

Carlos Gilly

'Theophrastia Sancta'

Paracelsianism as a religion in conflict with the established churches

I

In 1569 an enthusiastic Paracelsist called Lambert Wacker wrote from Berlin that Theophrastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim had not only been a 'monarcha et princeps medicorum', a monarch and prince of physicians, but also king of theologians and chief of lawyers, or, as the author put it: 'I could also say: Theologorum rex et iurisconsultorum caput' - as he had 'in everything shot nearer the mark than anyone before him'.¹

We shall ignore the lawyers, for whom Paracelsus, as well as for logicians and rhetoricians, did not care much anyway.² But king of theologians? Even Paracelsus himself, who was anything but modest, had never gone that far. True in his book *Paragranum* of 1529-1530 he had challenged the entire medical world by proclaiming his proud 'according to me and not according to you' and his provocative 'Mine will be the monarchy', thus appointing himself 'monarcha medicorum'. And when in the same book he took offence at the epithet 'the Luther of physicians', this was only because he felt that the title awarded him by his opponents was too slight:

'What is this mockery with which you insult me, that I am a 'Lutherus medicorum', meaning I am a heresiarch? I am Theophrastus and more than those with whom you compare me. I am the same, and moreover I am the monarch of physicians... I will let Luther defend his cause and I will defend my cause, and I will defeat those of my colleagues who turn against me!'

And further on:

'Do you mean, I am only Luther? I will give him and you some work to do!'³

The latter promise Paracelsus did indeed fulfil, but only decades after his death. Generations of polemical theologians, Lutheran or other, first had to rack their brains over the writings of the famous Swiss physician, before they could even begin to attack some of the religious dissidents and radical church critics of the late sixteenth and the entire seventeenth century.

While Paracelsus knew very well that he had called into life a new school of medicine with his works on medicine and natural philosophy - or, as he puts it, a 'Theophrastian sect, which will triumph, so you will have to acknowledge my philosophy',⁴ in his theological writings he had expressly refused to style himself the head of a new religious movement.

And yet: in theology, too, Paracelsus remained loyal to his famous motto: 'Alterius non sit, qui suus esse potest'. There is no need to doubt the statement circulated by his former medical assistant Oporinus, 'When he began to write, he wanted to send them [Luther and Zwingli], and the Pope all the more, back to school'⁵ Already in his early work *De septem punctis idolatriae christianae* of 1525, Paracelsus had turned away from the 'Mauerkirche' [the stone church] of Rome, which he felt had absolutely nothing to do with the 'catholic' church of the spirit, conscience and prophecy which he so desired.⁶ And in his book *De secretis secretorum theologiae* six years later, Paracelsus exposed not only the Pope, but this time also the reformers to bitter criticism:

'Anyone will say, I proclaim the gospel, I proclaim the basic truth, I proclaim the Word of God etc. do not believe this; [...] One man seeks the gospel amongst the Papists in Rome, another amongst the Zwinglians, a third one amongst the Lutherans, a fourth one amongst the Anabaptists etc'. 'Do not believe any of these, because it can never be found there. [...] they call each other impostors, and that is true; because that is what they are. That they call each other liars, now that is true; because they lie. That they call each other false Christians, now that is true; because on both sides they are false Christians. That they call each other false prophets, is all true: because God has not sent them to be prophets, but to be destroyers of their own kingdom [...] The Pope and his party cry out for blood: kill, hang, burn, drown etc.

The others have killed many thousands of men in a few years' time, and also scream: kill, drown etc. Those are their fruits, which they offer, by which we shall recognize them [...] Against it all with the sword, with fire! This is what the Pope does, as is apparent, and Luther, too, as is apparent, that nobody is allowed to speak against them with impunity, but risks being hanged!' [...] 'Christ did not send you Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Lambert etc.; because these, too, are [...] like monks and priests, who are born liars.'⁷

What Paracelsus was aiming at with his theological writings was not to establish a new sect, but on the contrary to try and deny all religious parties combating each other the very reason to exist, since he strove for a church of the spirit, subject only to God and nature.⁸ Paracelsus himself knew best that such an attempt was hopeless, as he prophetically wrote in his book *De imaginibus* on the subject of religious schisms:

'Then soon after Luther appeared with his doctrine and one sect after the other under the guise of Lutheran doctrine, and still there is no end to this. Because there will be more sects, and each one wants to have the last word and be better and holier than the other with respect to its doctrine. And there will be no cohesion and peace in religion and in the churches, until the golden and last age.'⁹

His solution was not to get involved with any of the religious factions, but to maintain silence with regard to the outside world until the completion of his medical, philosophical and theological work, and to show only few people, what 'has been in my pen'. He wrote the following about the ruling churches in a late introduction to his entire theological work:

'I have kept my silence, so that thunder and storm would not strike my soil. I have managed to survive in this way until now and have not bothered about them.'¹⁰

Because of these prudent tactics in an age of growing intolerance, Paracelsus was spared denunciation and persecution by the ruling religious parties during his lifetime, unlike for instance Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld or Miguel Servet. But because of this withdrawal he surrendered at the same time the immediate effect he could have had on his contemporaries. His explosive theological and philosophical manuscripts, which had been deposited in a safe place,¹¹ proved to be dangerously charged sleepers, which in the generations to come threatened to blow up the religious monopoly of the confessional churches and the epistemic rules of conservative scientists.

II



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After Paracelsus had died in Salzburg in 1541, at first there was silence. Only very few people new about his vast written work. Conrad Gessner for instance, the city physician of Zürich and an authority on book matters, in his *Bibliographia Universalis* of 1545 could only mention the Basel broadsheet, the printed *Wundartznei*, a manuscript of the Basel lectures, together with 'I do not know what sort of theological works for the Abbot of Sankt Gallen, which I do not believe were published'.¹²

In view of this unfamiliarity it is not surprising that it was the same Conrad Gessner who sixteen years later publicly issued the first theological condemnation of his countryman, when he wrote in a letter in 1561: 'I am entirely convinced that Paracelsus was a follower of Arius'. With respect to the Paracelsian manuscript heritage, the famous bibliographer furthermore reported in the same letter that he neither possessed a catalogue of Paracelsian works, nor had he ever made the effort to obtain one, because Paracelsus 'must have been an irreligious man and a magus, who commerced with the devil, and so unworthy to be listed together with good and civilized writers, whether Christian or heathen'.¹³

Gessner's opinion of Paracelsus was shared by Johannes Crato von Crafftheim, to whom the letter had been addressed. He initiated the first public attack on Paracelsus and his followers in a long preface to a work by Johannes Baptista Montanus, printed in Basel in 1562. The fact that Paracelsus was not explicitly mentioned here, was not Crato's decision, but that of the highly committed Basel printer Peter Perna, who

deliberately struck the name of Paracelsus from the preface. Yet it was obvious to any reader against whom Crato's insults, such as 'Magister Enthusiastarum', 'ignorant adventurer', or 'damned and criminal apostate' were directed.[14](#)

The by now unstoppable flood of editions of works by Paracelsus on medicine and natural philosophy issuing from the Basel, Cologne and Strassburg presses began to experience increasing opposition from the celebrities of orthodox medicine, although they used not so much the weapons of their own discipline, but rather arguments drawn from theology. They were the first to recognize the explosive theological force of these works and were furthermore convinced (as Rotondò has formulated it) that the most effective defence of a pattern of thought which the academic world then considered to be scientifically orthodox should have to begin with the defence of its theological framework.[15](#) Almost without exception they were men from the medical world, such as Gasser, Stenglin, Weyer, Solenander, Marstaller or Reussner, who in the first years of the so-called 'Paracelsan Revival' loudly proclaimed the charge of heresy with respect to Paracelsus and his followers.[16](#) This campaign reached a climax in 1571-1572 with the outpouring of malice and defamation in the first part of Thomas Erastus' *Disputationes de medicina nova Paracelsi*. Erastus did not hesitate to demand capital punishment for the adherents of the magus Paracelsus, and he also tried to influence one of the most authoritative theologians of the reformed party, the Zürich leader Heinrich Bullinger, in this respect: 'I swear to you by everything that is holy to me: neither Arius, Photin, nor Mohammed, nor any Turk or heretic were ever so heretical as this unholy magus'.[17](#)

Neither Erastus nor any of his fellow defamers had for that matter read a single word of the theological works of Paracelsus. Apparently they did not really consider this necessary, because, after all, they had all read Oporinus's notorious letter of 1565 with the anecdote relating to Paracelsus' religious way of life.[18](#) But even Oporinus' nephew, the cautious Theodor Zwinger, who a few years later came to acknowledge the greatness of Paracelsus as a result of his thorough study of Hippocrates, and publicized his views to the horror of his academic colleagues, appears at first to have hardly occupied himself with the theological writings of Paracelsus. In 1564 he wrote in a letter often copied at the time:

'I do not wish to comment on the morals of Paracelsus, as I find this unnecessary; because whether good or bad, they have no impact on his scientific approach. On the other hand, I can only testify concerning Paracelsus' piety and godliness, that he has written many works on religion, which are even today treasured by his followers as priceless jewels. But it is common knowledge, that Paracelsus was a declared atheist.'[19](#)

The first adherents and editors of Paracelsus found it difficult to oppose this wide-spread opinion, and found themselves on the horns of an uncomfortable dilemma. Either they left the theological accusations unanswered and confined the debate to the medical and nature philosophical field - a near-impossible task in an author like Paracelsus with his comprehensive cosmosophical ideas. Or else they had to decide, in order to elucidate matters, to publish the theological works of Paracelsus. In the light of the easily inflammable 'rabies theologica' of the theologians of all confessions at that time this might have impeded any further dissemination of Paracelsus's medical works for decades.[20](#)

A number of Paracelsists, such as Bodenstein or Toxites, decided to dodge the specific theological issues in the prefaces to their editions of Paracelsus with a few empty general phrases. Others, such as Quercetanus or Bovio, chose explicitly to distance themselves from the theological ideas of Paracelsus.[21](#) Gerard Dorn for his part attempted amongst others, to mitigate the force of the gnostic cosmogony presented in *Philosophia ad Athenienses* and to explain it in a more orthodox Platonic sense.[22](#)

Only a few of the better known early Paracelsists of the sixteenth century did not shun direct confrontation in the theological field. The Frenchman Bernard Penot, for instance, in a public letter addressed to the rabid antiparacelsist Andreas Libavius, pointed out not only that the charges of atheism against Paracelsus lacked any ground, but in addition characterized the theological works of Paracelsus as directly inspired by God.[23](#) In a work written in 1584 the Englishman Thomas Moffet reproached Erastus for trying to discredit his medical competitors by means of his coarse theological arguments and his

outrageous call for executions. For let us assume, the commonsensical Englishman wrote, that Paracelsus' views on the creation of the world and divine rule really differed from those expressed in the Mosaic books - what did that have anyway to do with medicine or in which respect did he then differ from the arch-heathen Galen, whom Erastus and his colleagues almost idolized?²⁴ Alexander von Suchten from Danzig simply mocked the 'Rag-books of Master Doctor Förtzle ['Fartling!'] of Heidelberg', who, although he 'had read a great deal in Aristotle, Zwingli and Arius', had as 'a good dialectician and rhetorician' had not understood the slightest thing about the books of Paracelsus and their 'stylo magico'. This kind of magic was neither witchcraft nor the work of the devil, as Erastus loudly proclaimed, 'but the very greatest wisdom of the work of God and an acknowledgement of hidden nature'.²⁵ Or, as Suchten expressed it even more radically in his *De tribus Facultatibus*: 'The wisdom of the old magical books of theology, of which only the Old and New Testaments had survived'.²⁶

The Bible as a magical book! It is easy to imagine what sort of momentous consequences the publication of such a work at this early stage would have had for the nascent 'Paracelsan Revival'. This would also apply to the Paracelsian Theologica, which were passed on from hand to hand and copied with a frequency which makes up for the loss of the Paracelsian autographs.

III



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As a result of this enforced clandestinity, theological Paracelsism of necessity established contacts with other marginal religious movements such as the Osiandrists, Schwenckfeldians, Castellionists and other adherents of Tauler or the Theologia Deutsch. That this confrontation was an enrichment for Paracelsism needs hardly be questioned. But it also caused a further radicalisation, as the common factors in these movements, the spiritual attitude regarding the established churches, the practice-oriented ethics and the prophetic-eschatological world view were now mutually reinforced.

An example of this is the famous *Cyclopaedia Paracelsica Christiana* of 1585, which as far as radical language is concerned outbids just about everything which Paracelsism had until then produced. Mention may here be made first of all of the fact that the manuscript of the *Cyclopaedia* came from the library of a Schwenckfeldian, Marquard von Hattstein, who incidentally as the Catholic Bishop of Speier was the formal representative of the Roman Catholic Church in his diocese. Secondly, the editor, too, was a well-known Schwenckfeldian, namely Samuel Eisenmenger alias Syderocrates, who was expelled from the orthodox-Lutheran university of Tübingen on account of his religious views. Finally, it must be noted that here, too, Eisenmenger did not fail to quote prominently from Sebastian Castellion's book against Calvin, *De calumnia*.²⁷

Eisenmenger's favourite student, the Schwabian physician and astrologer Helisäus Röslin, was a Schwenckfeldian, Paracelsist and also a chiliast of note, known in the history of science mainly for his prolonged controversy with Kepler. In his book *De opere Dei creationis seu de Mundo hypotheses* of 1597 Röslin explained a cosmology 'in harmony' with the biblical story of creation and the Paracelsian doctrine of the elements which was to play a not unimportant role in the later alchemy debate between Quercetanus and Jean Riolan in Paris in 1604.²⁸ His main work, however, was the *Speculum mundi* and the *Speculum Ecclesiae Harmonicum*, which appeared in print in 1604 in an incomplete and unauthorized edition. In this book Röslin attempted to explain the entire history of the world and that of the church on the basis of a prophetic system of coordinates, modelled on the prophecies of Daniel, the Apocalypse and mostly the fourth book of Esdras ('vere propheticus liber').²⁹

As an adherent of a general church of the spirit and in the firm hope of an imminent and final reformation under the sign of the 'Trigonus Igneus', which had been ruling in the heavens since 1583, Röslin strongly rejected the four existing religious parties - 'Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist or Anabaptist'. At the same time, however, he proposed in the majority of his works unlimited confessional freedom ('Libertas Religionis, Freyheit der Religion oder Freyheit des Glaubens') as prerequisite for the restoration of religious peace, political balance and economic prosperity in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire. Röslin's call for religious tolerance, strongly reminiscent of Sebastian Castellion and his *Conseil à la*

France désolée in its wording, was based rather on Paracelsus' principle of tolerance, which in turn was rooted in cosmosophy, astromancy, eschatology and apocalypticism. Röslin did not fail to include in his call for tolerance the postulate of free academic research: 'Das aber diese vnserere jetzige Zeit, die Zeit seye der Freyheit der Religion' [These our present times are the times of religious freedom], he wrote in *Prodromus Dissertationum Chronologicarum* of 1612, dedicated to the newly-elected Emperor Matthias I. The new times were not only announced by the comets and the new stars of latter years or the biblical prophecies from the fourth book of Esdras and the Apocalypse, but also by the latest achievements in science, and therefore, according to Röslin, should 'allen Gelehrten, beydes in Religions Sachen unvnd andern Künsten, der freyhe Lauff gelassen werden' [all scholars, both in religious matters as well as in the other arts, be given free rein].³⁰

When Röslin died in 1616, his unpublished astrological, theological and kabbalistic works were absorbed in the manuscript collection of Karl Widemann.³¹ The name of the Augsburg city physician Widemann is a household name for every Paracelsus researcher, because he copied and collected works of Paracelsus untiringly for more than thirty years and so succeeded in preserving many unprinted works by Paracelsus for posterity. Few people on the other hand know that as a leading Schwenckfeldian, he also possessed and similarly rescued a large part of Schwenckfeld's manuscripts as well as virtually the entire estate of his closest collaborators, Valentin Krautwald and Adam Reissner.³² After completing his medical studies Widemann worked in Prague as secretary to the English alchemist Edward Kelley at the court of Emperor Rudolph II in the years 1587-1588 and in Trebon with the Rozmberks, which enormously facilitated his contacts with most contemporary Paracelsists. His circle included the earliest propagandists of the Rosicrucian Manifestos and the first publishers of the Paracelsian *Theologica* and the Weigelian and pseudo-Weigelian writings.³³

A discussion of Valentin Weigel's writings nowadays is no easy matter, because recently the number of works definitively to be attributed to Weigel has been drastically reduced.³⁴ For the evolution of Paracelsism into a religion, however, the distinction between genuine and spurious works by Weigel plays a secondary role, because first of all the entire corpus of 'Weigelian' works had a simultaneous and integral effect, and secondly both Weigel as well as his collaborators, continuators and/or forgers were all enthusiastic readers of the theological and nature philosophical works of Paracelsus. Whether Weigel's collaborators also meddled with the works of Paracelsus cannot be ruled out entirely. Even if they did, they only continued an already existing tradition of both impatient radicals and able propagandists, who used Paracelsus as a stepping stone to rid themselves once and for all of the double yoke of the Roman Antichrist and the apocalyptic beast (this is how the old Paracelsist Johannes Montanus used to characterize the Augsburg confession).³⁵ These pseudepigraphic products, too, are amongst the historical witnesses of Paracelsism and therefore deserve to be taken into account.

Around the year 1600 the corpus of medical and philosophical works of Paracelsus was already available in print. The collected edition by the Catholic Johannes Huser and his Protestant collaborator Paul Linck, authoritative to this day, appeared in Basel from 1589 with the financial support of the Archbishop of Cologne. As was to be expected, the theological works were ignored as subversive and unredeemable - to some extent even to this day. The last one who had access to the theological autographs of Paracelsus and who excerpted them profusely was the above-mentioned co-editor Paul Linck, in an unpublished chiliastic work *Rechter Bericht von den dreyen Seculis und Judiciis divinis post diluuium* of 1599-1602, which presents Paracelsus (and also Joachim of Fiore, Brigitta of Sweden, Johann Tauler and Guillaume Postel) as the proclaimer of an imminent Golden Age ('einer Guldenen Welt').³⁶

Paracelsus had now been promoted to the status of seer. It is therefore no surprise to find that the majority of the works by Paracelsus which was published separately between 1605 and 1635 consist of prophecies.³⁷ What is more, he became posthumously the founder of a new religion: the religion of two lights (the light of grace and the light of nature), which, as the Paracelsist Oswald Crollius enthusiastically put it in the famous preface to *Basilica Chymica*, joined together 'the summum of theological and philosophical truth and the foundation of perfect religiousness from the book of grace and the book of nature'.³⁸

And this religion also soon obtained a name: 'Theophrastia Sancta', Holy Theophrastia.

IV



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The first to use the term 'Theophrastia Sancta' in print was the widely-travelled Paracelsist Benedictus Figulus. In the preface to *Pandora magnalium naturalium aurea et benedicta* of 1608 he announced his plan to 'promote' in print the 'Cabbalistic and theological books of our dear highly-gifted leader and teacher Ph. Theophrastus of blessed memory' to the 'eternal benefit and salvation of all Christendom', and also for the first time publicly proclaimed himself a student of the 'Sacrosancta Theophrastia and immortal philosophy of Christ'.[39](#)

Figulus himself had not coined this phrase. He became familiar with the term as a result of his acquaintance with Adam Haslmayr, a Tyrolean schoolmaster, musician and alchemist, who had studied the theological books of Paracelsus so intensively that he spoke only of the holy Theophrastia.[40](#) Adam Haslmayr or Haselmeier is known to all those interested in the history of the Rosicrucians, because he was the first to respond in public to the then as yet unprinted Rosicrucian Manifestos, for which reason (as can be read on the title-page of the first edition of the *Fama Fraternitatis* of 1614) he 'was imprisoned by the Jesuits and bound in chains on a galley'. Only recently did I locate the long looked-for original edition of Haslmayr's response, dated 1612, the full title of which will now be communicated as a 'scoop': *Antwort An die lobwürdige Brüderschafft der Theosophen von RosenCreutz N.N. vom Adam Haselmayr Archiducalem Alumnum, Notarium seu Iudicem ordinarium Caesareum, der zeyten zum heiligen Creutz Dörflem bey Hall in Tyroll wohnende. Ad Famam Fraternitatis Einfeltigist geantwortet. Anno 1612.*[41](#)

In this response Haslmayr had thanked the Rosicrucians, who were otherwise unknown to him, for their 'Theophrastiam and divine gift', because he saw in them 'those, who are now chosen by God, to spread the eternal Theophrastiam and divine truth, which has been miraculously preserved until now'. Haslmayr felt that Rosencreutz and Paracelsus had aimed at the same goal and he accordingly appealed to the members of the invisible brotherhood, finally to come forward, to help realize the hoped-for breakthrough of the new religion of the 'evangelical freedom, which Theophrastus and Christian Rosencreutz promised this latter world'.

In a letter of December 1611 Haslmayr also called upon his closest friends to respond to the Rosicrucians: 'Respond you lords and doctors, especially those whom God exhorts, to the Fama Fraternitatis C.R., so that one time we will be worthy to have these men as teachers, and the disagreeable bad world will recognize the magnalia and will be converted, causing our good old pious Lorentz Lutz to heave a heart-felt sigh, because of these Rosicrucian people, who revealed the Theophrastiam'.[42](#)

This Lorentz Lutz of Meran was not only Haslmayr's teacher, but notably also the last living medical assistant of Paracelsus.[43](#) Whether Lutz had recommended this idea to Haslmayr, or whether the latter had thought of it himself while reading the Paracelsian manuscripts kept by his teacher, is not clear. The main thing is that Haslmayr proclaimed and defended the newly founded religion, the 'Theophrastia Sancta', in the majority of the 200 works which he wrote between 1605 and 1630. Here are some of the titles:

- 'Theophrastia vom Geist und Leben ad Augustum von Anhalt'.
- 'Eu Angelica Philosophia, darinn verfasst ist die gantze Thëophrastia. Warumb der Mensch erschaffen und was sein Ambt ist hie auf erden'.
- 'Thëophrastia in iter Iesu, das ist die Teütsche Theologiam gründtlich zue versteen, das ist der warhaftige Weg Iesu Christi den Alle geen müessen welche seligkeit begehren, per Theophrastum'.
- 'Von falscher gewalt vnnd vbermuth / auch verführung des Volckes / ein Göttliche offenbarung. Von falscher Gewalt und Übermut. Theophrastia Revelationis'.
- 'Sacro-Sancta Thëophrastia Von der Wahren seligmachenden Religion und von Krefften des Glaubens ahn die Fursten und Potentaten Europae und an die Ersten rättd der Reichstätte'.
- 'Sacro-Sancta Thëophrastia von der Ordnung Gottes und Weltlichen Regiment als ewiger Religion Iesu Nazareni Regis Iudeorum an das gantze R[ömische] R[eich] Europae und sonderlich der zerstörtesten

lesten Christenheit Teütscher Nation, anno 1624'.

-- 'Thëophrastia Paracelsi christiana Vom Langen gsunden Leben der werden christen'.

-- 'Prophecei ex S. S. Thëophrastia über das Vatter Unser, doraus Alle vernufft sehen und erkennen kan, ob ein Glaub in der Weldtt sey an Alle Gelerte und Ungelerte Christen auf dise leste Zeitt zuer Warnung und Ermanung gestelddt, anno 1626, von einem verworffenen Menschen'.

-- 'Thëophrastia de Partu Virginis, Darinn auf dise leste Zeit geoffenbaret wirt Wahin man verführt hat das gantze Menschliche Geschlecht durch die selbslauffende unnutze und ohnmächtige Lerer, dorauß die Mechtigen, die Reichen diser Weldt wohl achtung geben mögen. Höher kan die verführung nicht mehr kommen durch Alle ständ der christenheit'.

-- 'Thëophrastia Sacro-Sancta de Anfractu christianorum a Seculo 1600 annorum usque ad 1660 Christi, Darinnen gefunden Aller christen Irrtumb, Übermuert, falscher gwalt und verführung des Volckhes per Theophrastum Paracelsum magnum'.

-- 'Schuel der Geheimnussen [...] Theophrastia alma an die alte Reichstadt Augspurg / vnd an die Praedicanten zu Nürnberg / sonderlich die Theophrastum in den erleuchten Mann Gottes M. Valentino VVigelio verwerffen'.

-- 'Sacro-Sancta Thëophrastia, oder Thëologia Paracelsica intacta. Von der Narren oder falschen kirchen zuer offentlichen Apologia wider die 99 gantz Nerrische Puncten D. Matthiae Hoÿe [...] zue Dresden wider die Reformiertten oder calvinisten erdacht'.

-- 'Thëophrastia luminosa sive lux oriens Mortalium de perpetua religione seu Evangelica Philosophia, darinn das gantze Leben und Ordnung, Mandat, Recht undgerechtigkeit lesu Christi unsers ainigen gesetzgebers und Erlösers, Wie es seitt der geburt und Himmelfart Christi hette sollen jederzeit in Aller Welt gehaldten sein worden, wolten wir kaine feind und Plagen Jemalen im christentumb gehabt haben, begriffen wirdt, auf dise leste Römische Monarchie ann Tag gegeben durch Thëophrastum Paracelsum magnum secretarium Christi vor 80 Jaren bschriben, ietzt gefunden, an das R[ömische] R[eich] und sein haubt de anno 1623'.

-- 'Thëophrastia sancta von Recht und gerechtigkeit lesu Christi, Wie es seider des Lesten Abendmals einsetzung gehaldten soll sein worden bis zue ende der Weldtt, wolte Man nicht Im fluech und Malediung sein gefallen vor Gott. Also daß der Türckh die christen solte meistern, durch Thëophrastum magnum Eremitam ad Ferdinandum II. Imperatorem'.

-- 'Thëophrastia de Verbo Dei vivo und vom langen Leben In gmeinen auf diser Lesten Zeitt Völcker gestelldt von einer verurteidten Person, 1622. Wider Alle selbs lauffende Propheten und Apostel dobei auch Cura Lunaticorum, id est, die sich das gstim regiern lassen Inn und under Allen Ständen'.

-- 'Thëophrastia de Vita longa Principum, und Ursachen, warumb den Potentaten und Fursten Ir Leben abgekürtzt wirt, und wie disem fürzuekommen sei, ex Thëophrasto'.

-- 'Theophrastiae Cabalisticæ Isagoge'.

Those interested in these and many other titles by Haslmayr only have to consult the final pages of the second volume of Karl Sudhoff's *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, where they are reproduced in full by Sudhoff, who did not know who the author of these books was.⁴⁴ The titles can also, and even better, be read in Joachim Morsius's *Nuncius Olympicus*, printed in 1626, because this work is in fact the sale catalogue of 228 manuscripts in the fields of theology, Kabbalah, magic, chemistry, medicine and philology, written by an 'ancient and famous philosopher and physician'.⁴⁵ That the author was Haslmayr can be learnt from the catalogues of the library of Karl Widemann, who marked a large part of the titles listed in the *Nuncius* with the abbreviation 'A.H.', that is, Adam Haslmayr. In his catalogues, Widemann also mentioned the total number of manuscripts by Haslmayr deposited in his Augsburg home: 'Adam Haselmarii Manuscripta: In Folio 66, in Quarto 94, together 160'.⁴⁶

Of these 160 manuscripts I have located some 40 during my research for the Rosicrucian bibliography. The manuscripts are either in Haslmayr's own hand, or in Widemann's. In addition, the libraries of Florence, Hannover, Gotha, Innsbruck, Kassel, Copenhagen, London, Weimar and Wolfenbüttel contain a further 50 autographs by Haslmayr unrecorded in either the *Nuncius* or in Widemann's own catalogues. See my [Adam Haslmayr](#) which discusses these manuscripts in greater detail. Here it may already be noted that some of Haslmayr's works even appeared in print, and under the name of Paracelsus. These are the *Astronomia Olympi Novi* or the *Theologia Cabalistica von dem vollkommenen Menschen*, which were included in the Paracelsian-Weigelian compilation *Philosophia Mystica* of 1618.⁴⁷ The

pseudonymous publisher Huldrich Bachmeister of Regenbrunn, alias Johannes Siebmacher of Nuremberg, obviously took these two works for works by Paracelsus.[48](#) Only in the case of the added 'Particulae' did Siebmacher express doubts as to its Paracelsian authorship, because he could not decide whether this was only the work of a 'disciple of the holy Theophrastia'.[49](#)

V



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What Haslmayr actually understood by 'Theophrastia', repeated not only in titles, but also in almost every one of his discourses, can be deduced an oration (*Oratio reuelatoria*), sent by Haslmayr to his sovereign, the Archduke Maximilian of Tyrol, immediately before being sentenced to the galleys in August 1612.

In this *Oratio reuelatoria* Haslmayr reported how he, too, 'while so many writers and high prophets these latter days' had manifested themselves, also began to speak out and as 'a simple Tyrolean' had to make a stand against such 'prophets', who 'hold themselves in such esteem, that heaven should depend on them, or nothing is right, but what they teach, imagine and write'. In reality, however, as theologians they are as good 'as the jugglers and charlatans are good poets or Cicero a preacher of Christ'. These theologians now upbraid him that it does not become him, Haslmayr, to write 'Revelationes theologicas', because he is only 'a common layman', and has not completed the Aristotelian 'cursum philosophicum' at any university, as if 'Narristoteles' [the fool Aristotle] 'ever completed, or even came near, our Christian curriculum'. 'What, then, should we care about the heathen's curriculum?', Haslmayr adds.

'May the spirit of God, not go where it wants, or must he first consult the universities and bishops? All men may fully share in the grace of God and the school of the holy Apostle is as open as it was during Pentecost, only now it is lodged in the mind and in the truth, in asking, seeking and appealing, and not in the anointment of humans or the tonsure [...] as Doctor Paracelsus Magnus explains, the mighty Cabalista.'

'The Sancta Theophrastia', according to Haslmayr, 'is not based (God be praised) on the elements of the common world, but on Christianity, and proves that all arts and faculties are to be slighted, which do not have their feet or foundation and cornerstone in theology'. Haslmayr believed that this was especially true for the 'eternal Sophia sancta', which, 'in particular under this new monarchy and century from 1600 onwards', 'calls us all and invites us to learn from her all the sciences, art and wisdom, a wisdom which is nobody or nothing else, but Christ'. Not surprisingly, Haslmayr concludes his discourse with a plea for the Rosicrucians and with a passage from the *Fama Fratemitatis*:

'Do we then need Narristoteles [that fool Aristotle] or Galen or Cicero in Christian schools? Now under the Reign of the Holy Spirit? We do not need them at all. Blessed the country, which has us only learn the 12 lights of God, because these teach us nothing else, but Jesus, who is above all wisdom, wherefore also we have from the Holy Spirit of the Ancients the wonderful adage: JESUS NOBIS OMNIA'.[50](#)

Haslmayr understood the 'Theophrastia Sancta' to be a sort of perpetual religion, practised in concealment since the days of the apostles until the time when the 'German Trismegistus, Philippus Theophrastus', began publicly to expound its meaning. The basis for this true Theophrastia (and at the same time the way and the method for a true progress in all arts and sciences) were the 'Tria cabalistica prima'. The three Kabbalistic principles were already described by Paracelsus, following Matthew 7:7, in the *Philosophia Sagax* as the road to all research as it is ordained by God and nature: 'As all things to be studied are based in three principles, in 'Bitten, Suchen und Anklopfen' [asking, seeking and appealing]'.[51](#) Haslmayr added to these three Kabbalistic principles the 'four rules of our Christendom' and 'eight virtues of holiness' based on the Sermon on the Mount, which he described in many of his works, including the *Verweisung* to Hippolytus Guarinoni of 1611 and the *Theologia Cabalistica* printed in 1618: 'I. To love our enemies; II. To abandon selfhood; III. To patiently suffer slander inflicted on us; IV. To refuse to accept all honour bestowed'. Haslmayr considered these four rules to be the 'key to the holy secret science and the magnalia of God' and at the same time the 'law, order and policy' of the true Christians, whose lives are based on the Sermon on the Mount or, as Haslmayr formulated it again and

again, are concerned to excel in 'the eight virtues of blessedness'. Through the principle of 'Nosce teipsum', that is through the observation of the three spirits lodged in man (animal, astral or syderial, and divine) he can penetrate the sacrament of the element and the word.[52](#)

In order to clarify this 'elementi verbique sacramentum', Haslmayr developed his own hieroglyphic sign in 1612 (in imitation of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*). In many of his works he called this sign 'Trimonas' (threefold one), 'Monarchia Stellae signatae', or simply the 'Signatstern' ('sign star') of Paracelsus. This sign, which he often explained in philosophical, medical or alchemical terms, but often also expounded in a purely theological or chiliastic sense, was used by Haslmayr to visualize the close relationship between the 'mystery of theology', the 'secret of philosophy' and the 'purpose of medicine'.[53](#) Haslmayr symbolized by means of the 'stella signata' the relation between the Rosicrucians' 'ergon' and 'parergon', that is, the close connection between the higher religion and sciences obtained through practice in the 'theosophico oratorio' (through imitation of God's works) and in the 'chymico laboratorio' (through the personal study of nature).[54](#)

Following the Rosicrucians (*Confessio Fraternitatis*, ch. 10) Haslmayr, too, reiterates that it is possible to glean 'all sciences and faculties from the Bible'. But at the same time Haslmayr depreciates the value of the 'external' biblical text, as did Thomas Müntzer, Ludwig Hätzer, Sebastian Franck, Servet or Castellion, but also Paracelsus:[55](#)

'The books of the Christians are the living creatures. The books written on paper by the prophets are no more than memorials and witnesses, so that we men are reminded of what is in us, because the sense is not in the book, but in the spirit, now the spirit houses in men, which we must allow to work in us freely, and listen, to what God tells us inside of us'.[56](#) The living word of God was for Haslmayr not to be found in the 'external characters' of the Bible, but in the inner being of man. And at the same time also in all creatures in the world, since, as he wrote in other places, 'all creatures' are 'the living incarnate word FIAT of God' and 'all men have impressed in their hands the signs with which to recognize the works of God'.[57](#)

Through practical, 'hands-on' work, that is through the individual and immediate experience of things and not through mere speculation or an appeal to 'paper' authorities Haslmayr believed felt the 'textus libri Naturae' could be deciphered and the 'Mysterium of the word and the elements' could be solved. In the same way as the 'true' followers of Christ were recognized, 'not for rhetorical discourse', not for 'talking and preaching of God', 'not for making the sign of the Cross', but for 'carrying the Cross' and for fulfilling the 'works of Christ', so must he who wishes to be 'the follower of God and Nature' prove himself through his own works.[58](#)

It was only deeds which mattered in this entire debate, as Haslmayr demonstrated so explicitly by means of a quotation drawn from Paracelsus: 'Note, therefore, dear reader, that he who is not tried and proved in theology and in medicine through his works, has lost his case and wins even less in arguing'.[59](#)

This caution applied to those physicians and philosophers whose knowledge did not spring from practical experience and experimental discovery, but was only founded on the authorities of Antiquity; those who with unbelievable arrogance and self-confidence declared the sciences to be already complete and rounded off, and who cried out for the henchman, if anyone but dared to question the sacrosanct authority of an Aristotle or a Galen. The caution also extended to the theologians of the several churches, who, priding themselves on their dogmatic confessions, engaged in bitter mutual controversies, persecuted dissidents, always seeking the patronage of the powerful or placing themselves at the helm of power.

The attitude of the adherents of Paracelsus regarding theory and practice was quite different: In religion or science, what counted 'the recognition of each thing from experience/ from action and feeling/ from the works of truth [...] because knowledge and learning flows forth from experience', as Johann Arndt formulated it in the first of his *Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christentum*.[60](#) Many Paracelsists in consequence were not too concerned with the dogmatism and orthodoxy of the theologians. In this sense they belonged to those who surpassed not only the confessional confines of the existing churches, but also rejected and combatted them, because they were a part of 'external Christendom'.

This radical rejection of the 'churches of stone' and the advocacy of a church of the spirit, not bound by 'external ceremonies' or certain 'places, cities or people' ('pure man is the temple', as Haslmayr put it once),⁶¹ was something which not only Paracelsus, but also Weigel had advocated. It is no surprise therefore that Haslmayr in his *Pansophia* also promoted the minister of Zschopau to one of the chief teachers of the 'Theophrastia Sancta':

'Now you Romish and Protestant and you mercenary sectarians and all you factions, look at this complete *Büechlein vom gebett* by Weigel and *Informatorium* also (to lead you to the narrow path to Christ) and all other books of the 2 men most enlightened by the spirit of God, D[ominus] D[oc]tor Theophrastus Eremitus Germanus et primus philosophus Christianorum and then M[agister] Valentin Weigel'.

Both had aimed at one thing only, namely the divine word, which is hidden in all creatures and which forms the centre and life of all things. This in contrast to the 'so-called holy temple-lords', who of old in their 'bricked-up temples', 'extinguished and obscured' self-knowledge or 'holy Gnothi Seauton'.⁶²

For, 'if the Theophrastian works had been taught in the faculties of the universities in Christendom for the past 100 years instead of the pagan writings', Haslmayr fulminated in his anonymous *Pansophia illuminati cuiusdam Viri, doraus die falschen Propheten erkannt werden* of 1619 'there would now be enough Magi or Theosophists' to overcome the 'false teachers', namely 'the Pope, Luther, Calvin and their ilk', 'but when the haughty get up to rule and teach, the humble theosophers and the pious true Christians hide themselves'.⁶³

But soon, or so Haslmayr hoped, referring to the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the era of the '*Gloria Dei intacta*' and the '*Evangelion Libertet*' would dawn, in which 'all classes and religions, factions and sects will meet', in order publicly to seek out these 'concealed theosophers'. The adherents of the Pope will then have to confess: 'We, poor confused and far too clever Papists have trusted far too much in the alleged saints, who have abandoned the road of truth'. The Protestants, too, 'with all their followers' will confess publicly: 'And we, Lutherans of all sorts, have taken everything to be good and just and true, which the lascivious women's theologian Luther or Calvin or Zwingli or Flacius Illyricus, Hus, or the Anabaptists told us [...] and also fed ourselves with lies, no less than the Papists'.⁶⁴

For Haslmayr at any rate the following was clear: not until the acknowledged and unacknowledged churches saw the errors of their ways and turned away from the false teachers, would the true Christian church of the prophets and apostles be established, being a church founded not 'on the rich Simon Magus, but on the poor holy Peter', built not with walls of brick, but 'in the spirit'. Then 'the school of the Pentecost and the Olympian languages of all wise believers in Christ will stand open', so that the 'Latinists' and other 'cacosophists and world-learned Doctors' will not even 'be worthy to serve as stokers for the wise'. Then only 'the Theophrastia Sancta and the eternal Sophia will flourish and be made public'.⁶⁵

VI



[toptop](#)

Unfortunately there is no room to discuss the intensive religious contacts between the 'Catholic' Adam Haslmayr in Tyrol, the 'Lutheran' Karl Widemann in Augsburg and the 'Calvinist' Prince August von Anhalt in Plötzkau between 1611 and 1631. But it may be said of their mutual strategy for the propagation of the 'Sancta Theophrastia', that Haslmayr had been appointed to lead the secret printing press of August von Anhalt from the summer of 1611 onwards, in order to allow publication of the theological works of Paracelsus and also the works of Weigel. Haslmayr's arrest and other adverse circumstances meant that only few works were actually produced by this secret printing press. Most of the works intended for publication had to be given to other publishers such as Cristoph Bismarck in Halle, Johann Francke in Magdeburg or Lucas Jennis in Frankfurt, who for a full decade supplied the German-speaking market

even in the remotest corners with the books of the 'Theophrastia Sancta', that is with the editions of Weigel and Paracelsus, but also Lautensack, Egidius Gutmann, and, of course, Haslmayr himself. Widemann or August von Anhalt supplied the manuscripts for many of these editions, while Anhalt often also provided the funds.[66](#)

When August von Anhalt abandoned these hazardous activities in 1621 after having assumed responsibility for affairs of state, Widemann and Haslmayr, who had returned from the galleys, attempted to win Herzog August in Wolfenbüttel for the plan to publish further theological works of Paracelsus, 'Taulerian and Eckhardian books' and other 'Theological manuscripts... against the errors and mistakes of the Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists' through the presses of the Stern brothers in Lüneburg. 'After all', Widemann wrote to Herzog August, 'the works of Weigel and Arndt, too, managed to evade the censorship of the theologians'.[67](#) August, however, immediately put a halt to this plan. He informed Widemann 'that the Theophrastian and Weigelian books are not allowed to be printed in these domains; as they would cause great confusion in our theology'.[68](#)

The theologians had already seen to it that the feared confusion was halted. The great number of Weigelian and Paracelsian editions had soon provoked a true avalanche of works by the orthodox theologians from the Lutheran and Calvinist camps (the Catholics did not get involved: to them it was infighting between heretics and enemies).[69](#)

The guardians of Lutheran orthodoxy in the German lands were the most vehement in their reactions. The reading-public and market aimed at by these German-language works justifiably caused them to think they were the immediate target of the Theophrastic and Weigelian 'rubbish'. The majority of these 'seditious' books was printed in Lutheran cities, without the theologians being able to prevent their publication. All that was left for them to do, was to warn against the danger of this 'new and fanatical theology' in increasingly strong terms, and to try to counteract the damage already done with a plethora of rabid polemics. The Wittenberg minister Nicolas Hunnius, for instance, responded at first in Latin in his *Principia Theologiae Fanaticae, quae Paracelsus genuit atque Weigelius interpolavit* (1618), later in German in the *Christlicher Betrachtung der neuen Paracelsischen und Weigelianischen Theologie* (1622). The Halle minister Andreas Merck in the *Treuherzige Warnung vor dem Weigelianismo* (1620), the Hamburg theologian Johannes Schellhammer in the *Widerlegung der vermeinten Postill Weigelii* (1621), the Tübingen Professor Theodor Thumm in his *Impietas Weigeliana* (1622) and many others responded in similar fashion.[70](#)

As far as the response of the German Calvinists is concerned, it took them a rather longer time to refute the 'Weigelian errors', but they were more thorough in return, as is evident above all from the *Exercitationes Theologicae* by the Anhaltian Christian Beckman, published in Amsterdam in 1641,[71](#) or the *Antiweigelius* of Johannes Crocius, printed in Kassel in 1652. There cannot have existed an initial sympathy, or even political complicity on the part of the Calvinists with the Rosicrucian and Weigelian movement (which many Lutheran theologians were only too happy to believe at the time, a fact which some historians even today cite as evidence).[72](#) Because it was precisely at the reformed university of Marburg and at the command of the Calvinist Landgrave Moritz von Hessen-Kassel that the first, and also normative, inquisitorial trials in Germany against the Rosicrucian, Weigelian and other errors of 'the Theophrastic sort' were conducted in the years 1619-1620.[73](#)

In Marburg, for instance, the son-in-law of the printer of the Rosicrucian Manifestos, Philipp Homagius, was sentenced to life imprisonment in a fortress town on the charge of having recommended and propagated the works of the 'excellent and enlightened essential theologians Weigel and Theophrastus' as the keys to the understanding of Holy Scripture; he also praised the Rosicrucians as 'true and highly enlightened perfect Christians' and 'had held them in a higher esteem than he could express in words'; exposing himself to be one of their faithful adherents: 'the Brothers of the Rosicrucian Fraternity', Homagius declared, 'and the followers of Theophrastus and Weigel agree in the fundamental articles of faith, although one reached a higher degree of faith than the other'.[74](#)

The orthodox theologians knew very well who had been responsible for the errors for which Weigel was being denounced: it was Paracelsus. Each, after his own strength, was concerned to reiterate and, where



possible, to surpass in separate chapters the slanders and taunts against Paracelsus which had been collected since the days of Oporinus and Erastus. As scholars steeped in theology they were, however, wise enough not to get involved in the medical and nature philosophical arena, and so they fulminated in particular against their apostate colleague Weigel, whose theological terminology was probably more easily accessible to them.

That is why these opponents all liked to speak of Weigelianism rather than Theophrastia or Paracelsism, which could have led to misunderstandings amongst the medical profession and other professional groups, because the merits of Paracelsus 'in physics, in chemistry and in the medical art', as Christian Beckmann conceded, could not but be acknowledged even by the theologians.

Thus 'Weigelianism' was an invention of the theologians, who styled it the chief heresy of the seventeenth century in Germany ('unde factum est, ut Religionem Fanaticam nostra aetas vocare coeperit Vveigelianam'),⁷⁵ although from a historical viewpoint - and this in contrast to the followers of Schwenckfeld, Paracelsus, Jacob Böhme or even Johannes Arndt - hardly anybody in the baroque era considered or called himself a Weigelian.

Abraham von Franckenberg hit the mark when in 1637 he gave his epochal work on the correspondences between the teachings of the ancient gnosis and the views of his co-religionists the significant title *Theophrastia Valentiniana*. The adjective 'Valentiniana' here stands for the gnostic heretic Valentinus from the first century CE, while the substantive noun 'Theophrastia' was meant to denote the newly founded spiritual and theosophical movements of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which with this designation were led back to their real origin, to Paracelsus.

Paracelsus, therefore, was very prescient, when he wrote a hundred years earlier in his book *Paragranum*: 'I will give Luther and you some work to do!'⁷⁶

Notes

An enlarged German-language version of this article was published in *Analecta Paracelsica. Studien zum Nachleben Theophrast von Hohenheim im deutschen Kulturgebiet der frühen Neuzeit*. (Heidelberger Studien zur Naturkunde der frühen Neuzeit), eds. W.-D. Müller-Jancke and J. Telle, Stuttgart 1994.

[0101](#)

1 Karl Sudhoff, *Versuch einer Kritik der Echtheit der Paracelsischen Schriften, II. Teil: Paracelsus-Handschriften*, Berlin 1899, 300; Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke II, Theologische und religionsphilosophische Schriften*, ed. Kurt Goldammer. Supplement: *Religiöse und sozialphilosophische Schriften in Kurzfassungen*, Wiesbaden 1973, 170-171.

[0202](#)

2 Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke I*, ed. Karl Sudhoff, Munich/Berlin 1922-1929, III; Paracelsus, *Theologische und religions-philosophische Schriften I*, ed. Wilhelm Matthießen, Munich 1923, 103-104.

[0303](#)

3 Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke I*, ed. Sudhoff, VIII, 62-63, 43.

[0404](#)

4 *ibid.*, 56.

[0505](#)

5 'Wann er [Paracelsus] anfieng zu schreiben, wollte [er] sy [Luther und Zwingli] und auch den Bapst erst recht in die Schül füren', cf. Theodor Zwinger, *Theatrum humanae vitae*, ed. Basel 1571, 1480; ed. Basel 1586, 2583; Carlos Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation. Theodor Zwinger und die religiöse und kulturelle Krise seiner Zeit*, Part I, in «Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde», 77 (1977),



57-137; II, «ibidem» 79 (1979), 125-223 (quot. I, 100).

[0606](#)

6 Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke* II, ed. Goldammer, III, XXVI-XXVII.

[0707](#)

7 Ibid. 227, 175-176, 206-209. For Paracelsus' criticism of the Roman-Catholic and the Reformed churches cf. Kurt Goldammer, *Paracelsus. Natur und Offenbarung*, Hannover-Kirchrode 1953, 89-92; K. Goldammer, *Paracelsus in neuen Horizonten. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, in «Salzburger Beiträge zur Paracelsusforschung» 24 (1986), 164-171 and passim; Hartmuth Rudolph, *Einige Gesichtspunkte zum Thema 'Paracelsus und Luther'*, in «Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte» 78 (1981), 34-53; H. Rudolph, *Individuum und Obrigkeit bei Paracelsus*, in «Nova Acta Paracelsica», NF 3 (1988), 69-76.

[0808](#)

8 *Theophrasti Paracelsi vonn Hohenhaimb Schreiben ahn einen glerthen, von grundt des Alten vnd Neüen Testaments vnnd vnserer Seeligkait* (the claim that this work is spurious is unsubstantiated) contains the words: 'Lieber N: daß du allein gegen alle Doctorn der Romischen, oder (so es den Göttern gefelt) der Christlichen kirchen, die von der Apostell zeit ahn biss dise heütige stundt einen grossen Rhuem gehabt, fülest und glaubest vnd wolst lieber Allein gegen alle halten, dann mit allen oder mitt dem Mehrern Thaill irren, Meines bedunckhens thuestu Recht daran, vnd Ich zweifel nit, es soll dir solche Meinung ie lenger, ie mehr gefallen, vnd ich bitt auch Gott, Er woll dich darin stercken. Dann [...] Ich gwißlich glaub, das die eüsserlich Kirch Christi mit sambt Iren gaaben vnd Sacramenten durch einreissung vnd verwüestung des Antichrists, ahn stund nach der Apostell Zeitt inn Himmell aufgefahren sej, vnd Ihm Geist vnnd Warheit verborgen lig, also das von tausend vierhundert Jahren kein eüsserliche versammelte kirchen, noch kein Sacrament gewest seindt, Ich gantz sicher bin', cf. Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Handschriften*, (see note 1), 556-558. [Dear N: that you alone against all Doctors of the Roman church, or (so it may please the gods) against the Doctors of all Christian churches, who have been renowned from the time of the Apostles until the present, feel and believe and prefer to hold out on your own against all others, rather than err with the majority, I believe you are right to do so, and I do not doubt, such an opinion will please you more and more, and I also pray God, that He shall strengthen you in this. For [...] I certainly believe, that through the appearance and the ravages of the Antichrist, the visible church of Christ with all its gifts and sacraments was assumed into heaven one hour after the time of the Apostles, and that she is hidden in the spirit and in truth; in short that these fourteen hundred years there has been no visible assembled church nor a single sacrament, of that I am quite sure].

[0909](#)

9 Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke* I, ed. Sudhoff, XIII, 373.

[010010](#)

10 'Mein mund hab ich zugehalten, darmit mir das wetter und der donder nit in acker schläge. darmit hab ichs hindurch bracht bis auf die zeit und hab mich nit bekümbert umb sie', cf. *Prologus totius operis christianae vitae* (Preface to *De secretis secretorum theologiae christianae*) in, Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke* II, ed. Goldammer, III, 171.

[011011](#)

11 On the preservation of Paracelsian manuscripts in Neuburg an der Donau cf. Joachim Telle, *Kurfürst Ottheinrich, Hans Kilian und Paracelsus. Zum pfälzischen Paracelsismus im 16. Jahrhundert*, in *Von Paracelsus zu Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt*, «Salzburger Beiträge zur Paracelsusforschung» 22, Vienna 1981, 130-146.

[012012](#)

12 Konrad Gessner, *Bibliotheca Vniversalis, siue Catalogus omnium scriptorum locupletissimus, in tribus linguis, Latina, Graeca et Hebraica: extantium et non extantium, veterum ac recentiorum in hunc usque diem, doctorum et indoctorum, publicatorum et in Bibliothecis latentium*, Zürich 1545, 614; cf. Robert Henri Blaser, *Paracelsus in Basel, Sieben Studien über Werk, Wirkung und Nachwirkung des Paracelsus*



in Basel published by the Swiss Paracelsus Society, Muttentz/Basel 1979, 76; Edwin Rosner, *Studien zum Leben und Wirken des Paracelsus in St. Gallen*, in «Nova Acta Paracelsica», NF 3 (1988), 32-54, esp. 46.

[013013](#)

13 Conrad Gessner, *Epistolarum medicinalium libri tres*, Zürich 1577, ff. 1r-2v. Thus Milt's claims, according to which Gessner in his latter years was to have interested himself for no other person so much as for Paracelsus, prove to be very exaggerated, cf. Bernhart Milt, *Conrad Gesner und Paracelsus*, in «Schweizerische Medizinische Wochenschrift», 59 (1929), 486-488, 506-509.

[014014](#)

14 Joannes Baptista Montanus, *In nonum librum Rhasis ad R[egem] Almansorem lectiones restitutae a Ioanne Cratone*, Basel 1562, fols. a2v-b4r: 'Mirifica igitur quorundam fanaticorum, ex magistri sui [Paracelsi] falsa persuasione, est fatuitas, qui totam artem atque tam veteres quam nostri seculi summos artifices, propter errata quaedam et humanos in arte lapsus vituperant, ac more Enthusiastarum in Theologia omnia scripta vetustatis tanquam falsa atque erronea reiiciunt, sibique Deum firmamentum et nescio quae alia libros Medicinae esse fingunt, quos de suo lumine naturae interpretentur, et Alchymia, nova Astronomia rerumque universitatis Anatomia, cuius se investigatores atque abstrusissimarum rerum inquisitores esse somniant, confirmant'; Gessner, *Epistolarum medicinalium*, (see note 13), f. 15r. 'Legi tua quae in *Theophrasteious* scripseras in praefatione illa, quam Perna mutilavit'. On Crato's opposition to Paracelsism, cf. Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), I, 98s, 119s, 133s.

[015015](#)

15 Antonio Rotondò, *Pietro Perna e la vita culturale e religiosa di Basilea fra il 1570 e il 1580*, in Rotondò, *Studi e ricerche di storia ereticale italiana del Cinquecento*, Turin 1974, 273-392, quot. 389.

[016016](#)

16 Anonymous, *Thyrus onagou In Tergum Georgii Fedronis*, s.l. 1565; Lucas Stenglin, *Apologia adversus Stibii spongiam a Michaële Toxite aeditam*, Augsburg 1569; Gervasius Marstaller, *Oratio de Theophrasto Paracelso*, 1570 (Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nuremberg, Ms. 991, ff. 8v-26v); Bartholomäus Reussner, *Ein kurtze Erklerung und Christliche widerlegung, Der unerhörten Gotteslesterungen und Lügen, welche Paracelsus in den dreyen Büchern Philosophie ad Athenienses hat außgeschüttet*, Görlitz 1570; Bernardus Dessenius, *Medicinae veteris et rationalis adversus oberronis cuiusdam mendacissimi atque impudentissimi Georgii Fedronis, ac universae Sectae Paracelsicae imposturas, defensio*, Cologne 1573; Johannes Weyer, *De praestigiis Daemonum et incantationibus ac ueneficiis libri sex*, Basel 1566, 1568, 1577, 1583. In the first editions of Weyer's *De praestigiis*, Basel 1563 and 1564, the name Paracelsus does not occur, the first mention being the edition of 1566 (book 2, ch. 18 and bk. 5, 13); the criticism of Paracelsus and the Paracelsists is repeated in the edition of 1568 (196ss, 493), was partly mitigated in 1577 (219-220, 442), but reinforced in 1583 with new quotations. The new English translation (*Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance. Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum*, ed. George Mora, Benjamin Kohl, tr. John Shea (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 75), Binghamton, New York 1991) is only based on the 1583 text, without indicating the important changes and additions made to the text of the earlier editions.

[017017](#)

17 Thomas Erastus, *Disputationum De Medicina Nova Philippi Paracelsi Pars Prima - Quarta*, Basel [1571]-1573; Rotondò, *Pietro Perna e la vita culturale e religiosa di Basilea*, (see note 15), 389; Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part II, 182.

[018018](#)

18 Udo Benzenhöfer, *Zum Brief des Johannes Oporinus über Paracelsus. Die bislang älteste bekannte Briefüberlieferung in einer Oratio von Gervasius Marstaller*, in «Sudhoffs Archiv» 75 (1989), 55-63 (also for the literature quoted so far). For the time it took to write the letter, cf. Gilly, 'Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation', (see note 5), Part 1, 93-94. To what has already been said it should here be added that Oporinus' letter to Johann Weyer and to Reiner Solenander, 'medicum illustrium ducis Juliensis



excellētissimum', could not have been written on the date suggested by Petrus Foreest (26-11-1555). The date proposed by Johann Staricius ('Epistola anno 1565 ex Basilea de iudicio admirandi medici Paracelsi') has now been confirmed by the discovery of a manuscript from Daniel Keller at Wolfenbüttel [Cod. Guelf. 13.7 Aug 4°, 231r-232v: 'Ex Oporini Ep istola 26 Novembris anno [15]65 Basilea ad D. Vierium scripta').

[019019](#)

19 Theodor Zwinger, Letter to Gervasius Marstaller of 7 January 1564 on the teachings of Paracelsus and the activities of the Paracelsists in Basel (contemporary manuscript copies in Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Ms. 991, fols. 15r-21v; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Dupuy 797, ff. 55-70; and Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1458, fols. 34-42). Critical edition of this letter (Latin and German translation) in W. Kühlmann-J. Telle, *Corpus Paracelsisticum* II (in print), nr. 82.

[020020](#)

20 As a good example of this 'rabies theologica' may serve the response of the Strassburg cathedral preacher Elias Schade, who was possibly the first orthodox theologian, in 1588, to have been requested to give a private *Judicium* on 'certain theological writings' of Paracelsus. Schade's annihilating judgment concluded with the words: 'Derhalben ist mein Raht zuvorderst, daß jhr [die Empfänger des *Judicium*] aller dings solcher Schrifften müßig gehet, darinn weder leset, noch darauß abschreibet: Darnach daß jhr die Bücher, sie kosten gleich wenig oder viel, auff's fürderlichst verbrennt, oder in ein Profey werfft, als deß Teuffels Dreck'. [Therefore my advice is foremost that they [the recipients of the *Judicium*] will by all means avoid such works, and not read them, nor copy from them: Next that you shall burn these books in future, be they cheap or expensive, or throw them in a cesspool as if they were the devil's own dung]. Cf. Ralf Georg Bogner, *Das 'Judicium' des Elias Schade (1589). Ein frühes Zeugnis der 'Verketzerung' Theophrast von Hohenheims*, in *Parerga Paracelsica*, ed. J. Telle, Heidelberg 1992, 122-139.

[021021](#)

21 Joseph Du Chesne (Quercetanus), *Ad Iacobi Auberti de ortu et causa metallorum Explicationem [...] Responsio*, Lyon 1575, fols. b1v-b2r: 'Ad Paracelsum vero quod attinet, equidem mihi nequaquam proposui ipsius Theologiae patrocinium suscipere, neque ipsi in omnibus astipulari unquam cogitavi, tanquam in eius verba iurarem'; on Du Chesne and the French Paracelsists cf. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Renaissance Essays*, London 1985 (9. The Paracelsian Movement); on Tommaso Zefiriele Bovio cf. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 13, 565-566; see also *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700: l'influsso di Ermete Trismegisto / Magic, alchemy and science 15th-18th centuries: the influence of Hermes Trismegistus* (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana - Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica), edited by Carlos Gilly & Cis van Heertum, 2 Vol., Firenze, Centro Di, 2002, quot. vol. II, 124-127.

[022022](#)

22 Gerhard Dorn, *De naturae luce physica ex Genesi desumpta iuxta sententiam Theophrasti Paracelsi Tractatus. Cui annexa est modesta quaedam admonitio ad Thomam Erastum*, Frankfurt 1583, 11, 32f., 370f.; *Theatrum Chemicum*, Strassburg 1659-1660, vol. I, 327, 332ff. cf. Carlos Gilly, *Das Bekenntnis zur Gnosis von Paracelsus bis auf die Schüler Jacob Böhmes*, in *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermetism and the Christian Tradition*, ed. by R. van den Broek and C. van Heertum, (Pimander: Texts and Studies published by the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 4), Amsterdam 2000, 385-425, quot. 395-397.

[023023](#)

23 Bernardus Penotus a Portu S. Mariae Aquitanus, *Apologiae in duas partes divisa ad Iosephi Michellii Middelburgensis Medici scriptum [...] Adjuncta est [...] Epistola Bernardi Penoti ad D. Andream Libavium*, Frankfurt 1600, ff. +1r-++6v: 'Praeterea (D. Libavi) non tu solus, sed tui similes quoque nobis Paracelsi impietatem, atheitatem nobis obiicitis, quod vel quilibet facile proferre et effutire, probare autem sufficienter minime poterit. Longe aliud enim scripta Paracelsi Theologica, praesertim libri ipsius de Philosophia aeterna conscripti tractant. Nam si vel primam huius Philosophiae partem [...] legisses, non tantum omni ipsum impietatis suspitione liberares, sed et peculiari spiritus sancti illuminatione instructum



ipsum haec scripsisse affirmares [...] O ter quaterque beatum felix regnum, cuius Paracelsus Dux eius. Porro regnum aureum merito dici poterit. Ibi etenim cunctorum hominum malorum finis et terminus erit (huius aetatis respectu) Rabularum causidicorumve loquacitas, omnisque denique iniustitia cessabit. Theologastrorum, sectarum haereses quoque terminabuntur. Aristotelis Philosophia opinionibus suffulta pessum ibit'. That Penot at a highly advanced age was to have distanced himself from his earlier enthusiasm for Paracelsus, as Libavius and others claimed repeatedly, is not correct. In the fourth edition of his *Tractatus varii, de vera preparatione, et usu medicamentorum chymicorum*, Basel 1616, 7, the 97-year-old Penot addressed the traditional Galenists: 'O laureati magistri, ab erroribus pedem retrahite et veritatem mendacis sopprimere desinite: Paracelsi Theodidacti scripta acri iudicio perlegite; ad rectam viam redite, ne forte rerum opifex [...] irascatur'. On the antiparacelsist attitude of the arch-conservative Libavius cf. Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part 1, 67-70; Part 2, 175-176, 221; cf. also 'The "fifth column" within Hermetism: Andreas Libavius', in *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700 / Magic, alchemy and science 15th-18th centuries* (see note 21), vol. I, 399-415.

[024024](#)

24 Thomas Moffet, *De iure et praestantia chymicorum medicamentorum Dialogus Apologeticus*, Frankfurt 1584, 11 (also in *Theatrum Chemicum*, ed. 1659, I 69). For Moffet see Allen G. Debus, *The English Paracelsians*, London 1965, 71-76; Blaser, *Paracelsus in Basel*, (see note 12), 200-209; Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part 1, 109-111.

[025025](#)

25 *Dialogus introducens duas personas interlocutrices, sc. Alexandrum et Bernhardum* [written around 1575], in Alexander von Suchten, *Chymische Schrifften*, Frankfurt 1680, 305-356, esp. 337-339; cf. Włodzimierz Hubicki, *Alexander von Suchten*, in «Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften» 44 (1960), 54-63.

[026026](#)

26 *De tribus Facultatibus*, in A. von Suchten, *Chymische Schrifften*, (see note 25), 357-382, esp. 370-374. From a theological viewpoint Suchten's work *De tribus Facultatibus* or *Kurtzer Bericht von der Wahrheit und Sophisterei dreyer der furnembsten Faculteten, nemlich Theologiae, Astronomiae et Medicinae* belongs to the most daring works of the entire Paracelsist movement. Here the reformers were for instance reproached for having thrown out the child with the bathwater when abolishing the rituals of the old church: 'Es haben ettliche Klüglinge wol gesehen, das Meß hören, Singen, Orgeln, Wachs, Oel, und Saltz uns nit seelig machen, darum haben sie es verworffen' [...] Also haben sie solcher Magischen und Apostolischen Satzung viel verworffen, [...] gedachten lang nicht, daß es Magische Bücher waren, die uns so viel, ja auch besser lehren, dann die geschriebene Bücher, zuverstehen das Geheimniß Gottes' [...] Diweil ihre Bücher möchten verlohren werden [...] haben sie [die Magi] einer jeden [Facultät] solch Zeichen gegeben, die nicht also vergehen können. Also daß die Bücher der Theologiae, von welchen uns die beyden Testament überblieben, gaben sie auch der Theologiae ihr Zeichen, auff das, so wir die Bücher verlohren, ander Bücher hätten die nicht also könnten verlohren werden: Das sind die Zeichen, und alles was sie in die Kirchen gegeben haben'; cf. Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part 1, 76-82; cf. also *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700 / Magic, alchemy and science 15th-18th centuries* (see note 21), vol. I, 185-198.

[027027](#)

27 Sudhoff, *Versuch einer Kritik der Echtheit der Paracelsischen Schrifften, I. Teil: Bibliographia Paracelsica*, Berlin 1894, 352-255; Sudhoff, *Gedanken eines unbekanntes Anhängers des Theophrastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim aus der Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts über deutschen Jugendunterricht*, in «Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für deutsche Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte» 5 (1985), 83-90; Heinz-Peter Mielke, *Schwenckfeldianer im Hofstaat Bischof Marquards von Speyer (1560-1581)*, in «Archiv für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte» 28 (1976), 77-83; Telle, *Johann Huser in seinen Briefen, in Parerga Paracelsica*, (see note 20), 221-223, esp. note 109. On the basis of a few typographical characteristics I expressed the view in *Johannes Valentin Andreae (1586-1986). Katalog einer Ausstellung in der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam 1986, 23-25, that the *Cyclopädia* was to have been published in Strassburg or Basel. The place of printing was in fact Strassburg, as Eisenmenger's pupil



Helisäus Röslin explicitly confirmed in his *Prodromus Dissertationum Chronologicarum*, Frankfurt 1612, c2r: 'Hievon aber weitläufftig gehandelt ist in einem Buch Anno 1585 zu Straßburg bei Jobin getruckt, außgangen, Cyclopaedia Paracelsica Christiana intituliert'. Unfortunately Röslin did not also reveal the identity of the author, as a few pages later he again refers to the 'Cyclopaedia Paracelsica incerti authoris vor 20 Jahren zu Straßburg außgangen'.

[028028](#)

28 Helisaeus Röslin, *De opere Dei creationis seu de mundo Hypotheses orthodoxae quantumvis paradoxae: continentes summa summarum artium principia, Physices, Chymiae, Medicinae, Astronomiae, Astrologiae, Metaphysices: nec non praecipua fundamenta Philosophiae et veteris et novae*, Frankfurt 1597. On Röslin's readership of the texts of Paracelsus cf. also the same, *Historischer, Politischer vnd Astronomischer Discurs Von heutiger zeit Beschaffenheit, Wesen vnd Standt der Christenheit, vnd wie es ins Künfftig in derselben ergehen werde*, Strassburg 1609, a3r-v; Röslin, *Prodromus Dissertationum Chronologicarum*, (see note 27), 3, 11. on Röslin as owner of autograph manuscripts of Paracelsus cf. J. Telle, *Johann Huser in seinen Briefen*, in *Parerga Paracelsica*, (see note 20), 223f.

[029029](#)

29 [Röslin, Helisäus], *Speculum et Harmonia Mundi: Das ist, Welt Spiegel Erster theil. Mit vergleichung der Monarchien vnnnd Welt Regimenten durch die Vmbstende der Orter Zeitten vnd Personen auß Gottes Rathschlag mit denselbigen nach seinem Werck der Creation vnnnd Schöpfung fürgenommen von anfang der Welt biß zu End geführt. Darinnen vns zum rechten Verstand der Prophecey Danielis vnnnd Offenbarung Johannis gute anleitung geben wird. Zuerkündigung dieser gefeherlichen letzten zeiten menniglich dienstlich, sonderlich aber den Potentaten vnnnd Regenten der Christenheit zu nutz Warnung vnd auffmuderung gestelt vnd geschrieben*. Getruckt zu Lich, in der Graffschafft Solms, durch Wolfgangung (sic) Kezelium. Jm Jhar, 1604; further title editions, with only the first gathering replaced, appeared in 1616 and 1617 'bei Johann Carl Unckel, Buchhändlern zu Franckfurt am Mäyn'. These editions were unknown to both Röslin's bibliographer Paul Diesner and Martha List, cf. Paul Diesner, 'Der elsässische Arzt Dr. Helisaeus Röslin als Forscher und Publizist am Vorabend des dreißigjährigen Krieges', in *Jahrbuch der Elsaß-Lothringischen Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft zu Straßburg*, 11 (1938), 192-215; Martha List, *Helisäus Röslin - Arzt und Astrologe*, in *Schwäbische Lebensbilder*, ed. by Hermann Haering and Otto Hohenstatt, III, Stuttgart 1942, 468-480; The work is also omitted in the otherwise excellently documented work of Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, Stanford 1988. Manuscripts of the first part of the *Welt Spiegel* can be found in Stuttgart (Württembergische Landesbibliothek, cod. Theol. 2 72), in Stockholm (Rikaerkivet, Skoklostersaml. Fol. 16) and in the Halle university library (Ms. 23 B 3). Karl Widemann's collection furthermore contained two other unprinted chapters of the *Welt-Spiegel* as well as the complete *Kirchen-Spiegel* under Röslin's pseudonym 'Lampertus Floridus', cf. Kassel, Landes-und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Ms. chem. Fol. 7, ff. 59-123; of Röslin's 'Geheime Auslegung in das vierdte Buech Esdrae Prophetae auf das gaist[liche] vnd Weltliche Regiment' Widemann produced in 1619 an (abbreviated?) Latin translation 'Interpraetatio Mÿstica et Vera in Quartum librum Esdrae Prophetae', which he sent to King James I of England, cf. London, British Library, Ms. Royal 2D XX, 1r-53v. On the meaning of the 4th book of Esdras in heterodox literature cf. Alastair Hamilton, *The Book of 'vaine fables': the reception of 2 Esdras from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century*, in *Kerkhistorische opstellen aangeboden aan Prof. dr. J. van den Berg*, Kampen 1987, 45-61; Idem. *The Apocryphal Apocalypse: the reception of the second book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Oxford 1999.

[030030](#)

30 Helisäus Röslin, *Mitternächtige Schiffarth, Von den Herrn Staden inn Niderlanden vor XV Jaren vergebentlich fürgenommen [...] Ein künstlicher Philosophischer Tractat*, Oppenheim 1611, 103-114; Röslin, *Prodromus Dissertationum Chronologicarum*, (see note 27), a3r-a4r. On Paracelsus' eschatology and views on tolerance cf. Kurt Goldammer, *Paracelsus in neuen Horizonten. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Salzburger Beiträge zur Paracelsusforschung, 24), Vienna 1986, esp. 87-176, 250-262; on Castellion cf. Hans R. Guggisberg, *Castellio and der Ausbruch der Religionskriege in Frankreich. Einige Betrachtungen zum Conseil à la France désolée*, in «Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte» 68 (1977), 253-267;



Guggisberg, *The Defence of Religious Toleration and Religious Liberty in Early Modern Europe: Arguments, Pressures, and some Consequences*, in «History of European Ideas» 4 (1983), 35-50; cf. also the new biography by the late Hans R. Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio – Humanist und Verteidiger der religiösen Toleranz im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Göttingen 1997, 208, 284; (1st ed. in English) *Sebastian Castellio, 1515-1563: humanist and defender of religious toleration in a confessional age*, transl. Bruce Gordon (St. Andrews studies in Reformation history), Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2002. That the spiritualist und rationalist Castellion was sometimes moved by chiliastic motives in his writings is demonstrated in his preface to the Latin Bible edition addressed to King Edward VI (cf. *Religiöse Toleranz. Dokumente zur Geschichte einer Forderung*, ed. Hans R. Guggisberg Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt 1984, 99-102), which induced Christoph Besold to quote large passages from Castellion immediately after quotations from Paracelsus and Brocardo in a *Dissertatio Historica de veteribus novisque Chiliasticis*, cf. Besold, *Discursus Politici, I. De Monarchia*, Strassburg 1623, 245-248; on Castellio and Röslin cf. also C. Gilly, *Sebastian Castellio und der politische Widerstand gegen Philipp II. von Spanien*, in «Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis» 77 (1997), 23-40; Idem, *Sebastiano Castellione, l'idea di tolleranza e l'opposizione alle politica di Filippo II*, in «Rivista storica italiana» 110 (1998), 144-166.

[031031](#)

31 In the manuscript catalogues mentioned above (Kassel, Landes-und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Ms. chem. Fol. 7, ff. 59-123) Widemann extensively described various manuscripts of Röslin under the name 'Lampertus Floridus' with precise indications of format and length. A number of them were also included as entries 213-215, 217-219, 221-223 in the printed catalogue of Joachim Morsius' *Nuncius Olympicus Von etzlichen geheimen Büchern vnd Schrifften*, Philadelphia [Amsterdam] 1626. The *Nuncius Olympicus* has been reproduced in facsimile in C. Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr. Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer* (Pimander. Texts and Studies published by the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 5), Amsterdam 1994, 238-291. In the last volume of the bibliography of the early Rosicrucians planned by the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, I shall attempt to give for the edition of Widemann's catalogues bibliographical records of Röslin's manuscripts which are generally believed to be lost.

[032032](#)

32 Irena Backus, *Valentin Crautwald*, in *Bibliotheca Dissidentium. Répertoire des non-conformistes religieux des seizième et dix-septième siècles*, ed. A. Séguenny, VI, Baden-Baden 1985, 9-70. For the manuscripts by Adam Reissner, Schwenckfeld and Paracelsus which were sold to Wolfenbüttel cf. Widemann's letters in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Bibliotheksarchiv, 44-47. For Widemann see C. Gilly, *Johann Valentin Andreae 1586-1986*. Amsterdam 1986, 46-51, 94-98.

[033033](#)

33 The Trebon state archive, Archivium Schwarzenbergicum, Rozmberk family, section 25, holds the autograph farewell letter to Vilém Ursinus Rozmberk [autumn 1588]. For Widemann cf. Robert J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his World. A Study in Intellectual History 1576-1612*, Oxford 1973, 216. Manuscript DD V 34 from the Strahov library in Prague quoted by Evans (see note 33), 226 ('Alia purificatio... Vom Engelender aus Wittgenaw H. Edu. Keleo 1588', which is also listed in Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* III, 168, as *Paracelsi Testamentum*) is incidentally an autograph recipe book by Karl Widemann, in which are also copied letters from Kelley's assistant Johann Grueber. For Widemann's circle of friends see C. Gilly, *Iter rosicrucianum. Auf der Suche nach unbekanntem Quellen der frühen Rosenkreuzer*, in *Das Erbe des Christian Rosenkreuz. Vorträge gehalten anlässlich des Amsterdames Andreae-Symposiums*, Amsterdam 1988, 62-89, esp. 73-82; Julian Paulus, *Alchemie und Paracelcismus um 1600 - Siebzig Porträts*, in *Analecta Paracelsica*, ed. J. Telle, Stuttgart 1994, 335-406 (includes a critical edition and a facsimile of Widemann's autograph register of spagyric physicians from about 1600-1630).

[034034](#)

34 Cf. Horst Pfefferl, *Die Überlieferung der Schriften Valentin Weigels* (doctoral dissertation, partly published), Marburg/Lahn 1991. The author has drastically reduced the number of works attributed to Weigel to a minimum, so that a full appreciation of Weigel's works cannot be made until Pfefferl's evidence has been published in its entirety. Cf. the splendid third volume in the series of new collected



works of Valentin Weigel which came out in 1996, *Vom Gesetz oder Wille Gottes - Gnothi Seauton*, ed. Horst Pfefferl, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt. Basing himself on new research findings, Pfefferl speaks of an actual work division between Weigel and Benedict Biedermann.

[035035](#)

35 August von Anhalt, letter to Widemann, Plötzkau 1. September 1614 (Staatsarchiv Oranienbaum, Abteilung Köthen, A 17a Nr. 100, f. 94v): '[...] ersuch des [Daniel] Sudermans büchlein mir etwa zukommen zu laßen, praesertim des C[aspar] S[chwenckfeld] bedencken vber die A[gustana] confess[io], welche der alte Montanus pflegte, die bestiam zu nehnnen, so vom meer aufsteigt, will ich damitt göttliche gnaden zu aller wolfart befohlen haben!'

[036036](#)

36 *Rechter Bericht Von den Dreyen Seculis vnd Judiciis Divinis post Diluuium, Als nemblich: 1: Von der Zerstörung Jerusalem vnd Untergang der gantzen Jrrdischen Policey. 2: Von der grossen Trübsal über den gantzen Erdtkreis vnd Vntergang aller Ständ der Welt. 3: Vom Jungsten Gerichte oder Letzten Tag der gantzen welt, welcher in der H. Schrift τ[ο] τ[ε]λος [to telos] finis vnd Συν[τα]λεια το[υ] α[ι]ωνος [synteleia tou aionos] Consumatio Seculi genennet wird. Geschrieben durch Paul Lincken Med. Doctore[m] anno 1599, Mense Januario vnd Volgends, Anno 1602 vermehret vnd Vollendet* (Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Theol. 1914, 1-615; Rostock, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Theol. Fol. 72, unfoliated; Wolfenbüttel HAB, 981 Helmst., Bl. 1-241). For Linck cf. Joachim Telle, *Johann Huser in seinen Briefen*, in *Parerga Paracelsica*, (see note 20), 215-216. Paul Linck's *Bericht* is not mentioned by Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis. Apocalypticism in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, (see note 29), or Enrico de Mas, *L'Attesa del secolo aureo* (1603-1625), Florence 1982. The same applies to the work of the Paracelsist Julius Sperber, written in 1597, *Von dreyerley Seculis oder Hauptzeiten, Tröstlicher Prophecey vnd Weissagung. Von der zunahenden güldenenen als der Dritten vnd Letzten Zeit vnd dem gantzen zustande derselben* (Mss. in Wolfenbüttel, 772 Helmst., ff. 173-287, and in the Heimatmuseum Köthen, printed in Amsterdam in 1663).

[037037](#)

37 Karl Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, (see note 27), nos. 288, 296, 316, 317, 318, 322, 330, 338-354. A friend of Libavius characterized Paracelsus as a 'Guckguck Grossvater', of the 'newen ungeweyheten und unberufenen Weissager, die vielleicht Eulenspiegels Prophetenbeer gekostet', cf. Melior [!] Rudolph Janicola, Strena [...] *Was von den newen Paracelsischen Propheten, vnd Thurneuserischen Warsagern zu halten*, Hamburg 1601; Nicolaus Hunnius in his *Gründtlicher Beweiss wie Theophrastus Paracelsus, Weigel, Felgenhauer, Teting ud andere [...] mit falschen Weissagungen umbgehen*, s.l. 1634, 33, also wrote about Paracelsus as the source and beginning of 'so viel wunderbarlicher seltzamer Propheceyunge', who 'in diesen jetzigen sehr Trübseligen zeiten an das Licht der Welt, mündlich und schriftlich, herrfür komen!'

[038038](#)

38 Oswald Croll, *Basilica Chymica continens Philosophicam propria laborum experientia confirmatam descriptionem et usum Remediorum Chymicorum Selectissimorum e Lumine GRATIAE et NATURAE desumptorum*, Frankfurt [1611-2], 69. For Croll see Telle, 'Johann Huser in seinen Briefen', in *Parerga Paracelsica*, (see note 20), 204-205; Wilhelm Kühlmann, *Oswald Crollius und seine Signaturenlehre. Zum Profil hermetischer Naturphilosophie in der Ära Rudolfs II.*, in *Die okkulten Wissenschaften in der Renaissance*, ed. by August Buck, «Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung» 12 (1992), 103-124; Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part 2, 174-175, 220-221; Oswaldus Crollius, *De signaturis internis rerum*, eds. W. Kühlmann and J. Telle, Stuttgart 1996.

[039039](#)

39 Benedictus Figulus, *Pandora Magnalium Naturalium aurea et Benedicta. De Benedicto Lapidis Philosoph[orum] Mysterio*, Strassburg 1608, ff. **rv **8r: cf. Joachim Telle, *Benedictus Figulus. Zu Leben und Werk eines deutschen Paracelsisten*, in «Medizinhistorisches Journal» 22 (1987), 303-326. quot. 323-324.



[040040](#)

40 For the relations between Figulus and Haslmayr see C. Gilly. *Adam Haslmayr* (see note 31).

[041041](#)

41 It was for that matter the very first mention of the word 'Rosenkreuz' in a printed book. The title-page has already been reproduced in the exhibition catalogue *Paracelsus in der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam 1993, 84. The complete facsimile edition is included in my Haslmayr study (see note 15). The text is furthermore reprinted in the first edition of the *Fama fraternitatis*, cf. Allgemeine vnd General REFORMATION, der gantzen weiten Welt. Beneben der *FAMA FRATERNITATIS, Deß Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes, an alle Gelehrte vnd Häupter Europae geschrieben: Auch einer kurtzen RESPONSION, von dem Herrn Haselmeyer gestellet, welcher deßwegen von den Jesuitem ist gefänglich eingezogen, vnd auff eine Galleren geschmiedet: Jtzo öffentlich in Druck verfertigt, vnd allen trewen Herten communiciret worden*. Gedruckt zu Cassel, durch Wilhelm Wessell, Anno M. DC. XIV. English translation in F.N. Pryce, *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of the Fraternity of R.C., commonly of the Rosie Cross. With [...] a Translation of the letter of Adam Haselmeyer*, Margate 1923, 57-64. For Haslmayr cf. Walter Senn, 'Adam Haslmayr. Musiker, Philosoph und "Ketzer"', in Festschrift Leonhard C. Franz, (*Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft*, 11), Innsbruck 1965, 379-400; C. Gilly, *Johann Valentin Andreae 1586-1986*, 45, 50, 55, 94-98; Gilly, 'Iter rosicrucianum', (see note 33), 63-89, esp. 73-75; Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr* (see note 31).

[042042](#)

42 Haslmayr, Letter to K. Widemann dated 24 Dezember 1611, copied in Karl Widemann, *Sylva Scientiarum* (Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. IV 341), 356.

[043043](#)

43 'Lorentz Lutz. burger vnd Bader im Algundt 1/4 Meil von Meron im Etschland. Obiit. Diser hatt Theophrastum selber kennndt und ist [...] Gabriel von Marwisen bei Ime doselbsten zur herberg glegen, auch [...] Adam Haslmayr mitt Ime geraisst. Hat vill scripta Theophrastica so noch nit gmein', cf. C. Gilly, *Johann Valentin Andreae 1586-1986*, 48; Paulus, *Alchemie und Paracelcismus um 1600 - Siebzig Porträts* (see note 33), 368. Lutz is furthermore mentioned in Widemann's *Sylva scientiarum*, (see note 42), 274: 'De mercurio praeparando: [Dieses] braucht der Lorentz Lutz, Theophrastischer alhie noch lebender diener, zu seinem feüren, retulit oretenus Adam Haslmayr'; cf. also Wolfgang Irtenkauf, 'Abraham Schnitzer, der 'gelehrte Scharlatan'. Leben und Werk eines Bergmeisters im 16. Jahrhundert', in *Veröffentlichungen des Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum*, 64 (1984), 9-56, esp. 23 and 41.

[044044](#)

44 Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Handschriften*, (see note 1), 755-764.

[045045](#)

45 Anastasius Philareta Cosmopolita [Joachim Morsius], *Nuncius Olympicus Von etzlichen geheimen Büchern vnd Schrifften, so ein fürnehmer Gottesgelehrter vnd hocheleuchter berümbter Theosophus vnd Medicus, in Theosophia, Cabala, Magia, Chemia, Medicina vnd Philologia, durch viel beschwerliche Reisen vnnd grosse Vnkostung, Ecclesiae vnd Reip[ublicae] literariae commodo zusammen gebracht, darin die gröste Himlische vnnd Jrrdische Weißheit begriffen ist [...]* Gedruckt PHILADELPHIAE [Amsterdam?] 1626. This book lists 227 manuscripts with their full titles.

[046046](#)

46 Kassel, Landes-und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Ms. chem. Fol. 7, f. 53v: 'Adamj Haselmarij Manuscripta: In Folio 66, in Quarto 94, Zsammen 160. Plurima hic tractantur secretissima in naturalj et supernaturalj lumine. Diser fromme Mann ist 2 1/4 Jar vf der galeeren gefangen ghalten worden. Durch die Jesuwider in Tirol dahin deputirt, weil er Ieren bedrug vnd Abgötterej gestrafft'. Both Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Handschriften*, (see note 1), 748 as well as Will-Erich Peuckert, *Das Rosenkreuz*, Berlin 19732, 71, have failed to notice the italicized words.

[047047](#)



47 [Adam Haslmayr] *ASTRONOMIA OLYMPI NOVI, Das ist: Die gestirnkunst deß newen Himmels, welche allein auß dem Glauben entspringet, darauß der Mensch alle Magnalia Gottes vnd der Natur, die den glaubigen seynd zuwissen, sehen vnd erlernen mag. Authore Paracelso ab Hohenheim and THEOLOGIA CABALISTICA De perfecto homine in Christo Iesu, et contra de perduto animali homine in Adam, qui Lunaticus dicitur. Das ist: Von dem vollkommenen Menschen in Christo Iesu, vnd hergegen von dem verdorbenen thierischen Menschen in Adam, welcher ein Mondsüchtiger genennet wirdt. Authore Theophrasto Paracelso ab Hohenheim, in PHILOSOPHIA MYSTICA, Darinn begriffen Eilff vnterschiedene Theologico-Philosophische, doch teutsche Tractätlein, zum theil auß Theophrasti Paracelsi, zum theil auch M. Valentini Weigelii, gewesenen Pfarrherrn zu Jscopaw, bißhero verborgenen manuscriptis der Theosophischen Warheit liebhabern. An jtzo in zweien Theilen zum Christlichen Vorschub, beyde Liechter, der Gnaden vnd der Natur, in vns zuerwecken, in offenen Truck gegeben. Deren Titul vnd Nahmen, wie ein jedes insonderheit von den Authoribus selbst genennet, die nachfolgende seite zeigen wirdt. Gedruckt zur Newstadt [Frankfurt], vnd zu finden bey Lucas Jenes [Jennis], Buchhändler, 1618, 33-39 and 40-53; cf. Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, (see note 27), 514-516.*

[048048](#)

48 The first of the appended *Particulae* concerns a letter of Haslmayr to his sovereign Archduke Maximilian of Tyrol. The authorship of Haslmayr is confirmed by an informative printing variant in a number of copies of the above mentioned *Philosophia Mystica*, note 47: 'Es hat mein vertrawter Herr, Bruder und Freundt Ad[am] H[aslmayr] N[otarius] P[ublicus] C[aesareus] diß nachfolgende Tractätlein oder Philosophiam de lunaticis hominibus, auß unsers hochthewren Magistri und Praeceptoris seliger Gedächtnuß, Magni Monarchae Aureoli Ph. Theophrasti Paracelsi etc. Astronomischen Schrifften gezogen, einer fürstlichen Person, dessen Nahmen ich dißmals billich verschweige, praesentiert und uberliefert'; on page 48 this message is signed: 'Benedictus Fig[ulus] Utenhovias, Fr. P.L.C. Theologus: Theosophus; Philosophus; Medicus; Eremita. D.T.P.D.G.N.' Copies with these printing variants are in the BPH Amsterdam and in the HAB Wolfenbüttel. For the identification of 'Huldrich Bachsmaier' as Johannes Siebmacher cf. Johann Valentin Andreae, *Ein geistliches Gemälde. Entworfen und aufgezeichnet von Huldrich StarkMann, Diener des Evangeliums. Nach dem wiedergefundenen Urdruck, Tübingen 1615*, ed. by Reinhard Breymayer, Tübingen 1991 [1992], XX-XXII. As in the case of Andreae, Huldrich here stands for Johannes, while Bachsmeier and Regenbrunn are anagrams for Siebmacher and Nürnberg. It is the same man, whom Widemann in his list of Spagyric physicians called 'Johann Sibmacher. Philosophus vnd chymicus zue Nörnberg'.

[049049](#)

49 The BPH Amsterdam recently acquired an (autograph?) manuscript of Siebmacher from 1607 with the same text which was printed at the end of *Philosophia mystica*: Huldrich Bachmeir von Regenbrun, *Introduction Hominis, das ist, Was der Mennsch inn disem Leben fürnemblich Studiern und lernen soll*, in 4°, 68 ll. This manuscript of the *Introductio hominis* of 1607, recently acquired by the BPH, is the key to identify the author of one of the most fascinating alchemical-theosophical books: the *Wasserstein der Weisen* (Frankfurt 1619), subsequently known also under the title *Das Goldene Vliess* (Leipzig 1736, 1737) and *Das allerhöchste, edelste, kunstreichste Kleinod* (Frankfurt 1755). Unlike the printed edition (1618) of the *Introductio hominis* at the end of *Philosophia Mystica* ('Newstadt' 1618), this manuscript already contains the sayings with the author's initials I.S.N. (Inn GöttlichenSachen Soll Welt weisheit Nichts; Iesus Salvator Noster). In the appendix to the *Introductio hominis* (both manuscript and printed edition), a certain Uldrich Bachsmeier von Regenbrun alludes to another treatise by the author, entitled the 'Guldene Flüs or the allerhöchst Edelst, Kunstreichste Cleinoth und Uhrälteste verborgene Schatz der Weisen'. As Uldrich Bachsmeier von Regenbrun is an anagram of Johannes Siebmacher von Nürnberg, he must also be the I.S.N. who authored the *Hydrolithus sophicus seu Aquarium sapientum, as the Wasserstein is called in the Museum Hermeticum*, cf. now also *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700 / Magic, alchemy and science 15th-18th centuries* (see note 21), vol. II, 151-153.

[050050](#)

50 Innsbruck, Tyroler Staatsarchiv, Pestarchiv VII 18, ff. 13r-17v: *Ad Reuerendissimum et Serenissimum Principem meum, Maximilianum Austriae, Teutonicus Ordinis Magistrum vigilantissimum, Oratio*



Reuelatoria (Subscript: 'Vnderthenigister Clyens et Alumnus Adamus Haslmaÿr, N[otarius] C[aesareus] von Hall'). For the Innsbruck documentation on Haslmayr cf. Walter Senn, *Adam Haslmayr. Musiker, Philosoph und 'Ketzer'*, (see note 41), 1965, 379-400.

[051051](#)

51 [Adam Haslmayr], *Extractus et Theophrastiae cabalisticæ Isagogen, Das ist, Die einlaltung der Heiligen geheimen Khunst vnd Weißheit der Propheten. Ohn welche Khunst vnnnd gnaden kheiner die heilig Schrift verstehen noch gründtlich erkleren khan* (Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Ms. Q. 286/20, 1r-5r, here 2r); cf. also Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke I*, ed. Sudhoff, XII, 185.

[052052](#)

52 Adam Haslmayr, *Verweisung vnd Vnderweisung, wie Guarinonius, Statt phÿsicus zu Hall in Tÿrol halt den folgenden Text, Matth. 24, [15] von whuest vnd Greul soll außgelegt haben, vnd die Christenheit nicht in verrere lhrsallen gefhiert, als biß her beschehen ist durch Europa* (1611), Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Ms. 17.30 Aug. 4□, ff. 165v-173; Paracelsus [Adam Haslmayr], *Theologia Cabalistica de perfecto homine, in Philosophia Mystica*, (see note 47), 42. I have found the first enumeration of these four main points in the introduction to the *Thesaurinella Alchimiae* of Benedictus Figulus of 1609 (Kassel, Landes- und Murhardsche Bibliothek, 8□ Ms. Chem. 25, f. 1): 'TRIA CABALISTICA prima Ex ore Spagyri Trismegisti [esu] Christi Domini et Redemptoris nostri prolata: PETERE, QUAERERE, PULSARE. Die 4 Haupt Puncten Des Wahren Christenthumbs alß der vnnberwindlichen CABALAE: 1) Unsere Feindt alle lieben, 2) Aygens verlassen, 3) Angethane Schmach gedultig leyden, 4) Anerbottene Ehr allenthalben verniechten'. For the conflict between Haslmayr and Guarinoni and Haslmayr being sentenced to the galleys, cf. Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr*, (see note 31), 39-60. For the recently recovered autobiographical report of Haslmayr's arrest at Innsbruck, the interrogation, deportation to Genua and his experiences as a galley convict, cf. Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica. Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke*. Ausstellung der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica und der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Amsterdam 19952, 34; for a longer discussion of this same report see Walter Schneider, *Adam Haslmayr*, in «Der Schlern» 70 (1996), 42-51, 544-48.

[053053](#)

53 The first work of Haslmayr in which I have found this sign, is the *Philosophia Sagax* addressed to Archduke Maximilian, which Widemann received for Christmas from Genua in 1612 (Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. IV 341, 501-508, 'Ex Autographo Adami Haslmayr Senioris'). Haslmayr then adapted this work a year later for the *Astronomia terrestris vonn der Sphaera oder Himmell Saturni* (ibidem, 521-528); *Nuncius Olympicus* no. 48); the sign reappears in a new guise on the title-page of *Novum Lumen Physico-Chymicum, Das ist: Ein Newes Liecht der Chimischen Phÿsica, welches vor Aller Zeiten die hohen Philosophi vnd König gehabt, vnd sich dardurch zum Langen Leben, gerechten Reichthumb vnd ewigen Weißheit, gebracht haben* (Florence, BN, Ms. Magliab. XVI 104, ff. 32-41, Haslmayr's autograph), dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany and signed by 'Adam Haslmaÿr von Bozen auß Tÿrol etc. der Freÿen vnd geheimen Kunsten der Philosophiei vnd Medicin Requisitor, der Zeit Gfangner in das 4t. Jar, daselbsten auff S. Georgen Galeen in Genoa. 16 Aprilis 1616'. This work was translated into Latin by Haslmayr under the title *Novum Lumen Physicæ intactæ* and dedicated to the Genoese Andrea Grimaldi (Florence, BN, Ms. Magliab. XVI 104, ff. 42r-49r, Haslmayr's autograph); the Italian translation was based on this edition. *Lume nuovo de la phisica mai tocata. La quale é el solo desiderio Christiano. De Lapide philosophico* (Florence, BN, Ms. Magliab. XVI 104, ff. 50r-57r): All three versions contain cryptic quotations from the *Fama Fraternitatis*, but only the first one contains Haslmayr's sign. The sign appears again in *AHT Sermo ad Filios. Gmeine philosophiei Paracelsi Magni. An meine Kinder* (Hannover, NSLB, Ms. IV 370, 1 16, Haslmayr's autograph). Haslmayr's sign with the accompanying text appeared in print in Liberius Benedictus's German and Latin edition, *Nucleus Sophicus, oder Außlegung in Tincturam Physicorum Theophrasti Paracelsi and Nucleus Sophicus seu Explanatio in Tincturam Physicorum Theophrasti Paracelsi*, both published by Lucas Jennis in Frankfurt in 1623, 76-78 esp. 62-64. Haslmayr's most detailed report on the sign appeared in a tract in 1629: *Amphitheatrum Chimicum Sacrum Wider die Sophistischen Spötter vnd vnerstendigen Mercatänter, welche ihnen traumt laßen, die Alt Spagyrische Scienz sei nur ein gedicht der Betrüger, vnd derhalben sei nichts recht, als was sie thun, handeln, lehren, vnd üben, widerlegt von einem Armen Schüler*



Theophrastischer Disciplin, (Kassel, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek, 2□ Ms. Chem 15, ff. 206r-212v and 260v, Haslmayr's autograph).

[054054](#)

54 [Adam Haslmayr], *Consideratio Figurae Ergon et Parergon* (Kassel, Landesbibliothek and Murhardsche Bibliothek, 2□ Ms. Chem. 19, 115r-119r, Widemann's hand, 'Ex autographo, octobri anno 1626'); Lübeck, Stadtbibliothek, Ms. Hist. 4□ 25, ff. 820r-830r, Joachim Morsius's hand). The 'ERGON et PARERGON Fratrum R.C. Cabalistica deductio de Olympo Terrae' already appeared without the illustration in Michael Maier, *Tractatus Posthumus sive Ulisses... Una cum annexis Tractatibus de Fraternitate Roseae Crucis*, Frankfurt, Lucas Jennis, 1624, 183-186.

[055055](#)

55 For the attitude of these and other spiritualists to the 'external Word' ('den äußeren Buchstaben') of the Bible, cf. Carlos Gilly, *Das Sprichwort 'Die Gelehrten die Verkehrten' oder der Verrat der Intellektuellen im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, in Forme e destinazione del messaggio religioso. Aspetti della propaganda religiosa nel Cinquecento*, ed. by Antonio Rotondò, Florence 1991, 229-375, esp. 273-275, 284-289, 325-327. For Paracelsus cf. *Labyrinthus Medicorum errantium*, in Paracelsus, *Die Kärntner Schriften*, ed. by Kurt Goldammer, Klagenfurt 1955, 108.

[056056](#)

56 [Adam Haslmayr], *Pansophia illuminati cuiusdam Viri, doraus die falschen Propheten, Apostel vnd Schreiber vnserer lesten vnd gferlichen Zeitt, Im gaist- vnd weltlichem Statu gantz aigentlich mögen erkannt werden* (Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Ms. 60.1 Aug. 2□, ff. 256-290, in Widemann's hand), 271f.

[057057](#)

57 [Adam Haslmayr], *Amphitheatrum Chemicum Sacrum*, (see note 52), f. 211r; Paracelsus [Haslmayr], *Theologia Cabalistica de perfecto homine*, in Paracelsus, *Philosophia Mystica*, (see note 47), 45; Haslmayr, *Philosophia Sagax von Heylung allerley Kranckheiten*, (Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. IV 341), 508.

[058058](#)

58 Haslmayr, *Oratio reuelatoria*, (see note 49), 40r; [Haslmayr], *Pansophia*, (see note 56), 277.

[059059](#)

59 [Haslmayr], *Pansophia*, (see note 55), 273. Cf. also H. Rudolph, *Einige Gesichtspunkte zum Thema 'Paracelsus und Luther'*, (see note 7), 24, note 30.

[060060](#)

60 Johann Arndt, *Vier Bücher von wahrem Christenthumb [...] Das erste Buch*, Jena, Tobias Steinmann, 1907, 388 (book I, cap. 37). For Arndt and Paracelsus cf. Edmund Weber, *Johann Arndts Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum als Beitrag zur protestantischen Irenik des 17. Jahrhunderts. Eine Quellenkritische Untersuchung*, Marburg 1971 (3th ed. in «*Studia Irenica*» 2, Hildesheim 19783); Gilly, *Zwischen Erfahrung und Spekulation*, (see note 5), Part 1, 97, 112-113; Gilly, *Iter Rosicrucianum* (see note 33), 80; Hans Schneider, *Johann Arndts Studienzeit*, in «*Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte*» 89 (1991), 133-176; Schneider, *Johann Arndt als Lutheraner?*, in *Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland: wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1988*, hrsg. von Hans-Christoph Rublack (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte ; 197), Gütersloh 1992, 274-298.

[061061](#)

61 Ex Manuscripto eiusdem Viri illuminati [Haslmayr] *de Baptismo Optime propter falsos Prophetas at Pseudoapostolos Vltimi Temporis notanda, qui salutem in externis ponunt et collocant contra Christum vnicam Veritatem*. (Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Ms. 60.1 Aug. 2□, ff. 290-302, in Widemann's hand): '[...] im armen Geist, alß der teütsche Edle Philosophus Christi Primus D.D. Theophrastus Eremita vnd andern ein Exempel ist, deme nun alle Nationen nach müessen wandlen vnd er aber nitt Inen nach, dorauff sich



nünn die wahre Theosophische Turba Fratrum R.C. (zue diser Lesten Römischen Monarchia herfürgeben dise ware Kirchen Christi wider einzusetzen, wie sie zue der Apostelln Zeitten war) [...] Dise H[eilige] Kirche ist nicht gebunden (sagen sie) an eüsserlichen ceremonien, Ortt, stött oder Menschen, dann Christus da allain Hautb ist vnd bleibett inn Ewigkeit; Pura mens ist der Tempel [...] die falschen Kirchen (1) ist ain sichtbare versamlung der Menschen (Weltmenschen) (2) Nicht auß Gott, (3) sonder auß der gailen Natur gebornen, (4) gebunden an gewisse Örtter, Personen, Ceremonien inn (5) villfachen Secten, Rotten zerrissen vnd zertailt (6) da Christus nicht das Hautb ist, sonder ettliche aufgeworfene Lehrer vnd Menschen alß Babst, Luther, Caluin, Zwingl, Flaccius, Tauffer vnd dergleichen etc. deren (7) was aigen nutz suecht (8) vnd das ewige Liecht nicht versteen auß dem Natürlichen Liecht'.

[062062](#)

62 [Haslmayr], *Pansophia*, (see note 55), 256, 272.

[063063](#)

63 Ibid., 287.

[064064](#)

64 Ibid., 287-88.

[065065](#)

65 [Adam Haslmayr], *Theosophia Decretalis. Vom Weltlichen Regiment zue den stoltzen Fursten und Landen Vermanung vnd Prophecey inn 7 Reglen verfasst Auff die 7 Bitt des heiligen Vatter Vnser, Ahn die gantze Christenhait, sonderlich aber ahn die stoltze Fürsten vnd Landt, so sich halber nit kennen, auch nit bessern wollen*, [written in 1612, revised in 1627]. (Halle, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 22 E 7, 350-368, in Widemann's hand): 'In sollichem christlichen Leben befinden wir noch keinen Salomonem oder Hermetem, das ist keinen Kaiser oder König der Christenheit, die lere vermeindtte Reichthumb oder zergenkliche güetter nicht mitt Schaden wider die Lieb des Ne[ch]stens eroberett hetten, alß eben der groß Monarcha Paracelsus, stella signata chriticolarum Sophorum, alß in seinen Büechern vber die Propheten vnd über die Büecher der Weißheit, vnd des Neüen testaments, sonderlich über die Psalmen Dauids vnd in den Secretis secretorum Theologiae, vnder andern vill 1000 seiner Monarchischen Büechern zue ersehen, Diser hatt gesehen, was der Neüe Willen Gottes vnd das *'nequaquam uacuum legis lugum'* sey, wie auch die verborgenen Fratres Thëosophi vom Rosen Creütz werden tempore predestinato offenbaren' [...] 'Das ist das Studium Sapientiae aeternae Theophrastiae, darzue vns dann durch die Gnaden Gottes kaine Büecher manglen' [...] 'Was im Brott vnd inn allen creaturen sey, dise Arcana machen ine, Theophrastum, zum Monarcham der Smaragdischen Taffell vnd Neüen guldenen Ierusalem'... 'Eure vermaindten Hoche Schuelen der 7 Secten oder freyen Künsten sollen dem Vulturno, ia dem nechsten lufft zuegeweicht vnd inn Rauch gehengkht werden vor allen Weisen Christi solt Ir ein Namenkappen sein [...] Eure edle Lateiner sollen wissen, die auch dardurch den Himmel versprochen vnd Ir inen Schuelen vnd Collegia gebauen vnd aufgerichtet, daß die Olympischen linguae, ia die Sprachen der Schuel des Pffingsttages, die Lehrer des h. Geistes, die Theophrastia, die ewige Sophia müesse floriern vnd offenbar werden, vnd sie eure Latiner sollen nicht werth sein, calefactores der Weisen zue sein'; cf. also Adam Haslmayr, *Theologia intacta Mysteriorchae Theophrasti Eremitae germani, Darinn alle Irthumb, falsch, Lugen vnd Betrug der falschen selbst erwehlten, vngeschickhten, vnkundigten, Söldnerischen Apostel vnd betrüglich listigen Lehrer begriffen vnd angezeigt werden. Zur Fursehung auf dise gefehrlichste Letzte Zeit an Tag gegeben. 1622 etc. Mit wahren, gwaltigen, vnpartheÿschen, grundtlichen vnderricht, wie man die falschen Apostl, vnd Allen Betrug versehen vnd erkennen soll, auß Christi vnsers Erlösers Mundt selbst. Jtem wie man seider seiner Himelforth biß hero solte gelebt haben, das wir vns der seeligen hoffnung in Glauben zu getrosten hetten zur gwißen Seelikeit. Auch wie man dan ietzt, nach Reformation der ganzen Welt hinfort an wirt leben in Aller Welt Nationen, Sprachen vnd Völckern Mit kurzen, doch grundtlichen Argumenten niemant weiters von der Seelikeit verfhirt werde aufs einfeltigist furgestellt. V[on] einem Theophilo*. (Hannover Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. I 69 [alt 24], 1-16, Haslmayr's autograph).

[066066](#)

66 More of this in Gilly, *Adam Halsmayr* (see note 31), 132.



[067067](#)

67 Widemann, Letter to Duke August, Augsburg, 29 and 17 June 1621: Wolfenbüttel HAB, Bibliotheksarchiv, cover 'Widemann', fols. [4r- 5r].

[068068](#)

68 Duke August, letter to Hainhofer, Hitzacker, 16 June 1621, in *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Philipp Hainhofer und Herzog August d.J. von Braunschweig-Lüneburg*, ed. by Roland Gobiet, München 1984, 334.

[069069](#)

69 Paracelsus himself had long since been placed on the index of prohibited books. Only during the inquisitorial trials against Johann Baptista van Helmont in Brussels in 1634 did Roman-Catholic theologians make a concerted effort to subject the teachings of Paracelsus to detailed censorship, cf. C. Broeckx, *Notice sur le manuscrit Causa J.B. Helmontii, déposé aux Archives Archiépiscolales de Malines*, in «Annales de l'Académie Royale d'Archéologie de Belgique» (1852), 277-327, 341-347; Robert Halleux, *Helmontiana*, in «Academiae Analecta. Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België», 45 (1983) No. 3, 33-63, esp. 35-36 and 53-54.

[070070](#)

70 Julius Otto Opel, *Valentin Weigel. Ein Beitrag zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands im 17. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig 1864, esp. 70-120; Winfried Zeller, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. by Bernd Jaspert, Vol. 1 («Marburger Theologische Studien» 8), Marburg 1971, 51-84; Siegfried Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung 1550-1650*, Berlin 1988, 522-534.

[071071](#)

71 Christian Beckmann, *Exercitationes Theologicae. In quibus De argumentis pro vera deitate Christi Servatoris nostri Contra Fausti Socini, Valentini Smalcii, Christophori Ostorodi, Ioannis Crellii Franci, et similium recentissimas molitiones: Ut et De argumentis pro vera humana Natura Christi ejusdem, Contra Mennonem Simonis, Theophrastum Paracelsum, Valentinum Weigelium, Paulum Felgenhauerum et alios huius notae*, Amsterdam 1642, 343-488. His great knowledge of then as yet unprinted theosophical works and his familiarity with dissident circles makes the Anhaltian theologian one of the best sources for the study of contemporary heterodox movements in Germany.

[072072](#)

72 This thesis, already put forward by Johann Salomo Semler, *Unparteiische Sammlungen zur Historie der Rosenkreuzer*, I, Leipzig 1786, 112, was presented by Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London 1972, as her own discovery and subsequently it obtained wide acceptance. In order to supplement the rather flimsy documentation adduced by Yates to underpin her thesis, I could mention numerous political pamphlets, prophecies and songs or works by participants in the Rosicrucian debate (Johannes Plaustrarius, Paul Nagel, Paul Felgenhauer, Philipp Ziegler, Isaac Habrecht, 'Johannes Germanus', Johannes von Röhrig, Wilhelm Eo, Irenäus Heiland, Simon Partlicius, Gottfried von Schwanbach and even Widemann or Haslmayr), in which from 1618 onwards the cause of the Elector Palatine and King of Bohemia Frederick V is advanced and which have been completely ignored by Yates. Most of these men would have supported any other prince opposed to the growing power of the Habsburgs and the Jesuits in Central Europe. However, this late spate of publicity, which made propagandistic capital out of the 'prophecy of the lion from the north', and even the *Fama* of the Rosicrucians, in support of the policy of Frederick V of the Palatinate or the glory of Gustav Adolph of Sweden, did not play any role in the origin of the Rosicrucian movement. On the contrary: in 1605 Tobias Hess for instance saw in Duke Frederick of Württemberg the political promotor of the future world reformation, while Haslmayr did all he could to persuade his protector Prince August von Anhalt to assume this role. The latter declined in a letter dated 5 June 1612 with the words: 'Wenn ich der leo [der Löwe aus Mitternacht] sein solt, so würde die liebe posteritet ubel versogt sein'. The court at Heidelberg



was hardly interested in the Rosicrucians; if at all, it condemned them, as did for instance the influential Palatine theologian Abraham Scultetus under the pseudonym Matthias Ehinger 1623: *Iudicium De fundamentis, quibus in praedictionibus suis utuntur NOVI PROPHETAE in Germania, Nagelius, Zieglerus, Geigerus, Plaustrarius, Praetorius, Stifelius, Faulhaberus, Wilhelmus Eo, alij, Coloniae [Berlin] 1623, or in German: Bedencken vnd Vrtheil MATTHIAE EHENGERI, Von den fürnehmen gründen, derer sich in Jhren weissagungen dick vnd oft gebrauchen Die NEWE PROPHETEN Jn Deuschland, Nagelius, Ziegler, Geiger, Felgenhawer, Praetorius, Stifel, Faulhaber, Wilhelm Eo, vnd andre Fladder vnd Wirgeistere. Erstlich Gedruckt im Latein zu Cöln [Berlin] Anno M. DC. XXIV. For the identification of 'M. Ehinger' with A. Scultetus cf. Caspar Landorpius, *Acta Publica*, Second Part, Frankfurt 1630, 292-295.*

[073073](#)

73 Karl W.H. Hochhut, *Mittheilungen aus der protestantischen Secten-Geschichte in der Hessischen Kirche, Vierte Abtheilung: Die Weigelianer und Rosenkreuzer*, in «Zeitschrift für die Historische Theologie», NF 26, 1862, 86-159; NF 27, 1863, 169-262; NF 28, 1864, 301-315. The original documents of Homagius' trial are deposited in Marburg, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 4i N 235 (402 leaves); contemporary copies of the interrogations of Homagius and his co-defendant Georg Zimmermann are also available in Darmstadt, Gießen, Lüneburg, Schleswig and Wolfenbüttel. Three years after this Marburg trial an 'Inquisition über Rosenkreuzerei und weigelianische Schwärmerei' was also instituted at the Lutheran university of Gießen against its professor Heinrich Nollius because of his Rosicrucian work *Parergi Philosophici Speculum*, Gießen 1623, because whatever was right for the alchemy enthusiast Landgrave Moritz von Hessen-Kassel, was certainly proper for Landgrave Ludwig von Hessen-Darmstadt, who was hostile to alchemy, cf. Heinrich Klenk, *Ein sogenannter Inquisitionsprozess in Gießen anno 1623*, in «Mitteilungen des Oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins», NF 49/50, 1965, 39-60. The relevant original documents are partly deposited in Gießen, Universitätsbibliothek, Universitätsarchiv 8 and 99 (1183 leaves), partly in Darmstadt, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abteilung 6 1, Gießen, Konv. 19, Fasc. 7; Abt. 5 A1, Konv. 41, Fasc. 9. Both trials will be dealt with at length in my forthcoming bibliography of the early Rosicrucians.

[074074](#)

74 The outcome of the Marburg trial is well-known. Zimmermann, who made a show of remorse, was banished the land. Homagius on the other hand, who insisted in his advocacy of Paracelsus, Weigel and the Rosicrucians, was sentenced to 'eternal imprisonment' on the express order of Landgrave Moritz. Quite misleading in this context is Bruce T. Moran, *The alchemical world of the German court. Occult philosophy and chemical medicine in the circle of Moritz of Hessen (1572-1632)* («Sudhoffs Archiv», Beiheft 29), Stuttgart 1991, 128ff. Moran incomprehensibly placed the Marburg trial against Homagius in Rostock ('one Philipp Homagius who had already been condemned in Rostock as a seditious hereticus') and concentrated solely on the Gießen trial against Nollius, in order to polish up the brilliance of the 'hermetical patronage' of Hessen: 'How different were the intellectual sympathies of the Kassel court! There, what was condemned at Giessen reigned as official philosophy. In Moritz's circle, Noll's Rosicrucian essays amounted to standard fare in the court's hermetic-alchemical diet. Neither were his Paracelsian interpretations, at least as they related to medicine and alchemy, in any way eccentric to the court's intellectual and religious views. Rather, as we shall see next, they took a place beside other uses of Paracelsian natural philosophy that served diverse alchemical, magical, and religious court interests'. In the meantime Moran has had to admit that there were limits to the Hermetic enthusiasm at the Kassel court, cf. B.T. Moran, *Paracelsus, Religion, and dissent: The case of Philipp Homagius and Georg Zimmermann*, in «Ambix» 43 (1996), 65-79.

[075075](#)

75 Balthasar Meisner, In *Systematis theologici partem primam generalem De Religione et ejus articulis [...] Disputatio XVI. De Religione Fanatica [...]* [respondit] Johann Spleiß, Wittenberg 1626, a2v: 'Hinc quoque est, quod Religio haec a Paracelso *Paracelsica* inscribitur [...]' 'Non ausus vero fuit Paracelsus dum esset in vivis, bellum suum foetum quem parturiebat, in Ecclesiae sinum promere, quamvis non raro dicere solitus feratur, se aliquando Lutherum et Melanthonem in Theologia non aliter reformaturum, atque fecerit in Medicina Galeno et Hippocrati. Itaque praeceptoris sui Theophrasti opera usus M. Valentinus Vveigelius, hypersapistes illius acerrimus, in homiliis suis super Evangelis Dominicalia, in Dialogo de

Christianismo, in Gnothi seauton et hujus furfuris libellis aliis hoc mysterium iniquitatis abunde nobis revelavit. Unde factum est, ut Religionem Fanaticam nostra aetas vocare coeperit VVeigelianam'. For the central role awarded to Weigelianism by the orthodox historiographers, cf. Johann Georg Walch, *Historische und Theologische Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten außer der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, Jena 1733-1736 (Facsimile reprint Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1985), IV.2, 1024-1090. Walch, who bibliographically recorded a great number of Weigelian and anti-Weigelian books, did not hesitate to begin the relevant chapter with the words: 'Unter den Fanaticis, welche sonderlich in Deutschland bekannt worden, sind die Weigelianer als die Vornehmsten mit anzusehen'.

[076076](#)

76 [Abraham von Frankenberg], *Theophrastia Valentiniana. Das ist: Ein unpartheyischer Schriff und Naturmässiger Bericht Uber ein Fragmentum Von der Lehre Valentini, genommen aus einem Büchlein, Welches durch Gerhardum Lorichium Anno 1540 zu Cölln ediret, Und Vallum Religionis Catholicae intituliret*, Im Jahre Christi 1703, in Gottfried Arnold, *Supplementa der Kirchen-Historie*, Frankfurt 1703, 10-48; also printed in the later editions of Arnold's *Unpartheiischer Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*. Cf. Gilly, 'Das Bekenntnis zur Gnosis von Paracelsus bis auf die Schüler Jacob Böhmes', (see note 22), 385-425.

Frans A. Janssen

Ad fontes - On the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica

Published in *Quaerendo* 27 (1997), p. 251-279

When the Dutch government decided in November 1994 to place the entire collection of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (BPH) - the name of the private library of Mr J.R. Ritman of Amsterdam - on the list of protected collections coming under the Cultural Heritage Act, it characterized the library as follows: 'A very special library with great significance for scholarship, both nationally and internationally, and an irreplaceable collection of culturally and historically valuable manuscripts and incunables. This library is unique from the point of view of scholarship because it has been built up on the basis of one single binding concept, the Christian-hermetic tradition within Western cultural history. The library is the only virtually complete centre where research in the field of the Christian-hermetic tradition can be carried out.' The library is the second library to have been designated a protected collection; the first one is the medieval Librije belonging to the St Walburgis church in Zutphen.

The above characterization points to the double importance of the library, as a book collection and as a research institute in the field of hermetic Christianity. As a collection the BPH is dedicated to the 'ad fontes' principle in bringing together sources: that is to say that the texts within the library's field are collected in their most authentic forms, in the way in which authors and editors, copyists and illuminators, printers, engravers, binders and collectors have passed on these texts. The works held by the BPH include medieval and later manuscripts and first and later editions, together spanning a period of more than a thousand years. These sources are thematically related, and in this the BPH differs from most other libraries. As a research institute, the BPH catalogues and indexes and also studies these sources. This article will concentrate not so much on the many fine works from our library, but rather on the library's theme, the collection areas and their backgrounds, and their mutual relationships.

In addition to its significance as a thematic collection bridging philosophy and religion, there is a second aspect which is illustrated by the following remark issuing from Dutch book historical circles: 'That it is possible even in the present day to bring together an outstanding collection of old and rare books is witnessed by the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, which is entirely focussed on the development through the ages of western mysticism and spirituality. The first, and beautifully produced, special catalogue of this private collection appeared in 1990.¹ This remark points to the significance of the BPH as an example of private book collecting, a tradition which is modestly represented in the Netherlands (e.g. Meerman, Westreenen - both collections now housed in the Museum of the Book in The Hague), and which was pursued on a wider scale in the United States (e.g. Pierpont Morgan, Huntington - now independent institutions). Private book collectors aim to bring together treasures from the world of

manuscripts and printed books. As the library's collection of works on hermetic Christianity also incorporates works which belong in each collection (e.g. Plato, Books of Hours), the library's activities are part of this tradition.

I



[top](#)

To begin with the name of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica: what is understood by 'hermetica' or 'hermetic philosophy'? In a broader sense it is used to cover the entire field of esoteric thought, but in a more specific sense it refers to the philosophy contained in a number of short treatises, which were originally composed in Greek in Alexandria between the first and the third century C.E. and which are attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. There is no actual author behind this name; the figure of Hermes Trismegistus is an assimilation of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Toth. During the Middle Ages these Greek texts were known (amongst others to the church fathers Lactantius and Augustine) and influenced diverse Latin works, but in the Renaissance these texts also experienced a real revival, in particular when they were translated into Latin by Marsilio Ficino at the request of Cosimo de Medici, which made them much more accessible; the first edition of this translation appeared in 1471, and a great many editions and translations were to follow. They are collectively known to scholars as the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

What is contained in these texts to which the name of the BPH refers? The answer to this question is on the one hand simple, on the other hand complex. Simple, because there exists a good recent English translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* with excellent commentaries; the BPH's own publishing house for that matter brought out a scholarly Dutch translation with commentary some years ago.² Complex, because hermetic philosophy cannot be explained in a few words. Today we characterize these texts as religious-philosophical treatises, originating in the Hellenistic period, and revealing Greek (Platonism), Judaeo-Christian (the Bible, in particular Genesis) and Egyptian influences (mystery religions). In as far as they were familiar with them, the Middle Ages opposed the world of thought behind these texts, but the Renaissance - in particular due to the Latin translation already mentioned above - saw in them revelations of the Godhead, older than those of Christ, older than those of Plato (whose works were also considered to belong to the divine revelation), and sometimes even older than Moses; the *Corpus Hermeticum* was considered to be part of the divine revelation which was to find its completion in the New Testament. The historian of religions Mircea Eliade spoke about 'the thirst among the humanists for a primordial revelation which would permit them to welcome Plato and Hermes the Egyptian into the bosom of Christianity.' It was not until 1614 that the philologist Isaac Casaubon was to demonstrate that these works attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were in fact written in the first centuries after Christ, and this is still the current view. Incidentally, in Egypt in 1945, near Nag Hammadi, fragments were found of Hermetic texts in Coptic which were composed in the fourth century; all Greek manuscripts which have been preserved are fourteenth-century copies.³

The following may serve to characterize an aspect of the philosophy of the *Corpus Hermeticum*: 'The human on earth is a mortal god, god in heaven is an immortal human.'⁴ This idea is connected with a second passage, taken from the *Asclepius*, one of the texts by Hermes Trismegistus which, strictly speaking, does not belong to the *Corpus Hermeticum* because it has a different textual history (it is only known in a Latin translation): 'Because of this, Asclepius, a human being is a great wonder, a living thing to be worshipped and honored: for he changes his nature into a god's, as if he were a god; he knows the demonic kind inasmuch as he recognizes that he originated among them; he despises the part of him that is human nature, having put his trust in the divinity of his other part. How much happier is the blend of human nature!'⁵ The first part of the quote ('a human being is a great wonder') has become famous because it has been used in the preface of what has been termed the supreme manifesto of the Renaissance: Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (On the dignity of man), written in 1487, first edition 1496: 'I have read in the records of the Arabians, that Abdul the Saracen, on being asked what thing on, so to speak, the world's stage, he viewed as most greatly worthy of wonder, answered that he viewed nothing more wonderful than man. And Mercury's "a great wonder, Asclepius, is man!" agrees with that opinion.'⁶ In his treatise Pico develops the idea of man's possibilities, placed between 'high' and

'low', with reference to Plato, Pythagoras, Moses and others. What we see in this *Oratio* - and also in other authors of the Renaissance who were influenced by Hermeticism - is a desire for the union between philosophy and religion, a connection between notions which to us are opposite. The terms used in this connection are 'docta religio' (learned religion) and 'pia philosophia' (pious philosophy), and in this interplay of opposites we see the desire for a connection between elements from Ancient philosophy and Christianity, perhaps I might say: between Plato and Hermes Trismegistus on the one hand and Moses and Christ on the other. *Theologia Platonica* [The platonic theology], the title of the chief work of Ficino, the translator of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, who has already been mentioned above, also illustrates that connection.

In order to characterize the world of thought of hermetic philosophy I give another quotation, this time from a work attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (but actually dating to the eleventh century), the *Liber XXIV philosophorum* [The book of the 24 philosophers]: 'God is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere'.⁷ This hermetic statement, too, would not easily be found in a work by the Pope of Rome, nor would it be found in the works of Luther or Calvin. An entire study has been devoted to this sentence and its context,⁸ which has been used and adapted by a succession of medieval and Renaissance authors (the list, incidentally, could easily be enlarged). Among the authors who have written about this hermetic sentence are historians such as Vincent of Beauvais, mystics such as Eckhart and Suso, theologians such as Albertus Magnus, hermeticists such as Robert Fludd, writers such as the authors of the *Roman de la Rose* and Pascal, but also someone from Plantin's circle: Guy le Fèvre de la Boderie, in a poem dedicated to the great Antwerp printer.⁹

To illustrate the value attached in the Renaissance to the works of Hermes Trismegistus, I draw attention to a remark by the sixteenth-century spiritual reformer Sebastian Franck. He translated the entire *Corpus Hermeticum* together with the *Asclepius* into German (the translation was never printed, we only have a manuscript version).¹⁰ In his compilation *Die guldin Arch*, printed in 1538, he gives a paraphrase of the first chapter of the *Corpus* and notes: 'I have read Hermes Trismegistus with admiration, and have not found his equal in Plato nor in any other philosopher. He contains all that a Christian needs to know', and he calls him 'this Egyptian Moses'.¹¹ This is illustrative of the reception of the *Corpus* in the Renaissance: Franck says that a Christian finds sufficient spiritual nourishment in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a text in which Christ is not even mentioned.

Regarding the importance attached to the hermetic writings, we also have a commentary from a rather unexpected and unsuspected angle, which is that of a sceptic and freethinker, the seventeenth-century librarian Gabriel Naudé. The latter says in his well-known manual for the librarian, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* of 1627, in the chapter on the arrangement of books, that in the philosophy section the works of Hermes Trismegistus should be placed first, followed by the works of Plato and Aristotle, in the same way as bibles should be placed first in the theology section: because, he says, in each section the most universal and oldest works should precede all others.¹²

I may now perhaps state my point more exactly: hermetic philosophy is part of Renaissance culture. This insight is relatively young. In Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, the classical study on the Renaissance published in 1860, we find only a first intimation of this idea. Although he does mention Platonism, the name Hermes Trismegistus does not occur in his book. He calls Platonism, which, just as the related Hermeticism, experienced a revival in the Renaissance, 'a second and higher rebirth of Antiquity' and concludes his book with the remark that as a result of the marriage of medieval mysticism and Platonism, the Italian Renaissance became 'the guiding lady of our new era' - in my view momentous statements, issuing from his convictions about existence, which he felt was based on metaphysics and religion.¹³ It was not until after Burckhardt that historians of the Renaissance became aware of Hermes Trismegistus and hermetic philosophy; of the number of scholars who have been pioneers in this field I shall only mention two: the German-American philologist Paul Oskar Kristeller, who published amongst others studies on Ficino,¹⁴ and the art historian of the Warburg Institute Frances Yates, whose seminal magnum opus *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition* has already been mentioned earlier (see note 3).

Since then virtually every book that has been published on the Renaissance and on humanism mentions

hermetic philosophy and its influence on culture. As an example I quote Sem Dresden's *L'humanisme et la renaissance* of 1967, which - based on secondary literature, including Kristeller and Yates - opens with some hundred pages in which hermetic philosophy and related movements such as neoplatonism are posited as having been at the roots of the Renaissance.

The Warburg Institute mentioned above (now part of London University), which is devoted to the study of the survival of classical antiquity in the Renaissance, attempts amongst others to trace elements in the art of the Renaissance which derive from hermetic philosophy. Edgar Wind, a Fellow of the renowned institute, gave Botticelli's *Prima vera*, painted in 1477-78, a neoplatonic-hermetic interpretation. Likewise, Dürer's well-known engraving *Melencolia* of 1514 has been explained by fellows of the Warburg Institute on the basis of the world of thought underpinning hermetic philosophy.[15](#)

In this context I should like to draw attention to two representations of the figure of Hermes. The first is the mosaic in the floor of the Cathedral of Siena, where we can also find inscribed a quotation from the *Asclepius*. Giovanni da Stefano, who made this work of art in 1488, did not really thus introduce a pagan element into a catholic edifice. According to Renaissance beliefs, God also revealed himself in the works of Hermes Trismegistus, and furthermore the location of this particular mosaic is symbolical: it is the first mosaic which can be seen in the centre aisle as one enters the church through the main entrance; then follow, continuing in the direction of the altar, representations from the Old Testament, while the altar of course represents the New Testament (furthermore we find, on either side of the centre aisle, Sybils, pagan female prophets, whose prophecies were also interpreted in a Christian sense). We see here the revelations in the works of Hermes Trismegistus foreshadowing the revelations in the Bible.[16](#) The vault paintings of ca. 1495 in the St Walburgis Church in Zutphen (the Netherlands), which include representations of the Sybils and of Hermes Trismegistus, fulfill a similar function.

The second representation is a painting by Luca Horfei on a pillar in the Vatican Library (called Sala Sistina after Pope Sixtus V who had this room built in 1587), in which Hermes is depicted with an alphabet attributed to him. The caption identifies Hermes with the Egyptian god Toth, who is traditionally credited with the invention of the holy Egyptian characters. Hermes, as well as for that matter Moses, Esdras, Pythagoras and others, are here placed in the context of a hermetically tinged cabbala, in which characters have a magical function.[17](#)

II



[toptop](#)

What, then, is the position of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in this context? The hermetic tradition which has been outlined above has provided an important enough basis for the BPH to have been named after it. Some would prefer the term 'gnosis' for the religious and philosophical traditions which developed at the beginning of our era in the Hellenistic world, one of the most important characteristics of gnosis being the recognition of intuition as the source of knowledge, through which man may achieve a union with the divine. Gnosis is strongly associated with hermetic philosophy, the primary collection area of the BPH. There are three other, related collection areas, which can also be linked to the tradition of gnosis. Mysticism, both the medieval stream (with authors such as Meister Eckhart, Suso and Ruusbroec) as well as the later protestant stream (with Jacob Böhme as the major representative), can be regarded as the leavening of the hermetic-Platonic tradition throughout Christianity. Alchemy, having as one of its most fundamental works the *Tabula smaragdina* [The emerald table], a short work attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, is concerned not so much with the practical art of making gold as well as with a hermetically tinged study of nature and the cosmos and the relationship between these two; it is not so much a chemical, but rather a spiritual matter: many alchemists equate the much sought-after 'philosophers' stone' with Christ. The fourth collection area is the early seventeenth-century spiritual reformation movement of the Rosicrucians, which - as will appear further on - was greatly influenced by the other three traditions.

These four areas are the main fields of the BPH, while there are also a number of related subsidiary

areas such as Cathars, Freemasons and the legend of the Grail.¹⁸ All these (and many more) areas have been described in *The encyclopedia of religion*, the impressive reference work which appeared in sixteen volumes under the editorship of Mircea Eliade in 1987. As the philosopher Ernst Cassirer remarked with regard to the Warburg Library: in essence it is not so much the collection of books, not even the separate collection areas, but the cohesive principle underlying it all.¹⁹

In 1984 the private collection of J.R. Ritman was transformed into a scholarly institution. This means that the BPH, like any other similar institute, engages in three activities. First of all there is the collecting of works, of enlarging the thematic collection of works on hermetic Christianity. Next comes cataloguing and indexing, i.e. making the collection accessible to the interested public; this is realized not only by means of a computerized catalogue, but also by means of elaborate bibliographical and cultural-historical descriptions of the library's holdings in the form of (exhibition) catalogues and other forms of academic research (studies, translations). The librarian of the BPH, historian of ideas Dr Carlos Gilly, plays a major role in the library's scholarly research. His wide-ranging research into the history of the Early Rosicrucians and their ideas has already yielded a number of special studies, and will be crowned by an annotated bibliography. The BPH's publishing house 'In de Pelikaan' was set up to accommodate the scholarly activities of the library; a small number of its publications is mentioned here in the notes. Finally there is the activity of documenting: In the context of his research, Dr Gilly has brought together material held elsewhere by other libraries and archives in the hermetic-Christian field: not only the titles, but also the works themselves are collected in the form of microfilms or microfiches (and also already in a digital format). The virtual library is now not far away.

III



[toptop](#)

Following the principle of the BPH, which is that of an eternal return 'ad fontes', to the sources, to the manuscripts and printed works in which successive generations have laid down the texts of hermetic Christianity, I should like to demonstrate the library's thematic approach by means of seven examples; at the same time I shall on each occasion make clear what is done with these books which are so important in cultural-historical and scholarly respect.

I shall begin with the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a choice which, after the previous discussion, should come as no surprise. Why does the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica collect as many manuscripts and printed works as possible of this text which, after all, is also available in excellent modern editions, both in the original Greek and in English, French, German and Dutch translations? Two reasons may be mentioned here. First of all these texts, continually copied and/or printed, testify to the interest shown in this tradition during successive periods and by various persons. But there is also a philological motif: there is no definitive text of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, we can only dispose of manuscripts, printed editions, adaptations, commentaries, which each time tell a different story, both in a factual sense (the letter of the text) and in a hermeneutical sense (the cultural-historical aspect). Each new generation of interested readers must therefore reconsider these sources.

As has been said, the *Corpus Hermeticum* appeared in print for the first time in 1471, in a Latin translation by Ficino; it was printed in Treviso, in the printing-house of Gerard de Lisa, a printer originating from Flanders. But rather than dwelling on the BPH's copy of this incunabulum,²⁰ I prefer to discuss one of the many editions, adaptations and translations, with or without annotations, which the library holds,²¹ namely the ninth edition, which appeared in Paris in 1505, printed by Henri Estienne and edited by the Christian humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples: [illustration 1.22](#) The actual *Corpus Hermeticum* is here called *Pimander* or *Liber de potestate et sapientia Dei* [The book of the power and wisdom of God], which is in fact the title of the first treatise of the *Corpus*. A second text by Hermes has been added, the *Asclepius*, and a third one, the *Crater Hermetis* [The mixing bowl of Hermes] by Ludovico Lazarelli, a later hermetic text belonging to the Renaissance. Lefèvre added comments and a few marginal notes to these editions of Hermes. One of those marginal notes is particularly striking: [illustration 2](#): the editor had the words 'Lapsus Hermetis' ('an error of Hermes') printed in the margin of a passage in the *Asclepius*. This caution to the reader is put next to a passage in which the text, in a religious sense, ventures beyond the



Corpus Hermeticum: it contains magical elements claiming that man can create gods through magical acts, a dangerous opinion in a purely Christian setting and which Lefèvre could not pass over without a warning. Although Augustine had already condemned this passage, one is inclined to think that the humanist and admirer of hermetic philosophy in Lefèvre was here corrected by the Christian and follower of the Devotio Moderna. In the text of the third work, by Lazarelli, such magical passages are, incidentally, interpreted in a Christian sense - another solution to the problem which this aspect of hermetic philosophy posed to Christian humanists (two years later Symphorien Champier provides an alternative way out: the magical passages were to have been interpolations by the Latin translator). Furthermore, in his comments Lefèvre continually points to the parallels between the works of Hermes Trismegistus and the Bible: he appropriates the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*, he renders Hermes acceptable to Christianity, he presents Hermes as the pagan prophet of Christian revelation, and thus places himself in the Renaissance tradition which I have indicated above. Thus this ninth edition has its own special place amongst the 'fontes' collected by the BPH.

A book with such an undogmatic character was of course also printed in the Netherlands, where in the seventeenth century works of all manner of dissidents could more or less be published freely. We know of two Dutch translations in three different editions. The first is tucked away in a description of Cornelis Drebbel's perpetuum mobile: *Wonder-vondt van de eeuwighe bewegingh...Ooc mede by gevoeght een Boeck Pymander, beschreven van Mercurius driemaal de grootste* [Marvellous discovery of the perpetual motion...Also added a Book Pymander, written by the Thrice-Greatest Mercury], printed in Alkmaar in 1607; only one copy is known, now in Leiden.²³ The BPH does own a copy of a second translation, acquired from the Theosophical Society in Amsterdam: *Sesthien boecken van den voor-treffelijcken ouden filosooph Hermes Tris-Megistus* [Sixteen books of the eminent ancient philosopher Hermes Trismegistus], published in Amsterdam in 1643 by Ysbrant Ryvertsz and printed by Nicolaas van Ravesteyn: [illustration 3](#). In this book we find of course the highly characteristic sentence on the mortal god and the immortal human which I quoted earlier from the recent English translation (p. 107, par. 98: [illustration 4](#)). What is striking in the Dutch translation of 1643 is the use of a remarkable hyphen: it is clearly a division mark between parts of a compound which individually also carry meaning, such as Tris-Megistus (=thrice greatest). The background to this idiosyncratic use of a hyphen must be sought in the person of the man behind this book, who in the epilogue refers to himself with the initials A.W.V.B. He is the Amsterdam merchant Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland, an idealistic mecenat who brought together texts in the fields of Hermetica and mysticism, many of which he translated himself, while he also carried the costs of publication.²⁴ He is the translator of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, he financed the compositorial and printing expenses, and he is also responsible for this so remarkable division mark, which - as it was not a standard item in the typeset - had to be cast especially for the printer. Apart from this work and the second edition of 1652, it is used exclusively in a series of editions of the works of the German mystic Jacob Böhme which Van Beyerland commissioned from the printer Van Ravesteyn at his own expense in 1642. The Amsterdam mecenat may have encountered this typographical mark in a few French hermetic printed works of the sixteenth century, in particular in the French translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by Gabriel du Préau from 1549, where it occurs once or twice.²⁵ It can also be found in works by the Cabbalist Guillaume Postel, and is a mark used in alchemy.²⁶ Eventually it goes back to a hyphen in classical Latin.²⁷ The Amsterdam University Library holds a special, interleaved copy of Van Beyerland's Dutch translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which is interspersed with extensive comments and also drawings by Reinier de Graaf (1674-1717, son of the physician of the same name); the BPH has made a start with a study of these commentaries.

[toptop](#)

As has been mentioned above, the printer of this book, Nicolaas van Ravesteyn, printed a number of mystical works for Van Beyerland. A number of Amsterdam printers followed in his wake and specialized in the production of hermetical, mystical and alchemical works, in particular of authors living in Amsterdam, such as Comenius; here I shall only mention Johannes Janssonius (who may perhaps also have been behind the pseudonym 'Hans Fabel'), Henricus Betkuis, Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge, Jan Rieuwertsz, Henricus Wetstein. In many cases these book producers were supported by Amsterdam patrons: Van Beyerland, father and son De Geer, Coenraad van Beuningen and also a non-Amsterdammer, the Arnhem mayor Gozewijn Huygens. A study of these patrons interested in hermetic Christianity and their printers, would be an appropriate addition to the research into cultural patronage in

early times which, witnessing the influential study of Peter Burke on the Italian Renaissance as well as studies on the printer Jenson and the painter Saenredam - to name but a few examples - is very much in the focus of interest nowadays.[28](#)

The next example also concerns Van Beyerland. It was he who played a crucial role in spreading the works of the protestant mystic Jacob Böhme. During the life of this 'Teutonic Theosopher' as he came to be known posthumously, only one short work appeared, in 1624, incidentally without his authorization. However, the circulation of his works on a large scale began in Amsterdam, and through the offices of Van Beyerland. Between 1632 and his death in 1648, he collected a large number of manuscripts, both autographs by Böhme as well as copies by others, which had been supplied to him - often various copies of the same text - by followers of the mystical author. Van Beyerland translated the larger part of those works into Dutch and sponsored the publication of editions in Dutch as well as in the original German. We owe the preservation of the works of Böhme to him. One of the manuscripts in his possession finally returned after many peregrinations to Amsterdam in 1993, to the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica. It concerns an early copy of what may perhaps be called Böhme's magnum opus: *Mysterium magnum, oder Erklärung über das erste Buch Mosis* [Mysterium magnum, or an exposition of the first book of Moses], written in 1623.[29](#) What follows is based on preliminary research. Van Beyerland at one point owned four manuscript copies of this work, two of which (including this one) were copied by Carl and Michael von Ender;[30](#) this manuscript in any case reached him shortly before 1640. In 1680, a few decades after Van Beyerland's death, his heirs turned over all Böhme manuscripts to the Arnhem mayor Gozewijn Huygens, mentioned earlier, who placed them at the disposal of Johann Georg Gichtel, the editor of the 1682 edition of the collected works of Böhme. After Huygens's death, they remained in Dutch hands until 1728, when Isaak Enschedé saw to it that they were placed in a circle of German Böhme adepts, who incidentally did not carry them to Germany until around 1750. They came to rest in Linz, where they were described by Böhme's bibliographer, Buddecke, in 1934, although he was not allowed to reveal their whereabouts in his published work.[31](#) Part of the collection was seized by the Gestapo in 1941, and later this manuscript was taken to München, from where it disappeared at the end of the war, to resurface at auction in New York in 1993 and finally return to Amsterdam.

It can easily be established that this manuscript is an apograph, as we know Böhme's hand from a number of autographs kept in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. But this manuscript has two very important features: it served as printer's copy for the first, anonymously published, edition of 1640, and it has notes in Dutch in the margins. To begin with the first aspect: we are dealing with a manuscript which in 1640 served as copy in a printing-house. This can be established immediately by means of certain signs pencilled in red in the margin, accompanied by underlining in the text: [illustration 5](#). Occasionally one can also find dashes in the text which relate to calculation, i.e. determining the envisaged amount of paper necessary for printing. The former signs in the margins are so-called compositor's marks, which the compositor put in the margins of his copy each time he had made up a page, so that he could be sure of a correlation between printer's copy and printed text. On page 68 of the copy, for instance, we read in the margin '5 H 61': this is precisely the place where in the printed edition of 1640 page 61 begins, which is page 5 of gathering H: 'und die Sternen/hauchen ein Geistlich Wesen auss sich' [and the stars do breathe forth a spiritual essence out of themselves] (see [illustration 6](#) for the printed edition). This quotation, incidentally, is representative of Böhme's recondite style: the description of the creation by means of alchemical imagery which Böhme offers in this book, is illustrative of this abstruse text. Further research might be able to demonstrate that these signs could be casting-off marks, noted down with an eye to setting by formes. Whatever the case may be, we have here a rare example of copy used in the Netherlands in the first half of the seventeenth century, although the question remains which printing-house composed and printed the text, because the published text does not give the printer's name or place of publication. As has been said, Van Ravesteyn did print for Van Beyerland, but the typography of the edition of 1640 does not resemble the products of his press.[32](#) Together with Bruckner, the bibliographer of German-language work printed in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, one might suggest the printer Johannes Janssonius, also from Amsterdam, who earlier, in 1634, had printed Jacob Böhme's *Aurora* in a related typography.[33](#)

In the margin of the manuscript we find Dutch-language notes made by the first Dutch owner: Van Beyerland.[34](#) Textually, both the manuscript and the printed edition are somewhat disappointing; shortly

after 1640 Van Beyerland received a superior manuscript from the Böhme disciple Abraham van Franckenberg together with a list of corrections made on the basis of the 1640 edition, and the Amsterdammer had to admit: 'the printed *Mysterium Magnum*, in German, is full of copying and printing errors.'³⁵ Nevertheless, this manuscript is extremely important among the 'fontes' of the BPH, which possesses circa 200 editions of Böhme's works prior to 1800 in circa 400 copies.

The fourth work which I should like to comment on is the famous *Poliphilus*, the full title of which is *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* [The battle in the dream of Poliphilus], by Francesco Colonna, printed by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1499: [illustration 7.36](#) Although renowned, the work is by no means rare: Grolier owned five copies and nowadays in the Netherlands alone there are five copies.³⁷ The book is famous for its typography: 'the most beautifully printed book of all times' is a qualification often heard, and indeed the letters, initials, the layout of the page and the clear woodcuts compose a typographical jewel. And yet this is not the reason why this book can be found in the BPH. Four other grounds for its presence in the BPH may be advanced. The fame of this book also rests on the text, written in Italian: it is a so-called *Bildungsroman*, an adventure story in which the hero, Poliphilus, becomes purified. The story draws its inspiration from the mythology, archeology, art and architecture of Antiquity; it includes hieroglyphs which are considered to be mysterious, as well as a number of neoplatonic elements and Christian symbols.

The story also lends itself to an alchemical interpretation, as was provided by the French alchemist Jacques Gohory, who was involved in the French translation printed in 1546, 1554 and 1561; it is also no coincidence that a French alchemist, Béroalde de Verville, published an adaptation in 1600 of this translation (all these French editions are in the BPH).³⁸ Research has also yielded that this symbolical novel has influenced one of the so-called Rosicrucian Manifestos, the symbolical tale *Chymische Hochzeit* [The chymical wedding] by Johann Valentin Andreae, which was published in 1616 (see below). A special reason for acquiring the copy of the *Poliphilus* which came into the BPH's possession some ten years ago was its provenance: on the second title-page: [illustration 8](#) a former owner wrote his name: 'Orontii Finaei Regii Mathematicarum professoris'; 'Oronce Fine, Royal Professor in Mathematics' (at the Collège de France). The French mathematician and astronomer Oronce Fine (1494-1555) himself also designed initials and ornaments in the style of the Renaissance and was therefore undoubtedly also interested in this typographical masterpiece. But this is not all: Fine, too, was an alchemist and was therefore interested in a number of special features of the contents of the book.³⁹

Bookbindings from the library of Duodo are not rare.⁴⁰ The late sixteenth-century diplomat Pietro Duodo brought together a fine travelling library bound in Parisian bindings, of which more than 130 have survived. They were bound for him during his term as Venetian ambassador at the court of Henry IV. The BPH owns one work, not because of the extraordinary binding but because of its interesting contents: the letters on the back read: 'Dion. Areop. Iambl.': [illustration 9](#). It is a *Sammelband* containing two editions.

First of all an edition of the *Opera* of pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, to which texts by Hieronymus and other early Christian authors were added (Lyon, G. Rouillé, 1585). Secondly an edition of *De mysteriis* by Jamblichus, to which a series of works by Proclus and other neo-Platonic authors as well as the *Corpus Hermeticum* are added (Lyon, J. de Tournes, 1577); this edition, also based on earlier editions, rightly places Hermes Trismegistus in the neo-Platonic tradition. What Duodo did when he ordered these two editions to be put together in a *Sammelband*, is in fact providing an interpretation: he links early Christian theology with philosophy from late Antiquity, he considers Platonism to be allied to Christianity (Dionysius Areopagita already tried to unify both). Duodo, wishing to establish a union between theology and philosophy, acts like a Renaissance man with an interest in Hermetica.

My next example does not concern a famous typographical masterpiece, but an anonymous and rare pamphlet, of which the BPH possesses the fourth known copy. It is one of the many responses to the appearance of the Rosicrucians in the early seventeenth century: *Examen sur l'inconnue et nouvelle caballe des Freres de la Croix Rosee* [Investigation concerning the unknown and new cabal of the Brothers of the Rosy Cross]: [illustration 10](#), published in Paris in 1623 by Pierre de la Fosse, but not printed by him, as the word 'pour' indicates. Such occasional publications survive their own day only when they find their way into a large library soon after publication and furthermore when they are included in a *Sammelband* together with other similar minor printed work. The former happened with this little book - the foliation '280' etc. added in pen points to this fact - but later it must have been lifted from the volume. Two of the four known copies are held by the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris (Gabriel Naudé, mentioned



earlier, was its librarian between 1642 and 1652) are in a *Sammelband*. It may also be noted that inclusion in a *Sammelband* changes the character of this work: from a polemical pamphlet it is raised to the status of historical source material. One of these two copies has a peculiarity which presents us with a problem: it is printed from the same type as the other copies, but has in the imprint instead of 'pour Pierre de la Fosse' the words 'chez David Ferrand'. This means we are dealing with a shared edition, a print run divided amongst the actual publisher (Fosse) and the printer (the printer-poet David II Ferrand in Rouen).⁴¹ In order to divide the edition between the two, the printing press was stopped after a number of copies, the name was changed (at the same time corrections in page number 3 and 5 were carried out) and the printing continued. This is a regular phenomenon in the case of expensive products, but such is not the case for this pamphlet; we must therefore assume that the printer wished to be known as fellow-distributor.

[toptop](#)

Who were these Rosicrucians and what is the pamphlet about? A number of new documents concerning the Christian reformation movement of the Rosicrucians have in the past decades been brought together by Dr Carlos Gilly. When comparing his publications⁴² with previous studies, notably with a well-known study by Frances Yates,⁴³ one can see how much has been gained; only now has the world of the Early Rosicrucians been fully charted. The Rosicrucians leapt into public awareness in Germany at the beginning of the seventeenth century by means of three works, which we now call the Rosicrucian Manifestos: *Fama Fraternitatis* [The Fame of the Fraternity], *Confessio Fraternitatis* [The Confession of the Fraternity] and *Chymische Hochzeit* [The chymical wedding]; they appeared anonymously, but it has been established that the Lutheran Johann Valentin Andreae was the author. The latter work, as has been stated earlier, was influenced by the symbolical novel *Poliphilus*.⁴⁴ There are various modern editions of these Manifestos, including editions for a wider audience than the historically interested readers: a fact which shows that these texts still inspire today.⁴⁵ In these writings, the Rosicrucians called for a spiritual reformation of religion, philosophy and the sciences, drawing on mysticism, alchemy and hermetic philosophy. These programmatic Manifestos provoked a flood of written and printed responses, both for and against: all of them are collected by the BPH. One of those responses, a very dismissive one, was written by the famous French librarian Gabriel Naudé, whom we encounter here once more. In his work *Instruction a la France sur la verité de l'histoire des Freres de la Roze-Croix* [Instruction to France concerning the truth of the history of the Brothers of the Rosy Cross], published in 1623, the same year in which the anonymous *Examen* appeared, he shows himself to be well-informed in the sense that he places the Rosicrucians in the context of hermetic philosophy and mentions the name of Hermes Trismegistus. There is also internal evidence in the text of the Manifestos to show that Andreae knew works of hermetic authors such as Paracelsus:⁴⁶ he mentions Hermes once, in the *Chymische Hochzeit*: 'Hermes Princeps' ('Hermes the Sovereign', of the philosophers), but a reference to the *Corpus Hermeticum* is lacking. And yet early Rosicrucians knew the works of Hermes Trismegistus, first of all indirectly through their reading of authors who quoted and used the *Corpus*, but also directly, because we know for instance that in the library of Christian Besold, one of the inspiring personalities behind the Rosicrucians, there were three versions of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, two printed editions and one manuscript version. Like Naudé's *Instruction*, the *Examen* is very negative about the new reformation movement, although it takes off from a different angle: the anonymous author is 'most Catholic' and discusses the 'Bande infernalle' [the hellish band], as he calls his fellow-Christians, followers of the Manifestos: 'Le principal de cet abominable College est Sathan' [foremost amongst this abominable college is Satan]. Not only because of this fierce opposition, but also because a number of initiators, in particular Andreae himself, later dissociated themselves from the brotherhood, the Rosicrucians did not develop into a large movement. Their ideas, however, influenced both theosophical literature as well as Freemasonry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There was a revival of interest in the twentieth century as a result of the anthroposophical movement.

For my last example I shall return to the late Middle Ages and the Netherlands, to one of the many Books of Hours from the collection: a Dutch-language manuscript, produced around 1475 in Delft (BPH 56, [illustration 11.47](#)). It is a beautifully illuminated manuscript on vellum, but, as with the *Poliphilus*, this book is not in the BPH for purely esthetical reasons. Books of Hours, containing prayers based on psalms and other religious texts which were read at certain hours during the day, were not meant to be used in church or convent, but were meant to serve the private devotion of laymen; they can be regarded as expressions



of Christian spirituality. Furthermore Geert Grote, the founder of the spiritual reformation movement for laymen, the *Devotio Moderna* (which arose in the late fourteenth century), introduced in his vernacular Book of Hours a chapter entitled 'The Hours of the Eternal Wisdom' : 'Hier beghint die ghetide der ewiger wijsheit'; Here begin the hours of the eternal wisdom). His adaptation of the Book of Hours was immensely popular: some three hundred manuscripts have survived carrying this addition, of which this copy is one. Grote derived this chapter from *Cursus de aeterna sapientia* [Course of the eternal wisdom], part of *Horologium sapientiae* [The Hourwork of Wisdom], the main work of the great German mystic Heinrich Seuse or Suso, who is also well represented in the BPH in both manuscript and printed form. Because of this addition, the Dutch Book of Hours acquires a mystical dimension, appropriate to stimulate the 'fervour of the heart' so sought after by the *Devotio Moderna* movement.⁴⁸ This purely mystical aspect forms the major reason for including this Dutch Book of Hours in the BPH's collection.

My brief discussion of seven 'fontes' - examples of the source material collected by the BPH - can obviously afford only a glimpse of the library and only sheds some light on the hermetic-Christian component of our culture. Nevertheless I hope that these observations may serve to clarify the motives underlying the library's existence.

(This is the text of a lecture delivered in 1995 and 1996.)

Notes

[0101](#)

1 O.S. Lankhorst and P.G. Hoftijzer, *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in Nederland tijdens de Republiek* (The Hague 1995), p. 45.

[0202](#)

2 Scholarly editions of the Greek text: *Corpus Hermeticum*. Ed. with French tr. A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière. 4 vols (Paris 1945-54; reprinted several times); *Hermetica*. Ed. with English tr. W. Scott. 4 vols (Oxford 1924-36; repr. 1985). Recent English translation: *Hermetica. The Greek 'Corpus Hermeticum' and the Latin 'Asclepius'*. English transl. B.P. Copenhaver (New York 1992). Recent German translation: *Das Corpus Hermeticum Deutsch*. Ed. C. Colpe and J. Holzhausen (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1997). The Dutch translation published by the BPH: *Corpus Hermeticum*. Tr. R. van den Broek and G. Quispel. 5th ed. (Amsterdam 2003).

An English version with an elaborate esoteric commentary has been included in: J. van Rijckenborgh, *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its call in the eternal present*. 4 vols (Haarlem 1982).

[0303](#)

3 See in addition to Copenhaver (note 2) also F.A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the hermetic tradition* (London 1964), chapters 1-2; J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Egypte*. 2 vols (Québec 1978-82). The quotation from Eliade can be found in his *No souvenirs. Journal 1957-1969* (London 1978), p. 173.

[0404](#)

4 Tr. Copenhaver, p. 36.

[0505](#)

5 Tr. Copenhaver, p. 69. A Dutch translation was published by the BPH: *Asclepius*. Tr. G. Quispel (Amsterdam 1996).

[0606](#)

6 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De dignitate hominis*. Ed. with German transl. E. Garin (Bad Homburg etc. 1968), p. 26-7; English translation: *On the dignity of man*. Tr. C. Glenn Wallis. 6th pr. (Indianapolis 1977), p. 3.



[0707](#)

7 *Le livre des XXIV philosophes*. Transl. by F. Hudry (Grenoble 1989), pp. 95-8.

[0808](#)

8 D. Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt* (Halle 1937; repr. 1966); cf. S.K. Heninger, *Touches of sweet harmony* (San Marino 1974), p. 111 and n. 92.

[0909](#)

9 *Supplément à la correspondance de Cristophe Plantin*. Ed. M. van Durme (Anvers 1955), p. 325.

[010010](#)

10 (C. Gilly), *Cimelia Rhodostauritica. Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke. Ausstellung der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica Amsterdam und der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel*. 2nd rev. ed. (Amsterdam 1995), p. 3.

[011011](#)

11 S. Franck, *Die Guldin Arch* (Augsburg, Heinrich Steiner 1538), fol.xli recto.

[012012](#)

12 G. Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* 2nd ed. (Paris 1644; repr. 1990), p. 132-3; English translation: *Advice on establishing a library* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1950), p. 65-6. For the backgrounds to this *Advis* see: J. Revel, 'Entre deux mondes: la bibliothèque de Gabriel Naudé', in: *Le pouvoir des bibliothèques*. Ed. M. Baratin & C. Jacob (Paris 1996), p. 243-50.

[013013](#)

13 J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*. Ed. W. Goetz (Stuttgart 1958), p. 200 and 527; cf. W. Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt. Eine Biographie*. Vol. 3 (Basel-Stuttgart 1956), p. 741-3.

[014014](#)

14 P. O. Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*. 2vols. (Florence 1937; repr. 1973).

[015015](#)

15 Respectively E. Wind, *Pagan mysteries in the Renaissance* (London 1958; revised ed. 1967), p. 113 ff (cf. J. Snow-Smith, *The 'Primavera' of Sandro Botticelli. A neoplatonic interpretation*. New York 1993), and R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the history of natural philosophy, religion and art* (London 1964), p. 284 ff, in particular p. 345 ff.

[016016](#)

16 B. Santi, *The marble pavement of the cathedral of Siena* (Firenze 1982); cf. A. Faivre, *The eternal Hermes*. (Grand Rapids 1995), p. 131.

[017017](#)

17 See: P.J.J. van Thiel, 'Litterarum inventores. Een uniek thema in de Sala Sistina van het Vaticaan', in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 15 (1964), pp. 105-31; *The type specimen of the Vatican Press 1628*. Ed. H.D.L. Vervliet (Amsterdam 1967), p. 17 ff; F.A. Janssen, *Zetten en drukken in de achttiende eeuw*. 2nd rev. ed. (Haarlem 1986), p. 94, 457; Faivre (see note 16), p. 134-5. On cabbala see: G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*. (New York [etc.] 1978).

[018018](#)

18 The connection between these four areas has been described in: J.R. Ritman, 'De Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica', in: *De hermetische gnosis in de loop der eeuwen*. Ed. G. Quispel. 2nd ed. (Baarn 1994), p. 643-62, and in: (F. van Lamoën), *De hermetische gnosis. Catalogus van een tentoonstelling in de BPH* (Amsterdam 1986; 2nd rev. ed. 1990; English translation: *The hermetic gnosis*, Amsterdam 1988; French translation: *La gnose hermétique*, Amsterdam 1991); see also: (C. Gilly), *500 years of gnosis in Europe. Exhibition of printed books and manuscripts from the gnostic tradition, Moscow*



& St. Petersburg. Organized by Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica and M.I. Rudomino Russian State Library for Foreign Literature (Amsterdam 1993).

[019019](#)

19 Quoted in: S. Settis, 'Warburg continuatus. Description d'une bibliothèque', in: *Le pouvoir des bibliothèques* (see note 12), p. 126.

[020020](#)

20 This copy has been described in the first part of the incunabula catalogue of the BPH: (M.L. Ford), *Christ, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus. The dawn of printing. Catalogue of the incunabula in the BPH* (Amsterdam 1990), no. 113.

[021021](#)

21 Almost all known manuscripts and printed editions - from the fourteenth century to the recent Dutch translation - have been brought together in a descriptive survey (F. van Lamoen), *Hermes Trismegistus, Pater Philosophorum. Tekstgeschiedenis van het 'Corpus Hermeticum'. Tentoonstelling in de BPH*. 2nd ed. (Amsterdam 1991).

[022022](#)

22 See amongst others: I. Pantin, 'Les "commentaires" de Lefèvre d'Étaples au *Corpus Hermeticum*', in: *Présence d'Hermès Trismégiste*. Ed. A. Faivre (Paris 1988), p. 167-83; F.A. Janssen, *Typografische vormgeving in enkele drukken van Henri Estienne. Een leidraad voor studenten* (Amsterdam 1996), p. 20-4.

[023023](#)

23 See F.A. Janssen, 'Dutch translations of the *Corpus Hermeticum*', in: *Theatrum orbis librorum. Liber amicorum Nico Israel*. Ed. T. Croiset van Uchelen et al. (Utrecht 1989), p. 230-41.

[024024](#)

24 See: (F. van Lamoen), *Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland. Jacob Böhme en het Nederlands hermetisme in de 17e eeuw. Catalogus van een tentoonstelling in de BPH* (Amsterdam 1986); F. van Ingen, *Böhme und Böhmiſten in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert* (Bonn 1984), p. 12-6.

[025025](#)

25 Hermes Trismegistus, *De la puissance et sapience de Dieu* (Paris 1549). The division-mark also occurs once in: *Orphei seu Mercurii Termaximi prognostica a terrae motibus*. Tr. I.A. Baius (Paris 1586), p. 2 ('Mercurii Ter-Maximi'); we also find it in a manuscript copy from 1740 after Van Beyerland's translation: see Van Lamoen (note 21), no. 15.

[026026](#)

26 M.L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel* (The Hague [etc.] 1981), p. 155-6; as an alchemistic symbol for 'praecipitare' (=to precipitate) see for instance M.P. Hall, *An encyclopedic outline of masonic...symbolical philosophy* (San Francisco 1928, many reprints), p. CLV.

[027027](#)

27 F.M. O'Hara, 'The use of the hyphen in printing to indicate divided words' in: *Visible language* 5 (1971), pp. 112, 121.

[028028](#)

28 Respectively: P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance* (London 1986); M. Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson* (Oxford 1991); G. Schwarz and M.J. Bok, *Pieter Saenredam* (Maarsse'n-s-Gravenhage 1989).

[029029](#)

29 Auction Sotheby's New York, *Fine books and manuscripts* 14-15 June 1993, no. 9.



[030030](#)

30 For the history of the Böhme manuscripts see the literature listed in F.A. Janssen, 'Böhme's *Wercken* (1682): its editor, its publisher, its printer', in: *Quaerendo* 16 (1986), p. 138; cf Van Lamoen (see note 24), p. 7-12. See also Abraham von Franckenberg, *Briefwechsel*. Ed. Joachim Telle (Stuttgart 1995), p. 118-26, 337.

[031031](#)

31 W. Buddecke, *Verzeichnis von Jacob Böhme-Handschriften* (Göttingen 1934), no. 143 and 143a.

[032032](#)

32 Communication by H. Borst, who is preparing a dissertation on Van Ravesteyn.

[033033](#)

33 J. Bruckner, *A bibliographical catalogue of seventeenth-century German books published in Holland* (The Hague 1971), no. 91, cf. p. xi and 63; cf: *Catalogus universalis*. Facs. ed. of the Dutch booktrade catalogues compiled and published by Broer Jansz, Amsterdam 1640-1652. Ed. H.W. de Kooker (Utrecht 1986), part 2, no. 65: 'by Johan Jansson' (the lists of Broer Jansz, however, sometimes only indicate that the title could be bought from the bookseller mentioned). Bruckner's attribution has been adopted by G. Dünnhaupt, *Personalbibliographien zu den Drucken des Barock*, 2nd. ed. (Stuttgart 1990), Vol. 1, p. 691 and in (D.L. Paisey), *Catalogue of books printed in the German-speaking countries ... from 1600 to 1700 now in the British Library* (London 1994), no. B 1655.

[034034](#)

34 We know his hand from a manuscript kept in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel: Buddecke (see note 31), no. 7.

[035035](#)

35 Buddecke (see note 31, no. 143 and 145; Van Lamoen (see note 24), p. 24. There are later and also modern editions of the *Mysterium magnum*, in English, French and Dutch, but for the German text we still have to rely on the edition of Böhme's collected works from 1730: facs. ed. in *Sämtliche Schriften*. Ed. W.-E. Peuckert (Stuttgart 1958), vol. 7-8.

[036036](#)

36 There are various (facsimile) editions; one of them containing an extensive commentary by G.D. Painter (London 1963); there are also French and English translations. The best modern edition is: F. Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Ed. G. Pozzi & L.A. Ciapponi (Padua 1980), with extensive commentary; cf. F. Colonna, *Le songe de Poliphile*. Tr. J. Martin, prés. G. Polizzi (Paris 1994). Of the many studies I only mention L. Birchler, 'Über die "Hypnerotomachia Poliphili"', in *Librarium* 1 (1958), pp. 37-47 and A. Blunt, 'The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili in 17th-century France', in *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937-8), pp. 117-37. A recent study attributes the work to the architect Alberti: L. Lefaivre, *Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Cambridge, Mass.- London 1997).

[037037](#)

37 G. Austin, *The library of Jean Grolier* (New York 1971), no. 141-4; *Incunabula in Dutch libraries* (Nieuwkoop 1983), no. 1353.

[038038](#)

38 Ford (see note 20), no. 72; A. McLean, *The Silent Language. The symbols of hermetic philosophy. Exhibition in the BPH* (Amsterdam 1994), p. 30; J. Van Lennep, *Alchimie* (Bruxelles 1984), pp. 97. 167. There even exists a Jungian interpretation of the *Poliphilus*: L. Fierz-David, *Der Liebestraum des Poliphilo* (Zürich 1947), tr. *The dream of Poliphilo* (New York 1950; repr. 1987). On alchemy see also: (H.M.E. de Jong), *Les symboles spirituels de l'alchimie. Exposition BPH* (Amsterdam 1988).

[039039](#)

39 See: Van Lennep (see note 38) p. 246; R. Brun, 'Maquettes d'éditions d'Oronce Fine', in: *Studia*



bibliographica in honorem H. de la Fontaine Verwey (Amsterdam 1966), pp. 36-42. The incunables from Fine's library are now kept in the Médiathèque Luxembourg in Meaux (*Patrimoine des bibliothèques de France*, vol. 1 (Paris 1995), p. 36).

[040040](#)

40 A. Hobson & P. Culot, *Italian and French 16th-century bookbindings* (Brussels 1990), no. 66.

[041041](#)

41 For Ferrand see J.-D. Mellot, *Dynamique provincial et centralisme parisien: l'édition rouennaise et ses marchés*. Thèse Université Paris I (Paris 1991-2), Annexe, p. 93.

[042042](#)

42 (C. Gilly), *Johann Valentin Andreae 1586-1986. Die Manifeste der Rosenkreuzerbruderschaft. Katalog einer Ausstellung in der BPH*. 2nd ed. (Amsterdam 1986); C. Gilly, *Cimelia* (see note 10); C. Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr. Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer* (Amsterdam 1994); cf. *Das Erbe des Christian Rosenkreuz. Vorträge gehalten anlässlich des Amsterdamer Symposiums 1986* (Amsterdam 1988).

[043043](#)

43 F. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London 1972); Yates's insights concerning the backgrounds to the movement of the Early Rosicrucians did not meet with undivided support and have lost their validity especially since Gilly's publications.

[044044](#)

44 See: R. Frey-Jaun, *Die Berufung des Türhüters. Zur 'Chymischen Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz' von Johann Valentin Andreae* (Bern 1989), p. 48-51.

[045045](#)

45 See the English translation with extensive esoteric commentary by J. van Rijckenborgh, *The secrets of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*. 3 vols (Haarlem 1991). A scholarly edition is being prepared in the edition of the collected works of J.V. Andreae (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1994 ff). At this moment the best edition is: J.V. Andreae, *Fama, Confessio, Chymische Hochzeit*. Ed. R. van Dülmen (Stuttgart 1981).

[046046](#)

46 On Paracelsus and the Rosicrucians see (C. Gilly), *Paracelsus in der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* (Amsterdam 1993).

[047047](#)

47 This Book of Hours has been loaned in the past to various exhibitions: *The golden age of Dutch manuscript painting* (New York 1990), no. 91; *Kriezels, aubergines en takkenbossen. Randversiering in Noordnederlandse handschriften uit de vijftiende eeuw* (Zutphen 1992), no. 35. The manuscript used to belong to the famous collector Chester Beatty.

[048048](#)

48 G. Grote, *Getijden van de eeuwige wijsheid*. Ed. A.G. Weiler (Baarn 1984). An edition of the entire Book of Hours by Geert Grote: *Het Getijdenboek van Geert Groote naar het Haagse handschrift 133 E 21*. Ed. N. van Wijk. Leiden 1940; cf. *Heinrich Susos Horlogium Sapientiae*. Ed. P. Künzle (Freiburg 1977), p. 262-3, Suso's text on p. 606-18.

Frank van Lamoen

Spreading the word. The earliest editions of Jacob Boehme

In the midst of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), as an expression of then prevalent millenarian sentiments, a movement sprang up which can be classified as 'mystical spiritualism'. The most important representative of this movement is the Silesian mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624).

Fascinated by the problem of evil, Boehme experienced a spiritual breakthrough in 1600, the record of which was laid down in writing twelve years later under the title *Morgenröte im Anfang*. It marks the beginning of a voluminous philosophical output, in which Boehme makes use of ideas and terms derived from the Bible, medieval mysticism, Kabbalah, Valentin Weigel (1533-88) and Paracelsus (1493-1541), whose collected works had been published in the years 1589-1591.

Boehme's mystical pantheism and dialectical conception of God - in which good and evil (and all antitheses for that matter) are rooted in one and the same being - soon brought him into conflict with Lutheran orthodoxy. The manuscript of *Morgenröte im Anfang* was confiscated by the authorities on 26 July 1613, and its author banned from publishing. His manuscripts, however, continued to circulate in copies made by friends, amongst whom Heinrich Prunius, Hans Rothe, Boehme's patrons Karl and Michael Ender von Sercha, and Johann Sigismund von Sweinichen. The latter managed to have a short work by Boehme to appear during his lifetime - without the author's knowledge - entitled *Der Weg zu Christo* (1624). There are only two known copies of this treatise, one in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, the other in Harvard.

After Boehme's death one of his followers Abraham von Franckenberg (1593-1652) concerned himself with the publication and dissemination of Boehme's spiritual heritage. In 1631 he published with Veit Heinrichs in Amsterdam part of Boehme's substantial commentary on Genesis, *Mysterium Magnum*, enlarged with works by Tauler, and a short biography of Boehme called *Iosephus redivivus*. The German professor Johannes Angelius Werdenhagen, who stayed in the Dutch Republic from 1627 to 1632, edited a Latin translation of Boehme's *Vierzig Fragen von der Seele*. It was published as *Psychologia vera* (1632) by Johannes Janssonius in Amsterdam. Two years later he printed Boehme's *Morgenröte*, under the current Latin title *Aurora*, printed on the basis of a corrupted copy. (The autograph was to remain in the townhall of Görlitz, where Boehme had lived his entire life, until 1641).

The ready distribution in Germany of the above-mentioned titles - and other Behmenist writings - caused the Lutheran classis in Lübeck to send a protest to their colleagues in Amsterdam. But the Dutch Republic in those days, as is well known, was fairly tolerant. As a corollary to the epoch-making Cartesianism, religious thought was marked by a sense of liberty, and an aversion to dogmatism: individual experience became the measure of all things. This attitude was embodied by J.A. Comenius, Antoinette Bourignon, Anna Maria van Schurman, to name a few. The original source from which the beliefs of the 'reformers' sprang was the philosophy of Jacob Boehme.

This was also the environment of the man who secured the Behmenist heritage for future generations: Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland (1586/87-1648). Nothing is known for certain of his origin. He settled in Amsterdam in 1615, where he soon made a career for himself as a businessman. From 1623 he was active in the civet trade and already the following year he was quoted on the stock exchange. Eventually he acquired a monopoly in this perfume industry and became a man of means.

In addition to his activities in the aforesaid branch, Van Beyerland produced account books, and also published on the fluctuations of the currency.

After a brief marriage to the widow of bookseller Abraham Huybrechtsz, Van Beyerland remarried a woman called Geertrui van de Poel in 1626. He moved to a house in the Warmoesstraat and was appointed elder of the Walloon Church. This church community met in the former Paulusbroeders church on the Oude Zijds Achterburgwal, and in the Westerkerk. Because he was an elder, Van Beyerland was also asked to become a regent of the Walloon orphanage in the Laurierstraat in the years 1641-42.

His social position enabled Van Beyerland to become the motor behind the dissemination of the ideas of Jacob Boehme. In the period 1634-53 he translated almost the entire work of the Silesian mystic, and furthermore published a number of his works in their original language: *De signatura rerum* (1635),



possibly also a reprint of *Der Weg zu Christo* (1635), and *Mysterium magnum* (1640), although the latter was published on the basis of an unreliable copy.

Van Beyerland was in touch with persons from Boehme's immediate circle such as Abraham von Franckenberg, Heinrich Prunius and Abraham von Sommerfeld; moreover he was acquainted with Boehme adepts such as J.A. Werdenhagen and Michel le Blon.

After 1637 Van Beyerland came into the possession of the manuscript collection of the brothers Karl and Michael Ender, and four years later he was able to crown his collection with the acquisition of the autograph of *Morgenröte im Aufgang*, the confiscated manuscript which was still in Görlitz. At the end of his life Van Beyerland owned more than a hundred manuscripts, including some seven autographs and letters.

Van Beyerland's translating activities took off in the years 1634-35 with four small anthologies from the work of Jacob Boehme, in which the element of 'practical theology' dominated. The first translation was entitled *Hand-boecxken*, or manual. The little book was announced as forthcoming on 18 November 1634 in the *Nieuwstijdingen bij Jan van Hilten*. In the following two years, Van Beyerland successively published Boehme's second and third work, in an integral translation, respectively *Hooge ende diepe gronden van 't drievoudigh leven des menschen*: High and deep grounds of the threefold life of man (1636), and *Van de drie principien*: Of the three principles (1637). It is at this time that - partly as a result of the acquisition of the Ender collection - Van Beyerland's 'text-critical period' began: although he was busy translating texts between 1637 and 1640, he did not publish anything else than a catalogue in which he made mention of the unpublished translations. He compared as many manuscripts as possible to achieve a reliable edition. Eventually he published a flow of works in 1642, in addition to a revised catalogue, printed at the end of Boehme's *Clavis ofte sleutel*: The Key.

Van Beyerland had all texts printed at his own expense, and took responsibility for part of the distribution. Nevertheless the curious fact remains that in 1643 Abraham von Franckenberg cast doubt on Van Beyerland's integrity, suspecting him of acting out of commercial motives.

[toptop](#)

Responses to Van Beyerland's Boehme propaganda on the part of the established churches were inevitable. Of the orthodox party a certain David Guilbertus and the well-known Counter-Remonstrant Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) attacked the 'erring spirit' and his apostle. The former even went as far as to visit Van Beyerland in person to convince him that he was putting himself at risk, but he failed in his pious mission and was shown the door. Van Beyerland did not respond to the allegations levelled against him in Guilbertus's diatribe entitled: *Christelijke waerschouwing, teghens de gruwelijcke boecken van Jacob Böhmen* (1643): a Christian warning against the horrible books of Jacob Boehme. Johannes Theodorus von Tsesch (1595-1649), a Behmenist of Silesian origin and lived in Amsterdam in 1641-44, however came to his defence.

Van Beyerland's translating activities were not confined to the work of Jacob Boehme alone. In 1643 he published the second *Corpus Hermeticum* translation - the first had appeared in Alkmaar in 1607 - partly as an attempt to combat atheism. In this respect he followed in the footsteps of the Protestant hermetist Philippe de Mornay, who had set himself the same goal in his *De la verité de la religion chrétienne* (1581), and his Catholic counterpart Francesco Patrizi, the Italian philosopher who with his *Nova de universis philosophia* (1591) had put Hermes Trismegistus to work for the Counter-Reformation, in an attempt to overthrow the rule of the 'godless' Aristotle.

Strongly influenced by his Boehme translations, Van Beyerland interpreted the texts of Hermes Trismegistus from a Behmenist viewpoint, and effected - especially in his marginal comments - a fusion between the world of thought of Jacob Boehme and that of Hermetism, or rather: he thought he saw a connection with the gnostic inspiration fuelling Boehme's thought.

Van Beyerland's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* came out as *Sesthien Boecken van den voor-*

treffelijcken ouden filosooph Hermes Tris-megistus: Sixteen books of the eminent ancient philosopher Hermes Trismegistus, printed by Nicolaas van Ravesteyn for Ysbrand Rieuwertsz la Burgh, manufacturer of account books. It was published again in 1652 by Rieuwertsz' son Pieter, like his father a manufacturer of account books, and a participant in the civet-trading cartel of the heirs of Van Beyerland.

Van Beyerland's last translation returned to one of the sources feeding the thought of Jacob Boehme: two brief texts by Valentin Weigel, the mystic who preceded Boehme in the adaptation of Paracelsian thought.

A year later, in 1648, the dialecticism of this world and the other comes to an end for Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland. He died and was put to rest in an as yet unknown place outside of Amsterdam.

Van Beyerland's life work was to some extent continued by the diplomat Michel le Blon (1587-1658), who was envoy to Christina, Queen of Sweden. Le Blon maintained relations with Van Beyerland, and after the latter's death with his eldest son Willem. He also corresponded with men in the circle around Boehme, amongst whom Christian Bernhard and Abraham von Franckenberg. Following the latter's instructions, Le Blon revised his copy of the corrupt *Mysterium Magnum* edition, and received a number of letters by Boehme in 1646 via Von Franckenberg which he published seven years later - together with a new translation of the *Gebetbüchlein* - under the title: *Gulde kleynoot eener aandachtighe ziele*: Golden gem of a devout soul.

Le Blon also helped disseminate Boehme's work in England. He was in correspondence with John Sparrow, the lawyer who translated almost the entire work of Boehme into English, partly using Van Beyerland's Dutch translations, partly on the basis of manuscripts in the possession of the heirs, and with the help of German editions in so far as these were already available.

The need for German editions was catered to by the Amsterdam publisher Hendrik Beets (ca 1625-1708), who owed his latinized surname, Betkius, to his spiritual father, the German minister Joachim Betke (1601-1663).

Beets knew Behmenists like Von Franckenberg and Von Tsesch, and planned to publish all works of Boehme in their original language, a lucrative idea in view of the number of German emigrants in the Dutch Republic.

Beets published 27 Boehme editions in the period 1658-78. He was very likely also the man responsible for the *Aurora* edition of 1656, which was said to be revised on the basis of the autograph in the possession of the heirs A.W. van Beyerland.

In spite of his considerable output, Beets did not manage an edition of the collected works of Boehme. This was to be the initiative of Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), a Behmenist living in Amsterdam.

With the financial aid of an Arnhem mayor, Willem Gozewijn Huygens (1645-1699), Gichtel acquired the manuscript collection in the possession of the heirs A.W. van Beyerland. He bought a printing press and the necessary materials, and put Andries and David van Hoogenhuysen in charge of printing, while he himself acted as editor, publisher, and to a certain extent also as printer. He also took care of (part of) the distribution of the printed works. The first critical edition appeared as *Alle theosophische Wercken*, in Amsterdam in 1682.

The edition was illustrated with a number of symbolical representations by an anonymous designer, who must have been highly familiar with the contents of Boehme's works. In the past Abraham von Franckenberg has been suggested, who, although he did give visual shape to some elements from the work of Boehme, had died long before 1682; also the engraver Jan Luyken (1649-1712) and persons from the circle around Gichtel himself: Johann Georg Graber whose name is on the title-page of Gichtel's posthumously published *Kurtze Eröfnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien* (1723), and Dionysius Andreas Freher, the designer of the illustrations to Boehme's collected works in English.

The unknown designer probably also produced the title engraving to the *Theosofische Schrifften* (1686) of

Bartholomaeus Sclei.

In the wake of Gichtel's edition, the Amsterdam publisher Frederik Vorster planned to bring out a Dutch edition of the collected works. The project was stopped for unknown reasons and never got beyond the first part of *Alle de theosoophsche of godwijze werken* (1686).

This part contains the translation of Boehme's first work, *Aurora*, traditionally attributed to Jan Luyken, the poet-engraver who was greatly familiar with Boehme's thought, a familiarity which is especially in evidence in the prose commentary to his collection of emblems *Jezus en de ziel* (1678).

It may have been that the market for a Dutch-language edition of Boehme was limited: the educated circles read Boehme in German, so that a translation of the complete works did not actually fill a need. This may also explain why one *Mysterium Magnum* translation was not printed until 1700, and another translation, by Johannes Boot from 1677, remained unpublished.

The German edition of the collected works was in need of a reprint in 1715. It appeared as *Theosophia revelata* in Hamburg, revised after the late Georg Gichtel's own copy.

In the meantime after the death of Huygens (1699) the manuscripts from the Van Beyerland collection had come into the possession of Huygens' friends Allart de Raedt and Johannes Goethals. The couple took the collection with them to Utrecht where De Raedt died in 1716. Goethals then moved to Haarlem, where he died twelve years later.

When his estate was auctioned in 1728 the manuscripts were saved from dispersal by Boehme adepts. The Haarlem publisher Isaac Enschedé and his son Johannes played a role of major importance here. In 1717 Enschedé published a translation of *De signatura rerum*.

The manuscripts were taken to Leiden, and used by Gichtel's 'heir apparent' Johann Wilhelm Ueberfeld (1659-1731) for the definitive edition of the collected work, which appeared in 1730.

Abroad the Boehme canon was being established with rather more difficulty. In England the edition of the *Works* - with the remarkable illustrations by Dionysius Andreas Freher - was left unfinished on financial grounds; in France an edition of the collected works never even got off the ground: in that country the daybreak only came under the inspired encouragement of the mystic Louis Claude de Saint Martin (1743-1803).

What happened to the manuscripts brought together with such great care by Van Beyerland? Initially they were to be found in Leiden, in the possession of Ueberfeld and his circle. These German emigrants returned to their country of origin in the middle of the eighteenth century. There the collection in the end came under the devoted care of a small group of Behmenists, 'die Stillen im Lande', the quiet folks in the country, in Linz on the Rhine. The bibliographer Werner Buddecke described the collection, then still intact, in 1934, before it was to become dispersed in the turmoil of the war. A large part went to Wroclaw (Breslau) in Poland; the autographs however, remained in Germany through coincidence, and are now in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.



This text is a translation of the author's revised preface in: F. van Lamoen, [Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland](#). *Jacob Boehme en het Nederlandse hermetisme in de 17e eeuw*. Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1986.

[toptop](#)

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Focus on Creation: Introduction

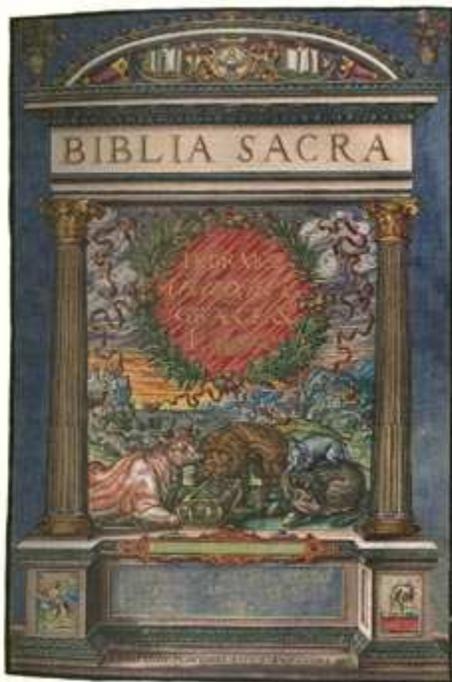
Questions about human existence are of all times. When man began to observe the earth, the moon and the sun, the stars, planets and the cosmos, he was naturally led to think about a Maker or makers who fashioned the universe. The sense of wonder he must have felt caused him to long for knowledge about beginning and end, and about an eternity without beginning or end. Questions about man's origin are linked to the human need to interpret our existence, to endow the universe with meaning, to think about its maker, the unknowable First, or God who brings order to chaos, God the Creator who separated the earth from water, the Nous bringing light in the midst of darkness, who himself was the Good in the All. By acquiring gnosis or intuition about the divine, various philosophical, mystical and religious thinkers thought it was possible for divine though mortal man to shed the imperfections of his created body and return to a union with the Godhead.

In addition to biblical creation stories there were many other influential ideas current concerning the creation of the universe, the world and the creatures in it. Several philosophical and religious creation myths were interpreted and elaborated in the history of Western thought and belief. Various wisdom traditions in Western culture exercised a profound influence on man's continuous attempts to fathom the creation, ranging from Genesis to Plato, from Marsilio Ficino's interpretation of the Hermetic works to Jacob Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum*.

Focus on Creation: Genesis

There are two creation stories in Genesis which did not originate at the same time and which differ significantly on a number of points. Genesis begins with the story in which God creates the earth in six days, after which the second, much shorter and presumably older story follows. In this story, the earth is not yet covered with plants and trees for 'Jehova God had not sent rain on the earth'. The creation of man, too, is described again and as with the plants, the second description is much more concrete: Adam is made of dust and he becomes a living soul because God 'blew into his nostrils the breath of life'. The creation story continues with man being placed in Paradise, the creation of Eve and finally the Fall. In the Judaeo-Christian creation legend man's disobedience has consequences for all of mankind. It disrupts the harmony existing between God and man.

The 'condition' of the earth prior to the creation is not clearly defined at the beginning of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters'. It does not provide an explicit indication that God created the heavens and the earth out of 'nothing'. The earth is described as 'a formless void' and order is brought to a primal chaos, including the primeval darkness. The idea of 'creatio ex nihilo' familiar in the West was a philosophical statement expressing the Christian view of creation which was developed in the second century CE. It evolved through the acceptance and rejection of elements of other religious and philosophical ideas, especially in confrontation with Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Platonism. A first indication that the world was created out of nothing can be found in the apocryphal 2 Maccabees, which was used by the Church Fathers to corroborate the idea of a 'creatio ex nihilo'. Amongst the adherents of this idea were Irenaeus, Tertullian and Augustine, who came to the conclusion that this was *the* foundation for the belief that there was one God and also that he was the sole creator: the *Pantokrator*.



Biblia sacra. Antwerp, C. Plantijn, 1587



Ludolph van Sachsen. *Dat boeck van Jhesus leven.*
Zwolle, P. van Os, 1499



Coenders van Helpen. *Escalier des sages.*
Groningen, C. Pieman, 1689



Preudhomme Mellon. *Le lustre des temps*.
Manuscript on vellum, Rouen?, 1534

'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.'
Genesis 1:3-5



Rudimentum novitiorum. Lübeck, L. Brandis, 1475

'And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.'

Genesis 1:7-8



Johan Jacob Scheuchzer. *Geestelyke natuurkunde*.
Amsterdam, P. Schenk, 1728-38

'And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.'

Genesis 1:10-11



Werner Rolewinck. *Fasciculus temporum*.
Utrecht, J. Veldener, 1480

'And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.'
Genesis 1:14



Isabella von der Heiligen Geist. *Recreationen*.
Manuscript on vellum, Bavaria, ca.1708

'And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.'
Genesis 1:20



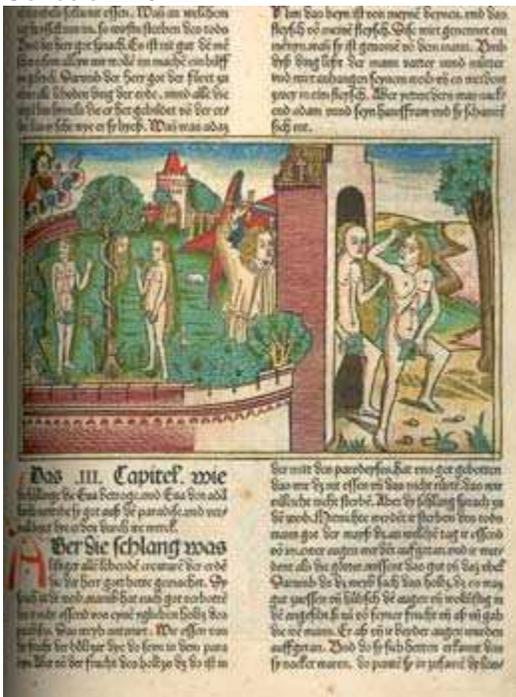
Hartmann Schedel. *Liber chronicorum*.
Nuremberg, A. Koberger, 1493

'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.'
Genesis 1:26-27



Biblia. Dordrecht, P. and J. Keur, 1729

'And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.'
 Genesis 2:20-22



Biblia Germanica. Nuremberg, A. Koberger, 1483

'And she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat...

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.'

Genesis 3:6, 3:23

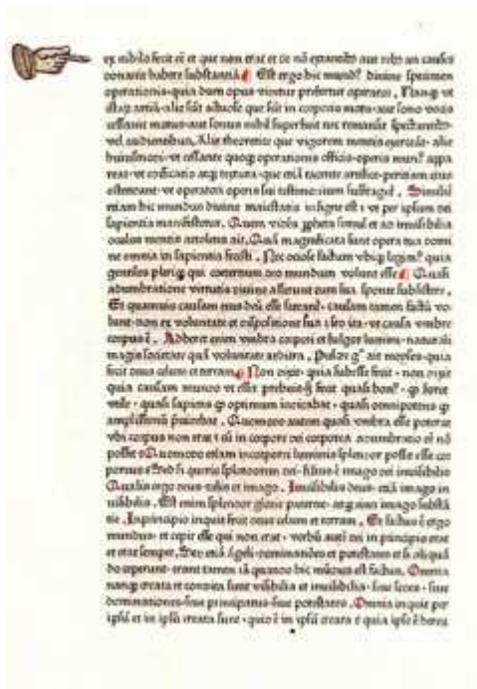


Biblia Latina. Mainz, J. Fust & P. Schoeffer, 1462

A first indication that the world was created out of nothing can be found in 2 Maccabees, written in the first century BCE; the Greek text of this apocryphal book was translated by Hieronymus as follows for the Vulgate:

'I beg you my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them, and understand that God made those things out of nothing, and also the human race.'

2 Maccabees 7:28

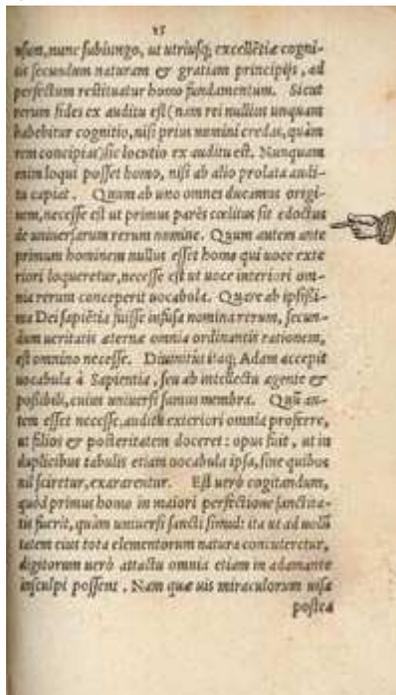


Ambrose. *Hexameron*. Augsburg, J. Schoessler, 1462

In the fourth century CE, the 'ex nihilo doctrine' had become fully accepted and absorbed by the Church Fathers. In his *Hexameron*, Ambrose (ca. 339-397) praises the creator as:

'He who in a moment of His power made this great beauty of the world out of nothing, which did not itself have existence and who gave substance to things or causes that did not themselves exist.'

fol 4r-v



14 Guillaume Postel. *De originibus*. Basel, J. Oporinus, [1553]

Hebrew was the most important language for the polymath Postel (1510-1581) because God spoke to Adam in Hebrew after he had created man. Postel believed that language, the ability to name things, was the greatest gift God had bestowed on Adam. In Paradise God and Adam communicated with each other through an inner voice; but for the subsequent generations the things had to be named using an outer voice. Without names nothing can be known.

'Since there was no man, before the first man, who could speak with an exterior voice, he necessarily conceived all the names of things by an interior voice. The names of things were infused into Adam's mind from that very wisdom of God, according to the order of eternal Truth which ordains all things.'
P. 15

Focus on Creation: Plato and the Platonists

The Greeks were not so much concerned with creator and creation. Plato (and the philosophers before him) were not familiar with a God who created out of nothing. According to the Greeks, the Maker worked with eternal matter existing outside himself. Yet Plato did differ from the other Greek thinkers in the sense that he believed that the world had a beginning and had been fashioned by a divine creature. Because god was called father in Plato's *Timaeus* it became possible for the Christians to interpret Plato's philosophy in a Christian sense. The first book of Moses also speaks of a pre-existent primal chaos of matter characterised by the elements of water, fire, earth and air, out of which God created heaven and earth.

In Plato's vision the world is a copy made after the original world, an image of the eternal: perfection existed only in the realm of the Forms or the 'intelligible living Creature'. That which comes into being or has been made must have a first cause. For Plato, however, the maker who is responsible for what is made remains unknowable: 'The maker and father of this universe it is a hard task to find, and having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind' (*Timaeus*). In order to get an idea how everything has come into existence Plato (the first Greek thinker to do so) introduced a creator god in the shape of the Demiurge, the worker or maker who brought order to everything that has been created. The motivation for the creation is also explained in the same myth. The creator god is good and wanted everything he made to be good and beautiful, too. The Demiurge therefore instilled intellect in the soul and the soul in the body.

Plato's philosophical creation myth, and the Logos of the superior god, the Intellect (*Nous*) of the Platonists, were also an influence on Hermetic philosophy. There are clear parallels between the creation myths in the Hermetic *Poimandres* and Plato's *Timaeus*.

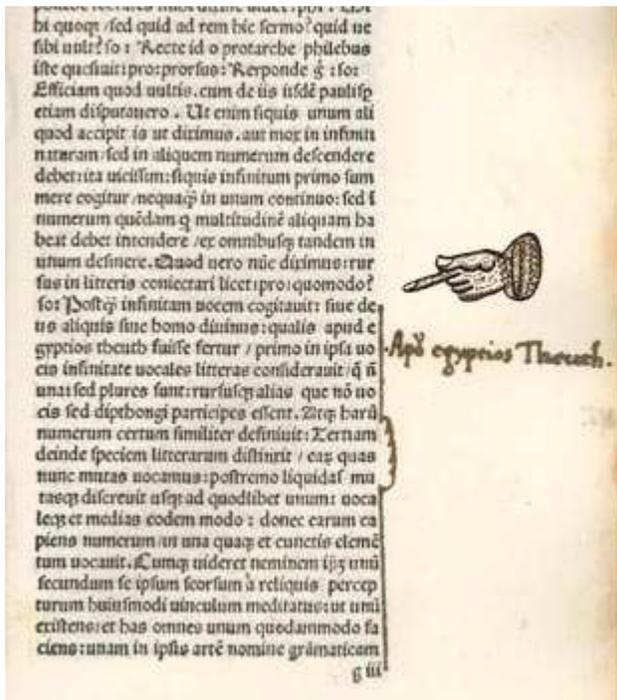


Plato. *Timaeus*. Paris, J. Badius, 1520

In *Timaeus* Plato (ca. 429-347 BCE) presented the world as made by the Demiurge, a creator god using matter which he himself had not created. What was structured that way, the sensible, visible world (conceived of as a living creature) and all forms of life (made by the heavenly gods: the stars, the planets, the earth), was good, as perfectly made as possible. Plato's creator god or the divine Mind imbued a living creature with soul and intelligence. Man's rational faculty is therefore divine in origin and forms a reflection of the divine nature of the cosmos as it is revealed to us.

'So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself. [...] Desiring, then, that all things should be good and, so far as might be, nothing imperfect, the god took over all that is visible [...] and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way the better.[...] There are Being, Space, Becoming - three distinct things - even before the Heaven came into being. [...] Fire, water, earth, and air possessed indeed some vestiges of their own nature, but were altogether in such a condition as we should expect for anything when deity is absent from it. Such being their nature at the time when the ordering of the universe was taken in hand, the god then began by giving them a distinct configuration by means of shapes and numbers. [...] The god framed them with the greatest possible perfection, which they had not before.'

30, 52d-e, 53b, F. Cornford



Plato. *Opera*. Florence, L. de Alopa, [1484-1485]



Laurenzo Pignoria. *Mensa Isiaca*.
 Venice, G.A. Rampazetto, 1605

Plato was in Egypt in 393 BCE and his work reveals a general familiarity with Egyptian culture. In *Philebus*, a discourse on language, he alluded to the legend about the Egyptian god Thoth as the inventor of letters. For the Egyptians, Thoth was the god who recorded what the creator god Ptah had created. But the Egyptians also believed that Thoth himself created by means of the word(s) he uttered.

'the unlimited variety of sound was once discerned by some god, or perhaps some godlike man [...] there was some such person in Egypt called Theuth. He it was who originally discerned the existence, in that unlimited variety, of the vowels and then of other things which, though they could not be called articulate sounds, yet were noises of a kind. [...] in the end he [...] affixed to the whole collection, as to each single member of it, the name 'letter' [...] so he gave utterance to the expression 'art of letters', implying that there was one art that dealt with the sounds.'

Philebus, 18b, R. Hackforth



Plato. *Le sympose*. Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559

Plato's *Symposium* on the Eros contains an anthropological myth on the first androgynous human beings (189D-193 E). These creatures were globular in shape, with rounded back and sides, four arms and four legs, and a head with two identical faces facing opposite directions. Of the total of three sexes, the male was seen as deriving from the sun, the female from the earth, the hermaphrodite from the moon. After a failed attempt by the hermaphrodites to attack the gods, Zeus cut them in half, and weakened them. Eventually Zeus relented and made procreation possible, so that a unification and healing of human nature could be effected through love (Eros).

'And so all this to-do is a relic of that original state of ours, when we were whole, and now, when we are longing for and following after that primeval wholeness, we say we are in love. For there was a time, I repeat, when we were one, but now, for our sins, God has scattered us abroad.'

192E-193A, M. Joyce

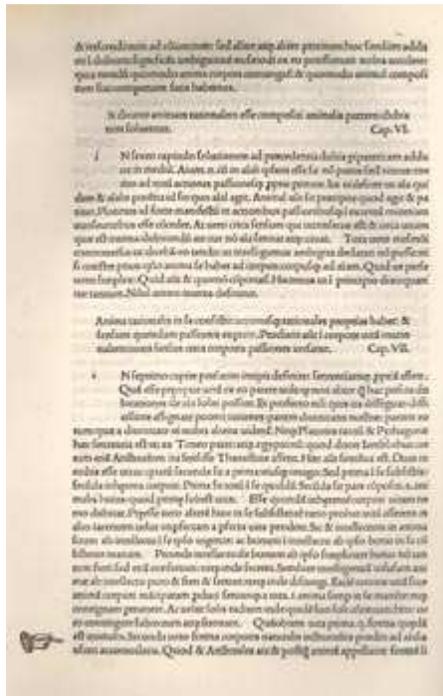


Philo of Alexandria. *Les oeuvres*. Paris, N. Chesneau, 1575

In his *De opificio mundi* (the creation of the world) Philo (fl. 39 CE) combined his own Judaism with contemporary Platonic thought. His exegesis of Genesis illustrates the importance of Plato's description of the Demiurge as 'father and creator'. Philo's perception of the universe was positive, it was created through God's Logos. For Philo there existed a direct and harmonic relation between the Law of Moses and the cosmic principles.

'In relating the history of early times, and going for its beginning right to the creation of the universe, he [Moses] wished to shew two most essential things: first that the Father and Maker of the cosmos was in the truest sense also Lawgiver, secondly that he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe, so that his deeds are attuned to harmony with his words and his words with his deeds.'

De vita Moysi 2: 45B52, P. Borgen



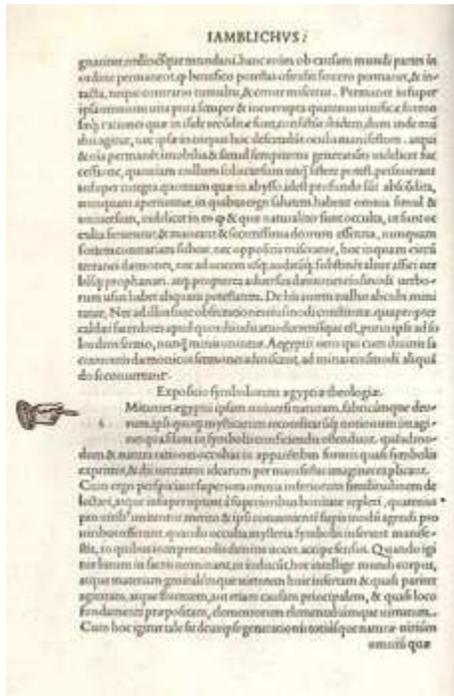
Plotinus. *Opera.*

Florence, A. di Bartolommeo Miscomini, 1492

In the *Enneads*, the Neoplatonist Plotinus (ca. 205-270) offers his three hypostases: to Hen (the One), Nous (Mind), and Psyche (the World Soul); an unknowable God brings forth Mind through necessary emanation. Psyche or the Soul emanates from the Intellect. Mind, the primary Intellect, contains all divine ideas when it creates the universe. Plotinus emphasised the beauty and goodness of the divine World Soul, the product of the primary Good.

'And again, it must be supposed that the Good is that on which all things depend, while it depends on nothing; for only so is it true that the Good is "that to which all things aspire" [...] the Good remains at rest, while all things turn towards it, as a circle turns towards the centre from which all its radii are drawn. We might compare it also to the sun, which is like a centre in relation to its own light, that depends on it and is everywhere linked to it and not severed; so that, even if you wish to part them, the light always stays with the sun.'

I 71, J. Gregory

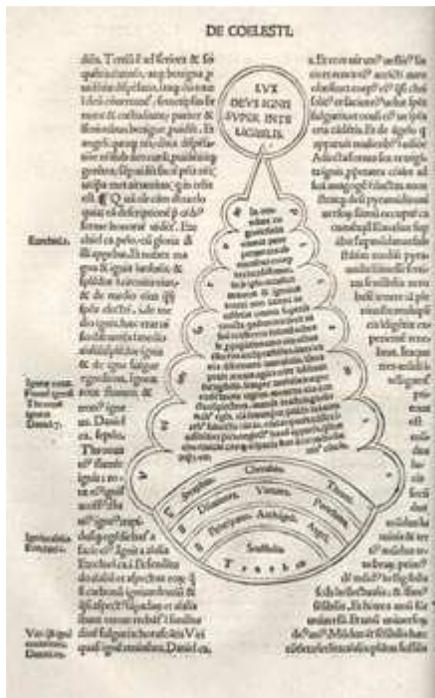


Iamblichus. *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*.
Venice, A. Manutius, 1497

In his longing to make a connection with the divine, the Neoplatonist Iamblichus (ca. 245-330) subordinated philosophy to theurgy ('acting through God'). Iamblichus considered it possible to a certain degree to become a part of the divine creator by means of magical writings and practices. With *The mysteries of the Egyptians* Iamblichus responded to Porphyry, who was critical of theurgy. Iamblichus used Egyptian, Chaldaean and Assyrian sources for his work. His version of the Egyptian religion is at the same time his own version of the Neoplatonism of his age.

'The Egyptians [...] imitate the nature of the universe and the gods' work of creation, by producing symbolic images to represent mysterious, occult and invisible meanings. Nature, in the same way, has revealed its unseen principles in visible forms, and the craftsmanship of the gods has made perceptible copies of the reality of the Forms. And so, because they know that all higher beings take delight to see their likeness in their inferiors, their wish is to complete the felicity of the gods by copying them, to the best of their powers; they [...] produce, in an appropriate form, an initiation into divine mysteries concealed in symbols.'

VII 1, T. Taylor



Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. *De coelestis hierarchia*.
 Venice, J. Tacuinus de Tridino, 1502

Dionysius (fl. 500-550) can be regarded as a Christian Neoplatonist. God is the first principle, unknowable and unnameable (except by what he is not, according to the 'theologia negativa'), but man is connected with God through the divine emanations. In *The hierarchy of the heavens*, a work influenced by the Neoplatonism of the Greek philosopher Proclus, Dionysius describes three triads of entities which mediate between God and men. Dionysius distinguished three stages of light: the sun, the cosmic primal light (Fiat Lux) and the divine light. The divine can be observed in creation, in nature, and man can participate in the divine being. In *De mystica theologia*, Dionysius describes the ascent of the soul and the mystical union with God.

Focus on Creation: Gnostics

In the first centuries CE various gnostic currents provide an explanation about the questions concerning human existence. A central idea in Gnosis is that man can be redeemed from his earthly existence when he becomes aware of his ultimately divine origin. This awareness enables him to return to the Good from which he comes. Gnostics believed that man was trapped in his earthly existence, and the world according to them was in consequence not created by a good God, but by an evil Demiurge (this was also one of the main controversies with the Christians).

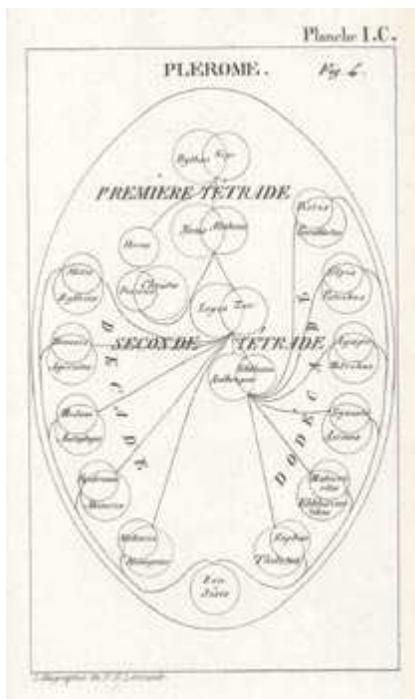
In general it may be said that in the gnostic representation of world and cosmos there is a first divine principle (which in Platonic terms may also be termed 'the Good'), from which aeons or spiritual entities emanate (together they make up the Pleroma, or fullness of being). There is a hierarchy between these aeons, the lower ones not being aware of the higher ones. Although there are various gnostic creation myths in existence, they all share the premise that the material world is not a reflection of the higher world, as it is with the Platonists.

In one of the best known gnostic systems, that of Valentinus, the maker of the material world is again called the Demiurge, and the creation is a consequence of a rift within the aeons. Because one of the aeons, Sophia, longed for the divine primal cause, she brought forth the Demiurge, who in turn fashioned the material world. Particles of light from the spiritual world, however, became trapped in the material world in the process. The Gnostics believed that man, although part of the material world, may nevertheless be redeemed by remembering that there is a divine spark within him and within creation.

Overcoming his forgetfulness of the spiritual World enables him to return to the One. A typically gnostic statement is that man is a mortal God, and God an immortal man: in other words, not 'I and thou' (God and man), but 'I am thou' (God is in man).

Until the discovery of Nag Hammadi gnostic works were known mostly because they had survived in the works of the Church Fathers, who quoted gnostic passages in order to refute them. It was not until 1945 that it was possible to study gnostic works integrally, and not only in the (prejudiced) polemical context of the Early Christian authors. These works make clear how important Gnosis, Knowledge, is: 'Consequently if one is a Gnostic, he is from above. If he is called, he is wont to heed, to respond, and to turn to Him who calls him, and go upward to Him' (*Evangelium veritatis*).

Mani (216-276), the founder of Manichaeism, was even more radical when it came to the problem of evil in the world and the evil world. According to Mani there were two principles, Light and Darkness, and three phases in the cosmological drama. Darkness tries to vanquish Light, but Light will conquer in the end and Darkness is exiled, although both principles continue to exist. The redemption of man begins when Adam awakens through the Redeemer, the son of God, who makes him aware of his divine origin. Manichaeism exerted a strong appeal, amongst others on Augustine, prior to his conversion by Ambrose of Milan.



Jacques Matter. *Histoire du gnosticisme, et de son influence*. Paris, G. Levrault, 1828

Illustration of the Valentinian Pleroma.



Clemens Alexandrinus. *Euriskomena*.
Florence, L. Torrentino, 1550

The ideas of Theodotos (2nd c. CE), a follower of Valentinus, are known only from fragments which have been preserved in Clement of Alexandria's 'Miscellanies' along with other Valentinian fragments. Through Gnosis man can recall his divine origin and can return to the One. Theodotos therefore admonishes his audience to realise:

'who we were, what we have become, where we were, into what place we have been cast; wither we hasten, from what we are delivered, what birth is, what rebirth is.'

Excerpta ex Theodoto 78.2

Only when man realises he is essentially divine, can he be redeemed.



Irenaeus. *Opus...in quinque libros digestum.*
Basel, N. Episcopus, 1534

The most important work of Irenaeus (ca. 115-ca. 202) is *Adversus Haereses*, which contains a great deal of information on the various Gnostic currents. On the issue of redemption, Irenaeus writes, there were various practices in use. The Gnostic was for instance instructed to address the powers, principalities and the companions of the Demiurge he would encounter as follows:

'I derive being from Him who is pre-existent, and I come again to my own place whence I went forth.' And they [the gnostics] affirm that, by saying these things, he escapes from the powers. He then advances to the companions of the demiurge, and thus addresses them: 'I am a vessel more precious than the female who formed you. If your mother is ignorant of her own descent, I know myself, and am aware whence I am.'

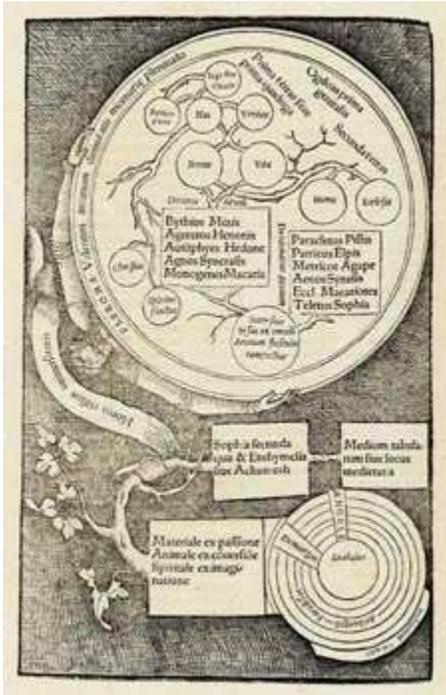
Book I, chapter 18, p. 41



Irenaeus. *Adversus Valentini, & similibus gnosticorum haereses*. Cologne, H. Mylius, 1625

Marcion (d. ca. 154), a follower of the Gnostic Cerdo, denied that the creator of the world was a good and omnipotent God. According to him, the good God differed from the Demiurge: the good God doesn't punish, doesn't bring about evil in the world, while the creator who is testified to in the Old Testament, is a cruel God. The imperfection of the world, Marcion claimed, reflected the imperfection of the Demiurge, who was also characterised by contradictory actions. He sharply distinguished between the inferior God of the Old Testament and the omnipotent God of the New Testament. Irenaeus took up arms against Marcion:

'Marcion of Pontus [...] advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring Him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself.'
Book I, ch. 29, p. 129

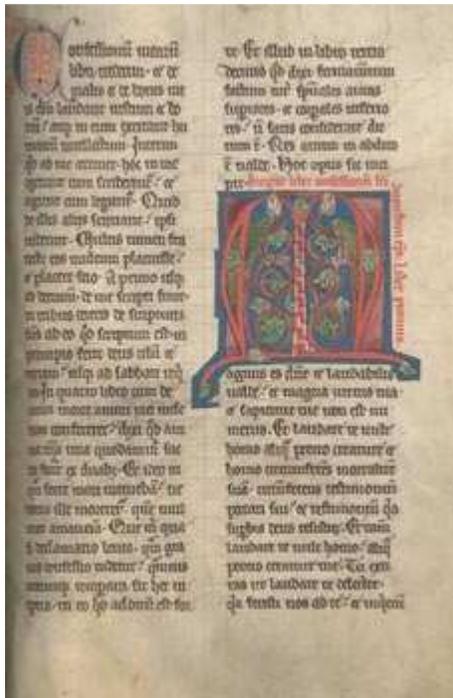


Tertullian. *Opera*. Basel, N. Episcopius, 1539

In his *Adversus Valentinianos*, Tertullian derides the system of the Valentinians when explaining the Valentinian gnostic world picture, which is here captured in a beautiful woodcut. In the 'Pleroma Valentini', there is a separate place for 'Soter, sive Iesus ex omnium aeonum flosculis compactur' (the saviour, or Jesus who is composed of all the flowers of the aeons), which is based on the following passage, in which Irenaeus notes the variety of Gnostic ideas on Jesus:

'Regarding the Lord Jesus himself, how great is the diversity (on that score)! Some build him up out of little flowers of all the Aeons, others claim he is composed only of ten, which have brought forth the Word and Life [...] Others (claim) that he was established out of Christ and the Holy Spirit.'

39, 1-2



Augustine. *Confessiones*. BPH Ms 83.
Manuscript on vellum. Germany, first half 13th century.

Augustine opposed the Manichaean view that there were two creations: a Realm of Light and a Realm of Darkness. In the 7th book of his *Confessions* he quotes his good friend Nebridius, who said the following about dualism:

"That said nation of darkness, which the Manichees are wont to set as an opposing mass over against Thee, what could it have done unto Thee, hadst Thou refused to fight with it?' For, if they answered, it would have done Thee some hurt, then shouldst Thou be subject to injury and corruption: but if it could do Thee no hurt, then was no reason brought for Thy fighting with it; and fighting in such wise, as that a certain portion or member of Thee, or offspring of Thy very Substance, should be mingled with opposed powers, and natures not created by Thee, and be by them so far corrupted and changed to the worse, as to be turned from happiness into misery, and need assistance, whereby it might be extricated and purified.'

Confessiones VII, 2, 3, E.B. Pusey



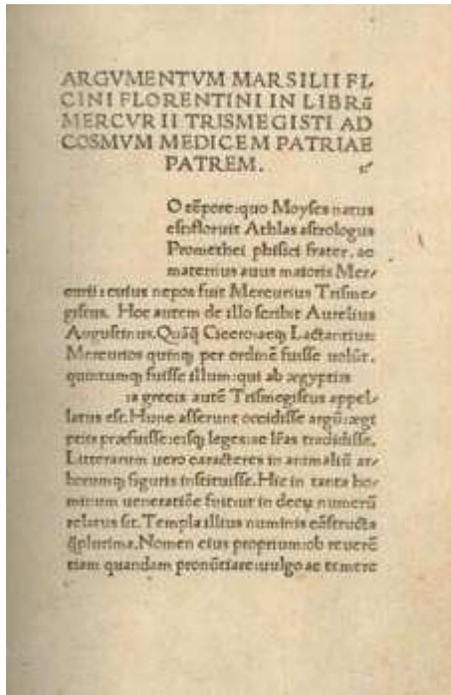
Jacob Boehme. *The works*.
 London, M. Richardson & G. Robinson, 1764-1781

The German theosopher Jacob Boehme wrote profound commentaries on the creation, for instance in *Mysterium Magnum*, his commentary on Genesis. Boehme calls the very first beginning 'Ungrund', the Nothing, the Absolute, comparable to the 'Ein Sof' of the Kabbalah and 'Bythos' (Abyss) of Valentinian gnosis. The duality between the world of ideas and the world of reality is bridged by the emanations of the divine and hierarchies of angels, comparable to the World of Aeons or the pleroma of gnostic systems.

Focus on Creation: Hermetica

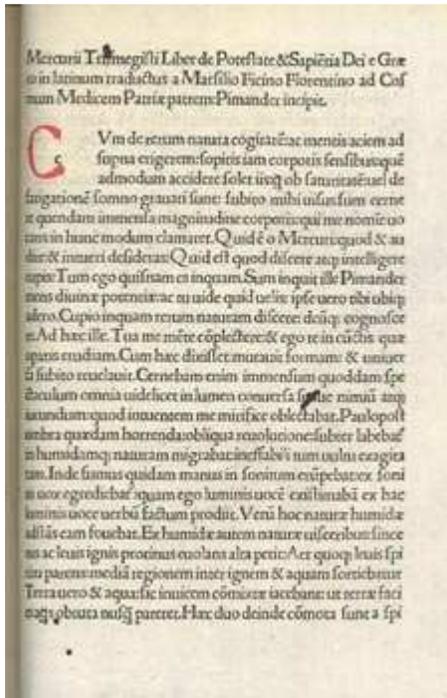
Hermetic thought developed in the first three centuries CE, contemporary with Gnostic thought, and even within the same mediterranean context, in Egypt and Alexandria. There are, however, more differences than similarities: the major difference being that the Hermetists did not value the creation as bad and inferior. The treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* - the main source for our knowledge of the Hermetica together with the *Asclepius* - are, however, not uniform in tone, because they were not written at the same time. They were inspired in the first place by Egyptian traditions. The very name of the alleged author, Hermes Trismegistus, is the Greek personification of the Egyptian Thrice Greatest Thoth. In addition, virtually all treatises bear traces of Greek or Jewish thought. There is no direct Christian influence, although there are parallels to be found, especially with Paul and with John. Because of this eclecticism there are pessimistic passages in the *Corpus Hermeticum* deriving from gnosticism, for instance a passage on good and evil: 'Here below the Good is called: the Evil which is not all too great'. The cosmos itself, on the other hand, is not valued negatively. On the contrary: the creation is God's finest product, his first Son and first image, and man is his second. Man is even called an ornament of the cosmos. The dominant tone in the treatises is one of optimism, which is expressed in a phrase from the *Asclepius*, made famous in the Renaissance: 'magnum miraculum est homo, animal adorandum et honorandum' (man is a great miracle, a living creature worthy of reverence and adoration). The god of the Hermetists is less abstract and more personal than the First Principle of the Greeks, because in the Hermetica he is in the first place part of a religious and not so much a philosophical system. God is invisible, but man can get to know the Maker by looking at what he made. This view, derived from the Stoa, became a cornerstone of cosmic religiosity in the Hermetica, with the potential to lead to a mystical experience whereby the individual could feel as if he was one with the universe, and so

with God: 'I am in heaven, in earth, in water, in air; I am in animals and in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb, everywhere' . This experience would be unthinkable to a gnostic. The first man, the androgynous Anthropos who still possesses a divine nature, falls as promptly as the biblical Adam: he sees his own image reflected in the water and wants to live on earth in the material world, but in doing so he loses a part of his higher nature, and becomes mortal. But the possibility to return to the divine is not lost, provided that man does not become subject to the passions of the body and the temptations of the senses lulling him into a state of forgetfulness and sleep. In the end the 'Way of Hermes' may lead via knowledge of the cosmos and self-knowledge to intuitive knowledge and a personal experience of God.



Hermes Trismegistus. *De potestate et sapientia Dei*.
Treviso, G. de Lisa, 1471

In 1463 Marsilio Ficino translated what is now known as the *Corpus Hermeticum* from the Greek. He was one of the many later Hermetists who tried to harmonise Hermetica with Christianity. Ficino's Christian interpretation is obvious from his preface: 'He [=Hermes] foresaw the demise of the old [Egyptian] religion and the creation of the new faith, the coming of Christ, the Final Judgement.' The title *On the power and wisdom of God* also derives from Ficino, it was not found in his source.



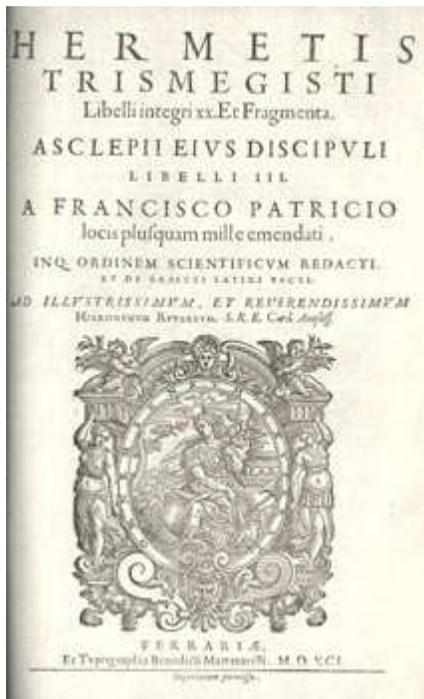
Hermes Trismegistus. *De potestate et sapientia Dei.*
Venice, D. de Mediolano, 1493



Robert Fludd. *Utriusque cosmi...historia.*
Oppenheim, J.Th. de Bry, 1617

In *Corpus Hermeticum I* we find a creation story which shows much similarity with Genesis: the beginning is the moist primal matter, which came into existence out of a darkness finding its origin in the Light, God

himself. In this indescribably restless chaos, order is slowly introduced by means of the Word, first between the lighter elements of fire and air, then between the heavier ones, earth and water. The planets are formed by the second Mind, Nous, issuing from God.

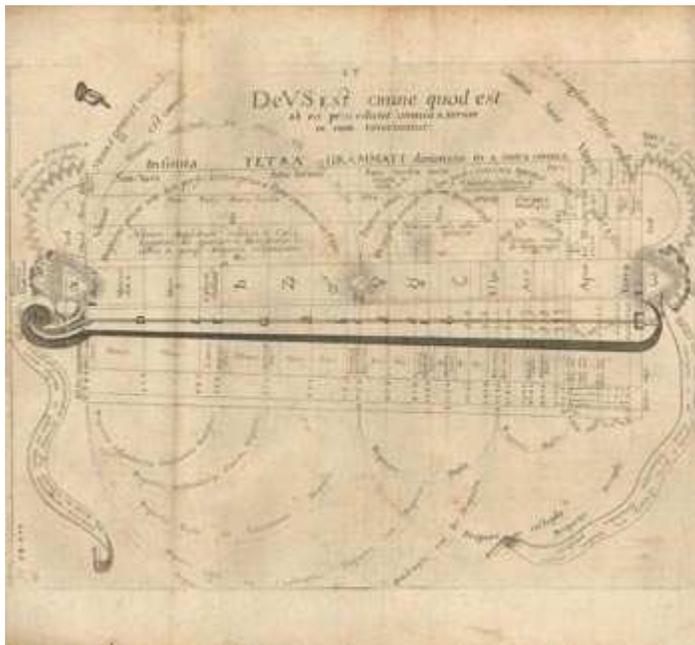


Francesco Patrizi. *Nova de universis philosophia*.
Ferrara, B. Mammarellus 1591

Corpus Hermeticum I speaks of the creative Word originating from the Nous (which itself originates from God), also called the 'Son of God'. The Logos stands between God and matter in a creative capacity. Because the Logos is called the Son of God, the fourth-century Church Father Cyrillus could interpret the Word as Jesus Christ. The text of Cyrillus is re-employed in this edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by the Christian Hermetist Patrizi, who compiled 'new' treatises on the basis of Hermetic testimonia



Robert Fludd. *Utriusque cosmi...historia*.
Oppenheim, J.Th. de Bry, 1617



Robert Fludd. *Sophiae cum moria certamen*.
Oppenheim, J.Th. de Bry, 1629

The pseudo-Hermetic *Liber XXIV philosophorum* attempts to offer approaches to God by means of brief definitions. The version known to us is probably no older than 1200, but its origin lies in third-century Alexandria. The first definition is: 'Deus est Monas monadem gignens, in se unum reflectens ardorem' (God is the Unity [i.e. the Monad] producing a monad, which he reflects in himself as love).

The seventeenth-century Hermetist Fludd uses this as the basis of his elaborate exegesis of creation; it returns elsewhere in a cosmological plan, modelled in the shape of his famous monochord.

'Trismegistus says that before the creation of the world, God only reflected light on himself and reflected the fire [of his love] within himself.'

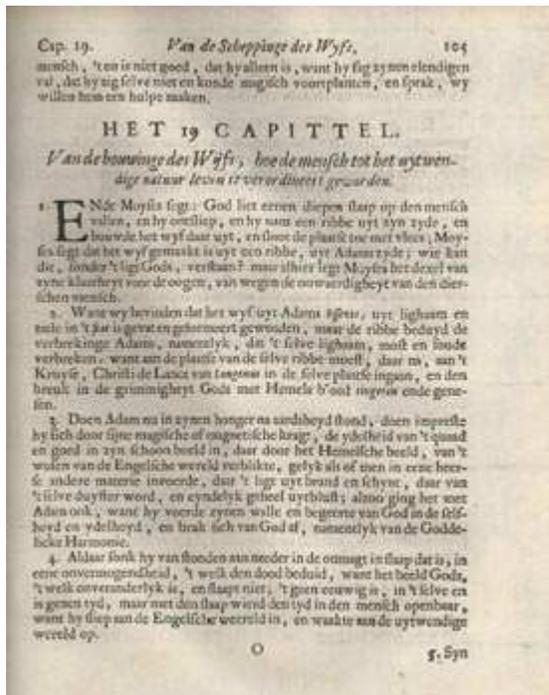


Nicolaus de Cusa. *Haec accurata recognitio trium voluminum operum.* Paris, J. Badius, 1514



Francesco Giorgi. *l'Harmonie du monde*,
Paris, J. Macé, 1578

God himself cannot be known, because human perception is finite whereas God is infinite. Yet attempts were made to approach the divine in images. In *De docta ignorantia* (1440) Nicolaus de Cusa, partly inspired by the mathematical images in the *Liber XXIV philosophorum*, tried to approach divine infinity. According to him, geometrical figures are the most accurate instruments for obtaining knowledge of the visible world and they are at the same time the highest divine symbols in which the heavenly world is reflected on earth (a Platonic idea). In order to describe the absolute infinity of God, Cusa bases himself on one of the definitions from the *Liber XXIV philosophorum*: 'God is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere'. Francesco Giorgi is one of the numerous later Hermetically oriented authors to quote this definition.



Jacob Boehme. *Mysterium magnum*.
Amsterdam, J. Claus and W. Lamsvelt, 1700

For Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) original man is a creature made up of matter and spirit, whose materialness is still unrelated to carnality. He never sleeps because he continually looks up towards the divine being, and so he has no need of eye-lashes. The first Adam abuses his free will by averting his eyes from the divine Unity in order to experience the essence of things himself. As a consequence he falls into matter, a fall comparable to that of the Anthropos in the *Corpus Hermeticum*.



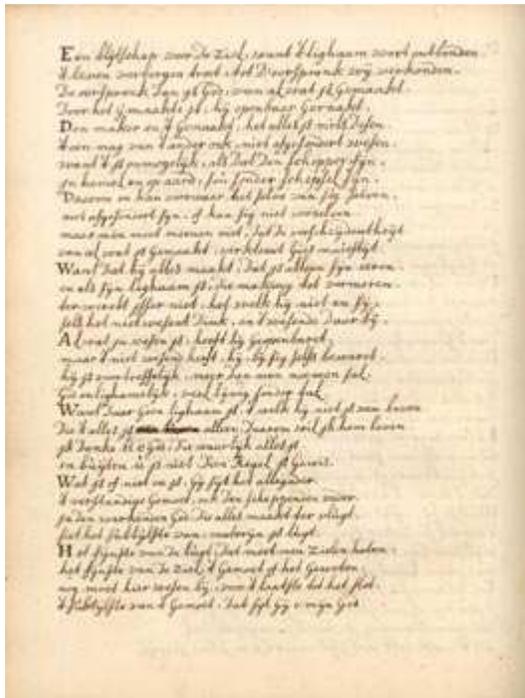
Jacob Boehme. *Mysterium magnum*.
Amsterdam, A. en D. Hoogenhuysen for J.G. Gichtel, 1682

Adam can be seen in the middle of the image, which was added to this copy of *Mysterium Magnum*; the serpent coiling around him causes the 'second fall'. Adam, originally androgynous, moved within the sphere of divine wisdom. After the first fall Eve was created. The traditional Fall makes Adam and Eve mortal. Eve is blamed for this transgression; the illustration contains a caution against the wiles of women.



Johannes Stobaeus. *Eclogarum libri duo*.
Antwerp, C. Plantijn, 1575

The banderole associated with the reclining figure says: man is the apex of creation and the most perfect of all creatures. In the cycle of 'living the virtuous life, wise thinking, dissolving' (*Corpus Hermeticum III*) man is subject to the influences of the planets ('the cycle of the gods') as can be seen in the image. To the left of the figure a catalogue of positive elements descending from heaven, such as good angels, clouds, wind and rain, manna; to the right the negative ones. According to *Korè Kosmou* ('The virgin of the world'), a long Hermetic fragment preserved in a collection of extracts from philosophical works compiled by Johannes Stobaeus ca. 500, they even contribute to the creation of man, each imparting to him some of their own attributes.



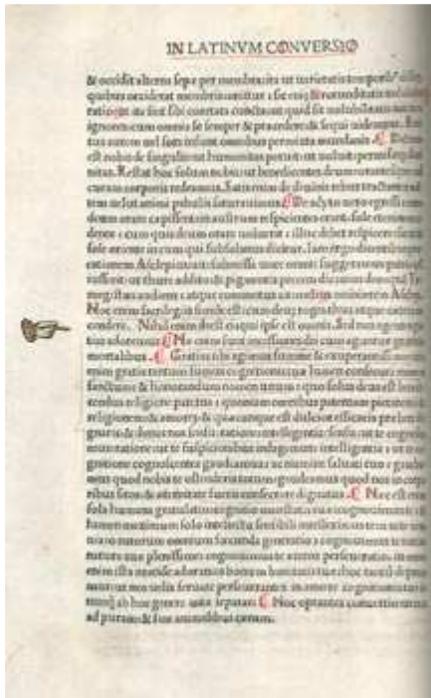
Valentin Weigel. *Van de betragting des levens Christi*.
Manuscript on paper, ca. 1700

The unknown author of this manuscript which was copied after the edition of 1643 added a poem about the creator and man which is based on *Corpus Hermeticum* XIV: From Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius, a treatise based on the Maker and his Making and the direct experience of that Maker.

'The source, then, is God, of all that has been made. He has been revealed by what he has made. The maker and what is made, everything is because of him. Nor may the one be separated from the other. As it is impossible that the wonderful creator, in heaven and on earth, would be without his creature.'

[Cf. CH XIV, 3 and 5:]

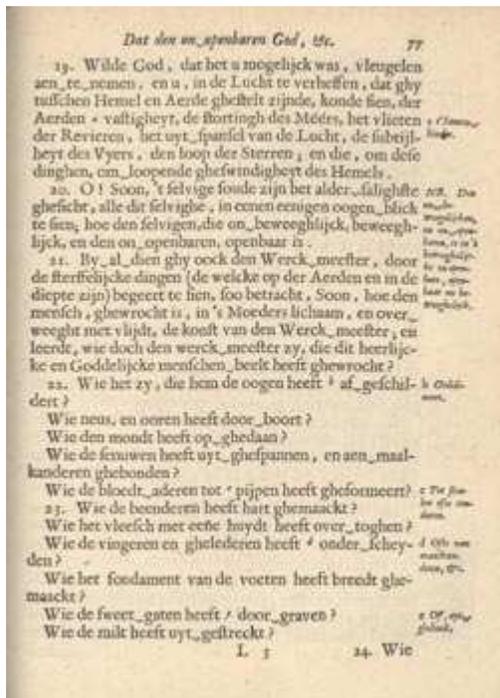
'everything that has come about [is] visible, although He is not. Otherwise he would not be constantly engaged in bringing forth, to make it visible that He is [...] And they belong together. The maker cannot exist without that which he has made (otherwise he would not be a maker).'



Hermes Trismegistus. *Asclepius*
in: Apuleius. *Opera*. Vicenza, H. de Sancto Urso, 1488

When Pico della Mirandola wrote his *Oration on the dignity of man* in 1487, which may be classified as *the* Manifesto of the Renaissance, he alluded to a chapter in the *Asclepius* (6): man is a great wonder, a living creature worthy of reverence and adoration, for he changes his nature into a god's, as if he were a god. And not after death, but during this life, as can be read in the final prayer of the *Asclepius*:

'We rejoice that you have deigned to make us gods for eternity even while we depend on the body.'



Hermes Trismegistus. *Corpus Hermeticum*.
Amsterdam, N. van Ravenstein for Y. Rievertsz, 1643

One way to get to know the creator is through observing creation. (CH V): in van Beijerland's striking Dutch translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* the creator - factor in his source - is termed the 'Werckmeester' ('workmaster'). The admiration for the maker is expressed in the discussion of the complexity of the human body in all its parts:

'... learn who is the workmaster, who made this beautiful and divine image of man? Who has painted his eyes? Who pierced nose and ears? Who opened up the mouth? Who stretched out the sinews and tied them down? Who formed channels for the veins? Who set the most honored parts in relief to make them visible but hid the shameful parts away? See! How many skills have been applied to the same material!'