612 catechism by Lancelot Andrewes, who was the Bishop of Chichester, Ely, and then Winchester, but even more significantly an overseer of the Authorized Version translation.<sup>11</sup> Another member of the Authorized Version team of translators, Daniel Featley, included the argument in his polemic against the papists, *The Roman Fisher caught and held in his owne net*.<sup>12</sup> William Gouge, a member of the Westminster Assembly, insisted that the mystery of the Trinity was hidden in the Hebrew names *Jehovah Elohim*.<sup>13</sup> The same was upheld by George Downname,<sup>14</sup> Bishop of Derry and chaplain to King James. The Hebraist John Lightfoot, another member of the Westminster Assembly, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, followed this argument as well.<sup>15</sup> And James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland, and Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College, and famous for his chronology of the earth, insisted on the trinitarian interpretation of *Elohim* in his *A Body of Divinitie* (1645).<sup>16</sup> The English divine, John Brayne, relied heavily on Zanchi's arguments in a series of works in response to the Unitarianism of John Biddle.<sup>17</sup> The

9 Henoeh Clapham, *A briefe of the Bible* (Edinburgh: Waldegrave, 1596), passim. Henoeh Clapham, *Elohim or AElohim-triune displayed by his workes physicall and meta-physicall, in a poeme of diverse forme* (London: John Harrison, 1601).

10 Lewis Bayly, *The practice of piety directing a Christian how to walk, that he might please God* (London: Hodgets, 1613), 35–37. The first edition was published in 1611.

11 Lancelot Andrewes, *A patterne of catechisticall doctrine, wherein many profitable questions touching Christian religion are handled, and the whole decalogue succinctly and judiciously expounded: with additions*. (London: W. Garret, 1612), 46.

12 Daniel Featley, *The Romish Fisher caught and held in his owne net. Or, A true relation of the Protestant conference and popish difference*. (London: Robert Milbourne, 1624), 63.

13 William Gouge, *Gods three arrowes plague, famine, svword, in three treatises. I. A plaister for the plague. II. Dearths death. III. The Churches conquest over the sword*. (London: Edward Brewster, 1631), 317.

14 George Downname, *The Christians freedome wherein is fully expressed the doctrine of Christian libertie. By the rt. reuerend father in God, George Downeham, Doctor of Diuinity and Ld. Bp. of Derry*, 1635, 6.

15 John Lightfoot, *The harmony of the foure evangelists among themselves, and with the Old Testament: the first part, from the beginning of the gospels to the baptisme of our saviour; with an explanation of the chiefest difficulties both in language and sense* (London: Cotes, 1644), 8, 196.

16 James Ussher, *A body of divinitie, or, The summe and substance of Christian religion catechistically propounded, and explained, by way of question and answer : methodically and familiarly handled*, 1645, 29, 213.

17 John Brayne, *Mr. John Biddle's strange and new trinity of a god, a man, an angel, and faith therein proved*

great theologian John Owen, vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford, repeated the trinitarian interpretation of *Elohim* in his work on the Holy Spirit (1674).<sup>18</sup> The eccentric Hebraist and Seventh Day Baptist Francis Bampfield placed Zanchi's argument at the centre of his *All in one, all useful sciences and profitable arts in one book of Jehovah Aelohim* (1677).<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the widespread popularity of Zanchi's argument throughout the Christian church, within the world of the international reformed church, as well as in Heidelberg where Zanchi, Junius, and Tremellius had taught, many reformed theologians continued to follow Calvin's explanation of the significance of the word *Elohim* and maintained that the trinitarian reading of the word *Elohim* was a weak and forced argument. The continuing diversity amongst reformed theologians on this question is well demonstrated by the heated exchange between Pareus and Hunnius and the opposition of Drusius to the works of Junius.

Looking at these two positions, we have seen a tension between a theological reading and a more grammatical reading of the biblical text. In the theological reading, the reader kept a close eye at all times on the *analogia Scripturae* and the *analogia fidei* and was oriented, as he read in any particular text, by what he already knew to be true from the broader body of Christian theology. As Junius maintained in his *Parallels*, the authors of the Old Testament were to have composed their texts with an inspired awareness of the meaning that, much later,

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*to be untrue, and the Scriptures to be perverted by it, which onely [sic] bear witness to Jehovah, God, and the Elohim, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in Him* (London: Blackmore, 1654), 2–5. See also John Brayne, *A treatise of the high rebellion of man against God in blasphemy* (London: Blackmore, 1654). the full title of which ends with “Written by an unworthy witness of the name and sovereignty of the Jehovah elohims, John Brayne.”

18 John Owen, *Pneumatologia, or, A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit wherein an account is given of his name, nature, personality, dispensation, operations, and effects : his whole work in the old and new creation is explained, the doctrine concerning it vindicated from oppositions and reproaches : the nature also and necessity of Gospel-holiness, the difference between grace and morality, or a spiritual life unto God in evangelical obedience and a course of moral vertues, are stated and declared* (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1674), 38.

19 Francis Bampfield, *All in one, all useful sciences and profitable arts in one book of Jehovah Aelohim, copied out and commented upon in created beings, comprehended and discovered in the fulness and perfection of scr[i]pture-knowledges*, 1677, 66, 81.

New Testament authors would give to their writings. Therefore, according to the theological reading, there was an increased expectation and sometimes even a presupposition that the theological *loci* of the Christian church were clearly in mind as the Old Testament authors penned their works. This theological reading brought with it certain presuppositions about the Hebrew language itself. Common to Zanchi and Junius was the assumption that the Hebrew language preserved a pre-lapsarian, pre-Babel, divine vocabulary, which communicated theological truth more effectively and more precisely than all other human languages. Because of this presupposition, both men were confident that a *proprie* reading of the Old Testament in its original tongue would naturally reveal God's triune nature.

In the grammatical reading, the reader did not necessarily call into question any of the theological tenets of the Christian faith. But there was a tendency to question the legitimacy of much of the exegetical evidence that had been used to argue for these tenets. As Drusius summarized his position in *Elohim*: "I don't deny here that there are three persons in the Godhead, it would be impious if I denied it: but that this be inferred from the plural noun *Elohim* seems to me hardly appropriate."<sup>20</sup> Thus Drusius epitomised the grammatical reading, the same method which had characterized Calvin's work. He was cautious to draw from the text only that which could be clearly established via the rules of grammar considered within the passage's historical context; and he was dubious of theological readings which approached the text with an expectation of finding various points of doctrine confirmed. As the reader became less preoccupied with the *analogia fidei*, the "rule of faith," and paid more attention to the rules of grammar, the doctrine of the Trinity itself was not necessarily discarded, but many of the traditional proof texts were. Calvin and Pareus differed from Drusius in that they were still theologians by trade who were trying to establish doctrinal positions. The doctrinal

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<sup>20</sup> 'Non hic nego tres in Deitate personas esse, impius futurus, si id negem: sed hoc ex nomine plurali ELOHIM parum mihi videtur apte colligi.' Johannes Drusius, *Elohim sive de nomine Dei* אלהים (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1604), 48.

positions for which they argued, however, were supported by a more grammatical reading of the text. Drusius, on the other hand, was a grammarian through and through. Uninterested in overthrowing or in building particular theological positions, his concern was to understand the grammatical meaning of each text. Systems of theology were not the focus of his studies, except for when those systems imposed bad exegesis on the biblical text. And even then, it was not the system that he sought to correct, but the twisting and contorting of biblical passages.

In the preface to his *Tetragrammaton*, Drusius wrote of his conviction that every university really ought to have two professors of the Hebrew language. One would be charged with teaching the grammar of the language, while the other would be charged with drawing theological interpretations out of the text. Drusius expressed his concern that the habit of reading the Hebrew text solely for the purpose of drawing commonplaces out of the text would result in a poor understanding of the Old Testament writings. “For the best Theologian is one who best understands the sacred letters: which only someone who understands can explain.”<sup>21</sup> Of these two teachers, the theologian and the grammarian, Drusius was clearly the grammarian, whose duty it would be to establish a clear understanding of exactly what the text communicated. It would be left to others to determine how the meaning of the text fit into the larger system of orthodox theology.<sup>22</sup> After all, there was no heresy in grammar.<sup>23</sup> To those who felt the need to circumscribe his work with threats of heresy, Drusius would only say: “If a lover of truth is a heretic, then surely I confess myself to be a heretic.”<sup>24</sup>

The proponents of the theological reading and the proponents of the grammatical

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21 'Nam is optimus theologus qui sacras litteras optime intelligit: quas enarrare non potest, nisi qui intelligit.' Johannes Drusius, *Tetragrammaton sive de Nomine Dei Proprio, quod Tetragrammaton vocant* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1604), 14.

22 See also Peter Van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century: Constantijn L'Empereur (1591-1648)* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 51–52.

23 Johannes Drusius, *De Hasidaeis, quorum mentio in libris Machabaeorum libellus ad Iohan. Utenbogardum*. (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1603), 22.

24 *Si veritatis amans est haereticus, tum ego profecto fateor me haereticum esse*. Ibid., 34.

reading both shared a confidence in the Hebrew text and its ability to support orthodox theology. They differed, however, in how they saw the relationship of this theology to the text. Calvin, Pareus, Drusius, and the more grammatically oriented theologians began, in general, with the Hebrew text and fully expected to end with an orthodox theology. Zanchi, Tremellius, Junius, and others more characterized by the theological reading, began, in general, with an orthodox theology and fully expected to end with an accurate reading of the text.

This contrast between the theological reading and the grammatical reading has been, with slightly varying terminology, previously noted in a number of works. Nevertheless in these earlier studies the contrast has generally been used to describe either diverging schools of Hebrew studies, as Friedman described them with his “Basel school” and “Wittenberg school,”<sup>25</sup> or as Pak has more recently suggested, as another category in which “confessionalization” had begun to drive a wedge between the Lutherans and the Reformed.<sup>26</sup> In both of these previous works the expectation is that the Reformed theologians are, like John Calvin, characterized by the grammatical reading. However, as this study has shown, both the theological reading and the grammatical reading were well represented within the Reformed church. Not only that, but both were represented on the same theological faculties, such as that of the University of Heidelberg or the University of Leiden. That is not to say that these men are so diverse that they cannot be grouped into broader “schools” of exegesis. The categories of “theological reading” and “grammatical reading” continue to be accurate descriptions of the two groups. However, the Reformed churches and educational institutions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were broad enough to incorporate and tolerate both of these opposing schools at the same time.

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25 Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), 165–176.

26 G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125–131.

This variety within the Reformed church, which was more pronounced than that which existed within the Lutheranism of that time, had the unwitting effect of allowing for the rise of a biblicist antitrinitarianism in its midst. The antitrinitarians' ability to appeal to the exegetical principles articulated by Calvin brought the exegetical variety within the Reformed church into starker relief. An exegetical spectrum was then produced amongst the Reformed theologians, with men like Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius on one side, relying on a theological reading of the Hebrew text to establish clear scriptural proofs for the doctrine of the Trinity. And on the other side men like Calvin, Pareus, and Drusius rejected those same readings of the Hebrew as they produced a more grammatical reading of the Old Testament and then found themselves accused of having unwittingly undermined the case for the Trinity (though Pareus's irenicism at times placed him in the middle). And as the antitrinitarians took the grammatical reading one step further than Calvin and his colleagues, taunting them for their supposed failure to see the logical conclusion of their course, they gave opportunity to the Lutherans to outflank the Reformed just beyond Zanchi and his colleagues.

In the context of this spectrum of approaches to the Hebrew text, the Hebrew divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* and the question of their trinitarian significance became a focus of heated debate. In particular, the name *Elohim* and the question of what exactly its plural ending was intended to communicate when interpreted *proprie* took centre stage. The word *Elohim* then became a sort of shibboleth for these various positions, identifying a host of presuppositions about the nature of the Old Testament held by various Reformed exegetes at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. In fact, this study has discovered a controversy, similar in many respects to the vowel point controversy, centred on the correct exposition of this name *Elohim*.

Additionally, this study has demonstrated that the persistent, though erroneous,

notion that the theological convictions of John Calvin were the primary yardstick by which the Reformed measured orthodoxy has also contributed to the misguided assumption that Calvin's grammatical reading, as opposed to the theological, was broadly representative for Reformed exegetes of this period. Rather, as has been made clear in the preceding chapters, Reformed exegetes such as Zanchi, Tremellius, and Junius, were just as fond of the theological reading as were their Lutheran opponents. Equally clear is the fact that they did not hold Calvin's estimation so high that they were unwilling to accept interpretations of the text which had been explicitly rejected by him. This variety within the Reformed church also calls into question recent attempts to apply the confessionalization thesis to the discipline of exegesis. The controversy over the word *Elohim* shows that, rather than undergoing an exegetical normalization at this particular point, Reformed exegetes maintained a significant amount of variety in their interpretations, in contradistinction to post-Formula of Concord Lutherans.

Had it not been for the threat of antitrinitarianism, had the antitrinitarians never surfaced, or had the antitrinitarians made their case against the Trinity solely on the grounds of rationalism and not by means of a radical interpretation of *sola scriptura*, the difference between the theological reading and the grammatical reading might have been far less dramatic. The difference between Calvin's explanation of the word *Elohim* in Gen. 1:1 and the explanation given by other Reformed exegetes might have been so trivial as to be not worth mentioning. However, once the antitrinitarians had supported their case with a radical biblicism and had laid claim to Calvin as their exegetical inspiration, the question of the right interpretation of *Elohim* became crucially important. Nevertheless, even after several bouts with antitrinitarianism, including the scandalous Heidelberg affair, the Reformed still did not normalize their exegesis. Rather than producing a standardized, confessional response from

within the Reformed ranks, the antitrinitarians sparked controversy – the *Elohim* controversy.

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