Back to the Sources

In order to understand the unorthodox and innovative character of the Rosicrucian manifestos, their call for a general reformation requires detailed analysis. Because the authors drew on previous traditions to formulate their reform plans, their call and its related elements can only be properly understood when studied from the historical background from which the manifestos emerged. By retracing the origins of the notion of general reformation and by situating it in the medieval and early modern religious and philosophical context, it will be possible to understand the manifestos' impetus, antithetical nature, and also their ingenuity.¹

It is the aim of this chapter to analyse the Rosicrucian call for a general reformation particularly in relation to religion, politics, and knowledge. In so doing, this chapter will study the extent to which the Rosicrucian manifestos received an impetus from medieval millenarian expectations and reform plans in relation to apocalyptic notions; in what ways their views differed from, were similar to, or were affected by Protestant (confessional or radical²) views; and in what way their call for reform, their interpretation of God's plan for the development of history, and their philosophy related to various astronomical and Renaissance sources.³

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- 1 Part of this chapter has previously appeared in: De Vries, "The Rosicrucian Reformation." I am grateful to Brill for allowing me to reproduce part of the contents of that article here.
 - 2 Representatives of the main confessions, magisterial reformers, were often closely connected to secular authorities, contrary to the radical reformers of the time, who abstained from such associations. For a discussion of magisterial reformers and their doctrines, see: McGrath, *Reformation Thought*; for the radicals, see: Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation*; idem, "The Radicals." For an overview of radical reformers, see: Williams, *The Radical Reformation*. Orthodox Calvinism (or rather the Reformed religion), as opposed to Lutheranism, generally lacked a clear eschatology, which is why this confession will not be considered in relation to apocalyptic thought and eschatology, even if various Calvinist and Reformed groups held eschatological views (consider, for example: Webster, *The Great Instauration*; Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted*). Moreover, because the manifestos originated from the German Protestant context, this study will focus primarily on that region.
 - 3 Reform plans are intrinsically different from eschatology, apocalypticism, or millenarianism, and these are not necessarily related to one another, despite the fact that they often go hand in hand. The call for a reformation does not necessarily require or imply a (coherent) eschatology, and eschatological prophecies may well exist without ambitions to reform the world.

The manifestos used three different terms to express their intention of worldly reform: reformation (“reformatio” and “allgemeine Reformation”), revolution (“ex mundi revolutione futura”), and renovation (“mundo renovando”). Although closely related, each of these terms hints at a different aspect of the Rosicrucian mission. They provide an obvious structure for discussing the context of this vision of reform and for distinguishing its sources.

1.1 The Reformation of Divine and Human Things

Reformatio divini: *The Overthrow of the Papal Antichrist*

Of the three terms used in the manifestos to describe the Rosicrucians’ quest to improve the world, the most prominent and frequently employed was the term “reformatio” or “allgemeine Reformation.” According to the texts, “many outstanding minds contribute to the future reformation with their contemplations through many parts,”⁴ like the Rosicrucians’ own founding father, Christian Rosencreutz, who “strove for such a goal of a general reformation.”⁵

“Reformation” is also the most conservative term employed in the manifestos indicating their programme of change. The term “reformation” would have sounded reassuringly Protestant to the contemporary reader, and it has also led historians to assume that the manifestos are grounded in mainstream Protestantism in general and in Lutheranism in particular.⁶ By using the word “reformation,” the manifestos give the impression of an alignment with the Protestant idea of Reformation: after Martin Luther (1483–1546), this term naturally carried the connotation of an overhaul of the religious world according to Lutheran inclinations.⁷

But the idea of ‘reform’ is, of course, much older than ‘The Reformation’; and although some elements of the Rosicrucian manifestos *are* distinctively Protestant, these are far fewer and less profound than historians have generally supposed. In fact, the only really distinctive Protestant feature is mentioned

4 *Confessio*, 54–55: “Ac sicut agnoscimus, multa praeclara Ingenia suis Meditationibus futurae Reformationi per partes multum conferre.” In the German version is written: *Confessio* (Gdańsk), 70–71: “Gleich wie wir nun gerne bekennen, daß viel vortrefflicher Leute der zukünftigen Reformation mit Schrifften nicht geringen Vorschub thun [...]”

5 *Fama*, 93: “Zu solchem intent einer general Reformation hat sich auch hoch und lange zeit bemühet, der weyland Andächtige Geistliche und Hoherleuchte Vatter Fr. C.R., ein Teutscher, unserer Fraternitet Haupt und Anfänger [...]”

6 See below, n. 262.

7 On the early seventeenth-century association of the term “reformation” with Luther’s Reformation, see: Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation*, 9.

en passant and has no significant bearing on the Rosicrucian conception of general reform; namely the notion that there are only two Christian sacraments, as opposed to the seven maintained by Catholics. While opting for the more general and less religiously loaded “renewal,” the authors of the manifestos sympathised with the two Protestant Churches, when they stated that they themselves “also enjoy two sacraments, as instituted with all formulae and ceremonies of the first renewed Churches.”⁸ By acknowledging the validity of Baptism and the Eucharist, the only two sacraments recognised in Lutheranism and Calvinism, the authors implicitly referred to the first new Lutheran and Calvinist Churches. It seems that they did not want to begin their reform by challenging directly and openly the authority of these Churches, but rather placed themselves within the sixteenth-century Protestant reforms of Church and theology. However, the use of the plural is significant here, and indicates that the manifestos deliberately do not discriminate between the Evangelicals and the Reformed.

Other elements of the Rosicrucian call for reform may share some similarities with mainstream Protestant views, but are in fact much more in the proximity of medieval and early modern radical ideas. One such seemingly orthodox notion was the Rosicrucians’ identification of the pope as the Antichrist. The authors of the manifestos claimed that the Antichrist, that abominable figure who was to come to earth to deceive the people, was already present. The introductory passage of the *Confessio*, addressed to the reader, is unequivocal:

And as we now openly call the pope the Antichrist, which was previously everywhere a capital crime: so we know that what we whisper here, we shall in the future shout out loud.⁹

It should not come as a surprise that the reform of religion should begin by identifying the Antichrist with the religious ruler seated on his throne in Rome. Dissenting from the Roman Church, but implicitly associating themselves with the Protestant Reformation, the brethren claimed that the worst enemy of Christ was dwelling amongst them, and he was that figure who claimed to be Christ’s representative on earth. Because the figure of the Antichrist usually

8 *Fama*, 123: “[Wir] geniessen auch zweyer Sacrementen, wie die angesetzt mit allen Phrasibus und Ceremoniis der ersten renovirten Kirchen.”

9 *Confessio*, 41–42: “At sicut nunc tuto Papam Antichristum vocamus, quod prius quocunque in loco capitale erat: ita futurum scimus, ut, quod hic mussitamus, sublato clamore intonemus.”

denoted the world's imminent end, it was obvious that his presence in Rome indicated turbulent times.

The idea that there would one day come a mighty deceiver, an Antichrist, had its origin in several biblical passages, such as Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.¹⁰ The presence of the Antichrist was expected to be accompanied by much distress and destruction on earth in the Final Days. According to Matthew 24:24, this destruction would be caused by deceivers working for Satan, arriving in the guise of "false Christs, and false prophets." One such deceiver is the Antichrist. The traditional conception was that the final Antichrist will come in the end and rule for three and a half years, based on Revelation 11:3, as was the view of the influential Church Father Augustine of Hippo (354–430).¹¹ The pronouncement about the Antichrist in the *Confessio* is obviously heavily informed by such biblical passages.

The Rosicrucian conviction that specifically the pope was the Antichrist follows numerous Protestant examples: among Protestants, pamphlets identifying the Antichrist with the Roman papacy were legion, with imagery depicting the pope in abominable ways.¹² This identification of the Antichrist with the office of the pope implied that instead of a period of three and a half years, the Antichrist had evidently ruled for many centuries, since the beginning of the papacy.¹³ Luther had argued that not only the pope himself, but the very office

10 These texts explicitly refer to the Antichrist. During the Middle Ages, many other texts provided source material for prophecies about the Antichrist, e.g., 2 Thessaloniki 2:3–11 and Revelation 11–13, 17. See further: Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 35–46. See also: 1 John 2:18. This study refers to the King James Version throughout, unless stated otherwise.

11 Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 20, chapter 23. Revelation 11:3: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed and sackcloth." See also: Daniel 12:7. On Augustine, see: Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*.

12 See, for example, the images given in Luther, WA 54, "Wider das Papsttum zu Rom," 346–373; and the *Passional Christi und Antichristi* by Luther's collaborator Lucas Cranach the Younger. See also: Seebaß, "Antichrist IV," TRE 3, 28–43, esp. 28–29; McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," 155–173. On the Antichrist in history, see: Preuss, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*; Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*; McGinn, *Antichrist*. For the Antichrist in the Middle Ages, see: Benrath, "Antichrist III," TRE 3, 24–28; and in the early modern period: Seebaß, "Antichrist IV," TRE 3; Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*; McGinn, *Antichrist*, 204–211; Oberman, *Luther*.

13 Luther, EA 26, pp. 120, 138; see also: Luther, WA 7, 389, to the pope: "[...] ich [schelte] dich den Endchrist, den Paulus vorbannet und vormaledeyet alz den, der seines herrn ordnung endert, seynem Evangelio widerstrebt und das selb umkeret." Cf.: Kunz, *Protestantische Eschatologie*, 5–25; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 1–3, 38–54; Leppin, *Antichrist und jünger Tag*; Rotondò, "Anticristo e chiesa Romana."

FIGURE 3 Lucas Cranach, *Passional Christi und Antichrist*, depiction of the Antichrist, HAB Wolfenbüttel

of the pope represented the Antichrist, thereby shifting the identification of the apocalyptic figure from the person or group of persons to the institution. In a letter to Johann Lange he announced that “[w]e are certain of this, that the papacy is the seat of that true and real Antichrist [...]”,¹⁴ while he wrote in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* that “[t]he papacy is nothing but the

14 Luther, WA 2 (“Briefwechsel”), 167: “Nos hic persuasi sumus, papatum esse veri et germani illius Antichristi sedem [...],” letter to Johann Lange dated 18 August 1520. Compare also

kingdom of Babylon and of the true Antichrist.”¹⁵ His claim is based on Revelation 17, in which the Whore of Babylon is described as sitting astride a beast with seven heads, which are thought to depict the seven hills on which Rome, and hence the Roman papacy, is built.¹⁶ In the same vein, the *Confessio* did not refer to one specific pope as the Antichrist, but rather implied that it was the entire institution that was to be abolished.

The pope was formally labelled the Antichrist in the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* (1577) and the *Book of Concord* (1580), which outlined the official doctrinal views of that confession.¹⁷ But also in other Protestant movements the pope or papacy was seen to represent the Antichrist. The leader of the Reformed Church, John Calvin, who generally did not engage in apocalyptic theories, wrote that “Daniel and Paul foretold that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. With us, it is the Roman pontiff we make the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom.”¹⁸ This view was virtually universal also amongst more radical types of Protestantism. Identifying the pope as the Antichrist, the worst enemy of the Christian world, turned him into the enemy of all Protestant reformers: each Protestant denomination, whether Lutheran, Zwinglian, Anabaptist or otherwise radical, agreed that the Antichrist could be found in the Roman Church.¹⁹

p. 759, where the pope is denounced as “destroyer of the heavenly kingdom and corruptor of innocence” (“vastator regni caelorum corruptorque simplicitatis [...]”). On Luther and the Antichrist, see: Preuss, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 75, 134, 158–159.

- 15 Luther, WA 6, 537: “essequē papatum aliud revera nihil quam regnum Babylonis et veri Antichristi.” Babylon originates from Revelation 17, and signifies a female figure, the mother of abomination, and an evil place, not to be mistaken for the once great city Babylon; see also: Luther, WA 6, 498.
- 16 On this, see also: Schmidt, *Die Illustrationen der Lutherbibel 1522–1700*, 110–111, 125, 214; Antognazza and Hotson, *Alsted and Leibniz*; 130–136.
- 17 Lietzman (ed.), “Apologie der Konfession,” in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelischen-lutherischen Kirche* (1952), 300: “Ita et papatus erit pars regni antichristi, si sic defendit humanos cultus, quod iustificent. Detrahitur enim honos Christo, cum docent, quod non propter Christum gratis iustificemur per fidem, sed per tales cultus [...]”; see also pp. 234, 239–240, 246, 364, 424, 430, 484, 489, which also include references to the Antichrist in the context of articles of faith.
- 18 Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.ii.12, cited and translated in: McGinn, *Antichrist*, 212. On Calvinist millenarianism, see: Hotson, “The Historiographical Origins of Calvinist Millenarianism”; idem, *Paradise Postponed*.
- 19 An overview of the theories related to the Antichrist among radical reformers remains a *desideratum*, but it is touched upon in: Williams, *The Radical Reformers*; Klaassen, *Living at the End of Ages*, 53–73. See also the famous medieval *Prophecies about the Popes* (*Vaticinia de summis pontificibus*), and its numerous early modern printed editions. On this text, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 453–462. Compare the editions by: Lichtenberger, *Prognosticatio* (1484); Osiander, *Eyn wunderliche Weyssagung von dem Babstumb*

The Rosicrucians' parallels with Protestant prophecies are also clear from a second passage of the *Confessio* about the Antichrist:

The supreme Ruler [...] bestows excellence upon the humble and tortures the proud through darkness; He sends angels to discourse with the silent, and thrusts the garrulous into solitude; a worthy punishment for the Roman Impostor, who has already poured out a full and abundant mouthful of blasphemies against Christ. Not even in the full light with which Germany has disclosed his tunnels and subterranean mazes, does he abstain from lies, so that he fills his measure no less entirely and may appear no less dignified. Thus, there will be another time when this viper will end its hissing and the triple crown will be reduced to naught.²⁰

The "Roman Impostor" is clearly the pope, who carries the triple crown and poses as Christ's representative on earth. But he is actually the Antichrist, and his abuses have already been brought to light by Germany—a patriotic reference to the Protestant Reformation. The pope was here not first and foremost considered abominable for his wealth—contrary to Luther's first criticism of the papacy, which concerned indulgences and the abuses thereof²¹—but for his lack of virtuousness, as he blasphemed against Christ. This was the main transgression for which he ought to be overthrown. The Rosicrucians indeed insisted that they "detest the blasphemies against our Jesus of both East and West

(1527), 403–484; Paracelsus, *Auslegung der Papstbilder* (ca. 1532), I, 12; 536–585. According to Regine Frey-Jaun, the possible authors of the manifestos were influenced by Osiander's prophecies: Frey-Jaun, *Die Berufung des Türhüters*, 130. For Anabaptists, see, for example: Franck, "A Letter to John Campanus," included in: Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual Anabaptist Writers*, 148, 151; for Rothmann, see: Klaassen, *Living at the End of Ages*, 54–55. Over time, people of various groups named each other "Antichrist," and as a consequence the figure became unrelated to any eschatological framework. As Gottfried Seebaß observed: "When at the end [of the Reformation] every party identifies the other as the Antichrist, the concept loses any clear content and gradually comes to be used as a purely polemical generic term," Seebaß, "Antichrist IV," *TRE* 3, 36; McGinn, *Antichrist*, 217.

20 *Confessio*, 59–60: "[...] supremo Rectori, qui excellentiam confert humilibus, superbos obscuritate cruciat. Taciturnis Angelos confabulantes mittit, Garrulos in solitudinem detrudit, quali poena dignus est Romanus Impostor, qui blasphemias suas jam pleno et abundanti ore in Christum effudit, neque jam in media luce, qua Germania ipsius antra et subterraneos meatus detexit, a mendacio abstinere, ne minus mensuram adimplevisse, et securi dignus videatur. Erit itaque aliquando, ubi sibilare desinat haec vipera, et Corona triplex in nihilum redigatur." See also the German *Confessio* (Gdańsk), 77–78.

21 Luther's rejection of indulgences was grounded in his *sola fide*, cf. Mathison, *The Shape of the Sola Scriptura*, 89–94.

(that is, Mohammed and the pope).²² The pope was deemed blasphemical and in this, he was no better than the infidels from the East, the Turks, who threatened to conquer the West—such antipathy toward the Muslim world that was also voiced by Luther.²³ Although this anti-Muslim feeling at first seems to stand in a somewhat antithetical position vis-à-vis the tale of Rosencreutz's educational sojourn in the Arab world, the *Fama* pointed out that the studies of the Fezzians were perverted by their religion, Islam, and the manifestos do not evince any Islamic sympathies.²⁴

It is thus easy to identify in contemporary religious literature inspiration for the Rosicrucian reference to the pope or papacy as the Antichrist, and the authors of the manifestos gave the impression of associating themselves with the Protestant tradition. They acknowledged that views that could previously be held only in private, might in the future be openly vowed ("what *we* whisper here, *we* shall in the future shout out loud"). Arguably thanks to Luther, the identification of the pope with the Antichrist was no longer "a capital crime."²⁵ By using the first-person plural already on the opening page of the *Confessio*, the authors of the manifestos made the rhetorical move of associating themselves with all Protestants opposed to the Roman Church, whether those Protestants were organised into a confession or not.

But neither the Protestants in general nor the Lutherans in particular really *whispered* this identification: their criticism of pope and papacy was shouted throughout the German lands and far abroad, both in words and in pictures, whereas the Rosicrucian manifestos referred back to the time of the first brethren. When Christian Rosencreutz started the fraternity, this identification was not yet a propagandistic commonplace, but was expressed in a more clandestine manner.

That the pope was the Antichrist was whispered in late medieval prophecies, well before the Lutheran Reformation. In those prophecies—originating from a variety of dissident reforming movements—individual popes, and sometimes the papacy as an institution, were identified with the Antichrist. In the twelfth century, Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202), a Franciscan abbot, founder of the monastic order of San Giovanni in Fiore, and father of the Joachimite movement, had referred to the "universal pontifex," the pope, as the Antichrist,

22 *Confessio*, 44: "[...] Orientis simul et Occidentis (Mahometen et Papam intellige) contra Jesum nostrum blasphemias detestamur."

23 On Luther's views on the Turks, see: Ocker, *Luther, Conflict and Christendom*, 257. On other Protestant positions about the threat posed by the Turks, see: *ibid.*, 257–271.

24 *Fama*, 97.

25 Cf. above, n. 9.

“about whom Paul says that he will be elevated and opposed to everything that is said to be God.”²⁶ This identification became more personal among some of his followers, whom the historiographical traditions collectively group under the heading “Spiritual Franciscans” as followers of Francis of Assisi (ca. 1182–1226).²⁷ As in the case of the radical reformers, there was no doctrinal unity between these Franciscans, and the movement lasted moreover for several centuries.²⁸ While Joachim only expected a false pope, some late-medieval Spiritual Franciscans labelled specific popes as the Antichrist. The Franciscan Ubertino of Casale (1259–ca. 1329) identified in his *Tree of Life* Pope Boniface VIII (1230–1303, Pope between 1295–1303) and his successor Pope Benedict XI (1240–1304, Pope between 1303–1304) as Antichrists.²⁹ The medieval alchemist and Spiritual Franciscan John of Rupescissa (also called Jean de Roquetaillade, 1310–ca. 1370) expected several popes to represent the Antichrist, including one false pope and the antipope Nicolas V (1258–1333, antipope between 1328–1330).³⁰ Fourteenth-century radical Franciscans, the

26 Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 168^{ra}: “[...] Ita bestia que ascendet de terra habitura sit quendam magnum prelatum qui sit similis Symonis Magi et quasi universalis pontifex in toto orbe terrarum. Et ipse sit ille Antichristus de quo dicit Paulus quod ex tollitur et adversatur supra omne quod dicitur deus.” See further: *ibid.*, 10^{vb}–11^{ra}. See also McGinn’s (somewhat different) translation, including references to biblical books in: McGinn, “Joachim of Fiore and the Twelfth-century Papacy,” 29. Simon Magus is the Magician of Acts 8:9–13, 18–24, who is occasionally thought to have been the forerunner of the Antichrist, see: Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 27. See also: Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 133^{ra}: “Unde scimus quia novissima hora est. Sequi non longe post ipsum magnum Antichristum demonstrat, quem ego considerans universas facies scripturarum et introitus et exitus concordiarum, presentem puto esse in mundo”; and Joachim, *Il Libro delle figure*, plate xiv: “et ipse dyabolus exibat in fine mundi [...]”, in: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 137–138. On Joachim in general, see: McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot*; Wessley, *Joachim of Fiore and Monastic Reform*; Potestà, *Il Tempo dell’apocalisse*. On Joachim’s treatment of the Antichrist as pope, see: McGinn, “Joachim of Fiore and the Twelfth-century Papacy,” 28–30.

27 Examples are Bonaventura, Fra Angelo, Olivi, Dolcino, Frater Arnold; see: Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 29–62.

28 Cf. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*.

29 Ubertino of Casale, *Arbor Vitae*, partly reproduced and translated in: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 212–215.

30 The antipope Nicolas V is thus not pope Nicolas V, who was pope from 1447–1455. The false pope and the antipope are not the same Antichrists, according to Rupescissa. In his *Liber secretorum eventuum*, written in prison, he lists six Antichrists of which the antipope is number three and the false pope number four, see: Rupescissa, *Liber secretorum eventuum*, edited by Lerner, 141. See also DeVun, who claims that Rupescissa expected an eastern, a western, and a final Antichrist: DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 38. Although Olivi and Rupescissa expected a false pope as Antichrist, they never referred

“Fratricelli,” directed their disapproval against the Roman Pope John XXII (1244–1334, Pope between 1316–1334) and his successors.³¹ These authors expressed their revulsion at the pope, but they did so in manuscript editions that obviously never reached such a broad audience as the Lutheran pamphlets in the sixteenth century.

Although the Rosicrucian manifestos are often associated with the Protestant world—and notably the Lutheran world—we encounter an important difference between the Rosicrucian accounts and the Lutheran Reformation. For Luther, the Antichrist could not be defeated by human agency but only by divine intervention: Christ was to come, defeat the Antichrist, and sit in Judgment. In his view, human beings were incapable of any improvement in the Last Days; they could only prepare themselves for the New Jerusalem, and only God could come and save them: “No sword can be of any use in this affair, God must take care of him [the Antichrist] on his own, without any human efforts or contributions. Therefore: he who believes the most will provide the most protection in this matter.”³²

to the Roman pope or the papacy as the seat of the Antichrist. Rupescissa also labelled multiple secular rulers as the Antichrist, such as Louis of Bavaria, Peter of Aragon, Louis of Sicily, and Frederik II: Rupescissa, *Vade mecum*, 502 (the version used here is the version printed in: Edward Brown, *Appendix ad fasciculum rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, II, 496–508). On Rupescissa, see: Bignami-Odier, *Études sur Jean de Roquetaillade*. On rulers as the Antichrist, see: McGinn, *Antichrist*, 4, 144. The same secular figures could be interpreted as Last World Emperor, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 293–392. On the expectation of multiple Antichrists in history, see: Preuss, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 44; Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 62–63, 68. Examples of authors who had such expectations are Joachim of Fiore, Olivi, Irenaeus, and Nicholas of Lyra, often based on 1 John 2:18 and Matthew 24:5.

31 Fraticelli, in their letter to citizens of Narni, around 1354: “These errors and heresies listed above [the condemnations of apostolic poverty], along with others invented, set forth, preached and defended by Pope John XXII, and confirmed and approved by his successors, are without doubt that Abomination and Desolation standing in the holy Place (the Church) that Daniel prophesied and Christ predicted,” cited in: McGinn, *Antichrist*, 176. The passage refers to Matthew 24, specifically Matthew 24:15. After Jesus is asked about the end of time and he has explained several signs, he continues: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matthew 24:15–16).

32 Luther, *WAB* 2, 455.80–456.2: “Dieser Sachen sol noch kan kein Schwert raten oder helfen, Gott muß hie allein schaffen, ohn alles menschlich Sorgen und Zutun. Darumb: wer am meisten gläubt [sic], der wird hie am meisten schützen” (5 March 1522 to Prince-Elector Frederick III of Saxony), cited in Oberman, *The Reformation*, 32. Cf. Luther, *WA* 2, 110, 617; *WA* 5, 345.

The Rosicrucian texts, by contrast, quite explicitly dissociated themselves from this pessimistic view regarding man's role in this important episode: they not only stated that the brethren "execrate the pope," but also dream of the time when the pope "is cast down from his throne by Germany, with great force and great thrust and is well trampled underfoot."³³ Victory would go to Germany, which was to triumph over the pope—again an explicitly patriotic claim, this time about the future. It suggested that the Antichrist would be defeated not by divine intervention but by human agency. By arguing that man could overthrow the Antichrist, the Rosicrucian brethren presented an optimistic message regarding human agency and implicitly but decisively deviated from orthodox Lutheranism. With such claims, the Rosicrucian manifestos placed themselves rather in the vicinity of medieval reformers who equally believed that the Antichrist could be defeated by humans. The medieval natural philosopher Roger Bacon (ca. 1214–ca. 1294), for example, believed that human beings could fight the Antichrist through the development of knowledge, while Rupescissa was convinced that they could defeat him with the help of alchemy.³⁴

In other words, in anticipating the overthrow of the Antichrist by human agency, the manifestos broke sharply with Lutheran and Calvinist norms and aligned themselves with radicals and dissidents from both before and after the advent of Protestantism. Although the doctrine of the Papal Antichrist seems, at first sight, one of the most obvious Protestant hallmarks of the manifestos (in the sense that it is virulently anti-Catholic), the notion that the Antichrist will be overthrown is one of the clearest *departures* from mainstream Protestantism and the first clear indication that the manifestos are actually drawing on dissident ideas which go back before the Reformation, and were preserved, not in the mainstream tradition, but on the radical fringes.

Throughout the Rosicrucian manifestos, the suggestion is made that further religious reform was required. The *Fama's* protagonist, Christian Rosencreutz, died in 1484, the year of Luther's birth. When after his travels in the Arab world Rosencreutz tried to convince the people in Europe of the need for reform, he went to Catholic Spain to discuss "the deficiencies of the

33 *Confessio*, 62: "Quid igitur animi estis, mortales, postquam Christum sincere nos profiteri, Papam execrari"; *ibid.*, 51: "[...] ille [the pope] magna vi magnoque impetus a Germania de throno deturbatus ac satis pedibus conculcatus est."

34 DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 49–50, 57–58. Cf. also: Rupescissa, *Liber lucis*, 19^{ff.}; Roger Bacon, *The "Opus Majus" of Roger Bacon*. On Bacon, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 45–48; Power, *Roger Bacon and the defence of Christendom*. On these views by Bacon and Rupescissa, see further below, section 1.3.

Church,” but the Spanish were not interested.³⁵ During Rosencreutz’s life, the manifestos explained, the Church was still to be purified, but the Reformation presented a marked improvement with a brighter light shining over Europe in recent years.³⁶ But, the authors lamented, “the old enemy shows his cunning and grumble plentifully, as he hinders through heretics’ discontent and vagabonds the beautiful course [of the clear and manifest light],” so that even after Luther’s Reformation Rosencreutz’s reform plans still remained necessary.³⁷ The implication that Luther’s reformation was incomplete represented a criticism of Luther that his followers would have rejected. By calling for a reform of “the divine,” the Rosicrucians advocated a new interpretation of religion and the divine, one that had its foundation in Christ.³⁸ The Rosicrucians’ identification of the pope as the Antichrist was tantamount neither to an expression of support for Lutheranism—as another reformation and the unseating of the Antichrist were needed and to be carried out by man, which contradicted Luther’s conclusions—nor solely to indicate their distance from Roman Catholicism. Instead it indicated their own plans for further religious reform in which humans should play a pivotal role.

Reformatio humani: *The Fourth Monarchy and the Rise of the Lion*

Just like the Lutheran Reformation was implicitly, but not explicitly, challenged, neither did the Rosicrucian manifestos intend to revoke directly and explicitly the authority of the empire or the princes. The brethren claimed that “in politics we acknowledge the Roman Empire and the Fourth Monarchy as our head and that of all Christians,” a clear pledge of alliance to the Holy Roman Emperor.³⁹ The reference to the empire as the head of the Christians was a return to the original idea of a leader of both the political as well as the

35 *Fama*, 98–99: “Nach zweyen Jahren verließ Fr. R.C. Fessam, und fuhr mit vielen köstlichen stücken in Hispaniam [...], besprach sich derowegen mit den Gelehrten in Hispania, worinnen es unsern artibus fählete, und wie ihnen zu helffen, worauß die gewisse India folgender seculorum zunehmen, und worinnen sie müssen mit den vergangenen concordiren, wie der Ecclesiae mangel und die ganz Philosophia moralis zuverbessern.”

36 *Ibid.*, 105, 107.

37 *Ibid.*, 93: “Lesset doch der alte Feind seine list und grollen mit hauffen sehen, da er durch Schwärmer unfried und Landleuffer solchen schönen Lauff [des hellen offenbahren Liecht] hindert [...].”

38 *Confessio*, 62. The transformations within the fraternity were also ordained by the divine; see *ibid.*, 48–49: “O Mortales, aliud est consilium Dei et commoditas vestra, cui decretum Fraternitatis nostrae numerum hoc Fraternitatis tempore augere atque multiplicare.”

39 *Ibid.*, 123: “In der policey erkennen wihr das Römische Reich und Quartam Monarchiam, für unser und der Christen Haupt.”

religious realm. The notion of a Fourth Monarchy originates from the Book of Daniel (Daniel 7). In a vision described there, four beasts appear to Daniel, the fourth of which was terrifying (Daniel 7:7–10) and was said to represent the fourth Kingdom, which “shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (Daniel 7:23). The Fourth Kingdom was to remain until the end of the world. Traditionally, this fourth Monarchy was taken to be the Roman Empire, but since the ancient Roman Empire had fallen in 476, the Holy Roman Empire was commonly seen as having taken its place.⁴⁰ This was also the eschatological self-conception of the Holy Roman Empire itself.⁴¹ The Rosicrucian manifestos, by acknowledging the authority of the Fourth Monarchy, seem to abstain from plans of radical political reform. Their authors claim: “Nor can we be suspected of any heresy or evil intent toward the state.”⁴² The manifestos were not written by political radicals, and they did not look to overthrow the Holy Roman Empire, or any other secular authority, for that matter. This seems also typically Protestant: magisterial reformers dismissed the authority of the Roman Church but did not seek to undermine the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor or other secular rulers.

Still, the Rosicrucian call for a *reformatio divini et humani* clearly also implied a reform of the human realm, and here they departed from Lutheran orthodoxy. The brethren observed instability in the human empire and worked for ways in which this instability might be overcome.⁴³ This idea of two realms had already been expressed in the writings of Augustine, who envisioned two separate realms, or two cities, one earthly and one religious. Augustine believed that people were either members of the earthly city and disregarded God, or members of the City of God, the heavenly city, and acted out of love for God. The city to which one belonged depended upon one's individual relationship with God.⁴⁴ On earth, the two cities were intermingled, and they would only be separated at the Last Judgement.⁴⁵ In Augustine's view, however, the Roman Empire did represent the earthly city that had ignored God.⁴⁶

Luther, after having nailed his 95 theses to the church doors in Wittenberg in 1517 and having defended his views at the Diet of Worms in 1521, embarked

40 Goetz, *Translatio imperii*, esp. chs. 4–6; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, ch. 7.

41 Goetz, *Translatio imperii*, 75f., chs. 5–6.

42 *Confessio*, 44: “Nec jam ullius haereseos, vel in Rempublicam mali tentaminis suspectos nos esse posse.”

43 *Ibid.*, 53–55. Cf. below, section 1.3, esp. pp. 76–77.

44 On Augustine's doctrine of two cities, see: Augustine, *De civitate dei*; Clark, “*Imperium* and the City of God,” 56ff. Cf. further: Hotson, “*Via Lucis in Tenebras*,” 39.

45 Clark, “*Imperium* and the City of God,” 58.

46 *Ibid.*, 67–69.

on a programme specifically of religious reform.⁴⁷ He took from Augustine the doctrine of the two kingdoms, but he explicitly distanced himself from any political aspirations. The German princes, who where at that time the local political authorities, were not questioned by Luther, and he broadly accepted their authority. According to Luther, the original Roman Empire had been the “final” empire, destined to remain only until the arrival of the Antichrist; since the Antichrist was already present, the reform of the empire was superfluous. The Roman Church, in turn, had in Luther’s view evidently not represented the heavenly kingdom. He claimed that the present empire was a mere derivative of the original Roman Empire, it was founded by and existed alongside the papacy, and, in accordance with biblical prophecies, it will be ended together with the ending of the papal Antichrist.⁴⁸ For Luther, the heavenly kingdom had not come to earth, it was not represented by the Church, nor should we pin our hopes on an earthly reformation.⁴⁹

The Rosicrucian reform of the empire thus did not have its origins in Luther’s reformation, and can be traced back more accurately again to medieval radical sources, whom Luther had ignored and dismissed.⁵⁰ In the Middle Ages, various reformers had aspired to a *reformatio mundi*, a reform of both religious and secular authorities.⁵¹ For example, the influential *Prognostication*

47 Cf. Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation*, 8 ff.

48 Luther, WA 11/2, 6: “Das Romisch reich sol das letzte sein, und niemand sol es zubrechen, On allein Christus mit seinem Reich”; idem, WA, Dt. Bibel [part 3], 7: 414: “Denn der Bapst hat das gefallen Römisch Reich widder auffgericht, und von dem Griechen zu den Deud-schen bracht, Und ist doch mehr ein Bilde vom Römischen Reich, denn des Reichs corper selbs wie es gewesen ist”; idem, WA 6, 462: “Es ist ohne Zweifel, daß das recht Römische Reyck, davon die Schrifft der propheten numeri xxiiij und Daniel verkundet haben, lengist vorstoret und ein end hat [...]. Und das ist geschehen durch die Gettas. Sonderlich aber, das des Türken Reich ist angangen bey tausent jaren”; and ibid., 463: “Und ist auch geschehen: dem keyszer zu Constantinopel ists genummen, und uns Deutschen der nam und titel desselben zugeschrieben, sein damit des Bapst knecht wurden, und ist nu ein ander Romisch reich, das der bapst hat auff die Deutschen bawet, den ihenes, das erst ist langis, wie gesagt, undergangen.” See also Luther, cited in Seifert, *Der Rückzug der biblischen Prophetie*, 9: “Nach dem Fall des ‘ersten Römischen Reichs’ hat der Papst ein ‘anderes Römisches Reich’ gegründet [...]” Cf.: Goez, *Translatio imperii*, ch. 14.

49 On this, see also: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 31 ff.

50 Oberman, *The Reformation*, 28–29; Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation*, 8; idem, “The Rad-icals,” 206–208. Examples include: Hans Hut (1490–1527) and several of his followers, Melchior Hoffmann (ca. 1495–ca. 1543), and Bernhard Rothmann (1495–ca. 1535).

51 See, for example: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 45–58, 191–228, 314–324; idem, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 38 ff.; McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist”; Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*; Oberman, *Luther*, 50–65; DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy, and the End of Time*. Examples include John Wycliffe, the Taborites, and Jan Hus and his followers:

by the German astrologer Johannes Lichtenberger (d. 1503), published numerous times in the sixteenth century, announced a time of great tribulations, but this would be succeeded by a future kingdom of peace on earth and religious improvement, in which “a new order will rise and a new restoration in the Church, and many false priests will be before the reformation.”⁵² Still more relevant is the medieval *Reformation of Sigismund*. This text was written anonymously in the German vernacular in 1439, shortly after the reign of Emperor Sigismund von Luxemburg (1368–1437), and was prophetic of similar outcomes.⁵³ The text was very popular around the time the manifestos were drafted, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,⁵⁴ and explicitly expressed the need for a reformation of both the spiritual and the political realms, as is already evident from its structure. The text begins with an introduction, which is followed by a section on a reformation of the Church (entitled “about the episcopal state”); thereafter is a section on worldly reformation (“order of a worldly state”), and it ends with a vision by the Emperor Sigismund on the future reform of the empire (“revelation of a new state”).⁵⁵ The manifestos’ reformation of divine and the human things clearly echoes such notions of change.

The expectation of religious reform as well as political reform remained alive and well in spite of Luther’s contrary stance. In the period after Luther, many authors argued in favour of a reformation of Church and state, and expected

Palacky, *Documenta Mag. Joannis Hus*; Preuss, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 49–74; Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 218–236; Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 71ff.; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 26–30, 142; Klaassen, *Living at the End of Ages*, 55–56; Lahey, *John Wycliffe*; Rügert, *John Wyclif, Jan Hus, Martin Luther: Wegbereiter der Reformation*.

52 Lichtenberger, *Prognosticatio* (1484), ii, chapter 13, p. xxxiii^r–xxxiii^v: “in quo tempore tribulatio magna erit et resurget novus ordo et nova restauratio in ecclesia et multi pseudo-pontifices erunt ante reformationem [...]” See also: *ibid.*, chapter 35, and the German version in *Propheceien und Weissagungen*, 48^f. On Lichtenberger, see especially: Kurze, *Johannes Lichtenberger*; see also: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 347–351.

53 For an introduction to the *Reformation of Sigismund*, see: Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, introduction by Heinrich Koller; Marosi, “Reformatio Sigismundi.” For the overview of editions, see Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, introduction by Koller, 34–39.

54 Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, introduction by Koller, 39–45. The text was first printed in 1476 in Augsburg. From before 1476, no less than 16 manuscript versions are preserved. Between 1476 and 1522 the text was printed eight times. After a period of 50 years, of which there are no records of further editions, the text was printed again in 1577, twice in 1607 and once in 1613, only a few years before the manifestos were published. Remarkably, all editions are very similar in contents to the original manuscript edition; see: *ibid.*, 2.

55 Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*. For the spiritual reformation, see: *ibid.*, pp. 116–236; the worldly reformation: pp. 238–328; the vision: pp. 330–352.

massive transformations in these areas.⁵⁶ Famous among them was the German Catholic bishop Berthold Pürstinger (1465–1543), who explained his interpretation of history in his *Onus ecclesiae* (1519), which included the reform of the religious and political realms.⁵⁷ A well-known scholar applying the reform of the state to France was Guillaume Postel (ca. 1510–1581), a French Cabbalist and visionary, who implored the King of France, Francis I (1494–1547), to reform both the Church and the political empire.⁵⁸

Hopes for a reformation of religion and the empire continued to resurface in the sermons and writings of so-called “radical reformers” of the sixteenth century, many of whom contested not only Roman orthodoxy and magisterial reformers, but also secular authorities.⁵⁹ In German-speaking lands, early sixteenth-century peasants desired a reformation of the religious kingdom and of the political empire.⁶⁰ They sometimes resorted to violence in pursuit of their ideals, as for example during the Peasants’ War of 1525, by which most of the German-speaking lands were troubled. The peasants demanded the right to fish, a reduction of taxes, and a loosening of feudal bonds; but they also made demands for religious freedom, so that their aims were of a political and religious nature.⁶¹ Luther did not side with these peasants, speaking out vehemently against their rebellion: he would rather they be oppressed than rebel

56 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 368; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 143–144; Gilly, “Las novas.”

57 Pürstinger, *Onus ecclesiae*; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 362.

58 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 381–382. On Postel, see: Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi*; Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*.

59 Radical reformers in the Protestant era were not organised into a unified confession, as a result of which they remained subordinate to the dominant confessions, Lutheranism and Calvinism. They challenged the reformations of magisterial reformers such as Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. Examples of radical reformers include figures as diverse as Andreas Karlstadt, Thomas Müntzer, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Franck, Hutterites, and Mennonites. For an informative introduction to these and other radical reformers, see: Williams, *The Radical Reformation*. For an accessible discussion of the radical reformation, see: Dixon, “The Radicals.” On a classification, see: *ibid.*, 197–199, 205–206; Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, xxiv.

60 For both secular and religious aspirations and reform plans in the early modern period, see: Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 113–122, 243–260; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 341–355; *idem*, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 110–115; Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 44, 60–83, 118; Antognazza and Hotson, *Alsted and Leibniz*, 150; McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 2–3, 8, 15–20, 219–221; Goertz, “Karlstadt, Müntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521–1525,” 30–34; McLaughlin, “Radicals”; Dixon, “The Radicals,” 19ff.; Hotson, “Outsiders, Dissenters.” Cf. further: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*; see also: Hotson, “Via Lucis in Tenebras,” 39–40.

61 Dixon, “The Radicals,” 19–21.

against their oppressor, as is clear from his publication dated the same year, *Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants*.⁶²

The hardship of Anabaptist peasants had roused them to demand changes of their own worldly situation, demands that became radical when they were voiced by reformers such as Hans Hut (1490–1527), Melchior Hoffmann (ca. 1495–ca. 1543), Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525), and Bernhard Rothmann (1495–ca. 1535). They preached amongst the poor their visions of religious and social reform to be realised in Augsburg, Strasbourg, and Münster in the late 1520's.⁶³

One of the presumed authors of the manifestos, Tobias Hess, is thought to have been influenced by Simon Studion (1543–1605?), who in his *Naometria* likewise expressed expectations of religious as well as secular reform.⁶⁴ The work was never published, but is presumed to have circulated widely in manuscript form.⁶⁵ Studion expected “peace and tranquility in the world, an improvement for the better, and a renovation in candlebrand-Philadelphia.” These changes were to take place especially in the religious and political realms and coincided with the revelation of secrets to political rulers: “To this Henry IV, the King of Navarre and France, because he will be the first of the renovated kingdoms in the world, all the mysteries of the Holy Scripture and of natural things will reduce to one.”⁶⁶

The Rosicrucian call for a reformation of divine and human things was contrary to Lutheran orthodoxy, but it was not unprecedented: it can be traced

62 Luther, *Wider die Mordischen und Reubischen Rotten der Bawren* (1525).

63 Oberman, *The Reformation*, 28–29. Cf. Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*; Krebs and Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*; List, *Chiliasmische Utopie*; Klaassen, *Living at the End of Ages*; Dixon, “The Radicals.” On Anabaptism and Spiritualism, see: Roth and Stayer, *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism*; see also: Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*. For Strasbourg: Abray, *The People's Reformation*; Roth and Stayer, *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism*, 100–102; for Münster: Müntzer, “Exposition of the second chapter of Daniel,” a sermon delivered in Allstedt, 13 July 1524, reproduced in Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 62. Cf. further: List, *Chiliasmische Utopie*, 129–139; Dixon, “The Radicals,” 206–208.

64 On Hess, see below, Chapter 3.

65 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 198.

66 Studion, *Naometria*, 23: “Dominus [...] conterens [...] pax et tranquillitas in mundo, restitutio in melius, et renovatio in Candelabro-Philadelphia [...]”; *ibid.*, 22: “Ad hunc Hermericum 4. regem Navarrae et Franciae, quod is primus renovationis regnorum in mundo futurus sit, omnia S. Scripturae, et rerum naturae mysteria ad unum respiciunt.” “Naometria” might originate from the Greek “naos” (temple) and the Greek “metria” (measure), possibly referring to a “templum Dei”; see *ibid.*, 150. Philadelphia is listed among the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 1:11, 3:7 ff.

back to medieval conceptions of reform that had been kept alive by early modern radical reformers of various stripes.

Within the manifestos, the reform of secular affairs was an undertaking not for human agency in general, but for the agency of a specific ruler; and this detail further distances the manifestos from orthodox Lutheranism and aligns them with late medieval and radical reformation expectations. The ruler mentioned by the Rosicrucians was to establish a new empire, which was an essential part of the brethren's general reformation. This ruler is depicted as a lion, who will destroy the pope and replace him as leader of the people. The pope will "experience the shredding of the claws, and the new [lion's] roar will end his braying."⁶⁷ The lion will defeat and replace the papal Antichrist, and rule over the world. As noted above, it was the German-speaking lands that would defeat the Antichrist "with great force and great thrust," making the expected lion a future German ruler.⁶⁸ He will inaugurate a new era and claim Rosicrucian secrets whilst establishing his empire, as if he were to take as his guidance the Rosicrucians' revelations: "Our treasures shall be left intact until the lion shall arise, demand and claim them for himself as his own right and use them for the establishment of his empire."⁶⁹ Whilst Luther had denied the possibility of another earthly empire, stated that the Antichrist had come, and that nothing could be done to defeat that figure except to wait for Christ to come and triumph over the Roman impostor,⁷⁰ in the Rosicrucian manifestos a worldly ruler will make his appearance, defeat the Antichrist, and establish the new kingdom.

The Rosicrucians' expectation of a new leader was certainly not unique. In medieval and early modern prophecies, such a leader was traditionally depicted in one of two ways: either as an Angelic Pope or as a Last World Emperor.⁷¹

67 *Confessio*, 51, after discussing the pope's tyranny: "ille [...] unguium dilanationes experietur, rugitusque novus [sic] finiet ruditum [...]." The lion in the manifestos should not be understood as the apostle Mark, as was the case in the *Reformation Kaiser Sigismund*; see below, n. 139.

68 *Confessio*, 51: "[...] ille [the pope] magna vi magnoque impetus a Germania de throno deturbatus ac satis pedibus conculcatus est." Cf above, n. 33.

69 *Confessio*, 53: "Nobis vero thesauros nostros intactos reliquendos, usque dum surgat Leo, et eos sibi jure suo exigat, accipiat, et in sui Imperii stabilimentum conferat"; *Confessio* (Gdańsk), 68–69: "unsere Schätze [werden] unberührt gelassen biß daß der Lewe komme und dieselben für sich fordern, eynneymen, empfangen unnd zu seines Reichs Bestettigung anwerden wird."

70 Luther, WA 1, 135–136; WA 3, 25, 433, 471; see also: Hotson, "The Historiographical Origins of Calvinist Millenarianism," 160–162.

71 On the Angelic Pope and Last World Emperor in history, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 293–508.

An Angelic Pope was opposed to the false pope. Joachim seems to have expected such an ecclesiastical figure to save the world in the end, but the idea of an Angelic Pope was primarily developed by one of his followers, Roger Bacon.⁷² Also some Lutherans, such as Andreas Osiander (1498–1552) and Johann Wolff (1537–1600), believed in an Angelic Pope, and, predictably, they thought to have found him in Luther.⁷³

Others depicted the new leader as a Last World Emperor, a political figure. The first appearance of the Last World Emperor came possibly from a prophecy by pseudo-Methodius, entitled *Revelations*, a text falsely attributed to Methodius of Patara, who lived in the fourth century, while this text was actually written in the second half of the seventh century. It was copied numerous times, and was printed at least ten times between 1470 and 1677, mostly in German-speaking countries.⁷⁴ Prophecies of an Angelic Pope and a Last World Emperor appeared in the context of the *reformatio mundi*: they designated the tropes according to which Church and state could be reformed.

The image of the leader presented in the manifestos is obviously closer to the tradition of a Last World Emperor than to that of the Angelic Pope, because he would establish an empire as a political ruler.⁷⁵ He was expected soon, because “Europe is pregnant and will bring forth a strong child.”⁷⁶ When Rosencreutz had travelled to Fez, the *Fama* tells us, that city had been ruled by wise men. Similarly, Europe was to be ruled by a wise figure and his arrival would be announced by the sound of a trumpet.⁷⁷

During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, it was often thought that the Last World Emperor would come either as a second Charlemagne (by the French) or as a third Frederick (by the Germans).⁷⁸ The idea of a Second Charlemagne followed the ideal of the first Charlemagne, Charles the Great

72 Joachim, *Liber Concordie*, 56^{rb}. For Bacon: *Compendium studii philosophiae*, 402; for this figure in general, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 45–48; McGinn, “Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist,” 155–173.

73 On Osiander and Wolf, see Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 138. Reeves explains that not many Lutherans were concerned with the concept of “Angelic Pope”: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 503. This may be because they did not envision a future period on earth.

74 McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 72, 302.

75 *Confessio*, 51.

76 *Fama*, 109: “[...] dann Europa gehet schwanger und wird ein starckes Kind gebären.”

77 *Ibid.*, 96–97.

78 On medieval and early modern prophecies of both rulers, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 293–508. On Joachim's influences on these prophecies, see: idem, “Joachimist Influences.”

(742–814), King of the Franks from 768 and Holy Roman Emperor from 800. The new Charles was expected to arise in France. Rupescissa, for example, envisaged the arrival of “the king of France,” and announced that “the entire world will be repaired [...] and the [French] emperor will free the Christian people.”⁷⁹ Lichtenberger, too, expected another Charlemagne.⁸⁰

Frederick I (Barbarossa, 1122–1190) had been Holy Roman Emperor in the twelfth century, and after his death the legend spread that he was the ‘sleeping emperor’ who was later to restore Germany’s greatness. Similar prophecies and legends accrued to his grandson Frederick II (1194–1250), King of Sicily, fuelling hopes for the eventual coming to the throne of a Third Frederick.⁸¹ Luther, for example, referred to the Third Frederick, but for him Frederick was not the harbinger of a new time. While the memory of this legend was still alive in the minds of early modern religious authors, Luther could make use of the prophecy albeit deliberately misinterpreting it to refer to an existing political authority, namely to Frederick III (1463–1525), Elector of Saxony (1486–1525).⁸²

79 Rupescissa, *Vade mecum*, 502: “totus orbis reparabitur [...] imperator liberabit populum christianum”; cf. *ibid.*: “[...] Regem Francorum, qui veniet in principio suae creationis ad videndam angelicam claritatem ejusdem, assumet, contra morem Allamanica, electionis, in Imperatorem Romanum, cui Deus generaliter subjiciet totum orbem occidentem et orientem et meridiem; qui tantae sanctitatis existet, quod ei Imperator aut Rex similis in sanctitate non fuit ab origine mundi praeter Regem Regum et Dominum Dominantium, Dominum Christum Jesum [...]. Hic Imperator sanctissimus erit executor omnium mandatorum reparatoris praedicti: per illos duos totus orbis reparabitur [...]”

80 Lichtenberger, *Prognosticatio*, ii, chapter 16, pp. xxvii–xxviii: “Et dicitur in librum Regum Francorum, quod de Carlingis, id est de stirpe regis Caroli Franci suscitabitur Imperator in novissimis, nomine. P. qui erit princeps et monarcha totius Europae, reformabit ecclesias et clerum. Post illum nullus amplius imperabit.” According to Reeves, “P” refers to Phillip, son of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian I, and as such unites the German and French prophecies of a final ruler. On this and his early works, see: Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 349–351.

81 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 317.

82 Luther, *Vom Miszbrauch der Messe*, WA 8, 561–562: “Ich hab offt ynn den landen, als ich eyn kindt war, eyn prophetzey gehort, Keytzer Fryderich wurde das heylige grab erloßen. Und wie den der prophecien art und natur ist, das sie ehr erfult, denn verstanden werden, so sehen sie alzeyt andertzwo hyn, den die wort fur der welt lauten: also deucht mich auch, das diße prophecy ynn dißem unßerm Fursten, hertzoze Frederichen zu sachssen, erfulet sey. Denn was konnen wyr fur eyn ander heylig grab verstehen den die heylige schrift, darynne die warheyt Christi durch die Papisten getod ist [...]” Given such prophecies about Frederick-rulers, Yates’ interpretation that the manifestos were written in support of Frederick V, grandson of William of Orange, as the new ruler is not surprising, even though far-fetched and without any textual basis: Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 54–57, 100–101.

This Elector of Saxony is well known for having supported and protected the religious reformer and for having brought him to safety at the Wartburg when Luther was in danger after the Edict of Worms.⁸³ Both men had previously corresponded about religious and apocalyptic matters.⁸⁴ This means that Luther knew the prophecy of the Last World Emperor, but appropriated it to show his support for the Elector of Saxony, to whom he owed his life. Thus also the Rosicrucian imagery of a new leader is a complete departure from Luther's conservative views of the existing secular order.

The expectation of a new leader expressed in the Rosicrucian manifestos is much more in the proximity of the *Reformation of Sigismund*, which was also used by Protestants. It claims that the imminent new leader "is a priest, through whom God will work a lot, he will be called Friderich von Lantnewen." It is unclear whether a person by this name ever existed, but Friderich was expected to establish a new empire and to be a future political ruler who would "effectuate God's order, men and city would obey him," he will end injustice and "bring peace to the countries."⁸⁵ The idea of a Last World Emperor, which became popular thanks to such prophecies, must have been known to the authors of the manifestos. Just as was predicted for the Last World Emperor, the Rosicrucian new leader was to inaugurate a new realm of peace and prosperity.

While late medieval apocalyptic prophecies abounded with Last World Emperors, Angelic Popes, Second Charlemagnes, and Third Fredericks, the manifestos specifically pinned their hopes on a new ruler in the figure of a lion. A lion had been forecast in the *Prophecy of the Erithrean Sibyl*, which originated from the thirteenth century. According to that text, the lion will briefly rule, but will be killed by a beast, after which the Antichrist will come.⁸⁶ In the

83 On Luther's travels, including this episode, see: Roper, *Martin Luther*.

84 See, for example, Luther, *WAB* 2, 455.80–456.2, cited in Oberman, *The Reformation*, 32.

85 Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, 342: "Er soll heyssen Friderich, er soll auch alle reich zü fride bringen zü lande und zu auen"; *ibid.*, 332: "Sigmundt, stant auff, bekenne got, berait einen wegk der gotlichen ordenung halb. Alles geschriben recht hat gebrechen an gerechtigkeyt. Du magst es aber nit volbringen, du bist woll ein wegbreyter deß, der nach dir komen soll. Er ist ein priester, durch den wirt got vil wurcken; er wirt genant Friderich von Lantnewen. Er wirt des reichs zeichen auffsetzen [...]"; *ibid.*, 334: "[...] er bringet ordenung gots zü krafft, im werden herren und stet gehorsam; im wirt unrecht zü kestigen [...]."

86 *Erithrean Sibyl*: "[...] a most mighty lion of heavenly colour, spotted with gold, with five heads and fifty feet will roar from the West. He will make an attack on the beast and crush his power. He will devour the tail of the beast, but will not harm his head or feet at all. After this the lion will die and the beast will be strengthened; he will live and reign until

manifestos, the lion will instead come after the Antichrist: whilst the Antichrist is already present, the lion is yet to come and is expected to defeat the pope. Also different from this *Erithrean Sibyl* is the fact that the lion in the manifestos will not himself be killed: his is the empire in which a new truth will arise.

A lion similar to that in the manifestos is prominently present in the unorthodox and pseudepigraphic work 2 Esdras.⁸⁷ Whilst both Jerome's Vulgate and most Lutheran Bible editions regarded 2 Esdras as apocryphal, and most Lutherans included it only in the appendix, it was appealing to dissenters from the confessional Churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸⁸ In chapters 11 and 12 of that book, a dream is presented of a three-headed eagle that has "contrary feathers," which attempt to rule one by one (2 Esdras 11:12–28). According to 2 Esdras 11 and 12, the eagle represents the fourth kingdom of the Book of Daniel, which was to endure until the end of time (Daniel 7:7–23). The eagle is challenged and defeated by a "roaring lion" (2 Esdras 11:37–38), after which the "eagle's feathers" disappear. The manifestos, like 2 Esdras, also mention eagle's feathers: "[...] although a few eagle's feathers remain to delay our cause, we encourage one, primary, assiduous, and perpetual reading of the Holy Bible."⁸⁹ The Rosicrucian eagle, in accordance with the eagle of 2 Esdras, represented the enemy whose rule was to be annulled and succeeded by that of the triumphant lion.

the Abomination comes. After the Abomination the Truth will be revealed and the Lamb will be known; the lions and kingdoms will bow their necks to him," cited and translated in: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 122–125, here 124. Abomination also occurs in Matthew 24:15, for example, and refers to the Antichrist. The Lamb, of course, is Christ. The Catholic bishop Berthold Pürstinger was also influenced by the Erithrean Sybil but reinterpreted it, so that in his version it explains that first there will be a revival of evil; see: Holdenried, "De Oraculis Gentilium."

- 87 For an excellent overview of the application of this book to history, see: Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, 115–193. 2 Esdras was used by some medieval Franciscans, but not specifically in relation to the eagle and the lion; see: *ibid.*, 26–29; for official uses, see pp. 66–93; for Catholic uses, pp. 94–114. Pico was the first since the Church Fathers to discuss 2 Esdras at length; see pp. 32–36. For biblical references to the lion, see: Amos 3:8; Revelation 5:5; see also: Isaiah 41:25; Jeremiah 50:9; Ezekiel 38:15.
- 88 Only five Lutheran Bibles included 2 Esdras, and of their editors one merely translated it, three expressed their opposition to the text, and only one admired it. Just like Lutheran Bibles, also the Reformed Bibles put the apocryphal text in the appendix while often dismissing it as false or inferior; see: Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, 72–80.
- 89 *Confessio*, 57: "[...] ut dum aquilinae aliquot pennae nostris rebus moram tantillam ferunt, ad sacrorum Bibliorum unam, primam, assiduam et perpetuam Lectionem adhortemur."

The similarities between 2 Esdras and the manifestos are evident: a lion defeats a previous ruler and will rule the world until the end of time, whilst the power represented by the eagle's feathers will be overcome—but there is one prominent difference. The lion in 2 Esdras is “the anointed, whom the Highest hath kept unto their end” (2 Esdras 12:31–32). He will make the people “joyful until the coming of the day of judgement” (2 Esdras 12:34). The apocryphal lion is typically interpreted as the Second Coming of Christ, who will stand in Judgement, whereas the Rosicrucian lion ushers in a new time as a ruler for a new earthly period.

Many sixteenth-century Protestants believed the eagle to represent the Holy Roman Emperor, whose coat of arms featured a double-headed eagle. They identified the devious eagle specifically with the Catholic House of Habsburgs, from which line multiple emperors originated.⁹⁰ The lion, instead, was believed to represent an alternative, reformed, and prosperous emperor. For the Rosicrucians, by contrast, we can presume that the eagle did not refer to the House of Habsburgs, from which line the contemporary Holy Roman Emperor originated. Firstly, the Rosicrucian brethren had described the Roman Empire, which was now represented as the Holy Roman Empire, as “our head and that of all Christians.”⁹¹ The Habsburg emperor (whose coat of arms incidentally features a lion) was thereby depicted as a leader to be followed rather than as an emperor to be defeated. Secondly, at the time the manifestos were drafted, the Habsburg scion Rudolph II (1552–1612) was Holy Roman Emperor. Ruling from 1576 until 1612, Rudolph was devoted to occult arts, and at his court he welcomed physicians, Kabbalists, astronomers, alchemists, and philosophers. As we will see below and in the following chapter, innovations within (alchemical) medicine, astronomy, and philosophy were central to the Rosicrucian general reformation. As a patron of these fields, Rudolph was presumably not seen to “delay” the Rosicrucians’ “cause.”⁹² The Rosicrucians most likely identified the eagle with the papal Antichrist: the pope was commonly believed to have obscured the reading of the Bible, just as the manifestos make reference to

90 For example, an otherwise unknown figure named Johann Runge thought that the three-headed eagle represented the Roman Empire, the papacy, and Byzantium, see: Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, 9, 60, 118–119, 146. Osiander also identifies the eagle with the “Roman Empire,” see: Osiander, *Eyn wunderliche Weyssagung*, 431, 443.

91 *Fama*, 123: “In der policey erkennen wihr das Römische Reich und Quartam Monarchiam, für unser und der Christen Haupt.”

92 On Rudolph II in this capacity, see: Evans, *Rudolph II and his World*; Marshall, *The Magic Circle of Rudolph II*; Purš and Karpenko, *Alchemy and Rudolf II*. See also below, section 4.1.

the eagle's feathers being said to hinder the brethren in a perpetual reading of Scripture.⁹³

The Rosicrucian lion shares even more similarities with a prophecy drafted around 1600 under the name of Paracelsus, entitled *Prophecy of the Midnight Lion*.⁹⁴ For a long time, Paracelsus was thought to have been its author, partly because the text consisted of passages taken from genuine Paracelsian works, but the prophecy was actually written after his death. Many manuscript versions have survived, and the text was finally published in 1622.⁹⁵ Just like 2 Esdras, the prophecy describes an eagle and a lion fighting one another.

Written from a first-person perspective, the protagonist in the pseudo-Paracelsian lion prophecy states that he has hidden three treasures on several sites in Europe.⁹⁶ These treasures will be discovered when a Midnight Lion (or Lion from the North) appears who will succeed the eagle, rule over Europe and parts of Asia and Africa (places to which coincidentally Christian Rosencreutz had also travelled), bringing peace and prosperity.⁹⁷ As in the manifestos, the lion in this prophecy signifies a new worldly ruler who will establish a kingdom, rather than Christ who will come for the Last Judgement. The resemblances are striking: the lions of both texts—the pseudo-Paracelsian prophecy and the *Confessio*—were to defeat a previous ruler, establish an empire, claim hidden secrets, and bring prosperity, whilst the last signs of the eagle vanish from the world. The Rosicrucian lion is thus both a political and spiritual ruler. He will lead the way in early modern Germany, using the Rosicrucian treasures for the establishment of his empire—again indicating the renewed stress on the role of human agency.

93 This thesis is contrary to Gilly, who argued that the eagle feathers of the Rosicrucians refer to the Spanish monarchy and that the lion was Christ: Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostauritica*, 75–76. Tobias Hess also identified the eagle with the pope; see below, section 3.2.

94 “Prophecey vom Löwen aus Mitternacht.” On this prophecy, see: Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, 531; Edighoffer, “Le Lion du Septentrion”; Gilly, “Der ‘Löwe von Mitternacht,’ der ‘Adler’ und Der ‘Endchrist’”; Pfister and Schmidt-Tieme, “Der Löwe aus Mitternacht.”

95 Most manuscript editions carry the date 1549, while some are dated 1546, and one is dated 1541, the year of Paracelsus’ death; but in their titles appears the name of Adam Haslmayr, who was not born until 1562. According to Edighoffer, “Le Lion du Septentrion,” 168, the editions dated 1546 actually originate from after 1631. For an overview of all manuscript and printed editions, see: Pfister and Schmidt-Tieme, “Der Löwe aus Mitternacht,” 51–53; see further: Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, 530; Åkerman, *Rose Cross*, 121.

96 The place where the first treasure was hidden is also mentioned in: Pseudo-Paracelsus, *De tinctura physicorum*, I, 14; 392.

97 An edition of the text is included in: Pfister and Schmidt-Tieme, “Der Löwe aus Mitternacht,” 62–68.

The Rosicrucian imagery of the new ruler came neither from canonical texts nor from confessional orthodoxy, but rather from the apocryphal 2 Esdras and the pseudo-Paracelsian lion prophecy. But the imagery of a lion as a new leader became well known only *after* the publication of the Rosicrucian manifestos, during the Thirty Years' War, presumably thanks to the Rosicrucian popularisation of this figure.⁹⁸

The *reformatio divini et humani*, foreseen by the manifestos, agreed with all Protestants on the reform of the sacraments and the identification of the Antichrist with the papacy. But it departed significantly from orthodox Lutheran views and more closely resembled late medieval and radical Protestant expectations, by anticipating the overthrow of the Papal Antichrist by an imminent new ruler who was to establish a future kingdom—which expectations were absent from canonical scripture and found instead in a range of apocryphal, heterodox, and pseudonymous popular prophecies.

1.2 The Revolution of the Ages

The Dawn of a New Age

These events find their place and meaning within the Rosicrucian conception of history as a whole: the fall of the Antichrist and the instigation of the lion's empire mark not the Second Coming, Last Judgement, or the end of the world; but they inaugurate a new age. The nature of this new age increases the distance of the manifestos from Lutheran orthodoxy and narrows its proximity with certain pre-Reformation dissenting traditions.

It is precisely because the last days of the present era are believed to be at hand that the desired reform was destined to take place. The authors of the manifestos refer to an imminent new age, when they claim that there have been ages that were characterised by seeing, and other ages characterised by hearing or smelling, and now, "as the age is ripe and ending its real movement [...]," the age of speech will commence.⁹⁹ While not mentioning any hierarchy between the several ages, the age of speech certainly differs from the other ages, because the senses characteristic of the other ages require humans to absorb information coming from the external world,

98 On the role of the lion after the manifestos, see below, p. 226.

99 *Confessio*, 55–56: "Velut in humano capite duo sunt Organa, quae audiant, duo quae videant; quae olfaciant duo; vocis unum, quam frustra ab auribus exigas, frustra ab oculis sonorum iudicium impetres: Ita secula fuerunt, quae viderent; fuere quae audirent; et

whether by sight, smell, or sound, whilst “to speak” requires of them an active engagement with the external world. As the present age was coming to an end and would be succeeded by the dawn of another era, this new characteristic was put into practice by the authors of the manifestos, their speech giving expression to the upcoming transformations that had been anticipated in Germany by Christian Rosencreutz.¹⁰⁰

The idea that history was divided into ages was of course not new. According to the first creation narrative in Genesis, God created the world in six days, and on each day a different part of the world was created, “[a]nd on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:2). This creation narrative has often been used to interpret the course of history. Traditionally, from its biblical origins to medieval and early modern prophecies, history was interpreted as following a linear trajectory, from Creation until the Last Judgement. The twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation described how, in between these events, there was to be a millennium on earth, a period during which Satan is bound in the abyss. The idea of a period of peace on earth, often interpreted to endure for one thousand years, can also be traced back to Jewish eschatology (Ezekiel 37–48; 2 Esdras 7).¹⁰¹ In Christianity,

olfaciendi quondam tempus fuit; superest, ut maturato atque abbreviato vero motu, linguae suus honor habeatur, ut quae olim vidit, audivit, olfecit, nunc eloquatur tandem [...].”

100 *Fama*, 102: “Damit wir aber unsers geliebten Vatters Fr. C.R. nicht vergessen, ist selbiger nach vielen müheseligen Reysen und übel angelegten trewen reformationen, wiederum in Teuschland gezogen, welches er (umb schirestkünfftiger änderung und wunderbarlichen gefehrlichen Kampfss) herzlich lieb hatte [...]”

101 Apocalyptic texts in the Bible are primarily the Book of Daniel (Old Testament), the Gospels, the Book of Revelation, and 11 Thessalonians 2 (New Testament). An important apocryphal text concerned with the Last Days is 2 Esdras. Other chiliastic elements in the New Testament can be found in John 5:28, 11:24; 1 Kor 15. In the Old Testament, see also: Isaiah 24–27; Ezekiel 38–39; Joel 2:28–3:2; Zechariah 9–13. On apocalyptic and millenarianism, see: Böcher, “Chiliasmus II,” *TRE* 7, 723–724; Lanczkowski, “Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen I,” *TRE* 3, 189–191. For ‘apocalyptic’ in the Jewish tradition, see: Müller, “Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen III,” *TRE* 3, 202–251; Böcher, “Chiliasmus II,” *TRE* 7, 724–727. For an introduction to ‘apocalyptic’ in the early modern period, see: Seebaß, “Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen VII,” *TRE* 3, 280–289. On ‘apocalyptic’ and gnosis, see: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*. On 2 Esdras and its influence, see: Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*. See further: Haase, *Das Problem des Chiliasmus*; McGinn (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*; Semeia 14 (1979); Rowland, *The Open Heaven*; Mendelsohn and Nowotny, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Semeia 36 (1986); Laursen and Popkin (eds.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, vol. IV; McGinn, “Apocalypticism and Church Reform, 1100–1500”; Lerner,

the last tribulations and the arrival of the Antichrist always loomed on the horizon, announcing the last days of the world.

According to this specific, teleological, and linear understanding of history, after one thousand years Satan will be freed for “a little season” (Revelation 20:3), during which one may expect the final tribulations and massive destruction taking place on earth. The period of destruction will end with Christ’s Second Coming and His Judgement over the people, after which the righteous will enter the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city of peace.¹⁰² This process of history was thought to be part of a bigger, divine plan, ordained by God, and the Last Days were to coincide with spectacular revelations from God. This linear interpretation of history was thus inherently epochal, that is, characterised by disruptive moments that each signified the beginning of a new period.

Theologians throughout the ages have striven to interpret this teleological process. Their attempts have included explanations of when the millennium was to take place, and how far advanced along the linear trajectory of this teleological process they and their contemporaries happened to find themselves in their own times. According to Augustine, for example, the millennium was in the present, it was the period in which he thought himself to live, which implied that all that could be expected of the future on earth was Satan’s rule for three and a half years (the “little season”). Hereafter “the judgement shall sit [...], and the kingdom [of the most High] will be an eternal kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey Him.”¹⁰³ For Augustine, the sixth age represented the millennium, after which will follow the final tribulations and Christ’s Judgement. The seventh age would take place after the Judgement and would be “a Sabbath without an evening.”¹⁰⁴ As the Church represented to him the

“Millenarianism”; Trepp, *Von der Glückseligkeit alles zu wissen*; Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*. Cohn, erroneously, interpreted chiliasm solely in a context of political revolt: Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*.

102 On the New Jerusalem, compare also Ezekiel 40–48, Zechariah 2, Isaiah 54; see further especially Revelation 20.

103 Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 20, chapter 23: “qui superabit malis omnes qui ante eum fuerunt”; “et dabitur in manu eius usque ad tempus et tempora et dimidium tempus. Et iudicium sedebit [...]. Et [Altissimi] regnum sempiternum; et omnes principatus ipsi servient et obaudient.” In the same chapter, Augustine explains that time (tempus), times (tempora) and half a time (dimidium tempus) equal three and a half years. On these times, see: Daniel 12:7. The kingdom discussed is Jerusalem which is “eternally in the heavens”; see: *ibid.*, 20, chapter 21.

104 Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 22, chapter 30: “Fiunt itaque omnes quinque. Sexta nunc agitur [...] haec tamen septima [aetas] erit sabbatum nostrum [...]”; *ibid.*, 20, chapter 7: the present age “est sexto annorum miliario tamquam sexto die, cuius nunc spatia posteriora

heavenly kingdom and the realm of Christ, the final tribulations could be expected after the thriving of the Church.¹⁰⁵ Augustine's view that the millennium will be followed by the rule of Satan, and that the present age was the millennium, became the standard view of the Roman Church, whereby the Church understood itself as the means to salvation. Evidently, this view was accompanied by the belief that there was no hope left for improvement on earth, only for the time after the Last Judgement.

Joachim of Fiore deviated from this interpretation of history in his *Exposition on the Apocalypse*. In his view, the sixth age was the time prior to the millennium of the seventh age. Whilst Augustine placed the seventh age after the end of the world, Joachim believed it to be the future millennium instead. To him, the seventh age was a period on earth rather than the eternal Sabbath that lay beyond time.¹⁰⁶ Based on Revelation 20:1–3 and whilst discussing the millennium when Satan is bound, he wrote: "These thousand years refer to the Sabbath," which is "the seventh age."¹⁰⁷ At the end of the Sabbath age, that is, at the end of "the seventh age of the world," there "will be the arrival of God for the Judgement."¹⁰⁸ The seventh age as the future millennium will be a period of "justice on earth and abundance of peace."¹⁰⁹ This notion of a future millennium can be characterised as millenarianism. Contrary to eschatological

volvuntur, secuturo deinde sabbato quod non habet vesperam, requie scilicet sanctorum quae non habet finem."

105 Ibid., 20, chapters 6–9; 22, chapter 30. Augustine argued that as long as Satan is bound, the Church could not be led astray.

106 Joachim, *Die genealogia*, edited by Potestà, 92–94; Joachim, *Expositio*, 209^{vb}.

107 Joachim, *Expositio*, 210^{va}: "Qua nimirum opinione e medio sublata eorum dico: qui putant istos mille annos referendos ad sabbatum [...]; "sabbatum septime etatis." For Joachim, the millennium is not literally a thousand years, this duration is only referred to because one thousand is a perfect number; see: *ibid.*, 211^{rb}. Joachim not only divided history in seven ages, but also in three statuses (often understood as ages), of which the third status corresponds to the seventh age. The first status is the age of the Father and corresponds to the Old Testament, the second status is the age of the Son and corresponds to the New Testament, while the third, future, status is the age of the Holy Spirit; see: Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 5^r–5^v, esp. 5^{va}. The fact that Joachim called the third status the age of the Holy Spirit is interesting because the *Fama* names the building in which Rosencreutz and his brothers worked on the future reformation, the "Spiritus Sanctus," Holy Spirit. On whether or not Joachim's third status was a millennium, see especially: Lerner, "Refreshments of the Saints."

108 Joachim, *Expositio*, 209^{vb}–210^{ra}: "septimam mundi etatem [...] in fine illius temporis venturus sit dominus ad iudicium."

109 Joachim, *il libro delle figure*, reprinted in L. Tondelli, M. Reeves, and B. Hirsch-Reich, *Il Libro delle Figure*, plate xiv: "justitia in terra et habundantia pacis." A translated excerpt from the text can be found in: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 137–138.

prophecies situating the millennium in the present or in the past, “millenarianism” or “chiliasm” (both words referring to the number “thousand” in Latin and Greek, respectively) specifically refer to the belief in a future millennium.

Several medieval scholars, such as Arnald of Villanova (ca. 1240–1311) and Roger Bacon, who both influenced Rupescissa, expected such a future millennium.¹¹⁰ Arnald of Villanova believed that the millennium will come “after the time of the Antichrist.” He claimed that after the Antichrist a holy pope might be expected who will come “to the time of universal tranquillity and peace of the Church [...].”¹¹¹ According to Rupescissa, during the millennium those who fought against the Antichrist will “live resurrected corporeally and reign corporeally with Christ for one thousand years, which will be from the time of the death of the Antichrist until the advent of Gog near the end of the world.”¹¹² Equally relevant here is the aforementioned *Onus ecclesiae* by Pürstinger, which was devoted to the seven ages of the Church and influenced by the Joachimite understanding of history, and in which the author placed himself at the beginning of the sixth age.¹¹³

Making use of such common interpretations, the Rosicrucian texts followed the division of history into multiple ages, with claims that one age is coming to an end and that a new age was on the horizon, as evidenced by the presence of the Antichrist and the coming of a new ruler. The fact that, according to the Rosicrucians, a future age will take place on earth, means that their conception was close to Joachimite views. In the *Fama*, the authors referred to

110 Joachim, Olivi, Arnald of Villanova, and Rupescissa expected a real millennium, although not all interpreted the millennium as a strictly one-thousand year period. Based on biblical passages, they generally expected it to be shorter. Arnald believed it covered 45 years, after Daniel 12:11–12 (1335 – 1290 = 45) and taking the days to represent years, while Olivi thought that the millennium would take 700 years; see: Arnald of Villanova, *De adventu Antichristi*, partly cited in: Pelster, “Die Quaestio Heinrichs von Harclay,” 58. See further: Lerner, “Refreshments of the Saints,” 130. For Olivi, see: Olivi, *Postilla in Apocalypsim*, partly reproduced in *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*; Lerner, “Millenarianism,” 349–351. See also Ezekiel 4:6: “[...] I have appointed thee each day for a year.”

111 Arnald of Villanova, *De tempore adventus antichristi*, cxxxiii: a beatific pope is expected “post tempus Antichristi,” “ad tempus universalis tranquillitatis et pacis ecclesie, [...]” For Bacon, see: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 27. On Arnald, see: Perarnau i Espelt, “*L’Allocutio christini* d’Arnau de Vilanova.”

112 Rupescissa, *Liber secretorum eventuum*, 179: “Isti ergo vixerunt corporaliter resuscitati et regnaverunt corporaliter cum Christo mille annis qui futuri sunt a die mortis Antichristi usque ad adventum Gog et prope finem mundi.” Those who were deceased before the fight with the Antichrist will resurrect only after the millennium; cf. *ibid.*, 202.

113 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 467–468.

“Judgement Day,” when stating that their *Axioms*, their philosophy, will remain in vigour until Judgement Day, and “that the world shall see nothing [better] even in its most advanced and final age.”¹¹⁴ The authors hinted at the traditional teleological understanding of history by referring to the Last Judgement, but clearly affirmed the notion that there is on the horizon a future, prosperous age on earth which will precede that disruptive moment. Referring to the lives of some recent “worthy heroes,” the *Fama* explained that “the world in those days was already pregnant with great commotion and was labouring to give birth.”¹¹⁵ The pains of labour were being experienced, the texts suggest, heralding the arrival of a new time, to which the world was giving birth.

The authors of the manifestos deplored that many were unaware of the “wonders of the sixth age,” “they fear from the revolution of the world the future as much as the present.”¹¹⁶ Examples of the wonders of the sixth age were rediscoveries of things hidden in the world, and the discovery of “never experienced works and creations of nature.”¹¹⁷ These wonders, which had presented themselves over the past decades, at the end of the sixth age, so the texts suggest, were ignored by many. But a new age was dawning, and it was only with respect to the expectation that a new period was imminent that the general reformation could take place and make sense. In this sense, the Rosicrucian manifestos were not eschatological texts *strictu sensu*, since eschatology is specifically concerned with the events of the Last Days, whereas they announced a future age.

This differs not only from the Augustinian interpretation of history, but equally deviates, again, from the orthodox Lutheran position of the sixteenth

114 *Fama*, 105: “[...] daß unsere axiomata unbeweglichen werden bleiben biß an den Jüngsten Tag und nichts wird die Welt auch in ihrem höchsten und letzten Alter zusehen [sic] bekommen.” For their axioms, compare also: *Fama*, 99, 106, 110, and below, sections 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5.

115 *Fama*, 100–101: “Gewißlichen wihr müssen bekennen, daß die Welt schon damahls mit so grosser Commotion schwanger gangen und in der Geburt gearbeitet, auch sie so unverdrossene rühmliche Helden herfür gebracht, die mit aller Gewalt durch die Finsternuß und Barbarien hindurch gebrochen [...]”

116 *Confessio*, 46: “plerosque [...] sextae aetatis miranda innotuerunt [...] aut ex mundi revolutione futura simul et praesentia metiuntur.”

117 *Fama*, 92: “Nachdem der allein wyse und gnädige Gott in den letzten Tagen sein Gnad und Güte so reichlich über das Menschliche Geschlecht außgossen [...], daher dann nicht allein das halbe theil der unbekanten und verborgenen Welt erfunden, viel wunderliche und zuvor nie geschehne Werk und Geschopff der Natur uns zuführen und dann hocherleuchte Ingenia auffstehen lassen, die zum theil die veronreinigte unvolnkommene Kunst wieder zu recht brachten [...]” It is unclear to which works and creations of nature the texts refer.

century.¹¹⁸ Luther had argued that the millennium was neither in the present (Augustine) nor in the future (Joachim), but had occurred in the past, in the time of the apostles. There was no millennium to look forward to: "Thus the only thing that can comfort you in this last stage is the Day of Judgement and your faith that the Lord rules in Eternity—ultimately all the godless will vanish."¹¹⁹ For Luther, time on earth was soon coming to an end, and all that was left on earth was Christ's Second Coming and the hope for the New Jerusalem: "[...] here we see that after this time, as the pope reveals, there is nothing to hope for neither to expect, except for the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead."¹²⁰ For Luther and orthodox Lutherans, the faithful would rejoice in the New Jerusalem, but the immediate future was one in which the tribulations of the Last Days would occur. Signs of the final tribulations were the plague, war, death, and punishment, which Luther and orthodox Lutherans observed all around them.¹²¹ Luther's reformation was intended to reclaim the Gospel and to prepare the world for Christ's Second Coming and for the afterlife.¹²² The renewal of the Gospel in preparation of the heavenly Jerusalem meant that there was no longer any need for the reform of earthly affairs. As Heiko Oberman puts it: "Luther believes that God openly intervenes by means of his Word to protect the poor in spirit, the chosen remainder of Israel, against the deceptions of the Antichrist."¹²³ Luther's rejection of the view that human agency could enact reform was intimately linked with his eschatology, with his conception that the end was nigh and that only Christ could come and save man.

The idea of a future terrestrial period was officially rejected by the Lutherans (Augsburg Confession, 1530), the Anglicans, (42 Articles of Religion, 1553), as well as by the Reformed confession (Second Helvetic Confession, 1566).¹²⁴

118 This verdict is contrary to: Wels, *Manifestationen des Geistes*, 247 ff., who argues that the manifestos are Lutheran texts and that they convey a Lutheran eschatology.

119 Luther, AWA 2, 615, 1–3, cited in: Oberman, *Luther, Man between God and the Devil*, 72.

120 Luther, WA dt. II/2, 112 (Luther's preface to Daniel's prophecy): "[...] hie sehen wir, das nach dieser zeit, so der Bapst offenbahrt, nichts zu hoffen noch zu erwarten ist, denn der Welt ende und auferstehung der Todten."

121 Since the end did not come, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards some Lutherans began to have limited hopes; see: Wallmann, "Zwischen Reformation und Pietismus"; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 116–117, 183–207; Penman, *Hope and Heresy*.

122 Luther, WA 3, II, 290.28, in: Oberman, *The Reformation*, 30–33. On the few elected ones, cf. Revelation 14:3–5.

123 Oberman, *The Reformation*, 30.

124 Lietzman, (ed.), *The Book of Concord*, "Augsburgische Confession," in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche* (1952), article xvii, 72; Dingel, (ed.), "Anglikanische Artikel," (Forty-Two Articles), *Bekenntnisschriften der evangelischen-lutherischen Kirche* (2010), article xli, 521.30–35; and idem, 'Confessio Helvetica posterior', article xi, 185.3–

Clearly, the official pessimistic outlook of the magisterial reformers in the Protestant era, in which the manifestos were drafted, was very different from the optimistic message expressed in the manifestos themselves.

Equally different from Lutheranism and similar to the Joachimite vision, is the fact that the Antichrist in the *Confessio* preceded the expected future age on earth, an idea resonating with what has been called the “post-Antichrist tradition,” which held that the millennium was to occur only after the defeat of the Antichrist.¹²⁵ This idea was popularised by Joachim, who argued that the earthly seventh age “will be the time after the fall of the Antichrist,” and, as we have just seen, this was confirmed by Rupescissa.¹²⁶ This notion is opposed to the pre-Antichrist tradition, according to which the millennium takes place before the arrival of the Antichrist, in accordance with Augustine and Luther.¹²⁷ Contrary to the conception of the magisterial Churches, but siding with other dissenters, the manifestos claim that the Antichrist is not the destroyer in the last days of life on earth, but instead precedes the future age. This clearly puts these texts in closer proximity to the Joachimite interpretation of history.

Notwithstanding this proximity, the future age in the manifestos can hardly be understood as a true millennium, contrary to what some Joachimites believed. In general, chiliasts believed in a future age with specific characteristics derived from canonical scripture. For example, they believed that it would endure for a thousand years, and would occasion the binding of Satan, the final tribulations, the following short reign of Satan, and Christ’s Judgement. In the manifestos, there is a clear expectation of a future, final period of prosperity on earth, but without most of these millenarian tropes, and therefore not in the

7. See further: Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 660; Antognazza and Hotson, *Alsted and Leibniz*, 149; Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, 3. Late sixteenth-century Italians may well have been the first Reformed millenarians, see: Wallmann, “Zwischen Reformation und Pietismus,” 188; Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, 4–5. On some late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Lutherans who expected a future millennium, see: Penman, “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder”; idem, “Between Utopia and New Jerusalem”; idem, *Hope and Heresy*. On millenarianism and trinitarianism in the late sixteenth century, see: Hotson, “Arianism and Millenarianism,” 9–36.

125 Although this tradition has come to be known as the “Joachimite tradition,” the idea of a peaceful time after the Antichrist originates not with Joachim but with the Church Father Jerome, even though, like Augustine, he was firmly against (future) millenarianism. For this ambiguity and early followers of Jerome, see: Lerner, “Refreshments of the Saints,” 101–110.

126 Joachim, *Expositio*, 210^{ra}: “Igitur erit tempus post casum antichristi”; Rupescissa, *Liber secretorum eventuum*, 179.

127 See: Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 20, chapter 23.

sense of the millennium corresponding to John's Book of Revelation.¹²⁸ Satan is not bound, there are no final tribulations, and unlike the thousand-year period of peace the new age of the Rosicrucians is not derived from Scripture.

No more than the Joachimite version of history, neither should we place the Rosicrucians into the vicinity of some radical reformers such as Anabaptists, who expected a future age on earth as a final apotheosis. Several Anabaptists proclaimed poverty and hoped for "social cleansing" through spiritual inspiration in the immediate future. It was not a millennium,¹²⁹ but it was divinely inspired. Müntzer, for example, preached that there will be "a transformation of the world" and that God "will prepare it in the Last Days in order that His name may be rightly praised."¹³⁰ Melchior Hoffmann, when preaching about Strasbourg, expected a restitution of the Jerusalem of the Psalms and argued that "Strasbourg will in this time be Jerusalem in Spirit, just as Rome had been the spiritual Babylon."¹³¹ For the Anabaptists, the coming new period was merely a prelude to the New Jerusalem,¹³² while in the manifestos it was a full new period not to be understood as a prologue to the time after the Last Judgement.

The manifestos make no reference to Scripture in their exposition, unlike medieval authors and Anabaptists alike who relied heavily on biblical passages, notably the Book of Revelation, in support of their interpretations. For example, Joachim's *Exposition* and Hoffmann's *Interpretation of the Secret Revelation* follow the structure of the Book of Revelation; Arnald of Villanova's *About the Time of the Arrival of the Antichrist* as well as Thomas Müntzer's *Exposition of the Second Chapter of Daniel* make continual reference to biblical passages; and the understanding of history of these authors and that of Rupescissa is primarily an interpretation of Scripture.¹³³ The fact that the manifestos

128 This is what prompted Wels to mistakenly argue that the manifestos' conception of the development of history was Lutheran: Wels, "Die Frömmigkeit der Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste," 195.

129 Hoffmann, in fact, believed that the millennium was in the past: List, *Chiliasmische Utopie*, 190.

130 Müntzer, "Exposition of the Second Chapter of Daniel," edited and translated in Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 62. For Müntzer, of course, the ideal was poverty, and the instigation of this reformation should be done with great violence; see, for example: List, *Chiliasmische Utopie*, 129–139.

131 Hoffmann, *Erklärung des waren und hohen bunds des Allerhöchsten* (1533): "Straßburg wurt zu dißer zeit Jerusalem jm geyst seyn, gleich alß Rom das geistlich Babylonia gewesenn ist," edited in: Krebs and Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. 8, pp. 185–186. Hoffmann repeated this statement during his interrogation by Strasbourg officials on 23 November 1534; see *ibid.*, pp. 393–395.

132 Klaassen, *Living at the End of Ages*, 86–87.

133 Joachim, *Expositio*; Arnald, *De tempore adventus Antichristi*; Hoffmann, *Auslegung der*

lack any explicit or implicit references to Scripture when it comes to their conception of history, means that they deviated much further from biblical prophecy than these authors. This is of course a very unusual feature for Protestant texts, which would normally insist on prognosticating the future wholly or at least in part with reference to canonical prophecy.

The optimism inherent in the Rosicrucian manifestos differs also from the predominantly pessimistic tone of such apocalyptic authors as Paul Gräbner and Adam Nachenmoser (dates unknown).¹³⁴ Although both authors, like some other late sixteenth-century Lutherans, expected a brief period of peace before the end, central to their apocalyptic prophecies was the belief in imminent hardship and destruction during the Last Days.¹³⁵ Gräbner, for example, had written a prophecy about the future of Europe and claimed that celestial events announced coming destruction and wars before a final period of peace.¹³⁶ There were no such dire forebodings in the manifestos. In fact, where expectations of final hardship are concerned, the manifestos differ from biblical texts, Lutherans, Joachimite prophecies, and radical reformers alike. They were explicitly optimistic about the advent of a future age; and the subsequent brief period of final tribulations under the rule of Satan, insisted upon in other interpretations, is excluded from the Rosicrucian account. This is an important difference: most reformers and even millenarians would claim that the Last Days will be characterised by final destruction, whereas the Rosicrucian axioms will not be destroyed but will thrive until Judgement Day.¹³⁷

The manifestos seem instead again to show parallels with the *Reformation of Sigismund*. According to this text, Sigismund is ordered by God to prepare a path to a divine order of the world.¹³⁸ A new period of peace on earth was to be inaugurated with the help of the evangelists John and Mark, harbingers of the new time: “We have two evangelists to our aid: John and Mark, who are our helpers in the two animal figures [eagle and lion, respectively], with whom we hinder all our enemies and all catastrophes, and in the future we will find beatific years, and God will bring us a gentle father, and he will be with us and

heimlichen Offenbarung; Müntzer, *Exposition of the second chapter of Daniel*, edited in Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*.

134 This is contrary to: Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostautrotica*, 20.

135 On Gräbner, see especially: Gilly, “Las novas,” 309–321. Gräbner’s prophecies became known only from 1619 onwards. For both Gräbner and Nachenmoser, see: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 121–123, 251–252, also for numerous other works focused on calculating the end of the world.

136 Åkerman, *Rose Cross*, 104–106; Gilly, “Las novas,” 313–317.

137 *Fama*, 105; see above, p. 58.

138 Anonymous, *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, 332–334.

we will be with him.”¹³⁹ In this future age, the gentle father “will also bring an entire realm of peace to the countries and to us.”¹⁴⁰ In the *Reformation of Sigismund*, there is neither mention of the duration of the period of peace nor is the new period called a “millennium.” Other similarities with the Rosicrucian prophecy are evident. In both the manifestos and the *Reformation of Sigismund*, millenarian tropes such as the binding of Satan are absent, and the theological context seems to evaporate. Although some elements in the *Reformation of Sigismund* and the manifestos are clearly taken from Scripture and later prophecies, the texts do not follow a biblical structure, are devoid of direct references to passages in the Bible, and are not directly inspired by the Book of Revelation, with no announcement of a final tribulation before Christ comes in Judgement.

The Revolution of the World

Against this background, the structure of history as sketched in the manifestos is unique. History in most eschatological prophecies is interpreted as developing linearly. There is a beginning, Creation, and an end, the Last Judgement. According to the second creation narrative in the Bible, which begins in Genesis 2, Adam and Eve, the first two human beings, lived happily in Paradise, having dominion over all animals. They were allowed to eat of every tree, except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But tragedy struck when Adam and Eve, seduced by the serpent, ate of that particular tree and thereby gained knowledge of good and evil. Disobeying His orders, they aroused God’s vehement anger, and He banished them from the Garden of Eden and declared human life to be one of sorrow. In Christian teaching, this episode of the Fall of Adam and Eve was viewed as the source of original sin: The sin of having disobeyed God is “passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12), from one generation to the next. With the Fall begins the linear course of history divided into six or seven ages to culminate in the millennium, followed by the little season under the rule of Satan and the Last Judgement.

The Rosicrucian manifestos deviated from this standard linear interpretation of history. The manifestos, while also structuring history according to multiple ages, advocated a cyclical conception of history based in increased

¹³⁹ Ibid., 342: “wir haben zwenn ewangelisten zü hilf, Johannem / und Marcum, dye unnser helffer sein in der zweyer thier figur, damit wir storen alle unser feinde und alles unheyl und finden in den kunfftigen zeytten selig jare und wirt unns got ein milter vater und wirt mit unns sein und wir mit ym.” In the following sentence it becomes clear that this father is Frederick, as “Er soll heysen Friderich.” For the lion and eagle depicting Mark and John, standard symbols for these evangelists, see also *ibid.*, 338, 340.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 342: “soll auch alle reich zü fride bringen zü lande und zu auen.” On the one who brings the realm of peace, see above, p. 49.

natural knowledge. They claim that “while the world is tottering and almost at the end of a period and rushes to its beginnings, God returns the order of nature [...]”¹⁴¹ The end of the present period not only inaugurates a new one, but is more importantly a return to the original stage of the world. This is a viewpoint profoundly different from biblical interpretations and most medieval and early modern prophecies. Here, harking back to our triad—reformation, revolution, and renovation—the meaning of the second objective of the manifestos becomes clear: the expectation of a “revolution of the world.”¹⁴² “Revolution” always implies a rotation or cyclical nature. Thus the brethren announced that the world was revolving and rushing back to its beginning.

A similar return to the beginning was beautifully articulated by the Italian poet, philosopher, and theologian Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639). In one of his poems, he wrote:

If the happy Golden Age was once in the world
it may be there more than once
that all that is buried will live again
the circle returning to where it has its root.¹⁴³

The final period, which the manifestos describe as a “happy time,” is in a sense the return to a Golden Age, which implies a circular interpretation of history rather than a linear one. As in the Renaissance myth of the Golden Age, a blissful time, which had once been in the world, will return in full grandeur.¹⁴⁴ In Campanella’s poem, the circle is literally returning to where it has its beginning; in the manifestos the original order of nature will be restored.

Rather than being inspired by biblical apocalyptic texts, this cyclical conception of history may have had its origin in astronomy, and more specifically in the cycles of night and day, the seasons, the cycle of the Platonic Great Year of about 36,000 years, and celestial conjunctions.¹⁴⁵ The manifestos announced the new

141 *Confessio*, 43: “Jehova est, qui mundo labascente, et propemodum periodo absoluta, ad principium properante Naturae ordinem invertit.”

142 *Ibid.*, 46.

143 Campanella, *Tutte le opere*, cited in: Ernst, “From the Watery Trigon,” 267: “Se fu nel mondo l’aurea età felice / ben essere potrà più ch’una volta / che si ravniva ogni cosa sepolta / tornando il giro ov’ebbe la radice.” On Campanella, see especially: Bonansea, *Tommaso Campanella*; Ernst, *Religione, Ragione e Natura*; idem, *The Book and the Body of Nature*.

144 See, for example: Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*. Cf. below, section 2.1.

145 For the cyclical conception of history, renovation, and its relation to astronomy, cf: Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 30.

age by means of astronomical references. They state that “[a]fter the world will have slept off its intoxication from the poisonous and soporific chalice, in the morning it will proceed to meet the rising sun with an opened heart, and bare-headed and barefoot, happy and jubilant.”¹⁴⁶ Day follows night, and the dawn is commencing. The new era is on the horizon and before “the sun rises,” it will already cast a “bright or dark light in the heaven.” The first rays of sunlight can already be observed, even before the happy time has begun.¹⁴⁷ The imminent new world, while already visible on the horizon, starts with the Rosicrucian manifestos signalling the dawn of the new day.

The main source of influence for the manifestos’ conception of history seems to relate to various significant events taking place in the skies. Referencing the above-mentioned “worthy heroes,” the manifestos write that they already “broke through the darkness and barbarism” and revealed nature’s secrets, because they “were the tip in the Fiery Trigon, whose flames will now shine even more brightly and will certainly kindle in the world the final Fire.”¹⁴⁸ This is a reference to the new cycle of conjunctions in the Fiery Trigon of Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. In December 1603, a conjunction between “the highest stars”—Saturn and Jupiter—took place in Sagittarius, and inaugurated the beginning of a new cycle of conjunctions in the three zodiacal signs together named the Fiery Trigon. Conjunctions between Jupiter and Saturn, commonly known as the Great Conjunctions, are the rarest of all conjunctions and take place approximately once every 20 years. The previous such conjunction had taken place in 1583, when the alignment of the two superior stars occurred at the transition from the Watery Trigon (the signs Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces) to the Fiery Trigon.¹⁴⁹

146 *Confessio*, 56: “postquam venenati et soporiferi calicis crapulam edormiverit Mundus; atque manet exorienti Soli apertis pectoribus, detectis capitibus, amotis calceis, laetus jubilansque; obviam processerit.”

147 *Fama*, 122: “ehe die Sonne auffgehet, sie [bringt] zuvor ein hell oder dunckel Licht in den Himmel [...]” See also: *Confessio*, 47–48.

148 *Fama*, 100–101: “[...] rühmliche Helden [...] die mit aller Gewalt durch die Finsternuß und Barbarien hindurchgebrochen und uns schwächern nur nachzudrucken gelassen und freylich der Spitze im Trigono igneo gewesen, dessen Flammen numehr je heller leuchtet und gewißlichen der Welt den letzten Brand antzünden wird [...]” On the conjunctions and the Rosicrucians, see also: Leppin, *Antichrist und jüngster Tag*, 14; Åkerman, “The Rosicrucians and the Great Conjunctions,” 3. The darkness and barbarism possibly refer to the contemporary state of affairs in philosophy and the sciences; on this, see below, sections 1.3 and 2.4.

149 Importantly, there had also been a conjunction between Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars in 1484, which was said to be the year of death of Christian Rosencreutz.

According to the Arabic astrologer Albumasar (787–886), these Great Conjunctions occurred every twenty years in a cycle of twelve. After $12 \times 20 = 240$ years in one trigon, the conjunctions will take place in the subsequent trigon (each of the four trigons consisting of three of the twelve zodiacal signs and named after the dominant element). Conjunctions in the Fiery Trigon, for example, followed conjunctions in the Watery Trigon. After $4 \times 240 = 960$ years, the cycle of conjunctions will be completed and begin anew again. According to Albumasar, specifically the conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn were followed by changes on earth.¹⁵⁰ His works went through several Latin translations, and his *Introductorium Minus* became the foremost textbook on astronomy at European universities during the late Middle Ages.¹⁵¹

The Alfonsine tables of the thirteenth century established that the specific transition from the Watery Trigon to the Fiery Trigon, and thus the fulfillment of one full cycle of conjunctions and the start of a new one, occurs about once every 800 years, not every 960 years as per Albumasar's estimation.¹⁵² Early modern astronomers claimed that such a noteworthy, transitory conjunction had occurred only a few times since Creation, and that the previous two had taken place around the time of two important events: Christ's birth and the rule of Charlemagne, who was crowned on Christmas day in 800 AD. After the transitory conjunction in 1583, a new cycle of conjunctions between Saturn and Jupiter took place in the Fiery Trigon, with the first conjunction occurring approximately twenty years later, at the end of 1603.¹⁵³ The Rosicrucians claimed that with the start of the conjunctions in the Fiery Trigon, the universe had thus literally entered a new period and a new cycle. For the important changes on earth the conjunctions were said to indicate, the Rosicrucians understood these most recent celestial events to announce the commencement of the final period of the world, as the aforementioned "heroes" were the first signs of the new era.

150 Vescovini, "The Theological Debate," 103–104. On Albumasar and his influence in the West, see: Hartner, "Tycho Brahe et Albumasar," 137–150; Van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-faced Janus*, 63–65; Vescovini, "The Theological Debate." Cf. also: Thorndike, "Albumasar in Sadan."

151 Vescovini, "The Theological Debate," 104–105.

152 On the Alfonsine tables, see: Chabás and Goldstein, *The Alfonsine Tables of Toledo*; Rosen, *Copernicus and his Successors*, 29–40. The time between the conjunctions and the beginning and ending of cycles is fixed, taking approximately 20 and 800 years, respectively.

153 See: Aston, "The Fiery Trigon Conjunction," 160–162, 166; Ernst, "From the Watery Trigon," 266–267. This conjunction of 1603 was followed by a conjunction in Autumn 1604 of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars.

This event was met with widespread enthusiasm and the sense that it was significant of something beyond observable alterations in the night sky. The famous astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), at the time mathematician to Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II, had described it in his *On the New Star* (1606).¹⁵⁴ His colleague David Fabricius (1564–1617), with whom Kepler corresponded over recent celestial changes, referred to this new cycle and compared it to the celestial events of the time of Christ. Just as the during Christ's birth the Great Conjunction in the Fiery Trigon had signified a new time, he concluded, this recent conjunction indicated the beginning of a new era.¹⁵⁵ A few years before the *Fama* was drafted, Campanella had also described the conjunctions that appeared in the "fiery triplicity." He, too, thought that, since a similar conjunction had taken place during Christ's birth, the present one must certainly indicate a new era.¹⁵⁶ He believed that the new celestial phenomena announced the coming of a new period on earth, and like the Rosicrucians he referred to portents visible on the "machinery of the heavens":

Hence a diverse appearance of the stars hangs above the earth, and now that the entire machinery of the heavens has obtained a new position, it gives birth to new ages, and it emits new influences onto the singular parts of the earth. That is why we must conclude that, when a constellation of stars withdraws into the place of another constellation, very great changes on earth happen.¹⁵⁷

The authors of the manifestos had probably not read Campanella's work.¹⁵⁸ Although Campanella's writings were brought from Italy to Germany by one of their friends, Tobias Adami (1581–1643), and although later another friend, Wilhelm von Wense (1586–1641), had visited Campanella in prison while in Naples,

154 Kepler, *De stella nova in pede Serpentarii* (1606), 282–291. On Kepler, see, for example: Voelkel, *Johannes Kepler and the New Astronomy*.

155 Granada, "Johannes Kepler and David Fabricius," 73. Fabricius, however, connected it to the restoration of the "Roman Eagle." See: *ibid.*, 74.

156 Campanella, *Tutte le opera. I. Scritti Letterari*, 125. On the *Prophetic Articles* see Ernst's introduction ("nota introduttiva") in: Campanella, *Articuli prophetales*, edited by Ernst, pp. XI–XLVI.

157 Campanella, *Articuli Prophetales* [1599], 266: "unde diversa facies stellarum terris imminet et tota caeli machina novam adepta positionem nova parturit saecula novasque singulis terrarum partibus influentias demittit [...]. Ideo censendum est, quando figura stellarum in alterius figurae situm secedit, permaximas in orbe mutationes contingere." In the manifestos, signs precede and announce events, but it is not obvious that they influence events.

158 On authorship, see below, Chapter 3.

both events happened after the *Fama* had been published in 1614,¹⁵⁹ which suggests that Campanella did not directly influence the authors of the manifestos. Two early works by Campanella were bound together with a manuscript version of the *Fama* of circa 1613, but this was several years after the composition of the text, and the *Fama* was merely one of over 70 other texts with which Campanella's works were bound together.¹⁶⁰ And while both this text, the *Prophetic Articles* (1599), and the utopian *City of the Sun* (1602) were written before the manifestos, they possibly did not circulate widely before 1610 (the *City of the Sun* did not appear as a printed publication until 1623).¹⁶¹ In any case, there is no documented contact between Campanella and the authors of the manifestos, but there may have been undocumented influence before the manifestos were drafted—although the chances that the authors were influenced by Campanella before drafting the *Fama* are small.

The dramatic changes taking place in the constellation of Sagittarius foreshadowed two other celestial events that received much attention at the time and that were interpreted optimistically by the Rosicrucians. In chapter six of the *Confessio*, the brethren made clear that it was the business of the Rosicrucians to understand celestial omens sent by God:

To whom it has been granted to behold, read, and thereafter to comprehend these great letters of God, which He inscribed on the machine of the world and which He repeats alternately according to the vicissitudes of the empires; he indeed (even if ignorant at this moment) is already one of us, and as we know that he will not overlook our invitation, so we will in turn abjure all fraud.¹⁶²

Interpreting these letters, and inferring a divine provenance, the brethren wrote that God “has from His own will already sent forward messengers, the stars appearing in Serpentarius and Cygnus,” which are “surely great

159 Andreae, *Christianopolis*, introduction by Edward H. Thompson, 29; Gilly, “Campanella and the Rosicrucians,” 198–199.

160 Gilly, “Campanella and the Rosicrucians,” 210. The works are the *Scuela del primo senno* and the *Epilogo magno*.

161 Cf. Ernst, “Introduction,” to Campanella, *Articuli Prophetiales*, xxi.

162 *Confessio*, 52: “Sane cuicumque Magnas illas Dei litteras, quas Mundi machinae inscripsit, & per Imperiorum vicissitudines alternatim repetit, intueri, legere, atque exinde se erudire concessum; ille quidem (etsi hoc tempore inscius) jam noster est; Atque uti scimus, non neglecturum nostram invitationem: ita vicissim fraudem omnem ejuramus [...]”

signs of the great plan.”¹⁶³ These signs inscribed in the heavens were portents of the new era and, whilst the manifestos characterised the present time as one of adversity, neither the celestial portents themselves nor what they indicated about the future were deemed to be frightening. These events were read as indicative of God’s great plan and as auspices for the success of the Rosicrucians’ general reformation.

The idea that celestial signs reveal God’s plan originated from both Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic texts, as well as from recent astronomical prophecies.¹⁶⁴ In the Christian context, revelatory signs were expected shortly before the End Times, as announced in the Book of Revelation.¹⁶⁵ The central notion “apocalypticism” originates from the Greek word “apokalypsis” (ἀποκάλυψις), “disclosure” or “revelation,” and concerns the revelation of divine mysteries. Apocalypticism as such is not primarily eschatological: revelation of divine secrets is not first and foremost reserved for the Final Days. But from “apocalypticism” is derived the more specific term “apocalyptic,” the adjective used as a noun, which does refer to the revelation of events taking place specifically during the Last Days.¹⁶⁶ In the Middle Ages and the early modern period, expectations of the Last Days were often accompanied by a sense of crisis; and following biblical suggestions the signs indicating the Last Days were expected to be frightening, such as famines, wars, and earthquakes. In Matthew 24:6–8, for example, Christ is reported to have prophesied about future disasters.¹⁶⁷ In Luke 21:25–26, Christ describes how such terrible signs will also appear in the heavens:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

163 Ibid., 55: “De sua quidem voluntate jam praemisit nuncios Deus, Stellas in Serpentario atque Cygno exortas, quae magna profecto magni Consilii signacula illud docere possunt [...]”

164 For a discussion of apocalyptic in ancient Jewish and Christian texts, see: Rowland, *The Open Heaven*.

165 Both Daniel and Revelation are examples of ‘revelation’ of divine secrets. See also: Lanczkowski, “Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen 1,” *TRE* 3, 189–191. On this, see: Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 9–11; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*.

166 Cf. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 26, 70–71.

167 Compare also Matthew 24:29–31.

Such passages influenced many prophecies,¹⁶⁸ including those of the aforementioned medieval authors. Possibly inspired by the passage from Matthew, in his *Companion in Tribulation* Rupescissa wrote that, before the end, “terrible destruction will abound beyond all human estimation: tempests from the sky, and elsewhere floods of water never seen before, unheard of in many parts of the world (except for the Great Flood), serious famines beyond measure, plagues and deaths, abscesses of the throat and sufferings of other infections.”¹⁶⁹ In the Protestant interpretation, Luther and his orthodox followers expected the signs of the end to include a second Great Flood and dramatic portents in the skies. Luther wrote: “we will perceive an unusual sign, which will announce the coming of Christ. There will be a sign of the sun, because the sun will be transformed into darkness and blood.”¹⁷⁰

An interesting Protestant interpretation of astrology came from Luther’s early collaborator Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), who taught that the study of astrology could enlighten us on certain questions of God’s governance,¹⁷¹ and that its practice was supported by biblical passages.¹⁷² Melanchthon and his “Melanchthon Circle” practiced astrology and interpreted recent celestial events—such as conjunctions, new stars, and comets—as signs, and generally as warnings about coming earthly affairs. For Melanchthon, unlike Luther, astrology and natural philosophy were intimately linked with religion and religious teaching, as astrology should teach the world about God’s power and

168 On the interpretation of portents in history, see: Mout, “Chiliastic Prophecy and Revolt”; Leppin, *Antichrist und Jüngster Tag*, 87–96; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*; idem, “Images of Hope and Despair”; idem, *Astrology and Reformation*.

169 Rupescissa, *Vade mecum in tribulatione* (1356), 499: “[...] abundabunt terribiles clades ultra omnem aestimationem humanam; tempestates de coelis; et alias nunquam visa diluvia aquatica, inaudita in multis partibus orbis (praeter diluvium generale) fames gravissimae supra modum; pestilentiae et mortalitates; gutturus squinantiae et aliae apostematicae passiones.” Compare also: *ibid.*, 497: “I rejoice in the future reparation, but am saddened about the imminent, very hard pressure on the whole Christian population, the likes of which has never been since the beginning of the world, neither will it be in the future until the end of the age”: “gaudeo de reparatione futura sed contristor de imminenti pressura universi populi christiani durissima qualis nunquam fuit ab origine mundi nec postea futura est usque ad finem seculi.”

170 Luther, WA I, IV, 622: “Videamus signa ex ordine, quae Christus ventura praedicat. Solis signum erit, quod immutabitur sol in tenebras et in sanguinem.” See also: Lichtenberger, *Prognosticatio*, ii, chapter 13. Cf. Joel 2:31: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.”

171 On Melanchthon, Philipists, and astrology, see: Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, here p. 134.

172 Caroti, “Melanchthon’s Astrology,” 116; Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 142. The biblical passages Melanchthon referred to were Genesis 1:14 and Jeremiah 10:2.

goodness, and astrological divination could strengthen one's faith.¹⁷³ Divination, including astrology, could teach humans about God and the divine providence without which, he believed, the world would otherwise be reduced to mere matter.¹⁷⁴ For Melanchthon, such events presaged the imminent end. In the Protestant era, most people awaited the final tribulations with a sense of dread.¹⁷⁵

The manifestos evidently shared nothing of this pessimism. Not inspired by pessimistic canonical Scripture or Protestant prophecies, their optimistic tone once more bears a resemblance to prophecies originating from the context of astronomy. Many astronomers of the time regarded new stars and rare conjunctions as signs of a new era.¹⁷⁶ The messengers in "Serpentarius and Cygnus," mentioned in the *Confessio*, were a star newly visible in the constellation of Cygnus (from 1600 onwards, named "P Cygni") and a supernova in Serpentarius (1604), which was at the time believed to be a new star rather than the explosion of an old one. The significance of the new stars was of course greatly increased by their temporal proximity to the Great Conjunction of a few months previously. 1604 was also a highly important year in the manifestos. In that year, Rosencreutz's vault was said to have been rediscovered and opened, namely 120 years after Rosencreutz's death in 1484.¹⁷⁷ This rediscovery coincided with the revelation of secrets and the coming of a new and better age.

Some astronomers of the time believed that the new star of 1604 was a sign from God, and compared this star also to celestial events that had taken place when Christ was born, namely to the Star of Bethlehem.¹⁷⁸ The 1604

173 On Melanchthon's astrological aspirations in relation to theology, see: Caroti, "Melanchthon's Astrology," esp. 119; Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 139–152. On the Melanchthon Circle, see: Thorndike, *History*, vol. 5, 378–405. On the use of the notion "Melanchthon Circle," see: Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 339n26.

174 Caroti, "Melanchthon's Astrology," 116.

175 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 29.

176 On this, see: Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*; Van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-faced Janus*. The observation and interpretation of celestial changes was very common at the time. Astrology had become influential since the twelfth century following the translation of Arabic astrological texts, but since the fifteenth century they were made more easily accessible thanks to the printing press. With the availability of printed works, astrology as a means to understand the divine plan entered the popular realm, especially in Germany, with vernacular editions about astrological signs predicting the future tribulations. On astronomers' expectations of such an age, see: Ernst, "From the Watery Trigon."

177 On the rediscovery of Rosencreutz's vault, see below, p. 82f. and p. 136f.

178 On such celestial events contradicting Aristotelian astronomy, see: Weichenhan, 'Ergo perit coelum ...' *Die Supernova des Jahres 1572 und die Überwindung der aristotelischen Kosmologie*.

star was observed by many at the time and caused much excitement, including among famous astronomers such as Helisaeus Roeslin (1545–1616), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), and Kepler.¹⁷⁹ Kepler described the supernova of 1604 in his *On the New Star*. He discussed at length the star and its possible astrological meaning on the eve of a new period, although he believed the new star to indicate nothing: it was “blind chance” that it had appeared in that place at that moment.¹⁸⁰ His colleague Fabricius, instead, believed that “this new star signifies peace, and it will also signify peace as well as a change of the [Holy Roman] Empire for the better.”¹⁸¹ He was one of the astronomers who compared this star to that which had appeared over Bethlehem at Christ’s birth. Although these texts might have been published too late to influence the authors of the manifestos, they are indicative of the optimistic sense resulting from such striking celestial phenomena.

The 1604 supernova also immediately reminded astronomers of the 1572 star, which had been observed, among others, by the astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601). Referring to predictions about the new star of 1572, Brahe wrote:

Nor are these phenomena alien to the most ancient prophecies of very wise and divinely illuminated persons, who predicted that before the universal conflagration of all things a certain temporary peaceful and harmonious age on earth will take place, during which the confusions in political managements and of the tumultuous variety of religions will be transformed and be adapted to a state that will be more in agreement with divine intention.¹⁸²

179 Roeslin claimed, unlike the manifestos, that the star was a terrible omen that signified outward war and disasters, but inward peace and spiritual light. David Herlicius’ *Astronomische und Historische Erklerung des Newen Sterns oder ... Cometen ... 1604* (1605), about the new star of 1604, was especially influential at the time, but he also understood the star to signal destruction: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 171–172.

180 Kepler, *De stella nova in pede Serpentarii* (1606), 272–291; Granada, “The Discussion between Kepler and Roeslin on the Nova of 1604,” 35.

181 Fabricius, letter dated June 1607, cited in: Granada, “Johannes Kepler and David Fabricius: Their Discussion on the Nova of 1604,” 69, 73.

182 Brahe, *Progymnasmata*, 312: “neque etiam haec a vetustissimis sapientissimorum et divinitus illuminatorum hominum vaticiniis sunt aliena, qui ante universalem rerum omnium conflagrationem, pacificum quoddam et concors seculum aliquamdiu in terris futurum, in quo politicarum administrationum et varietatis religionum tumultuariarum confusiones transmutabuntur, et ad divinae voluntati conformiorem analogiam adaptabuntur, vaticinati sunt,” cited in: Ernst, “From the Watery Trigon,” 272. Brahe refers here to ancient prophecies, including the Tiburtine Oracle; see also: Brahe, *De nova stella* (1573). On Brahe, see particularly: Christianson, *On Tycho’s Island*.

Brahe, whose brother in law, Erik Lange, was later to be inspired by the Rosicrucian manifestos, was generally opposed to 'superstitious ideas', but like many others he believed that the new celestial phenomena must announce a new era. His view is particularly close to the Rosicrucian one, as he claimed that a seventh cycle or "restitution" was about to commence and that this new cycle will be a beneficial one.¹⁸³ Like the manifestos, he clearly used astronomical data to announce a return to the beginning, ushering in a new phase of renewal. The Louvain physician and astronomer Cornelius Gemma (1535–1578) further compared also this star to the one that had announced Christ's birth, after which, he wrote, inequality and evil will be exterminated.¹⁸⁴

That exceptional celestial occurrences announced upcoming earthly changes was an idea embraced by the Rosicrucians and many astronomers alike, and these earthly changes were eagerly anticipated. The optimistic tones struck in the manifestos corresponded to the message of these astronomers, but contrasted starkly with the mainstream Lutheran pessimism about the immediate future and the Joachimite fear of the final tribulations. The same goes for the cyclical conception of history, which can only be explained in reference to recent celestial events, but which departs dramatically from canonical and confessional literature.

1.3 The Renovation of Philosophy

A Philosophical Renovation

In keeping with the first term analysed in this chapter, "reformation," the brethren of Rosencreutz's fraternity yearned for a "general reformation of divine and human things," which was imminent, but had not yet taken place. In keeping with the second term, "revolutio," the evidence that a new day was approaching, heralding a return to the beginning, was the dawning of light.¹⁸⁵

183 Brahe, *Progymnasmata*, 312: "Veluti illae restitutiones trigonicae quae impari numero exhibitae sunt, velut prima, tertia et quinta, salutare Mundo fuerunt: sic et hanc septimam numero impari praecipue gaudentem, magni cuiusdam boni et felicius status esse praenunciam"; "et si septima haec est trigonorum in integrum ab Orbe condito restitutio, quemadmodum communiter recepta aetatis Mundi numeratio admittit [...]," cited in: Ernst, "From the Watery Trigon," 272.

184 Gemma, *De naturae divinis characteris*, 133, see: Ernst, "From the Watery Trigon," 271. On Gemma, see: Hirai (ed.), *Cornelius Gemma: Cosmology, Medicine and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Louvain*.

185 *Fama*, 121–122: "Wiewol wir nun wol wissen, daß es umb ein ziemliches, noch nicht an dem, da wieder unserm verlangen, oder auch anderer hoffnung, mit allgemeiner refor-

Light is of course often a metaphor of knowledge, and this introduces another dimension of the Rosicrucian general reformation: the idea of a renewal of philosophy. The “general reformation *divini et humani*” refers, most obviously, to a reformation of spiritual as well as secular affairs, that is, to religion and the empire. At the same time, the reference to a reformation of divine and human affairs points also to a renovation of divine and human knowledge; of theology, as well as of philosophy and the other arts. In one prominent passage, progress in the knowledge of divine and human things is expressly linked:

After the uniquely wise and merciful God has poured out His grace and goodness so generously in the last days over the human race, so that knowledge of both His Son and nature increasingly spreads, and we may justly rejoice in a happy time, so that not only the [other] half of the unknown and hidden world has been found, but also many wondrous and hitherto never experienced works and creations of nature are brought to us, and caused certain highly illuminated minds to stand up, who partially renewed the polluted and imperfect arts [...].¹⁸⁶

Progress in the knowledge of divine things (achieved by religious transformations) is associated with progress in the knowledge of the natural world (achieved by the voyages of discovery), as well as with progress in the renewal of the arts (achieved not only by Renaissance art and scholarship but also by technological advances, from which the era increasingly benefitted). While new creatures and the Americas (the unknown half of the world) were discovered, this formerly hidden world contained also the divine realm, because knowledge not only of nature but also of the Son became increasingly available.

The expectation of an age of philosophical enlightenment after the overthrow of the Antichrist and before the Second Coming was once again utterly alien to Luther’s worldview and to the apocalyptic expectations of confessional

186 Ibid., 91–92: “Nachdem der allein wyse und gnädige Gott in den letzten Tagen sein Gnad und Güte so reichlich über das Menschliche Geschlecht außgossen, daß sich die Erkantnuß/ beydes seines Sohns und der Natur/ je mehr und mehr erweitert/ und wihr uns billich einer glücklichen zeit rühmen mögen/ daher dann nicht allein das halbe theil der unbekandten und verborgenen Welt erfunden, viel wunderliche und zuvor nie geschehne Werk und Geschopff der Natur uns zuführen und dann hocheleuchte Ingenia auffstehen lassen, die zum theil die verunreinigte unvolkommene Kunst wieder zu recht brachten [...].”

Lutheranism of the period: according to Luther and mainstream Lutherans, it was a heterodox position to announce a time of intellectual enlightenment on earth. Again the Rosicrucians drew on approximate heterodox antecedents from before the Reformation period, but in this case the differences are as significant as the similarities.

Some medieval authors concerned with the *reformatio mundi* may have regarded changes and developments in knowledge and philosophy as necessary means for the correction of all that is corrupt. They expected a reparation of the world, but this reparation was mostly a corollary of Church reform.¹⁸⁷ For them, developments in *scientia* were to a large extent relevant only for the defeat of the Antichrist or in order to enter the New Jerusalem, and were not predominantly the result of a renovation of philosophy for the sake of knowledge itself. Roger Bacon, for example, criticised Aristotle and wanted improvements in the sciences, such as mathematics, natural philosophy, and astronomy, but also in alchemy.¹⁸⁸ He emphasised the importance of *scientia experimentalis*, but mostly for the purpose of the teaching of secular thought for theology, for the Last Days, and for the defeat of the Antichrist.¹⁸⁹ For him, a reformation in knowledge and the Church had as its primary purpose the fortification of a Christian society. His plans for reform were ecumenical, and after the Antichrist, already in place, there would come “one most blessed pope who removes all that is corrupt from the university, the Church, and the rest, and the world will be renewed and all people will enter, and the remainder of Israel will be converted to the faith.”¹⁹⁰

Arnald of Villanova expected a time “when over the entire world truth will be recognised and Christ will be honoured.”¹⁹¹ He advised that people study the

187 For Joachim: McGinn, “Apocalypticism and Church Reform,” 79. For Joachim, in any case, there is not really perfection until the end of the world. The new period, the future millennium, was simply a renewal of the New Testament, not a perfection or an entirely joyful time, see: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 22–23.

188 Hackett, “Roger Bacon on the Classification of the Sciences,” 57–59. On Bacon’s alchemy, its innovative character, and its purpose for medicine, see: Newman, “An Overview of Roger Bacon’s Alchemy,” esp. 323–335.

189 Hackett, “Roger Bacon on the Classification of the Sciences,” 49–53, 63; Newman, “An overview of Roger Bacon’s Alchemy,” 335. On Bacon’s *scientia experimentalis*, see: Hackett, “Roger Bacon on *scientia experimentalis*”; DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 87–89, 145.

190 Roger Bacon, *Compendium Studii Philosophiae*, 402: “unus beatissimus papa qui omnes corruptiones tollet de studio et ecclesia, et caeteris, et renovetur mundus, et intret plenitudo gentium, et reliquiae Israel ad fidem convertantur.” On this idea in Bacon, see also: DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 4, 91, 152.

191 Arnald of Villanova, *De tempore adventus antichristi*, edited in: Finke, *Aus den Tagen*,

natural world, because “after all, man knows God in the present life primarily through [His] creatures.”¹⁹² Himself a physician, Arnald wanted hospitals to be built, the poor to be housed, and men to be trained in theological schools.¹⁹³ He influenced Rupescissa, who was unique in believing that there was room for human agency in (preparation for) the Final Days.¹⁹⁴ Rupescissa argued that the study of nature and the practice of alchemy would play an essential role on the historical world stage, as it would contribute to the world’s transformation and the fight against the Antichrist.¹⁹⁵ Alchemy, in particular the creation of the philosophers’ stone, could help to avoid apocalyptic disasters. After a description of the creation of the philosophers’ stone, Rupescissa stated that he “has revealed this only for the Saints as remedies for the tribulations in the imminent times of the Antichrist.”¹⁹⁶ Although the Rosicrucians’ apocalyptic notions and aspirations for the reformation of religion, politics, and knowledge clearly had their precedent in such medieval reformers, the brethren surpassed their precursors by prioritising the reform of philosophy for the sake of knowledge itself and by renovating the world independently of any anticipation of the Final Events.

For the Rosicrucians, the renewal of philosophy was an integral part, not only of the *reformatio divini et humani*, but also of the *revolutio mundi*. The metaphor of gradually dawning light for the renewal of philosophy and theology is contrasted with the “darkness” of the preceding period, understood as confusion, lies, and heresy:

Whence it is right that deceit, darkness, and slavery withdraw, which, by the gradually advancing instability of the great globe, crept into the sciences, actions, and human governments, by which these have been for the better part obscured. Hence was born that innumerable diversity of

xxxxiii: “[...] tempus [...] in quo per universum orbem cognoscetur veritas et adorabitur Christus [...]].”

192 Arnald of Villanova, edited in: Perarnau i Espelt, “*L’Allocutio christini* d’Arnau de Vilanova: edició i estudi del text,” 78–80: “Cogniscit autem homo Deum in presenti vita, primo per creaturas.”

193 DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 91.

194 Rupescissa, *Vade mecum*, 502.

195 DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 4, 59–60, 152.

196 Rupescissa, *Liber Lucis*, 25^v: “Hoc enim solum pro Sanctis revelavi in proxima Antichristi tempora tribulationibus remedia,” cited in: DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, 59, 187–188. Here, Rupescissa makes use of alchemy in an apocalyptic or prophetic context. About prophecy and alchemy, see the insightful introduction to the subject, although specifically focused on the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, in: Crisciani, “*Opus and Sermo*.” On apocalyptic alchemy, see below, p. 118 ff.

opinions, lies, and heresies that either make it difficult even for very wise men to choose, while it tore asunder the fame of the philosophers, and the truth of experience. When finally all of this will be removed, as we trust, we shall see it instead substituted with a similar rule that will perpetually remain equal to itself.¹⁹⁷

Remarkable here is an inversion or revolution in intellectual values implicit in this and other passages from the manifestos. Here, the “lies” that had crept into the scientific and political areas are denounced with the religiously loaded term “heresy.” “Heresy” traditionally identifies beliefs that are contrary to established doctrine, and particularly refers to deliberate persistence in such error.¹⁹⁸ The brethren reversed the logic of this by identifying their own doctrine as the future standard, against which truth and falsity, orthodoxy and heresy, are to be measured. Seeing the traditional sciences and governments, which historically speaking represented the status quo, as beset with errors, the Rosicrucians deemed them heretical and aberrations from the Rosicrucian truth. The brethren derided the moral character of the traditional heretics, who deceive, enslave, and lie, and they wanted these heresies to be replaced by their own philosophy. With such aspirations to reform all teaching and what was built on it, the Rosicrucians far surpassed the aspirations of the Lutheran reformation, and also those of the medieval *reformatio mundi* of faith and state.

Within the institutional context of established learning, the manifestos also proposed an even more specific form of academic “revolution,” by threatening to overturn the hierarchy of the disciplines deeply entrenched in the medieval and early modern universities. Within the established curricular structure, the faculty of philosophy was subservient to the three higher faculties of medicine, law, and theology. The primary purpose of studying philosophy, in these institutions, was as a preparation for the three higher faculties; and, as a consequence, the needs of the higher faculties heavily influenced the content of the philosophical or arts curriculum. Although any one of the three higher faculties could only be studied after one had graduated in the liberal arts, theology

197 *Confessio*, 54: “Unde Falsum, tenebras, et servitutem cedere aequum est; quae, sensim progrediente Globi magni volutatione, in Scientias, Actiones et Imperia humana irrepserunt; illis ex magna parte obscuratis. Hinc illa sententiarum, Falsitatum, Haereseon innumeralis diversitas enata; quae vel sapientissimis hominibus delectum difficilem fecit, dum hinc philosophorum Fama, illinc experientiae veritas distraheret; quae si cuncta (uti confidimus) sublata aliquando, Unam v. Contra et sibi perpetuo similem Regulam substitutam viderimus.”

198 Maclean, “Introduction,” xv.

claimed the highest rank, since it dealt with the highest things (God) and the highest good (the eternal life of the soul, as opposed to the temporal life of the individual body and the body politic). To be sure, at Northern-European medieval universities, (natural) philosophy and philosophical arguments were used in discussions on theological matters, but philosophy always remained subordinate to theology.¹⁹⁹

In the Rosicrucian manifestos, this hierarchy is overturned by the incorporation of the higher faculties into the previously subordinate study of philosophy. "Philosophy," they argued, "is the head of all faculties, sciences, and arts."²⁰⁰ "Philosophy includes much of theology and medicine, but little of law."²⁰¹ Philosophy is thus transformed from a subordinate faculty into a broad category, which incorporates but also exceeds theology and medicine. Since philosophy was to be transformed, so too were theology and medicine. The reform of theology has already been discussed; the reform of medicine will be discussed in the next chapter, as it was the only profession to be practiced by the Rosicrucians.²⁰²

The demand for a reformation of philosophy emerged first as a rejection of the established philosophy of the universities. Christian Rosencreutz had discussed with Spanish scholars not only the problems within *ecclesia*, but also "what is failing in our arts and how they can be helped," and how "the entire moral philosophy may be improved."²⁰³ His objective, and that of his fraternity, was described as a replacement of established learning and a renovation of philosophy.

The authors of the manifestos dismissed all traditional philosophers, whom they viewed as not even remotely interested in the sought-after renovation and new philosophy. Amongst (university) scholars, "pride and ambition" abounded, "as they stick to their old songs," and it was thought that "the old enemy shows his cunning and rumble plentifully." The Rosicrucians were taking aim

199 On this, see: Kusukawa, *The Transformations of Natural Philosophy*, 7–26.

200 *Confessio*, 45: "Est autem Philosophia nobis nulla, quam quae facultatum, scientiarum, Artium caput."

201 *Ibid.*, 45: "[philosophia] theologiae ac medicinae plurimum, jurisprudentiae minimum habeat."

202 *Fama*, 106: "[k]einer solle sich keiner andern profession außthun, dann krancken zu curiren und diß alles umbsonst [...]" For the reform of medicine, see below, section 2.3.

203 *Fama*, 98–99: "Nach zweyen Jahren verließ Fr. R.C. Fessam, und fuhr mit vielen köstlichen stücken in Hispaniam [...], besprach sich derowegen mit den Gelehrten in Hispania, worinnen es unsern artibus fählete, und wie ihnen zu helfen, worauß die gewisse Indicia volgender seculorum zunehmen, und worinnen sie müssen mit den vergangenen concordiren, wie der Ecclesiae mangel und die ganz Philosophia moralis zuverbessern."

particularly at two classical authorities: Aristotle, who dominated the philosophical curriculum, and Galen, the principal authority for medicine. If Aristotle and Galen were alive today, according to the suggestion offered in the *Fama*, “no doubt they would happily correct their own errors, but here one is too weak for such great works.” Aristotle and Galen were mistaken, but those following in their footsteps had the possibility to see the newly discovered truths in “theology, physics, and mathematics”—and yet they refused to do so.²⁰⁴ Scholars demonstrated no willingness to contribute to the development of all the arts.²⁰⁵

A Restoration of Knowledge

This brings us to the third and final term used to describe the means at the disposal of the Rosicrucians, “renovatio.” “Renovation” suggests that the world will be, or should be, renewed. Such a “renovation” could occur primarily through changes within philosophy, so that the renewal of the world was intimately related to the development of philosophy:

Just as, where a new plague arises, nature usually reveals a remedy in that same place; so also during these great crises of philosophy, unique means arise in the least for the sanity [of philosophy], sufficiently suitable to our fatherland, through which philosophy can recover and appear in a new or renewed form through the renovation of the world.²⁰⁶

The nature of the means for recovery remains unknown, but the implication is that whilst unspecified tensions in philosophy broke out in the German-

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 92–93: “[...] ist auch bey den Gelehrten der Stolz und Ehrgeitz so hoch, daß sie nicht mögen zusammen treten, und auß allem, so Gott in unserm seculo reichlich mitgetheilet, in librum Naturae, oder regulam aller Künsten, söndern möchten, sondern je ein theil dem andern zu wieder thut, bleibe man bey der alten Leyren, und muß Bapst, Aristoteles, Galenus, ja was nur einem Codice gleich siehet, wieder das helle offenbahre Licht gelten, die ohn zweiffel selbst, so sie lebten, mit grossen Frewden sich corrigirten: hie aber ist man so grossen Wercken zu schwach, und ob wol in Theologia, Physica, unnd Mathematica, die Warheit entgegen gesetzt, lesset doch der alte Feind seine list und grollen mit hauffen sehen, da er durch Schwärmer unfried und Landleuffer, solchen schönen Lauff hindert und verhaßt machet.”

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 92–93. On further criticism of followers of Aristotle and Galen, Galenism, and the Aristotelian practice at universities, see below, section 2.3; see also: *Confessio*, 50–51.

²⁰⁶ *Confessio*, 45: “Caeterum ut plerumque in eo ipso loco, ubi nova lues exurgit, Natura remedium aperit, ita inter tantos Philosophiae paroxysmos, patriae nostrae satis idonea, imo ad sanitatem unica media succrescunt, per quae revalescat et nova, vel renovata, mundo renovando appareat.”

speaking lands, home to the brethren, the remedy to the matter was to be found in the same place. This is of course again a patriotic claim: the Rosicrucians had obtained from Christian Rosencreutz the right kind of philosophy with which they could now promote the advent of the new age and prepare the renovation of the world. They were well aware of the crumbling of the traditional Aristotelian-Galenic worldview, and expressed the dire need for change through texts that were inherently apocalyptic but also expressive of a sense of progress.

The abolition of all established teaching would occasion no regret amongst the Rosicrucians, who would, on the contrary, happily replace it all with their own—Christian Rosencreutz's—philosophical theories: "if the destruction of all literary works were decreed by the Almighty God, our Father Christian's contemplations will establish a new foundation of the sciences, on which posterity can erect a new citadel of truth."²⁰⁷ This citadel of truth was the same as the Rosicrucian axioms, which would endure until Judgement Day, and as the single rule that would replace the arts.

This formulation of the citadel of truth distances the brotherhood from another of the well institutionalised intellectual trends of the preceding period: Renaissance humanism. Humanists focused unprecedented attention on the language and literature of Antiquity, which they considered to be the foundation for a restitution of the arts, sciences, and philosophy. The idea that all literary works should be allowed to perish, runs against the humanist charge against the scholars of what they called the 'middle ages' between antiquity and its rebirth, who had actually allowed much of the literature of the previous period to disappear. Unlike the humanists, the Rosicrucians could face the prospect of a further loss of literary works with equanimity: if necessary, the whole of knowledge could be reconstructed from their principles. The path toward the new age did not begin by copying the old one; their renovation of philosophy was not a simple extension of the Renaissance.

The Rosicrucians' aim to reform natural philosophy coincided with changes in the seventeenth century, such as the further discovery of plants, fruits, and animals from the New World; and developments in astronomy, natural philosophy, and medicine through innovation and invention. They were aware of these new developments and their potential to undermine traditional modes of thought, and they believed that this finally cleared the way for real progress to be made. Thus the Rosicrucian protagonist, Christian Rosencreutz, is described

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 49: "[...] Patris nostri Christiani [...] meditationes [...], si a Deo omnipotente universae rei literariae interitus immitteretur, nova scientiarum fundamenta jacere, novamque veritatis arcem extruere posteritas possit"; *Confessio* (Gdańsk), 59.

as having gone to Spain to show the (traditional) scholars “new plants, fruits, and animals, that could not be explained from the old philosophy,” but which those scholars ignored because

it was all a joke to them, and because it was still new, they were worried that their great names would be diminished if they now began to learn and would admit their errors of many years. They were accustomed to their errors, and these had brought them enough profit [that they said]: ‘Another, who is served by unrest, should rather reform.’²⁰⁸

Rosencreutz was met with similarly dismissive responses in the other countries he visited.²⁰⁹ New discoveries from the New World, the Americas, such as plants and animals that the old Aristotelian philosophy could not explain, made a new (Rosicrucian) philosophy necessary, but traditional scholars were too vain to admit it. As the innovations in philosophy were linked to developments in natural philosophy or *scientia*, knowledge was no longer supposed to come from book study, as was customary at northern-European universities, but rather from nature and empirical investigations. For the Rosicrucians, hitherto invisible creations were to be discovered, and all that had “hindered the human mind and its operations” will be “disposed of.”²¹⁰ Against the conservative pusillanimity, the Rosicrucians pushed for reform. Not only was it possible to defeat the Antichrist and establish a new empire; the sciences and philosophy were to be radically improved.

The brethren further suggested that such developments in knowledge should be used for the training and teaching of future political leaders, thereby linking the reform of *scientia* to political reform. The authors of the *Fama*

208 *Fama*, 99: “Er zeigte ihnen neue Gewächs, neue Früchte, Thiere, die sich nicht nach der alten Philosophia richteten [...], aber es war ihnen alle lächerlich. Und weil es noch new/ besorgten sie/ ihr grosser Nahme würde geschmalert/ so sie erst lehren/ und ihre viel jährige irrung bekennen solten/ des ihren weren sie gewohnet/ und hette ihnen auch genug eingetragen: Ein anderer/ deme mit Unruhe gedienet/ möchte eben wohl reformiren.”

209 *Ibid.*, 99.

210 *Ibid.*, 91–92; *Confessio*, 62–63: “[Dei] laboris ea praemia habituri estis, ut quaecunque Natura in omnes terrae partes dispersit bona, ea juncta et unita vobis [...] collatura sit. Iam cuncta ea, quae humanam cognitionem obnubilant, actionem retardant, [...] expellere possitis”; *Confessio* (Gdańsk), 81: “Fürwar wenn ihr das thun werdet, wird euch dieser Nutz darauß erwachsen, daß alle Güter, so die Natur an alle örter der Welt wunderbarlich zerstreuet hat euch zugleich miteinander werden verliehen und mitgetheilet werden, wie ihr den auch alles was den Menschlichen Verstandt verdunckelt und dessen Wirkung verhindert leichtlich werdet ablegen.”

claimed that, like Fez, a society existed in Europe that was rich in gold and gems which served the common good. In it, future rulers were raised so that “they know everything which God wanted people to know.”²¹¹ This society seems to represent the Platonic ideal of a training place for philosopher-rulers. Gold and gems, the finest amongst the metals and stones, represented the community’s wealth and wisdom, from which future leaders may learn and profit for their political endeavours. Thus the discovery of hitherto hidden secrets would be beneficial for the empire, too.

In the Rosicrucians’ notion of progress and the role therein for human beings, themes were expounded on at length that were totally absent from Luther’s writings. To them, reform entailed much more than a reinterpretation of the Gospel, and with their notion of epistemic progress the manifestos further violated the notion of Luther and mainstream Lutherans that improvements before the end were impossible.

Still, the Rosicrucian manifestos cannot simply be understood as outpourings of the contemporary shift from books to nature. For the Rosicrucians, the thriving of the arts was not just the result of contemporary progress in these fields. As the world was returning to its original splendour and the order of nature was being restored, in agreement with this cyclical notion primeval wisdom—again granted by God—was returning to the world. One of the central events described in the *Fama* is the discovery of Rosencreutz’s vault. The third generation of Rosicrucians discovered this vault after the first brethren of the Rose Cross had passed away. As they had done every year, their successors returned to Rosencreutz’s house, which was called *Holy Spirit*, below which his vault was hidden. The brethren claimed that “what we experience and publicly declare about Father C’s grave, was also ordered, allowed and imposed by God.”²¹² On the vault, which the brethren discovered by accident and opened “with great joy and desire,” was written: “After 120 years I shall open.”²¹³ To this, the authors added: “Just as our door is miraculously opened

211 *Fama*, 100: “[...] daß man also auch in Europae ein Societet hette, die alles genug von Goldt und Edelgestein habe/ und es den Königen zu gebührenden propositis mittheilen/ bey welchen die Regenten erzogen würden/ die alles das jenige/ so Gott dem Menschen zu wissen zugelassen/ wüsten.”

212 *Ibid.*, 111: “Es sol aber der großgünstige Leser nachmahln erinnert sein, daß was wir an itzo von seiner des Fr. C. Begräbnuß nicht allein erfahren, sondern auch hiermit öffentlich kundt thun, also von Gott versehen, erlaubt und injungiret worden [...]” On what they found is this vault, see below, section 2.4.

213 *Fama*, 112–113: after a description of a brother searching for a place to hide a plaque with the names of the brethren, he found Rosencreutz’s vault: “[...] An seiner Taffel nun steckte ein grosser Nagel etwas stärker, also daß, da er mit gewalt außzogen wurde, er

after so many years, also a door will open for Europe [...], which can already be espied, and for which many wait eagerly.”²¹⁴ The discovery of this vault ushered in changes for all of Europe as well as the revelation of what was hidden and access to previously hidden knowledge.

Access to knowledge of the past was a central aspect of the philosophical reformation, and was the result of the return of the primordial order, in proximity to the widespread notion of the returned Golden Age. The brethren announced that “God has declared truth, light and dignity to return to the world, which would not long afterwards be destroyed—such things as he had ordered to move from Paradise together with Adam—and to temper man’s misery.”²¹⁵ Rupescissa, in his *Book of Secret Events*, had similarly argued that during the millennium there will be such an outpouring of knowledge that it would seem “as if Paradise had descended to earth.”²¹⁶ The Rosicrucians, however, associated the return of the original order of nature in the new age not only with the return of the lost original purity of Paradise, but more specifically with the return of original wisdom, which had previously been known only to a few pious men in the remote past:

Our philosophy is nothing new but is the same as that which Adam received after his Fall and which was also exercised by Moses and Solomon. Thus she should not engage in exercises of questioning or refutations of other opinions, but as truth is one, brief, and always consistent with itself and above all fully in accordance with Jesus in all its parts and members, just as He is the image of the Father, so it [truth] is His likeness.

einen ziemblichen Stein von dem dünnen Gemäwr oder Incrustation, über die verborgen Thür, mit sich nahme, und die Thür ohnverhofft entdeckte, dahero wihr mit Frewden und verlangen, das übrige Gemäwr hinweg geworffen, und die Thüre geseubert, daran stund gleich oben mit grossen Buchstaben geschrieben: ‘Post CXX annos patebo’, sampt der alten Jahrzahl darunter.” On page 119, it is written that “our most beloved father, sweetest brother, most faithful teacher, our most honourable friend, for 120 years he was hidden here on his own”; “Pater dilectissimus, Fr. Suavissimus, paeceptor fidelissimus, amicus integerrimus, a suis ad 120 annos hic absconditus est.”

214 Ibid., 113–114: “[...] gleich wie unsere Thüre nach so viel Jahren wunderbarlicher weyse eröffnet, also sol Europae eine Thüre auffgehen [...] die sich schon sehen lesset, und von nicht wenigen mit begierd erwartet wird.”

215 *Confessio*, 53–54: “Illud itaque unum nobis confirmandum est, Mortales, Deum mundo haud longe post interituro, reddendam veritatem, Lucem et dignitatem decrevisse: qualia cum Adamo Paradiso emigrare, & hominis miseriam condire jussit.”

216 Rupescissa, *Liber secretorum eventuum*, 202: “[...] ut paradisus videatur quasi descendisse in terram, quia supra omnem estimationem humanam Ecclesia universa transformabitur in omnem perfectionem vite Christi.”

Thus it should not be said: 'This is true according to philosophy but false according to theology', but rather wherein Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, and others recognised the truth, for which Enoch, Abraham, Moses and Solomon provided the crucial argument, and which above all is consistent with that wonderful book, the Bible—all of that comes together [...].²¹⁷

Speaking of their philosophy as specifically Rosicrucian ("our philosophy"), the authors referred to a unified set of people having a unified set of ideas, which was to be distinguished from other philosophies and especially from university practices and established learning. This Rosicrucian philosophy should not engage in the scholastic practices of disputations, in which philosophers argued for or against a certain question or proposition. The texts referred to the principle that "truth is one," and by identifying philosophy and theology the manifestos further dismissed the traditional hierarchy of theology over philosophy. To them, the one and only truth should be understood in a Christian manner, and the Christian truth both mirrored God the Father and corresponded with philosophy, more precisely the philosophy of the ancients.

With this identification of philosophy and theology, the Rosicrucians dismissed the double-truth theory, according to which philosophy and theology have different truths. Medieval Averroïsts held the position of two different truths, in order to be able to make philosophical claims on the basis of Aristotle which did not align with religious dogmas. This theory was condemned several times. It was one of the theories prohibited in the Paris Condemnations of 1270 and 1277, when the Bishop Etienne Tempier (d. 1279) listed numerous propositions that were prohibited, including the double-truth theory. But until the seventeenth century, the double-truth theory remained influential, especially in Italy.²¹⁸

217 *Fama*, 123–124: "Unser Philosophia ist nichts neues sondern wie sie Adam nach seinem Fall erhalten und Moses und Salomon geübet. Also solle sie nicht viel Dubiteren, oder andere meinungen widerlegen, sondern weil die Warheit eyinig kurz und ihr selbst immerdar gleich, besonders aber mit Jesu ex omni parte, und allen membris überrein kompt, wie er des Vatters Ebenbild, also sie sein Conterfeth ist. So sol es nicht heissen: Hoc per Philosophiam Verum est, sed per Theologiam falsum, sondern worinnen es Plato, Aristoteles Phytagoras und andere getroffen, wo Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Salomo den außschlag geben, besonders wo das grosse Wunderbuch die Biblia concordiret, das kömmet zusammen [...]."

218 Blair, "Mosaic Philosophy," 33–34. On Tempier and the several Paris Condemnations, see: Grant, "The Effect of the Condemnation of 1277"; idem, *Planets, Stars and Orbs*, 50–56, 150–165; Putallaz, "Censorship," 99–113.

A few years before the manifestos were drafted, the so-called *Hofmann-Streit* took place at one of the first Protestant universities, the University of Helmstedt, about 200 kilometres south-east of where the manifestos were printed. There, Daniel Hofmann (1538–1611) attacked the Christology of Jakob Andreae (1528–1590), the grandfather of one of the possible authors of the manifestos, Johann Valentin Andreae. Hofmann argued that Aristotelian philosophy, or philosophy in general, devalued Christ's Word, and that each of the two fields should be left within its own domain.²¹⁹ In 1598, he presented 101 theses on the position of philosophy and theology. One of his claims was that philosophy and theology do not have the same truth, that philosophy cannot help us to acquire theological truths, and that those who claim otherwise are to be suspected of Pelagianism.²²⁰ In response to his dispute at the university, Hofmann was commanded to withdraw his statements, because it implied a severe revision of the standard curriculum.²²¹

The Hofmann controversy may remind us of Luther's *Heidelberg Theses* of 1518, of which the first philosophical thesis claimed that "who wants to philosophise in Aristotle without danger, needs first of all to be made a fool in Christ."²²² Luther had distinguished between philosophy and theology, claiming that "[t]he same thing is not true in both philosophy and theology," and that "philosophy and theology have different subjects."²²³ Luther never upheld the double-truth theory. Even though he acknowledged that there may be various truths, the truths of philosophy and religion not merely differed but had entirely different objects of study, so that philosophy did not provide an alternative truth to the theological truth.²²⁴ In his early years as a reformer, Luther emphatically dismissed Aristotle's philosophy, arguing that it was useless and without any genuine knowledge. Aristotle's philosophical works, the *Physics*,

219 Antognazza, "Hofmann-Streit: il dibattito sul rapporto tra filosofia e teologia all'Università di Helmstedt," 390–420; Haga, *Was There a Lutheran Metaphysics?*, 191–202, 211. On Andreae, see Chapter 3.

220 Antognazza, "Hofmann-Streit," 394. Cf. *ibid.*, 397–400. Pelagianism, named after the monk Pelagius (354–ca. 440), entailed the theory that original sin did not affect the purity of human nature. On this, see below, p. 95.

221 Antognazza, "Hofmann-Streit," 309–420. The irony was, however, that Hofmann had to use philosophical arguments in order to conclude that philosophy was dangerous; see *ibid.* On the double-truth theory, see also: Friedrich, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*.

222 Luther, *Disputatio Heidelbergae habita*, WA 1, 355, thesis 29: "Qui sine periculo volet in Aristotele philosophari, necesse est ut ante bene sultificetur in Christo."

223 Luther, WA 39/2; 31–32: "idem non est verum in philosophia et theologia"; *ibid.*, 26: "Philosophia et theologia habent diversum subiectum. Ergo non pugnant inter se. Sunt diversa, non contraria."

224 Dieter, "Luther as Late Medieval Theologian," 46 ff.

Metaphysics, *De anima*, and *Ethica*, were to be eliminated from the university curriculum.²²⁵ “Aristotle,” he claimed, “is to theology as darkness is to light.”²²⁶ Philosophy and theology should therefore each be left to their own devices, as the only meaningful truth was found in Scripture.²²⁷

But the Rosicrucians identified theological and philosophical truths, and moreover suggested that the philosophy of Aristotle (though not of the scholastics who followed in his wake) agreed, at least in part, with Scripture. In this sense, they again differed from Luther, but also from the university curriculum. Their ultimate source for studying and understanding the world was in fact the Bible:

The nearest and most similar to us are those who make the Bible their rule of life, the *summa* of their studies, and the compendium of the entire world [...]. Who owns the Bible is blessed, who reads it is more blessed, who learns it by heart is most blessed: who understands and serves [it], is most similar to God.²²⁸

The Bible for the Rosicrucians was the central source for their morality, their “rule of life,” and their studies, and as it encompassed the entire world it served as a key to understanding it. One could even become similar to God by achieving complete knowledge through the understanding of Scripture.

With such claims, the brethren were however not preaching in accordance with Luther’s *sola scriptura*, the doctrine whereby the only source of revelation was the Word of God.²²⁹ According to Lutheran orthodoxy, one could

225 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 35–44. Cf. *ibid.*, 33, xvi. For Luther, improvements in education and indoctrination were preparations for the end; see: Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 60–71, 115–116.

226 Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, cited in *Luther’s Works*, xxxi, 9–16, here p. 12. See further: Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 32–34. This was also the opinion of Melanchthon; see: *ibid.*, 65–66.

227 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 201. Melanchthon, certainly at first, held similar views; see: Melanchthon, *CR*, xii, 695, cited in: Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 66. Melanchthon, however, later admitted the use and teaching of philosophy in universities, and as put by Kusukawa, “Melanchthon’s natural philosophy never rationally proved the central tenets of Lutheran theology”; see: *ibid.*, 202; see also pp. 50–51, 60, 65–66, 69.

228 *Confessio*, 57–58: “Ita proximi ii, et maxime similes nobis, qui una Biblia suae vitae Regulam, suorum studiorum summam, mundique universi compendium faciunt [...]. Quod qui habet [SS Bibliorum opus] felix est, qui legit, felicior: qui ediscit, felicissimus: qui intelligit et servat, Deo similimus.”

229 Scripture could still be complemented by *traditio*. Magisterial reformers did not want to

neither be completely illuminated by the Bible nor become similar to God in the present life—but this was precisely what the Rosicrucians suggested.²³⁰ The manifestos further associated the wisdom of the old Patriarchs and Hebrew masters, which was written down in Scripture, with the philosophy of pagan masters such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, which implied that their philosophies corresponded (“concordiret”), at least in part, with some secrets that were later to be expressed through Scripture.

The linking of theology with philosophy, of the Bible with primordial wisdom, and recommending the use of the Bible as the *summa* and touchstone of their studies rather breath the air of the tradition of Mosaic philosophy. Disappointed by contemporary Peripatetic philosophy, many Renaissance authors turned to a literal reading of Scripture, especially of the first chapters of Genesis, for a foundation of their natural philosophy. Like the Rosicrucians, they understood their own (natural) philosophy to be inherently Christian, and, conversely, Christianised ancient pagan natural philosophy and associated it with primordial wisdom and the Bible.²³¹ Mosaic philosophers founded their physics in a Christian reading of Scripture, and understood it to be opposed to Aristotelian philosophy but in agreement with an original pious philosophy—hence the term “Mosaic physics.” Despite the lack of any attempt to provide a literal reading of the Bible or to found their studies explicitly on Genesis, the alternative that the Rosicrucians proposed is akin to Mosaic physics: they aspired to provide a universal, Christian doctrine, making the Bible the foundation of their studies, drawing on the contents of the first chapters of Genesis, albeit implicitly, and opposing their philosophy to scholastic thought. Their philosophy was the same as that of Moses and Solomon, and reminiscent of those of pre-Christian philosophers such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, but the Rosicrucians co-opted such ancient thought into a Christian framework.

From this emphasis on the ability to obtain original truths, it follows that the manifestos can also be associated with another tradition of the time.

invent an entirely new tradition, but Scripture was to be reinterpreted and *traditio* was to be grounded in Scripture; see: Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 84–85. It should be noted that *sola scriptura* was not opposed to tradition, and that Luther did not invent this authority of Scripture, he rather continued but popularised a medieval concept; cf., also for further literature, *ibid.*, 72–84, 96 ff.

²³⁰ Cf. below, p. 323 f.

²³¹ On Mosaic philosophy, see especially: Blair, “Mosaic Physics,” here pp. 32–33; Gilly, “Vom ägyptischen Hermes,” 106–113. Petrus Severinus called “Physica Mosaica” in general terms “all those diverse knowledges of nature”; see: Gilly, “Khunrath und das Entstehen der frühneuzeitlichen Theosophie.”

The manifestos proclaimed that philosophy could actually help human beings acquire original and divine truths. It is the philosophy known to Adam *after* the Fall that was considered to be similar to the Rosicrucian philosophy. For philosophy to mirror God the Father, Adam must have been able to bring divine wisdom with him from Paradise after the Fall, or to be otherwise divinely inspired even outside of Paradise. In the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*, the biblical figures mentioned, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and Solomon, were often seen as heralds of divine wisdom.²³² In this tradition, secrets to be revealed were thought to have been known to a few wise persons in the far past, were afterwards lost, and were now disclosed again, often in proximity to the last days of the world. In the manifestos, the announcement of the new period went hand in hand with such a revelation of secrets. Ancient knowledge that was at least partly known to Aristotle, Plato, and Moses, but was lost when scholastic philosophers began to merely follow Aristotle and Galen and to study philosophy through scholastic practices, had again become accessible to a few men in the recent past and now found its expression and wider dissemination in the Rosicrucian manifestos.

One type of perennial philosophy is Hermeticism. The idea of a perennial philosophy became popular in the Renaissance after Marsilio Ficino's translation of several of Plato's works and the *Corpus Hermeticum* (published in 1471), which was attributed to the legendary ancient Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus.²³³ Several Renaissance philosophers claimed to be followers of Hermes,

²³² *Fama*, 123–124. The main difference between the *philosophia perennis* (or *prisca philosophia*) and the *prisca theologia* is that the *prisca theologia* refers to previously lost knowledge once known to the ancients, while *philosophia perennis* refers to knowledge passed down from the ancients to the present. Here the term “*philosophia perennis*” will be used as a more generic term for those movements returning to perennial wisdom. For a discussion of the *prisca philosophia* and *prisca theologia*, see: Hanegraaff, “Tradition,” in *Dictionary of Gnosis* (ed. Hanegraaff), 1125–1135. For a historical overview of the *philosophia perennis*, see: Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, esp. ch. 9. See also: Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*. For a discussion of medieval esoteric themes and Renaissance occult philosophy in the manifestos, see: Faivre, “Les Manifestes et la tradition,” 90–114; idem, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, 171–190.

²³³ For hermetic philosophy, see, for example: Copenhaver, *Hermetica*; idem, *Magic in Western Culture*; Ebeling, “Alchemical Hermeticism.” An influential but outdated source is: Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. On Ficino, see also: Copenhaver, “Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the De Vita of Marsilio Ficino.” Many Renaissance philosophers interested in Hermeticism were also versed in (Christian) Cabala, with which, according to the *Fama*, also Rosencreutz was acquainted; see: *Fama*, 96–97. For several Cabalists and the *philosophia perennis*, see: Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*.

who was thought to have possessed true wisdom. The advocates of Hermeticism believed themselves to belong to a tradition of divine and superior wisdom, or true philosophy, which had originated with the first human beings, ancient philosophers, and “magi.”²³⁴ As a consequence, “primeval philosophy” was frequently associated with an ancient type of magic, passed down from Adam to his descendants, then to the magi and further to ancient philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras, who are mentioned in the Rosicrucian manifestos.

In the manifestos, the specific role of Hermes is minor, even though the Rosicrucians share the general philosophical framework of Hermeticism. The name of Hermes does not appear in either the *Fama* or the *Confessio*, and in the *Chemical Wedding* his name is mentioned only once, on a tablet on a fountain, which tablet was borne, once more, by a lion. The text of the tablet, which is about the water in the fountain, is read out loud by Rosencreutz: “Princely Hermes: After so many injuries caused to the human race, by God’s council and by the existence of art, a beneficial medicine is made; here I flow. Drink from me who can; wash, who wishes; make me turbid, who dares. Drink, brothers, and live.”²³⁵ This passage nicely encapsulates the Rosicrucians’ concern for medicine and the arts, and their disapproval of the misuses in these fields—which could now be remedied with the help of Hermes.

The term *philosophia perennis* was first introduced by the Vatican librarian Agostino Steuco (ca. 1497–1548) in his *On the First Philosophy* (1540), which was influenced by Ficino and Pico.²³⁶ This work was printed four times in the sixteenth century. In it, Steuco claimed about the original philosophy that “this knowledge was gathered and absolute in the first men.”²³⁷ In later times, when people scattered all over the world, this knowledge was lost among most

234 In line with the Italian Neoplatonists, these magi were ancient illuminated figures from Persia and Egypt, among whom Zoroaster, rather than the Bethlehem magi. On these magi, see: Walker, *The Ancient Theology*, 3–10; De Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*; Webster, *Paracelsus*, 65.

235 *Chemical Wedding*, 74: “Hermes Princeps, Post tot illata generi humano damna, dei consilio: artisque adminiculo, medicina salubris factus. Heic fluo. Bibat ex me qui potest: lavet, qui vult: turbet qui audet: Bibite fratres et vivite.” It is unclear what the meaning of Hermes’ name is here. For Hermeticism in the *Chemical Wedding*, see also: Edighoffer, *Les Rose-Croix*, 139–162; Gilly, “Vom ägyptischen Hermes.”

236 On Steuco’s perennial philosophy, see: Schmitt, “Perennial Philosophy: from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz.”

237 Steuco, *De perenni philosophia libri IX*, 1: “Hanc quidem scientiam in primis hominibus cumulatam, absolutamque fuisse.”

people, and remained known only to a few.²³⁸ That ancient wisdom was then passed to the Greeks, “as Plato also testifies.”²³⁹ Later knowledge was less perfect:

The philosophy of those ancients was presumably much more perfect and clear than the philosophy that was later born from contemplation. But in recent times, a brighter light appeared concealing or blunting previous times (like the rising sun usually obscures the stars), as if it were its rays and the dawn preceding the rising sun.²⁴⁰

This very idea of a misguided university philosophy blurring ancient wisdom returned in the manifestos.²⁴¹ Note also the similarity in wording of the aforementioned dawn of the rising sun in the *Confessio*, which reads that “[a]fter the world will have slept off its intoxication from the poisonous and soporific chalice, in the morning it will proceed to meet the rising sun with an opened heart, and bareheaded and barefoot, happy and jubilant.”²⁴²

To express the restored ancient wisdom upon the return of the original order of nature, the Rosicrucians required a language similar to the original language. In an attempt to express nature’s essence, the Rosicrucians formulated a new language based on the characters and alphabet to be found in the Bible and in God’s creation. They derived “our magical letters entirely from these letters, and made ourselves a new language from them that simultaneously expresses the nature of things.” About other languages it is stated that “they are not in the least redolent of Adam’s or Enoch’s language, but are contaminated by

238 Ibid., 2: “Siquidem cum post sparsum, ac diffusum in omnes terras genus humanum, priores illi et pauci fuissent, et longius a se recessissent, tum vitae necessariis excogitandis essent intenti, necesse fuit rerum praeteritarum memoriam neglectam, apud paucos omnino remansisse [...]. Et veritas quidem apud paucos restitit.”

239 Ibid., 3: “Ex vetustissima Theologia, quae a primis hominibus perveniens, qui Armeni, Chaldaei que fuerunt, perpetuis successionibus descendit ad caeteros barbaros, ab his ad Graecos, ut Plato quoque testatur.”

240 Ibid., 3: “Veri quidem est simile, maiorum illorum et perfectiorem longe et clariorem fuisse, ista quae postea ex contemplatione nata est Philosophia. Sed novissimis saeculis, omnis et illa et haec, clariore exorta luce (veluti oriente sole, solent stellae obscurari) obsconsa, vel hebetata est, ut quasi radii fuerint eius, et venturum solem praecedens aurora.”

241 *Fama*, 92–93.

242 *Confessio*, 56: “Postquam venenati et soporiferi calicis crapulam edormiverit Mundus; atque manet exorienti Soli apertis pectoribus, detectis capitibus, amotis calceis, laetus jubilansque; obviam processerit.”

the Confusion of Babel,” claiming that only theirs is similar to the original tongue.²⁴³ The world was witnessing the return not only of the order of nature, magic, and true philosophy; but also of the language once belonging to the time of Adam.

The origin of the creation of a new language, and the judgement that contemporary languages are confused, lies, of course, in Genesis.²⁴⁴ Creation itself had occurred through an act of speech (Genesis 1:3–4). When Adam was created, he was invested with full knowledge of the natural world, which enabled him to name the creatures of God in Paradise (Genesis 2:19–20). Even after he and Eve had been cast out of Paradise for eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the universal, Adamic language remained intact. Before the Confusion of Babel, all humans spoke the same language, which enabled them to work together and allowed them to do everything they wanted (Genesis 11:6). But God eventually confused their language, dividing it into many languages so they would not understand one another, which is known as the Confusion of Babel (Genesis 11:7–9). The Rosicrucian restoration of the original language was intended to cancel the consequences of the Confusion of Babel.

Many medieval and Renaissance thinkers had equally been inspired by the idea of an original Adamic language and had dedicated their thought and work to the creation and command of a universal tongue. The alchemist John Dee (1527–1608/9) and his colleague Edward Kelley (1555–1597), for example, claimed that they had been taught the Adamic or Angelic language which enabled them to converse with angels.²⁴⁵ Figures as diverse as Boethius of Dacia, Dante Alighieri, Raymond Lull, Johannes Trithemius, Guillaume Postel, Giordano Bruno, and Jacob Boehme have written works about the concept of an artificial universal language, ranging from a codified system to communicate secret and universal messages (e.g., Trithemius’ steganography) to a language specifically intended to voice what lay hidden behind the external reality (e.g., Lull’s art).²⁴⁶ Later, Francis Bacon would inspire many English logicians

243 Ibid., 56–57: “[...] a quibus literis nos omnino nostras Magicas mutuo sumsimus et linguam nobis exinde novam collegimus, qua simul rerum natura exprimitur; unde mirum non sit, si in reliquis linguis et hac latina minus delicati simus: quas scimus neutiquam Adami illam aut Enochii redolere; sed Babylonis confusione contaminatas esse.” On the Adamic language in the manifestos, cf. Edighoffer, *Les Rose-Croix*, 19; idem, *Les Rose-Croix et la crise*, 77–78.

244 Cf. John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” On this, see also: Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, 6–8.

245 Harkness, *John Dee’s Conversations with Angels*, 160 ff.

246 On the universal language, see: Strasser, *Lingua Universalis*; Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, esp. pp. 178–182; Lewis, *Language, Mind and Nature*. On astrology as a

and linguists with his proposal of an artificial language of new characters that would represent “things and notions” without the imperfections of alphabetical characters.²⁴⁷

Like others before them, the brethren maintained that contemporary languages were insufficient and inadequate for the expression of divine truths. The *Confessio* stated that they created a new language, suggesting that theirs is not simply the return of the language once spoken by Adam and Enoch. This new language, they suggested, was similar to the Adamic tongue, but was made anew possibly because the old language was lost, which meant that a new language was needed to express the essence of things for which other languages were unsuitable.

Importantly, the aim of the Rosicrucians was a perfect language rather than a universal one.²⁴⁸ The language described in the *Confessio* was not one that every person could speak. According to the brethren, many were incapable of grasping the divine secrets, whilst the Rosicrucian language was able to express not only those divine secrets but also the nature of things. Only this perfect language was suitable to address divine matters, which could not be done “in other languages and in this Latin.”²⁴⁹ The Rosicrucians thereby neglected again the humanist practices of the time and their return to the prose style and vocabulary of ancient Greek and Latin authors. For them, the Latin used at universities, the *lingua franca* of the intellectual community and of the humanists, did not suffice for expressing true wisdom. Their perfect language, by contrast, because it emulated the Adamic tongue, possessed the magic of naming things according to their essence. Through it, they had possession of ancient philosophy and magic and were able to express the characters to be found both in the Bible as well as in God’s creation, that is, in the Word and the World.²⁵⁰

language, see: Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*. See further: Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted*, 66–73; Maat, *Philosophical Languages in the Seventeenth Century: Dalgarno, Wilkins, Leibniz*. On Trithemius’ steganography for secret and universal messages: Strasser, “Closed and Open Languages,” 152–156.

247 Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (eds. Spedding, Ellis, Heath), vol. 1, *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum*, 651–653; vol. 3, *Advancement of Learning*, 399–400; see: Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 145–150, 306. See also: Lewis, *Language, Mind and Nature*.

248 This difference was also observed by: Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, 73. See further: Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 145–159.

249 *Confessio*, 57, see above, n. 243.

250 On these characters in relation to the two books, see also: Kileen and Forshaw, *The Word and the World*; Forshaw, “Vitriolic Reactions.”

This idea resonates with what has been termed the *clavis universalis*, a notion espoused widely by various well-known authors such as Giordano Bruno, Francis Bacon, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Jan Amos Comenius, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The term *clavis universalis*, the “universal key,” refers to the idea that man was able to probe beyond the appearances of the natural world to observe the divine secrets hidden within.²⁵¹ The celestial events, announcing earthly changes and the new age, coincided with the disclosure of previously hidden secrets. Such signs sent by God indicated that “the Book of Nature is opened wide before the eyes of all, even though few can either read or understand it,” implying that new characters could now, at last, be read by some.²⁵² Recall that the *Confessio* stated that such signs and characters were inscribed by God on the machine of the world, for humans to read and admire them.²⁵³ God had inserted such characters throughout creation and in the Bible, which were revelations of divine wisdom and were sent by God for humans to understand His plan. His messengers could be used to acquire wisdom of nature and the divine, but also to probe into the future:

In the same manner that God inserted here and there characters of this kind and His very alphabet in the Holy Books, so He impressed them openly in the admirable works of creation on the heavens, earth, and the animals, so that just as the mathematician can predict eclipses, so we can foresee the dark periods of the Church and their durations.²⁵⁴

Just as an astronomer can predict future celestial events, so the Rosicrucians claimed that they could read God’s signs and predict the future and its duration, notably in a religious context. Nowhere in the manifestos is there a suggestion as to how such signs could be read and how future events could be predicted—the reference to such messengers simply served to inform the reader of their presence, of the coming new era, and of the brethren’s ability to fully express their pious philosophy and discoveries properly, owing to their new language.

²⁵¹ Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, xv.

²⁵² *Confessio*, 55: “De sua quidem voluntate jam praemisit nuncios Deus, Stellas in Serpentario atque Cygno exortas, quae magna profecto magni Consilii signacula illud docere possunt, quam junctis iis, quae humanum ingenium adinvenit, suae occultae scripturae inservire faciat, ut Liber Naturae in omnium quidem oculis expansus adaptatusque sit; pauci tamen vel legere omnino, vel intelligere possint.”

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 56: “Eiusmodi characteres atque adeo Alphabetum suum sicut Deus sparsim SS. Bibliis inseruit, ita in admirando Creationis opere Caelis, Terrae, Animalibus manifeste impressit, ut, quo Mathematicus modo Ecclipses praevidet; eodem nos Ecclesiae obscurationes, earundumque durationes praecognoscamus.”

Evidently, the notion of a divine primeval philosophy expressible in an Adamic tongue deviated from the traditional idea of a philosophical ascent from mythology through Presocratic “stammerings” to Aristotelian systematicity. It suggested that there had been no progress in knowledge, beginning with the ancients, through the Presocratics up and until the time of the Renaissance. Steuco rejected the idea of progress in truth: the truth of the ancients was the same as that which was once again coming to light. Likewise, the Rosicrucian authors suggested (echoing the *philosophia perennis*) that wisdom presently increased because original, divine wisdom was returning to the world, implying that the Middle Ages had indeed just been the ‘middle ages’. The new age was a restoration, or an instauration, of ancient times. The idea of the return of Adamic wisdom and language neatly coincides with the Rosicrucian cyclical conception of time, which was absent in the confessional literature.

But the manifestos also stated that philosophy and the sciences advanced towards truth, and the return of ancient conditions went hand in hand with new discoveries in the natural world and with progress in natural philosophy. The Rosicrucians’ restoration of primeval philosophy was thus neither easily reconciled with the biblical and confessional linear interpretation of history, nor with the idea of the Fall of man and the ensuing loss of original wisdom and truth, nor, moreover, with the notion that there was no progress in knowledge.

The traditional conception of a sinful loss of innocence and divine knowledge after the Fall is also irreconcilable with the notion, expressed in the manifestos, of a return of things once removed from Paradise combined with post-lapsarian intellectual perfection expressed in an Adamic tongue long after ancient times and the Confusion of Babel. Most religious literature indeed abhorred such claims. According to Augustine, for example, the mind of man after the Fall could no longer conceive divine truths, as man had lost his original purity. Man had sinned, and was therefore unable to restore his purity after the Fall. More specifically, owing to his Fall, the nature of man was “wounded, hurt, damaged, destroyed”; his act had resulted in an irrevocable loss of morality and epistemological understanding.²⁵⁵ In the same vein, the Catholic authorities of the early seventeenth century explicitly condemned the notion of access to divine secrets.²⁵⁶

As already mentioned, Luther also claimed that human beings were incapable of restoring their original purity or of grasping theological truths—they

²⁵⁵ Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 62.53, cited in Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, 31–32.

²⁵⁶ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 8.

could neither acquire divine knowledge nor live in a perfect state on earth.²⁵⁷ In his view, limited divine inspiration was always mediated by either Scripture or the sacraments, and man himself was incapable of progress. This view was officially expressed in the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* (1577), in the writing of which, notably, the grandfather of one of the likely authors of the manifestos, Johann Valentin Andreae, was involved. In this orthodox Lutheran text, original sin is discussed, and its authors emphasised that “because of the Fall of Adam, the human nature and essence are entirely corrupt.”²⁵⁸ Due to the Fall of Man and the penalty of original sin the image of God in man is lost, and human nature and his intellectual capacities are corrupted.²⁵⁹ The authors further rejected “the Pelagian error,” according to which “the nature of humans also after the Fall is incorrupt, and especially with respect to spiritual matters has remained entirely good and pure in nature, that is, in its natural powers.”²⁶⁰ This doctrine might have prompted Daniel Hofmann, the Helmstedt theologian mentioned earlier, to claim that man’s mind was so corrupted after the Fall that he was not able to perceive or conceive truths by himself, and that nothing of the wisdom known to Adam before the Fall was brought with him. To claim otherwise was, in Hofmann’s words, “stultitia coram Deo,” “stupidity before God,” and one would be guilty of Pelagianism, namely of believing that man’s sinful behaviour which resulted in the Fall had not affected man’s purity. According to Hofmann, human nature was totally corrupt.²⁶¹

The tradition of the *philosophia perennis* as well as the Rosicrucian manifestos, in turn, worked under the assumption that human beings had not irreversibly lost their original purity, because even after the Fall they could acquire original wisdom. According to the manifestos, humans may be capable of that

257 Cf. also: Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1–5*, in *Luther’s Works* 1, p. 166.

258 Lietzman (ed.), *Formula of Concord*, in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (1952), 772: “Wir glauben, lehren und bekennen aber hinwiederumb daß die Erbsünde nicht sei eine schlechte, sondern so tiefe Vorderbung menschlicher Natur, daß nichts Gesundes oder Unvorderbet an Leib, Seel des Menschen, seinen innerlichen und äußerlichen Kräften geblieben, sondern wie die Kirche singet: ‘Durch Adams Fall ist ganz vorderbet menschlich Natur und Wesen.’”

259 Ibid., 848–849.

260 Ibid., 773–774: “Desgleichen verwerfen wir auch den pelagianischen Irrtumb, da vorgegeben wird, daß die Natur des Menschen auch nach dem Fall unverderbt und sonderlich in geistlichen Sachen ganz gut und rein in ihren naturalibus, das ist, in ihren natürlichen Kräften, geblieben sei.” See further: idem, “Augsburgische Confession,” in: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (1952), art. II, 53.

261 Hofmann, *Pro duplici veritate Lutheri a philosophis impugnata*, cited in: Antognazza, “Hofmann-Streit,” 406–408.

which Augustine, Luther, and Hofmann deemed impossible: they could understand Scripture and thereby could even become similar to God, and they were capable of acquiring nature's secrets which Adam had brought with him after the Fall.

The idea of a rediscovery of divine secrets, known to ancient heralds, on the eve of a new age cannot be understood simply in the light of the Joachimite tradition, which neither expected a return of ancient wisdom in the final age nor claimed that the world was returning full circle. Only the tradition of the *philosophia perennis* sheds light on this aspect of the matter. It is to this tradition that the Rosicrucian authors had recourse in their claims about a renovated world.

1.4 Concluding Remarks

The Rosicrucian manifestos were not explicit about how exactly the world should be renovated and what such a renovated world should look like. But their call for a general reform merged with apocalyptic and millenarian expectations. Although the Rosicrucian announcement was formulated by means of famous prophetic elements—the Antichrist, the new ruler, celestial events, and a new age—their use of these elements as well as their message was novel and unusual. The brethren used and combined these popular themes, without referring to the original traditions from which they came, to create an optimistic message of total change, imminent improvement, and the revelation of secrets and of Adamic wisdom for those capable of understanding it. In this, they drew on pre-reformation prophecies and early modern radical texts, and predominantly neglected and dismissed canonical Scripture as well as orthodox Lutheranism.

In past historiography, the manifestos have mistakenly been placed in a Lutheran context, as scholars emphasised the Lutheran background from which they emerged and argued that they were written to reinforce the Lutheran, evangelical Reformation.²⁶² Most recently, Volkhard Wels has argued that the manifestos are immersed in Lutheran piety, and that their association with heterodox views in the early furore is solely the result of a misconception

262 See, for example: Kienast, *Johann Valentin Andreae*, 105; Van Dülmen, *Die Utopie*, 78, 82–83; Edighoffer, *Les Rose-Croix et la crise*, 23, 174–175; Brecht, *Johann Valentin Andreae*, 77–79; Wels, *Manifestationen des Geistes*, esp. 242–247; idem, “Die Frömmigkeit der Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste,” 173–207; Penman, *Hope and Heresy*, 18–19, 21.

due especially to their publication with heterodox texts.²⁶³ In his paper, Wels mistakenly argues that the rejection of the double-truth theory only confirms a Lutheran piety, that the manifestos expected the imminent end of the world, and he ignores their indebtedness to notions that disagree with orthodox Lutheranism.²⁶⁴

But to understand the Rosicrucian manifestos as Lutheran outpourings is untenable; the Rosicrucian call for a general reformation and its main components departed dramatically from mainstream Lutheranism. *Pace* Luther, their texts were hopeful and optimistic; they expected a future on earth rather than its imminent destruction; they sided with the post-Antichrist tradition which announced a future period on earth after the defeat of the Antichrist. While Luther had also maintained that the Antichrist was already present, he and orthodox Lutherans believed him to be the *Endchrist*, the Antichrist of the end. In the brethren's view, the Antichrist could be defeated, as human agency was capable of triumphing in such hazardous times; for Luther, a new ruler would neither defeat the Antichrist nor establish a new kingdom. In the manifestos, human beings could grasp divine wisdom, without mediation through Scripture—which violated the position of Luther and orthodox Lutherans. And whilst apocalyptic portents were interpreted by Luther and many of his followers as destructive, they were not so in the Rosicrucian manifestos. These texts completely moved away from the Augustinian, Pauline, and Lutheran paradigms, from canonical literature, and evidently from Luther's idea of a reformation of faith alone solely through a reinterpretation of the Gospel.

Luther's view accorded with most medieval and Protestant apocalyptic and millenarian texts inspired by biblical prophecies that the world would change in conformity with a pre-established harmony by non-human, supernatural agents, such as the angel who was to intervene and bind Satan for one thousand years. By contrast, the Rosicrucian call for reform describes the potential role

263 Wels, "Die Frömmigkeit der Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste," 173–176, 200–207. The opening sentence of his paper reads, p. 173: "Meine These lautet, dass die Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste, die 1614 und 1615 in Kassel gedruckt werden, keine heterodoxe, spiritualistische, hermetische oder in sonstiger Form vom konfessionellen Luthertum abweichende Frömmigkeit vertreten, sondern im Gegenteil eine eher konservative Variante dieser Frömmigkeit. Die *Fama fraternitatis* und die *Confessio fraternitatis* wären damit Ausdruck eines genuin lutherischen Glaubens, einer praxis pietatis als alltäglich gelebter Frömmigkeit [...]"

264 Wels further downplays the manifestos' Paracelsian impetus and argues that the use of Paracelsian notions, such as the Liber M., also confirms a Lutheran piety, see: Wels, "Die Frömmigkeit der Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste," 174–176, 181–182, 188, 193–200. On Paracelsian notions in the manifestos, see below, Chapter 2.

for human agency: human beings are the executors of change. Some prophecies and expectations from before the Reformation, as well as from early modern radical reformers, which attribute an active role to human beings, can help us to understand the Rosicrucian call for reform and its antithetical character. Quite unlike Augustine and Luther, the Rosicrucian manifestos expected a new and much changed man-made future on earth, one which was eagerly awaited by the brethren.

As the Rosicrucian brethren called for the reform of both religion and politics, under the guidance of a spiritual and political ruler (the lion), they aligned themselves with several medieval and early modern authors that aimed for a *reformatio mundi*, a reformation of both faith and the state. Yet, innovatively, the brethren proposed to reform also a third pillar, philosophy. Their reformation was not to result in a single religion in one political realm, but rather involved the improvement of knowledge of man, the world, and the universe. Their desired reform was general in the sense that it was to affect all aspects of society, but it would culminate in a reform of philosophy broadly understood. The Rosicrucians believed in the “repair of philosophy” and the “perfect development of all arts,” to coincide with the new scientific discoveries and the hopeful astronomical phenomena of the time. Their reform would also include the divine: the Rosicrucian reformation coincided with God’s plan and included a reform of religion as well as of divine things, grounded in Christ, even though the manifestos never fully reveal how this should take shape.

The new age and new philosophy of the Rosicrucians was immersed in Renaissance and scientific expectations. Medieval and early modern visions of change were mixed with Renaissance notions such as the return of wisdom, the revival of pre-Aristotelian and pre-Platonic thought, and the renovation of the Adamic language, and contradicted orthodox views of man’s sinful nature. The manifestos further dismissed the Humanist tradition and opposed the double-truth theory, drawing on those traditions and sciences that reinforced their antithetical nature, such as Mosaic physics, the *clavis universalis*, natural philosophy, astronomy, and notably the *philosophia perennis*.

But also in the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*, with which the manifestos shared the expectation of the return of ancient wisdom in the final age, we find no call for a general reformation or the intention to reform the divine and the human in the sense of the Rosicrucians. The main idea in this tradition was the return of primeval wisdom, often put in a theological framework, and often against the corruption of the Church. In this sense, the expected renovation was a *renovatio ecclesiae*, a renovation of the Church, and was supposed to result in a *concordia mundi*, concord of the world. This is the case for scholars as

diverse as Guillaume Postel, Girolamo Savonarola, Tommaso Campanella, and Nicolas of Cusa.²⁶⁵ As has been observed by Marjorie Reeves, many of their hopes were furthermore accompanied by fears and woes,²⁶⁶ which sentiments we do not find in the manifestos.

In this tradition of a *concordia mundi*, the aim of a reformation for religious reasons is best expressed by Guillaume Postel.²⁶⁷ Postel has sometimes mistakenly been linked to the Rosicrucians,²⁶⁸ but he was a missionary, and his reformation consisted in the conversion of the entire world to Christianity, with the help of the printing press and the further discovery of the New World.²⁶⁹ "Through the benefit of the Spanish navigation, almost all men have received Christ, and they recognise the Creator of Heaven and earth."²⁷⁰ Such

265 Campanella, in his later work, did seem to expect a universal renovation of the world; see for example: Campanella, *Monarchia Messiae* (1633), 15: "fames cessaret [...]. Item pestis cessaret [...]. Item afflueret sapientia hominum ex abundantia pacis, ac perviderent in conctis ante tempus per Astrologiam, Medicinam, Physicam, Polyticam [...]. Item si totus mundus regeretur ab uno, multiplicaretur scientia, ob tutas navigationes, et itinera, et mercaturas, et communicationes rerum, que scientur, in singulir nationibus, cum his, quae sciuntur in aliis, et melius observantur, presertim astronomia, astrologia, physica, et polytica, quae multis observationibus indigent, multisque observatoribus."

266 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 430–431.

267 See, for example: Postel, *De orbis terrae concordia* (1544), 133; idem, *La tierce partie des orientales histoires*, translated in Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi*, 130; idem, Letter of 1560, translated in Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi*, 215–216. Postel aimed for a restoration of Paradise.

268 Kuntz suggests that Postel might have influenced the Rosicrucian manifestos, because: 1) Yates suggested that Dee influenced the manifestos; 2) there is a link between Dee and Postel; and 3) Postel had styled himself as "Rorispergius Postel," inspired by "ros" (dew) and "rosa" (rose), from which the word "Rosicrucian" is sometimes said to have been derived (Gassendi thought that "Rosicrucian" was derived from "ros"). Another argument by Kuntz for a link between Postel and the Rosicrucians is the fact that Gabriel Naudé linked Postel to the Rosicrucian "scare." Kuntz further suggests that there are similarities between Postel's use of hieroglyphs and symbols and what she calls "Rosicrucian mathematics" and "numerous Rosicrucian documents"; see: Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, 173–177. Her arguments are, obviously, farfetched, if only because Yates' suggestion was flawed (on this, see especially: Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, 22), and authors such as Naudé and Gassendi, criticising the Rosicrucian manifestos years after their publication, can hardly be used as arguments for causal links between earlier authors and the manifestos. In the Rosicrucian pamphlets, there was no "Rosicrucian mathematics," even if Andreae was a mathematician. Later texts inspired by the Rosicrucian manifestos might, of course, have derived inspiration also from other sources, such as works by Postel, but this says nothing about the influence on the manifestos themselves.

269 Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi*, 231–250; see also: Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, 17–19, 49–51, 137–138, 151–172.

270 Postel, *De orbis terrae concordia*, 353–354: "Verum Hispanicae navigationis beneficio fere

ecumenical visions were not uncommon in eschatological texts, but the Rosicrucian reformation announced neither a New Jerusalem nor an ecumenical world.

Perhaps even more unique is the manifestos' precise understanding of history. Although they share similarities with Joachimism, their teleological interpretation of history was cyclical rather than millenarian *strictu sensu*. It entailed the restoration of prelapsarian conditions (which is also why the term "revolution," employed in the manifestos, is so important), and it contradicted the notion of final tribulations, which were normally believed to follow the millennium. The manifestos conveyed a sense of continual progress. What happens in these texts is that the ancient Greek vision of a returned Golden Age is Christianised, influenced by heterodox views and the need for progress, and combined with millenarian characteristics.²⁷¹ The problem is that a proper terminology is lacking for such prophecies. In historiography, it has often been named "chiliasm" or "millenarianism," but, as we have seen, the meaning of those terms is too narrow to include the Rosicrucians' and similar conceptions, which not only neglected but also contradicted some millenarian tropes. Admittedly, there were many different types of millenarianisms, but these included nonetheless specific characteristics, although formulated in different ways, which were absent in the Rosicrucian conception of history.²⁷² For that reason, the expression of similar expectations by the reformer and encyclopaedist Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1628) have been termed "quasi-millenarianism" by Howard Hotson.²⁷³ In our case, this term would be too evocative to apply it to the manifestos, as these texts deviated further from strict millenarianism than Alsted's views of historical development. It would in fact be appropriate to characterise the Rosicrucian interpretation of history as a vision of a returned and Christianised Golden Age (even if they never

omnes receperunt Christum, coelique et terrae conditorem agnoscunt." Compare also: "Divine justice shall have its hour; the last of the seven epochs symbolized by the seven days of creation has arrived; the judgments of God are about to be accomplished; the empire and the papacy, sunk into impiety, shall crumble away together [...]. But upon their ruins shall appear a new nation of God, a nation of prophets illuminated from on high, living in poverty and solitude. Then the divine mysteries shall be revealed [...]. The Holy Spirit shall shed abroad upon the people the dew of His prophecies, of His wisdom and holiness [...].": Postel, cited in Sabatier, *Vie de S. François d'Assise*, 67–68.

271 For the Greek origins of cyclical renewal, as well as for a brief overview of cyclical, linear, and progressive conceptions of time (although distinguished from one another), see Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, ch. 1.

272 For millenarianisms, see: Laursen and Popkin (eds.), *Continental Millenarians: Protestants, Catholics, Heretics*.

273 Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, 27n88; idem, *Johann Heinrich Alsted*, 182–185.

used this term), which was infused by optimistic notes of epistemic progress and millenarian features. Although this combination is evidently not an actor's term, if this description can be labelled as a "term" at all, appropriate terminology is required to avoid referring to the Rosicrucian conception of history by means of incorrect terms. As we will see in Part Three of this book, it is possibly precisely because the manifestos drew on different interpretations of the development of history, without providing a conspicuous alternative terminology, that the early responders varied in their understanding of the manifestos.²⁷⁴

The Rosicrucians, in sum, combined the meanings of "reformation," "revolution," and "renovation." They used the influence of the Reformation while reviving pre-Reformation and early modern reform plans by so-called radical reformers, medieval millenarian expectations, as well as Greek visions of renewal. They effectively mingled these with Hermetic elements while appealing to the innovations of so-called "novatores." In the present survey, however, one tradition has purposely been left out and, as a consequence, so has a discussion of the Rosicrucian alternative to established philosophy: Paracelsianism, a tradition often associated with Rosicrucianism, but never for its religious tendencies. In order to thoroughly analyse the origins of these manifestos and their call for reform, and to grasp the meaning of the Rosicrucian philosophy, this tradition, too, will be discussed at length.

274 Cf. below, Chapters 4 and 5.