Chapter 2

The Paracelsian Impetus

Paracelsianism was named after presumably the most enigmatic physician of the sixteenth century, Paracelsus (real name, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493/4–1541). Paracelsus was one of the best-known physicians of the century preceding the publication of the manifestos, a key figure in the transformation of medicine, and an outlandish figure announcing imminent changes in the world. He is also the sole recent historical figure mentioned in the manifestos. In order to appreciate the full meaning of the general reformation and Paracelsus’ influence on the manifestos, it is necessary to introduce this physician as well as the movement he engendered in some detail.

Paracelsus was the son of physician Wilhelm von Hohenheim, who introduced Paracelsus to medicine from an early age onwards. His mother is presumed to have worked in the famous Benedictine monastery of Einsiedeln, and died when Paracelsus was still a young boy. In 1516, Paracelsus recalled, he received the degree of doctor in Ferrara, Italy. In his early years as a physician, he became increasingly famous as a practitioner of the new healing arts and for the use of alchemically prepared cures, but his antithetical attitude toward...
established medicine had a dramatic impact on his life. The turning point came while he was working as professor in Basel. Paracelsus was invited to Basel to become the official city physician and professor of medicine at its university, and in 1527 he settled in that town.\(^5\) As professor, he never adjusted himself to the institutional customs and conservatism of that university. He lectured in German rather than in the obligatory Latin and used a different, new terminology. He openly and rigorously rejected the traditional medical authorities who were still taught at the university. The culmination of Paracelsus’ opposition to the authorities was when, on St. John’s Eve, 23 June 1527, he threw a copy of the standard medical textbook of the time, most likely Avicenna’s *Canon of Medicine*, into a bonfire. In his recollection of the event, Paracelsus wrote: “I have thrown the *summa* of books in the fire of Saint John, so that all misery would rise up in the air together with the smoke.”\(^6\) It comes as no surprise that his antagonistic attitude and this event in particular met with much hostility in Basel. Soon, his views were ridiculed in verses wherein he was styled Cacophrastus (shit-speaker), as opposed to Theophrastus (god-speaker).\(^7\) According to his own testimony, he was mocked, laughed at, and was even pelted with urine.\(^8\) After this event, Theophrastus changed his name to Paracelsus, was forced to leave Basel by decree of the city council, and his medical career took a turn for the worse.\(^9\) He travelled from town to town but was unsuccessful in finding a more permanent place of residence or a publisher to print his prolific body of works.\(^10\) Learned communities preferred not to associate themselves with such an outlandish figure.

---


\(^6\) Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, 1, 8; 58: “ich hab die summa der bücher in sanct Johannes feuer geworfen, auf das alles unglück mit dem rauch in luft gang [...]” For an account of the bonfire in Basel, see: Ibid., 1, 8; 43, 58. Paracelsus did not specify the book he burned, but the reformer Sebastian Franck recalled this event and explained that Paracelsus had burned Avicenna’s book. He described Paracelsus as a rare and strange man, who stood alone against all physicians: Franck, *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* (1531), fol. 253’.

\(^7\) Paracelsus was mocked in verses entitled *The Ghost of Galen against Theophrastus, or rather Cacophrastus* (*Manes Galeni adversus Theophrastum sed potius Cacophrastum*). On these verses, see: Blaser, *Paracelsus in Basel*, 82–102; Webster, *Paracelsus*, 13, 39–43.

\(^8\) Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, 1, 8; 43.

\(^9\) “Paracelsus’ may refer to ‘beside’ or ‘past’ (para) Celsus, the Roman physician Cornelius Celsus, but Webster points out that this was never claimed by Paracelsus himself, see: Webster, *Paracelsus*, 40–41.

\(^10\) Kamenzin, “Paracelsus und die Universitäten,” 157–158.
During his life, Paracelsus had become notorious as a chemical physician, but twenty years after his death his works became increasingly popular. Important physicians contributed immensely to Paracelsus’ renown at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. They published editions of Paracelsus’ works or wrote works themselves that contributed to his popularity, and soon his works issued from various printing presses.\(^{11}\) Owing to this proliferation of publications, his ideas spread over Europe. Enthusiasts began writings tracts in his name to attract a readership, and translations of his works and new books inspired by his ideas were published not only in Germany and Switzerland, the regions where Paracelsus had spent most of his life, but also in England, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden.\(^ {12}\) With such an outpouring of Paracelsian writings, it was inevitable that the enigmatic figure and his early reception would have come to the attention of the authors of the manifestos.


Paracelsus’ influence on the manifests is not a new topic. In the available historiography on the manifests, Paracelsus’ role and Paracelsian themes have been widely acknowledged, with a special focus on the Paracelsian elements within the manifests, such as the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, Paracelsus’ theory of signatures, and the specific invocation of the “Book of Nature.” Yet, a thorough analysis has remained a desideratum, while also Paracelsus’ religious and apocalyptic considerations have not yet been considered in relation to the Rosicrucian texts. Equally neglected in this context are the strong pseudo-Paracelsian and early-Paracelsian currents of thinking. There is still a need to trace the manifests and specifically their call for a general reformation and related themes back to pseudo-Paracelsian and sixteenth-century Paracelsian texts. To what extent did Paracelsus and his early followers excite and inspire this central aim in the manifests? The eschatological and millenarian expectations, apocalyptic beliefs, and alchemical, medical, and finally philosophical considerations surfacing in this profusion of Paracelsian literature in the years preceding the composition of the manifests require careful examination in order to establish a Paracelsian impetus for the Rosicrucian notion of a general reformation.

13 Examples include: Kienast, Johann Valentin Andreae und die Vier echten Rosenkreuzer-Schriften, 120; Trevor-Roper, Renaissance Essays, 182; Edighoffer, Rose-Croix et société idéale, vol. 1, 270–278; idem, Les Rose-Croix et la crise, 163–178; idem, “L’énigme Paracelsienne”; idem, “Die Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer”; Gilly: Cimelia Rhodostaurotica, 7; idem, “Vom ägyptischen Hermes,” 71–73; Åkerman, Rose Cross over the Baltic, 12–13; Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition, 174–176. On these Paracelsian themes, see below, section 2.4. A comparative study on Paracelsianism(s) still remains pending, and is not the object of this book. Here, the term “Paracelsian” will be used for those who self-identified as followers of Paracelsus.

14 In his ‘Chiliasmus und soziale Utopie im Paracelsismus,” Wollgast briefly discusses chiliasm in Paracelsus’ works and subsequently in what he named “Rosicrucianism,” but he neglects to discuss the Rosicrucian manifests, let alone the influence of Paracelsus’ chilastic views on these manifests. Edighoffer, in turn, discusses Paracelsus’ influence on the manifests in several of his works, but he neither discusses the influence of the following Paracelsian movement on the manifests nor even mentions Paracelsus’ apocalypticism. He does acknowledge a Joachimite influence in the Confessio, but dissociates this from Paracelsianism; see: Edighoffer, Rose-Croix et société idéale, vol. 1, 278–285.

15 Here, in particular the early Paracelsians who were also involved in publishing Paracelsian books, and who were as such responsible for the early dissemination of Paracelsus’ ideas, will be taken into account.
2.1 Visions of a Golden Time

The reform described by the Rosicrucians was expected to take place on the eve of an imminent new age, according to an interpretation of history that was not only teleological, but also cyclical. The Rosicrucian authors expressly drew on Paracelsus throughout their manifestos in support of their predictions. Apocalyptic expectations were not only a central aspect of the Rosicrucian manifestos, but were also a conspicuous feature in the Paracelsian literature, which thereby proved to be a wealthy source of potential influence.\(^\text{16}\) While he was primarily known as a physician, Paracelsus had written extensively on religious matters, which is an aspect of his work that scholars have only recently begun to study in any great depth.\(^\text{17}\) In fact, his most extensive works concern biblical and theological topics, such as his *Commentary on the Psalms* and his interpretation of Matthew.\(^\text{18}\) Paracelsus started writing in the early phase of the Lutheran Reformation, around 1525, when Luther's views had just begun to spread widely.\(^\text{19}\) Paracelsus' earliest religious writings, such as his *On Justice* and *On Seven Points of Christian Idolatry*, concerned much-debated issues of the time.\(^\text{20}\) As was the case with his philosophy and medicine, in his religious


\(^{17}\) Goldammer and Matthiessen published in the mid-twentieth century several religious works by Paracelsus, and Goldammer has analysed and discussed several of them: see: Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 1–7, and supplement. Nevertheless, many of Paracelsus' religious works have never been published, and whilst in the last few decades these texts have received proper attention from some scholars, there is still much left to be untangled. Gantenbein has begun publishing religious texts by Paracelsus in the Neue Paracelsus Edition, most of which have never been published before. The first volume of the planned 12 has been published: Gantenbein, *Neue Paracelsus-Edition* 1, hereafter: NPE.


\(^{19}\) Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation*, xxv. On Paracelsus and Luther, see: Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, 1, 8; 43–44, 63; Rudolph, “Einige Gesichtspunkte zum Thema ‘Paracelsus und Luther’.”

\(^{20}\) Paracelsus, *De iustitïa*, 11, 2; 151–156; idem, *De septem punctis*, 11, 3; 1–58.
works he deliberately dissociated himself from all authorities, whatever their denomination, believing that the leaders of the established religious groups were all made of “the same cloth.”21 He worked as a lay theologian, preaching among the “common folk,” sympathising with the peasants’ movement, and speaking, as he himself stated, “several times in taverns, drinking places, and inns, against senseless church attendance, lavish ceremonies, praying and fasting that are to no avail, alms giving […]”22 Although Paracelsus argued against all confessions, he associated with some radical reformers, sent letters to Luther and his companions about his own Matthew commentary, and is documented to have chosen to die a Catholic—all of which contributed to the enigma of the man’s religious identity.23

Despite the direct references to Paracelsus in the manifestos, his apocalyptic views could not have been further removed from the Rosicrucian expectations. In some of his religious writings, Paracelsus made prophetic statements about the future.24 Like the Rosicrucians later, he believed the present time on earth to be one of degradation, but that contemporary misery would soon be replaced by a beatific future. As he explained in his On the Genealogy of Christ: “So everything is nothing but a vale of tears, from where we must leave towards another world, where nothing will be but joy and delight in eternity.”25

21 Idem, De secretis secretorum theologiae, 11, 3; 203, 206: “[…] die dem bapst beistehen, die halten ihn für ein lebendigen heiligen; die dem Ariano beistehen, dergleichen für ein gerechten, die dem Zwingli beistehen, dergleichen für ein gerechten menschen; die dem Luther beistehn, dergleichen für ein rechten propheten […]. So richten sie sich selbst über einander und schändan antichristen, widerchristen, ketzer; und seind vier Par Hosen eins Tuchs.” See also: ibid., 227.

22 Idem, De septem punctis, 11, 3; 3–4: “Euer täglich widerpellen und scharfpreden wider mich von wegen der warheit, so ich etwan und etlich mal in tabernen, krügen und wirtshäusern geredt hab wider das unnütz kirchengehn, üppige feier, vergebens petten und fasten, almusen geben […], und alle andere dergleichen priesterliche gebott und aufenthaltung, auch mir dasselig in ein trunkenheit gezogen, darumb, daß in tabernen geschehen ist, und die tabernen für untüchtige örter zu der warheit zu sein anzeigen, und uf das mich ein winkelprediger genant.” On Paracelsus’ sympathy with the peasants’ movement, see: Webster, “Paracelsus: Medicine as Popular Protest.” On Paracelsus speaking in taverns, see also: Weeks, Paracelsus, 95.


24 See, for example: Paracelsus, De genealogia Christi, 11, 3; idem, Auslegung des Psalters, 11, 4; idem, Auslegung des Psalters Davids, 11, 7; idem, Auslegung der Papstbilder, 1, 12.

25 Paracelsus, De genealogia Christi, 11, 3: 132–133: “[…] so ist es alles nichts dann ein
The world’s dire conditions were reflected in the spread of diseases and in the miserable lives of the peasants with whom he was acquainted. According to Paracelsus, humans would soon be liberated from their misery: “Our joy arrives, our golden world, as God Himself will weed out the vineyard and repair the fence, so that there will be no more gaps for a Judas.”26 The new world will be one of perfection and bliss to be instigated by God, and misery and deception were to be endured only until God’s intervention.

In ancient Greek sources, the Golden Age was an age of splendour to be followed by a gradual decline. In Hesiod’s Works and Days, an age of peace and splendour had once been in the world, characterised as Gold, which was followed by ages of Silver, Bronze, Heroic, and finally Iron. During the Renaissance, the myth emerged that after the decline of history, the Golden Age was to return again in all of its glory. This myth was promulgated by authors such as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499).27 This view was akin to the one expressed in the Rosicrucian manifestos: the new age was to see misery and imperfection disappear and be replaced by a new citadel of truth, as prelapsarian conditions were restored to the world.28

Unlike the Rosicrucians, Paracelsus, who seems to have read Ficino,29 did not expect any improvement or perfection before the end of the present world, but awaited a new time only after Christ’s Last Judgement.30 He shared the widely held belief that the grisly conditions of the present times were to be endured only until Christ will stand in judgement and the righteous will be allowed to enter the New Jerusalem. In his Interpretation of the Images of the Pope (ca. 1532), Paracelsus’ edition of the famous medieval Prophecies about the Popes (Vaticinia de summis pontificibus), he aligned himself to the Lutheran expectation of an imminent end from which the manifestos deviated:

jammertal, aus dem wir müssen in ein andere welt, da nichts wird sein als freud und lust in ewigkeit.”

26 Idem, Auslegung des Psalters, 11, 4; 137: “Do kombt unser freud, unser gulden welt, so uns got im weingarten selbst ausreuten wird und den zaun ganz machen, daß kein Judas lucken mehr do werden sein.”

27 Ficino, letter to Paul of Middelburg, Opera omnia, 944. On the Golden Age in the Renaissance, and a chapter on its prehistory, see: Levin, The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance.

28 Confessio, 53–54.

29 Paracelsus, Begleitbrief an Clauser (1527), 1, 4; 71.

30 Amadeo Murase has mistakenly attributed an optimistic view of future earthly splendour to Paracelsus, arguing that Paracelsus expected another age before Christ’s Second Coming: Murase, “Paracelsismus und Chiliasmus,” 11–19.
Another day will come, after the Last Judgement, in which there will live and be happy those that dwell on earth [...], and the devil in the snake will be in Hell, and not on earth, but bound in the abyss of the deeps of hellfire. And the people on earth will be without heresy, there will be no false apostles, no false prophets, no false Christians.\(^{31}\)

The golden world is equated, not with a future earthly period before the end of history, but with the time of the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation 21–22. But Paracelsus also drew on Revelation 20, which speaks of the binding of Satan (the snake) in the abyss during the millennium. Uniquely, Paracelsus combines these two prophecies as he situates the binding of Satan in the time after the Last Judgement, which means that Satan is bound in hell, not during the millennium, but at the time of the New Jerusalem. There, according to Paracelsus’ Interpretation of the Psalms of David, the world will be devoid of all evil and cold, snow will feel “like wool from sheep,” soft and warm, while “the poor and miserable should be joyful in Jerusalem, they will play the harp and sing.”\(^{32}\)

The delight of the New Jerusalem would entail the inversion of the social order, an inversion of everyday life on earth: the poor will thrive but the rich will be miserable.\(^{33}\) Within the manifestos, there is no such commendation of poverty for the sake of a new world in the New Jerusalem. Their authors instead characterised their society as one rich in gold and gems for the benefit of the present world. But Paracelsus’ views were akin to those of the peasant reformers in Salzburg. During the Peasants’ War of 1525, he worked as a physician in Salzburg and had associates amongst the reformers.\(^{34}\) In his religious writings of the time, he expressed his concern for the welfare of the peasants.

\(^{31}\) Paracelsus, Auslegung der Papstbilder, i, 12; 555: “[...] es wird dornach nach disem jüngsten tag ein ander tag komen, dorin werden leben und frölich sein, die auf Erden wonen [...] und der teufel in der schlangen wird in der hellen sein und nicht auf erden, sonder gebunden in abgrunt der tiefe des hellischen feurs, und die menschen auf erden werden kein ketzerei weiter haben, kein falsch aposteln, kein falsch propheten, kein falsch Christen.”

\(^{32}\) Idem, Auslegung des Psalters Davids, ii, 7; 99–100: “secht, wie gutig in disem Jerusalem der herr sein wird, daß der schne, der bei uns kalt ist und uns erfroren will und erfroren [sic] und treibt uns ab dem felt, von der gassen in die stuben,—denselbigen schne will er machen, daß er uns wird sein wie die wollen von schaffen, dieselbigen wollen seindt lind, seindt warm [...] also wird auch der schne und der winter hingohn und verloren werden [...], daß also über und über alles gemein sein wird und alles summer”; ibid., 93: “[...] die armen unnd ellenden worden in Jerusalem mussen frolich sein und werden mit dem harpfen schlagen und singen, [...]”; see also: Goldammer, “Paracelsische Eschatologie,” 141–142.

\(^{33}\) Paracelsus, Auslegung des Psalters Davids, ii, 7; 93.

\(^{34}\) Paracelsus, in any case, was acquainted with Melchior Spach, the field captain of the
Paracelsus’ expectations were not chiliastic, in the sense that he did not expect a new terrestrial period before the Last Judgement, as if it were an earthly millennium. Like Luther and orthodox Lutherans, his expectations related to the time after Christ’s return. But he made matters more elusive by implying that the New Jerusalem will not be a heavenly kingdom at all but rather a terrestrial place, that is, an earthly paradise. After Christ, “the new, golden world will begin, that is [after] this, the final fire from Heaven. There we will live blissfully on earth.”35 This world will be the “holy world.”36 Luther had claimed that only the past Paradise had been terrestrial,37 but Paracelsus suggested that the restored paradise will take place also on earth, meaning that the world will not be destroyed after Christ’s Judgement:

[...] God the Lord [will] build a New Jerusalem and will bring all Christians, who today are divided and scattered over the world, together in one Jerusalem, under [the rule of] one Lord, that is under Himself [...]. And once God has pushed the Mammon from the earth, all children of God will live far away from each other, and those He will bring together into one stable, under the rule of one shepherd. This will be the New Jerusalem, which is in this earthly paradise.38

rebels of the war in 1525, because the latter was the first listed among Paracelsus’ friends in his testament, see: Biegger, ‘De Invocatione’, 32; Dopsch, “Paracelsus, Salzburg und der Bauernkrieg,” 300–306. Paracelsus returned to Salzburg once or twice later in his life; see: Dopsch, “Paracelsus, Salzburg und der Bauernkrieg,” 299–308. See also the other articles included in Dopsch and Kramml (eds.), Paracelsus und Salzburg. Like in other German regions, in the preceding years the city’s burghers and the peasants had to pay an increasing amount of taxes which, together with religious struggles, resulted in rebellious uprisings throughout the German-speaking lands; see: McClintock and Strong, “Peasants’ War,” 859. On Paracelsus and the Peasants’ War, see: Dopsch, “Paracelsus, Salzburg und der Bauernkrieg,” 299–308, esp. 304–306; idem, “Paracelsus, die Reformation und der Bauernkrieg,” 201–216.

Paracelsus, Auslegung des Psalters, 11, 4; 93: “[W]ir danken dir ewiglich und bekennen, daß du, herr, uns erlöst hast, erledigt und erhalten. do wird die neu, guldin welt angehn, das ist dise … das letzte feur vom himel, do werden wir woen saliglich auf erden.” Based on a comparison of manuscript versions, Goldammer explains in an editorial note that one of the manuscripts, instead of “das ist dise,” reads: “das ist nach dise […]” (“that is after this”) which seems correct; see ibid., 93.

Ibid., 93: “Als dann so wir seindt in der heiligen welt [...]”.

On Luther’s past earthly paradise, see: Leoni: “Studium simplicitatis: The Letter of Grace in Luther’s Commentary on Genesis 1–3,” 197–198.

Paracelsus, Auslegung des Psalters Davids, 11, 7; 90–91: “[…] so wri alsdann got der herr ein neu Jerusalem bauen und wird die christen, so hin und her zerteilt seindt und zerstreuert, zusammen samblen und sie ein Jerusalem bringen, das ist under ein herrn, das
The incongruous reference to the children of God living far away from each other in a future period was likely intended to refer to the present, rather than the future, where those children who are now separated will be brought together. The New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation, having already been connected to the millennium, is now also identified with the terrestrial Paradise of the first chapters of Genesis. Such a conception of the last events and the prospect of a new world resembled neither Protestant nor Catholic views, but shares one characteristic with Rosicrucian expectations. The Rosicrucian manifestos describe the imminent earthly improvements as resembling a restored paradise and in this sense as representing a return to the beginning.\(^{39}\) Paracelsus, too, suggested such a return of original conditions when he identified the New Jerusalem with the earthly paradise, albeit in his view this return would take place by divine intervention and after Christ’s Judgement.

Because Paracelsus believed that history was drawing to a close, also his interpretation of the role of the Antichrist differs from the Rosicrucian description of this apocalyptic figure. In some cases, such as in his *On the Secrets of Theology*, Paracelsus referred to the Antichrist generally, claiming that all “sects” were Antichrists, because they “call each other the antichrist, which is true,” and that each of these sects was recognisable by the fruits of the Antichrist: death and destruction.\(^{40}\) In other passages, he specifically placed the Antichrist in the End Times and identified him with Rome. Paracelsus had already argued that in the end of time God will ban the Mammon from the earth. The word “Mammon” originated from the Bible and usually means “money” or “wealth.” During the Middle Ages, the term signified a wealthy demon,\(^{41}\) but Paracelsus applied this symbolism specifically to the pope. He frequently argued that the Endchrist was to be found in Rome, and he called the pope the “Roman Antichrist.”\(^{42}\)

\(^{39}\) On this, see above, section 1.2.

\(^{40}\) Paracelsus, *De secretis secretorum theologiae*, ii, 3; 175–176: “[…] wie Rom und andere mehr […] heißen einander antichristen, ist wahr […] Der bapst und die seinen schreien nach dem blut: tot, henk, prinn, ertrink, etc. die andern haben in kurzen jaren vil tautsen mann umb ir leben auch bracht, schreien auch: tot, ertrink, etc. das seindt ire frücht, die sie geben, aus denen wir sie erkennen sollen”; idem, *Liber de felici liberalitate*, NPE 1, 190.


\(^{42}\) Gantenbein, “Leben, Tod und Jenseits bei Paracelsus,” 188, 190. Paracelsus often used the term *Endchrist*; see, for example: *NPE* 1, 141, 190, 228, 391, 517, 525. Melanchthon also used...
Antichrist, the papal Endchrist will be defeated not by man but by divine intervention, as he will “be expelled from the sheepfold by Christ and should leave it together with his legions.”\textsuperscript{43} Christ will defeat the Roman impostor and inaugurate the New Jerusalem on earth. Unlike the manifestos, Paracelsus sided with the pre-Antichrist tradition, according to which the Antichrist comes in the end and is conquered by Christ, after which no new age before the Last Judgement was to be expected—a highly traditional interpretation.

It was fundamental to the Rosicrucian general reformation and their millenarian imagery that the pope could be replaced as ruler over the people, notably by human agency, upon the arrival of the new age. Evidently, in this regard the Rosicrucian authors were not influenced by Paracelsus’ eschatology as articulated in his religious texts. For Paracelsus, if the world could not be improved before the Last Judgement, certainly not by human agency, any hope for reform would be in vain simply because there was no earthly time to which one could look forward. When it comes to his conception of history and man’s role within it, Paracelsus could not be further from the views later to be expressed in the manifestos: in these religious works, he simply ruled out the possibility of a general reformation.

The authors of the manifestos were presumably unaware of the fact that Paracelsus had expressed these views so divergent from their own, the reason being that his religious works, in which he announced the imminent end and the subsequent earthly paradise, were not easily available at the time when the manifestos were drafted. These works could be found in the collection of Hans Kilian—who kept one of the largest collections of Paracelsian manuscripts in Neuburg—but were never published by Gerard Dorn (1530–1584), Adam von Bodenstein (1528–1577), Michael Toxites (Michael Schütz, 1514–1581), or Johannes Huser (1545–ca. 1600).\textsuperscript{44} These physicians steered clear of Paracelsus’
theological writings, not least because the religious views expressed therein had been deemed dangerous and heretical, owing to Paracelsus’ criticism of the three rivalling confessions.45 This is not to say that they were not read. The Paracelsian physician Alexander von Suchten (ca. 1520–1575), for one, was aware of and praised Paracelsus’ religious works, while the French alchemist and Paracelsian Bernard Penot (1519–1617) expressed his admiration for Paracelsus’ religious conceptions.46 But generally, Paracelsus’ religious writings, which could circulate only in manuscript form, were far less known in the early seventeenth century than his published medical or philosophical books.

Paracelsus’ eschatology as conveyed in these religious works is radically at odds with the Rosicrucian notion of reform, but also with his views expressed in his natural-philosophical works, which offer a more optimistic view of future events.47 In his Book on Images, for example, he briefly discussed the numerous sects that had come about since Luther’s appearance on the world stage, and explained that “there will come more sects, and each wants to be right, and be better and holier with its teaching than another. And in religion and in the Church there will be no unity and peace, until the golden and final time. But afterwards the Day of the Lord will not be far.”48 Clearly, Paracelsus suggested here that a brief, golden, peaceful time may be expected before the end. The terminology is significant, however: the golden world will take place only after the Last Judgement, but a golden time may be expected before Christ’s Second Coming.

Paracelsus, moreover, was a medical reformer, and his activities in the fields of medicine and natural philosophy evidently implied that reform, at least in these areas, was possible. In some of his medical and natural-philosophical texts he explicitly announced that his work will prevail over traditional

47 This does not mean that these two types of works, natural-philosophical and religious, were entirely different. On common ground, see especially the works of Dane Daniel, e.g., “Paracelsus’ Astronomia Magna.” Paracelsus’ natural-philosophical and medical works are numerous, an analysis of which is beyond the scope of this study. For relevant literature, see especially: Pagel, Paracelsus; Kahn, “Alchimie et Paracelsisme”; Webster, Paracelsus.
authorities, that they will remain authoritative until the end of the world, and that all other philosophers should enter his “kingdom.” This is best expressed in his Paragranum, where he declared that his medical and scientific contributions will set the rule until the Last Judgement: “Until the last day of the world my writings must remain and genuinely, and yours [the followers of Galen and Avicenna] will be known to be filled with bile, poison and serpents, and abhorred by the people like toads [...].” A few pages later, he added: “[...] the false philosophers will be boiled and tossed into the dung heap, and I and my philosophy will remain.” We will turn to Paracelsus’ medical criticism in the following section, but what is striking here is that in Paracelsus’ view the dirt left behind by previous physicians and philosophers could be replaced by his own new philosophy. Paracelsus did not specify when exactly this was to happen, but it would in any case occur before the Last Judgement, which further suggests that there will be a future period of earthly improvement established by human beings, that is, in any case, by Paracelsus himself. This view is profoundly different from the eschatological position outlined in his religious writings, but resonates with the Rosicrucian manifestos.

The natural-philosophical works must also have influenced both pseudo-Paracelsian authors and early Paracelsians. In early seventeenth-century German regions, several authors published their writings in Paracelsus’ name. Some of these texts have long been regarded as spurious, while others have only recently been distinguished from Paracelsus’ authentic writings. The spurious texts are attributed to pseudo-Paracelsus, although it is most likely that there were multiple authors who abused Paracelsus’ name. The optimistic outlook, in which there was to be another earthly time before the end, was in fact dominant in pseudo-Paracelsian writings. For example, speaking in the name of Paracelsus and aligning himself with Paracelsus’ claims, the author of On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers claimed that he would continue to lecture his opponents.

---

49 Cf. below, section 2.3.
50 Paracelsus, Paragranum, 1, 8; 290–291: “bis in den letzen tag der welt meine gschriften müsse bleiben und warhaftig, und die euer werden voller gallen, gift und schlangen gezücht erkennt werden und von den leuten gehasset wie der kröten [...].”
51 Ibid., 139: “also werden die falschen philosophi gescheumpt werden und in die mistlachen geworfen, und ich und mein philosophi werden bleiben.”
52 Cf. Sudhoff, Bibliographia Paracelsica. On several types of (pseudo-)Paracelsianism, see: Pumfrey, “The Spagyric Art.”
53 Cf. the sections below.
54 Pseudo-Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, 1, 14; 393: “[I]ch werde euch alchimisten und doctors durch mein erlitne arbeit die neu geburt öfnen. Ich werde euch lernen die tinctur,
The Rosicrucian authors may have been influenced also by the views of several Paracelsians, who had fully accepted Paracelsus’ optimistic conception of another earthly age. Presumably inspired by both genuine and pseudographic natural-philosophical writings, they expected a new period on earth to be imminent in which Paracelsus’ views would triumph. The Kabbalist, alchemist, and physician to the German Prince Ludwig von Anhalt (1579–1650), Julius Sperber (1540–1616), for example, wrote his *On the Three Ages* on the eve of the new century (1597). In it, he followed Joachim of Fiore by dividing history into three ages. According to this text, the first age corresponded to the Old Testament and the age of the Father, the second to the New Testament and the age of the Son, “but now the third and last age is approaching,” the age of the Holy Spirit. This third age was understood to be a “golden time.” Sperber referred to the coming period in similar terminology as Paracelsus had used in his *Book on Images*. He had in mind a period of improvement that was reminiscent of the third age described by Joachim, as it would take place before Christ’s Second Coming, like a future millennium. Although the Rosicrucian brethren did not divide history into three ages, their new period resembled Sperber’s hopeful expectations.

Like Paracelsus and Sperber, Bodenstein also referred to the new period as a “golden time,” and claimed that it was now beginning to take shape on earth. Bodenstein associated the imminence of the new time with contemporary improvements in knowledge: “Long we abided in a time of tittle-tattle, who will deny that now the time of knowledge approaches?” Clearly, life on earth had been glum, but better times were on the horizon, in which the arts would thrive. Like the manifestos, he argued that God had already sent messengers to earth so that “from many portents we can learn that changes are imminent [...]”. Soon the world would free itself from the darkness that had cast a shadow over the arts, studies, and places of learning.

---

55 Sperber, *Von den dreyen seculis* (1597), 9: “Nunmehr aber ist [...] die dritte und letzte zeit [...] ganz nahe vor der thir.” On Joachim of Fiore and the three ages, see: Chapter 1, n. 108.

56 Sperber, *Von den dreyen seculis*, A8r (Vorrede): “[...] Aus welchem nun erscheinet/ daß dieses hohe Geheimnus/ der zeit nach/ nicht ehender als bis auf die ietzige gegenwertige der andern Welt und zeit/ und also gegen dem anbrechenden dritten und letzten Seculo/ darinnen solche unsere Seeligkeit und recht Güldene zeit wirklich angehen wird/ [...]”.

57 Bodenstein, *cp*, vol. 1, nr. 7, 150: “Fuimus diù in tempore garriendi, iam tempus sciendi instare quis negabit?”

58 Ibid., nr. 11, 268: “Also hatt Gott der Allmechtig inn gegenwertiger güldinen zeyt/ da das Wort Gottes hell an tag/ dergleichen alle güte Künsten so herrlich herfür gebracht werden [...];” ibid., nr. 7, 154: “Signis multis discere possimus instare mutationes [...].”
These Paracelsians adopted and emphasised the more optimistic, but generally less explicitly apocalyptic views of earthly improvement of Paracelsus. In their apocalyptic visions, the Rosicrucian manifestos were possibly not inspired by Paracelsus’ religious works, but aligned with his medical and natural-philosophical views, and more so with the views of some of his successors.

2.2 The Revelation of Secrets

That the manifestos have more in common with some early Paracelsians than with Paracelsus’ own religious texts can also be concluded from their apocalyptic views. According to the Rosicrucian manifestos, the changes of the new age could already be espied through the portents God had placed in nature and heaven for humans to decipher His secrets. In historiography, revelation is referred to by the terms “apocalyptic” and “apocalypticism.” “Apocalyptic” is the belief that all things will be revealed during the Last Days of the world. This was the way Paracelsus interpreted revelation, who had declared in his book on elemental beings, the Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pigmies and Salamanders and other Spirits (date unknown), about the final time that “[n]ow is the time, that things will be revealed”; explaining in his Prologue on the Blessed Life (1533?) that “[t]his will come to light, which God wants to be brought to light. And now is the time, and summer is drawing close.”

These revelatory phrases refer to the time shortly before the Last Judgement, because Paracelsus had used the word “summer” to indicate the New Jerusalem. Although he described this period by means of a natural analogy rather than by reference to the Book of Daniel, the moment of revelation, shortly before Christ’s second Coming, is traditional.

The more general notion of “apocalypticism” refers to divine revelations generally, and not specifically during the Last Days. In this way it was used not only in the Rosicrucian manifestos, but also by early Paracelsians. The Paracelsian physician Michael Toxites claimed, in the preface to his edition of Paracelsus’ Philosophia Sagax, or Great Astronomy (1571), that

man is created for that purpose, that in flesh and blood he is an appropriate instrument of the natural light, through which God reveals all secrets of the heavens, the elements, and all of nature in all sorts of arts and wisdom, so that the invisible will become visible, which will not occur without human beings.\textsuperscript{60}

Inspired by the light of nature, human beings can study and comprehend the natural world and all treasures hidden within it, so that all heavenly and natural secrets will be revealed not by Christ but by human agency in accordance with God's plan. For Toxites, the renovation of the arts would not just free the world of age-old authorities, but was specifically set in motion by God to finally bring to light the secrets of His creation.

Bodenstein was another Paracelsian author who believed that secret wisdom will be revealed with the coming of the new age. He maintained that nothing will remain hidden, invoking a proverbial analogy that would surely have appealed to the Rosicrucians: “[t]he time brings forth roses.”\textsuperscript{61} As a Paracelsian physician, he believed that the new time would coincide specifically with the revelation of a “heavenly medicine.” This medicine was a gift from God against sinful activities and for the conversion of non-Christians, specifically Jews, Tartars, and Turks.\textsuperscript{62} Bodenstein argued, in line with the \textit{philosophia perennis}, that “the restoration of medicine occurs in our times.”\textsuperscript{63} The perfect medicine, he

\textsuperscript{60} Toxites, preface to \textit{Astronomia Magna}, Av: “So ist nun zu wissen/ daß der Mensch darumb erschaffen/ daß er in Fleisch und Blut were ein geschickts Instrument des natürlichen Liechts/ dardurch Gott alle heimligkeiten offenbar machte des gestirns/ des Element/ und der ganzen Natur in allerley Künsten/ und Weißheiten/ damit das unsichtbar sichtbar würde/ welches ohn den Menschen nicht beschehen were.”

\textsuperscript{61} Bodenstein, \textit{CP}, vol. 1, nr. 7, 154: “Nihil enim teste spiritu sancto adeo reconditum est, vt non reueletur, et nihil adeo occultum, quod non sciatur. Ideo nos trito proierbio dicimus, Tempus proferre rosas.”

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 152: “Verum medicina est res sancta et Dei munus, Quod medius fidius extra Ecclesiam apud Turcas, validos osores Christi, Iudaes perfidos, Tartaros, aloisque veri numinis irrisores non magis quaerendum, quam in Ecclesia est, propter quam aesterna medicina descendit ex coelo, eamque curuit.” Cf. ibid.: “Cogitemos omnes morbos ommemque mortem esse peccati poenam, quam nemo potest mitigare, longe minus totam auertere, nisi fuerit instructus excellenti aliqua re à Deo tradita: Quemadmodum enim Christus verus Dei filius nos redemit ab aesternis morbis, sic oportet medicum, corporis morbos arcere et curare, quosquae tempus dissolutionis veniat, quod certe non fieri potest absque coelesti medicina, quam Deus firmam, certam et efficacem donat suis contra peccati operationes, quo agnoscamus per eam longe duiniorem medicinam, eique respondeat nostras.”

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 154: “Quapropter eximie vir, non est mirum, si medicinae fiat restauratio hisce nostris temporibus, quibus Deus sempiterna lux mira reuelat. Quia ipsi displicant hominis terreni figmenta, sua autem bona, quae sunt certa ac sancta, amat et manifestari cupit.”
claimed, was bestowed by God on the first human beings; it was perfectly practiced before Hippocrates; traces of it had been found by Hermes Trismegistus, and it had been disclosed through the alchemical *Emerald Tablet*. It had afterwards been lost—but humans were now once again granted access to such perfect medicine. Bodenstein gave a medicinal reading of this text: the *Tablet* states that all things come from one, and Bodenstein’s inference was that this perfect medicine came from one, that is, from God. This medicine and the perfect wisdom associated with it were granted by God through divine illumination before the end, as a restoration or instauration of what had once been lost. Similar beliefs are reflected in the Rosicrucian notion of a general reformation and the brethren’s belief that the new time would see original perfection and wisdom restored.

**Apocalyptic Alchemy**

In the manifestos, divine revelations at the dawn of the new age are associated with alchemy, an art practiced by Christian Rosencreutz that might be deployed to its full potential in a bid to transform the world. Usually, alchemy was seen as a means to purify and perfect nature, whether in order to find the philosophers’ stone or in the form of *chrysopoeia*, the art of transmuting metals into gold. The latter as a legitimate reason for the practice of alchemy was especially rejected by the authors of the Rosicrucian manifestos:

Concerning the godless and accursed making of gold in our times especially, it has gotten so out of hand, that it has induced first of all many wayward gallows-bound sycophants to practice great mischief under its name, and to abuse the curiosity and credulity of many [...], as if the alteration of metals were the highest *apex* and *summa* in philosophy [...].

---

64 Ibid., 151: “Eodem sane modo medicina verum Dei munus saepius mutationes sensit: Quia mundi IEHOVA primis hominibus, qui naturaliter vixerunt, maximam naturae cognitionem cum longa vita est largitus, Caeterum peccato nimium paulatim crescente, usque adeo ignorantia successit scientiae, tenebrae luci, vt Dominus non solum homines morbis affligerer [...]. Hermes quidem dicitur postea duas lapideas tabulas reperisse, in quibus veteris medicinae et totius naturalis scientiae vestigia restabant, sed ars vera, nec illic erat inscripta, nec homines eam à Noé alijqui recte dicerunt”; ibid.: “[...] Ex hisce liquet medicinam ante Hyppocratem fuisse, et sincerius tractatam, quam vulgus medicorum ipsius aetate declarat.”

65 *Fama*, 132.

66 Ibid., 124–125: “Was aber sonderlich zu unser zeit, das gottloß und verfluchtte Goldmachen belangt, so sehr überhand genommen, daß zuforderst vielen verlaufenen henckermasseigenen Leckern, grosse Bubeerey hierunter zutreiben, und vieler fürwiz und Credulitet sich
The Rosicrucians understood alchemy to be a part of philosophy, but transmutational alchemy, that is, alchemy used for the amelioration of base metals (e.g., lead, tin, copper, iron) into noble metals (silver and gold) was not among their foremost studies. The manifestos claimed that many books and pictures had been published “in the name of Chymia” which were “an offence to the glory of God.” Alchemy was a divine art whose value was not to be diminished through the use of images or by using it to make gold. Most books published on the subject were false and filled with recipes of fake tinctures. In this context, the Confessio alluded to the Amphitheatrum of the alchemist and theosopher Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605), a work on alchemy which the Rosicrucians seem to have reviled for its images and figures.

With these views, the Rosicrucians implicitly rejected some of the practices of Paracelsus and his followers. Paracelsus, as an alchemical physician, had of course used alchemy primarily for medical purposes, but he had not always distanced himself from transmutational alchemy and chrysopoeia. In his Book on Renovation and Restoration, he discussed the restoration and renovation of metals, minerals, and the human body. His On Minerals describes the use of alchemy for the transmutation of metals and supports that practice. Alchemists and physicians, in his view, had the possibility to transform and purify elements and metals (transmutational alchemy) as well as human bodies (medical alchemy), involving sometimes the same minerals, such as antimony. Nevertheless, discussions of transmutational alchemy are rare within his writings,
and more often than not he distanced himself from it, arguing instead for the benefits of alchemy for the restoration of the human body and the pursuit of longevity.

To muddy the waters even more concerning Paracelsus’ attitude towards chrysopoeia, some spurious works published under his name dealt approvingly with the transmutation of metals. The Alchemical Treasure, On the Nature of Things, and the Book of Vexations, for example, all dealt with and promoted transmutation.74 The author of the equally spurious On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers described two types of what he called “spagyric mystery,” namely the renovation of the body and the transmutation of metals.75 All of these works were taken as genuine by Huser, and some of them had been published by Bodenstein, Toxites, and Dorn.76 These Paracelsians, too, practiced alchemy and wrote about the transmutation of metals.77 Dorn, Von Suchten, and Leonard Thurneysser (1531–ca. 1595), who were involved in the dissemination of Paracelsus’ works, worked not only on Paracelsian medicine but also on transmutational alchemy.78 According to Sperber, finally, the philosophers’ stone could be used both for the advantage of medicine as well as for the transmutation of metals.79 All Paracelsians, however, preferred chymiatria.

74 Pseudo-Paracelsus, De natura rerum, i, 11; 399–403; idem, Thesaurus ⟨Thesaurorum⟩ Alchimistarum, i, 14; 401–404; idem, Coelum philosophorum sive liber vexationum, i, 14; 405–420. Cf. Telle, “Vom Stein der Weisen.”
75 Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, i, 14; 391–399, esp. p. 397.
76 On this, see: Sudhoff, Bibliographia Paracelsica: for Manuale de lapide philosophico medicinali, 235, 268, 394; for Liber vexationum, 257, 393; for Thesaurus Alchimistarum, 257, 268, 343, 393; for De natura rerum, 345, 392. Other works include: De vita longa: ibid., 392; De tinctura physicorum: ibid., 189–190, 235, 268, 392, and Sudhoff, Sämtliche Werke, 1, 14; xii–xvi.
78 See, for example: Dorn, Clavis totius philosophiae chymisticae (1567); idem, Congerier paracelsiacum chemiae de transmutationibus metallorum, 557–646; Von Suchten, De secretis antimonii; idem, Tractatus secundus de antimonio vulgaris (1604); Thurneysser, De transmutatione veneris in solem. On the latter text, see: Morys, “Leonhard Thurneissers De transmutatione veneris in solem.” On Von Suchten: Newman and Principe, Alchemy Tried in the Fire, 50–56.
79 Sperber, Von den dreyen seculis, 206–209: “Auch wie man den verum lapidem Philosophorum so wohl zur transmutation der Metallen/ als auch zur Arzteney warhaftig und beständig machen möge.”
(alchemical medicine) over *chrysopoeia*. By the time the manifestos were drafted, Paracelsus could therefore also have been seen as an alchemist involved with transmutation, with the transmutational art being promoted not only by the master himself, but also by some of his followers and imitators. But the Paracelsian texts explicitly concerned with *chrysopoeia* had not left their mark on the Rosicrucian manifestos.

The Rosicrucian authors made transmutational alchemy subordinate not to medical alchemy, but to what may be called “apocalyptic alchemy,” that is, to a type of alchemy used for the disclosure and revelation of secrets. Transmutational alchemy was not entirely dismissed, but was viewed rather as a *parergon*, a secondary activity. According to the *Fama*, many alchemists falsely maintained that the making of gold should please God, but:

> We hereby declare publicly that this is false, and that for the true philosophers it is a trifle and only a secondary activity. Together with our beloved Father C.R.C. we say: *pfuh*, gold is just gold. So he to whom all of nature has been opened, does not rejoice in that he can make gold, or as Christ says, that the devils obey him, but that he sees heaven to be open, and the angels of God ascending and descending, and his name written in the Book of Life.

While the transmutation of metals was not to be abandoned altogether, neither was it promoted, and emphasis was put, instead, on the study of nature and heaven, and the revelation of natural and divine secrets on the eve of a new age through alchemy. For the Rosicrucians, alchemy should not be practiced for the mundane benefits it might provide; its purifying capacities were used for apocalyptic purposes. As such, alchemy had theosophical characteristics, as it was,
ideally, a means to revealing natural and divine miracles and secrets—which is why apocalyptic alchemy played a singular role in the Rosicrucian general reformation.82

Attributing to alchemy these apocalyptic properties was not at odds with the literature of the time. The transformation of nature was sometimes related to salvation through Christ and to an understanding of soteriology, wherein the philosophers’ stone was sometimes identified with Christ.83 Alchemy was seen as a means to reveal what was hidden and to prophesy upon what was still unknown. In the same vein, the authors of the manifestos stated that through their alchemical practices they could push their observations beyond the borders of the material world and see the movements of God’s angels in imitation of Jacob’s Ladder from Genesis,84 and they could read and understand the names written on the Book of Life, that is, the names of those who will be saved during the Last Judgement.85 Through their art, the Rosicrucians had singular access to secret and sacred matters. Thus the Confessio reads that this art is “the highest medicine of the world,” it is “a gift from God,” and it “opens [medicine] and innumerable other marvells”—even if it would be preferable to achieve these things through philosophy.86 By means of apocalyptic alchemy, alchemists could obtain insights into the secrets hidden in nature and in the heavens.

---

82 Confessio, 58–59.
83 Crisciani, "Opus and Sermo," 21–22; Nummedal, Anna Zieglerin, 134. On the philosophers’ stone, see: Principe, The Aspiring Adept, 76–80; idem, The secrets of Alchemy; Newman and Principe, Alchemy Tried in the Fire; Nummedal, Alchemy and Authority, 96–118. For Paracelsus and several Paracelsians on the philosophers’ stone, see: Paracelsus, Archidoxa, cited in: Khülmann and Telle, cp, vol. 1, 131; Bodenstein, cp, vol. 1, nr. 6, 114; pseudo-Paracelsus, Apocalypsis Hermetis, edited by Zetzner (1603), part 2, 668–671; pseudo-Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, 1, 14: 391–399; Sperber, Von den dreyen seculis, 206–209. The philosophers’ stone, in these writings, does not seem to have been understood as Christ, which was however not an uncommon identification at the time; see, for example: Jung, Psychologie und Alchemie, "Die Lapis-Christus-Parallelle," 395–491.
84 Genesis 28:12: “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”
86 Confessio, 58–59: “Quae porro cum Impostorum detestatione contra metallorum Transformationem, et supremam Mundi medicinam a nobis dicta sunt, ea sic volumus intelligi, Nullo modo extenuari a nobis tam insigne Dei donum: sed cum non perpetuo Naturae cognitionem secum affcrat, haec vero & illam & infinita alia Naturae miracula edoceat, aequum est, potiorem a nobis philosophiae cognitionis rationem haberi [...].”
Christian Rosencreuutz, Elias, and Paracelsus

With respect to the disclosure of secrets, a striking similarity can be observed between the protagonist of the Rosicrucian manifestos, Christian Rosencreuutz, Paracelsus, and the hero of early modern Paracelsian alchemists and physicians, Elias Artista. Christian Rosencreuutz was described as someone who had begun his brotherhood in order to pass on the secrets he had learned elsewhere. When his vault was rediscovered, notably at a time when all hidden things were said to come to light, the treasures buried together with Christian Rosencreuutz were also opened.

For several early Paracelsians, the use of apocalyptic alchemy upon the arrival of the new age became associated with a newly invented apocalyptic figure, Elias Artista. This figure was to disclose all divine mysteries on the eve of the millennium or else of a new period defined otherwise. This “Elijah the Artist” was heralded especially by physicians, chemists, and alchemists, and their expectations were often associated with a sense of scientific or cognitive progress.

The legendary Elias Artista was a derivative of the prophet Elijah who, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, was thought to return again and reveal all secrets. Elijah had returned to the kingdom of God without having died (2 Kings 2:1–18). Since he had not died, he was believed not to be resurrected after the Last Judgement. As a consequence, Elijah became an eschatological figure who was expected to return before the end of time to reveal all wisdom which he had learned while residing with God. This notion of Elijah as the harbinger of wisdom had its origin in the Jewish rabbinic tradition, where rabbis discussed the true meaning of Scripture and waited for Elijah to reveal the true answers. Paracelsus had also referred to the coming of Elijah, albeit sporadically, but he never added the title “Artista.” It therefore seems that he referred to the traditional eschatological figure, although he did associate Elijah particularly...
with alchemy.91 Julius Sperber, who likewise never referred to an Elias Artista, also announced the imminent arrival of Elijah. According to him, the traditional eschatological figure was to return at the beginning of the third earthly age. While Moses had announced the first age, and Christ the second, Sperber explained, “the prophet Elijah, who will return then, will initiate the third and last age.”92

Other Paracelsians believed that it was Elias Artista who would reveal all secrets and, following Paracelsus’ interpretation of the prophet Elijah, would do so primarily through alchemy. Pseudo-Paracelsus, in On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers, mentioned the apocalyptic Elias Artista as the one “who will disclose the concealed.”93 After its first publication in 1570 this text circulated widely.94 It was in the possession of Toxites and Von Suchten, both of whom took it to be a genuine work. Von Suchten predicted that “the contents of [the books of the Magi about alchemy] will remain hidden, until Elias Artista comes, and explains it to us.”95 Dorn also knew On the Tincture, which he translated into Latin in 1570.96 In 1581, he published a Collection of Paracelsian Chemical Texts on the Transmutation of Metals, which was printed again in 1602 in the first of the six volumes of the Theatrum Chemicum (Chemical Theatre)

91 Paracelsus, Von den natürlichen Dingen, 1, 2; 163: “nun aber eisen in kupfer zu machen, ist nicht so vil, als eisen in golt zu machen. darumb das weniger letzt got offenbar werden, das merer ist noch verborgen, bis auf die zeit der kunst Helias, so er komen wird.”
92 Sperber, Von den dreyen seculis, 19: “Die dritte und letzte zeit aber wird anfahren der Prophet Elias/ welcher alsdan wiederkommen wird.”
93 Pseudo-Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, 1, 14; 396: “[...] dan diser arcanorum, welche die transformations geben, sind noch mer, wiewol wenigen bekant. und ob sie schon einem von got eröffnet werden, so bricht doch der rum der kunst nit also von stund an herfür. Sonder der almechtig gibt im auch den verstann gleich mit, die selbigen andern zu verhalten bis auf die zukunft Heliae artistae, da das verborgen wird offenbar werden.”
94 Sudhoff, Sämtliche Werke, 1, 14; xii–xvi. Von Suchten, however, thought that the present times were the last ones: Von Suchten, CP, vol. 1, nr. 33. 573–574.
95 Von Suchten, Mysteria gemina antimonii, 92: “Also haben die Magi viel Bücher davon [transmutation] geschrieben/ und ein jeder nach seines Herzen Luft dasselbig tractirt/ wir haben der Bücher viel/ sind gemein worden. Aber ihr Inhalt bleibet verbogen/ so lang biß Helias Artista kommt/ und uns dieselben auslegt.” For the Magi in Paracelsus, compare: Paracelsus, Aus der Philosophia super Esaiam, 1, 12; 507; idem, Astronomia Magna, 1, 12; 27, 83–85, 125, 278, 373; Webster, Paracelsus, 67n42–43. Paracelsus seems to turn from the Persian and Egyptian magi to the Magi of the Orient, who witnessed Christ’s birth in Bethlehem.
96 Dorn, Archidoxorum Aureoli Ph. Theophrasti Paracelsi de secretis naturae mysteriis libri decem, 253–170.
published by Lazarus Zetzner (1551–1616), who was later also to publish the
Chemical Wedding.97 In the Collection, Dorn discussed a tincture of the philoso-
phers, and copied and translated the entire passage on Elias Artista from On
the Tincture.98 According to him, until Elias’ arrival all (alchemical) secrets will
remain hidden.99

The Paracelsian Toxites, in a 1574 letter to Count Palatine Philip Ludwig of
Neuburg (1547–1614), claimed that Elias Artista will reveal all mysteries upon
the dawning of the new time: “[...] the time has come, that God will reveal
everything. Then God the Lord will let us be handed the books, and He wants
us to commit to them, and to search [in them], until He sends us Elias Artista,
who will explain everything [...]”100

In a letter of 1571 to Archduke Ferdinand II (1529–1595), Bodenstein in-
vested a new meaning into the figure of Elias Artista by identifying him with
Paracelsus, who had revealed all secrets, especially with respect to “studies in
medical, metallical, yes, all philosophical things.” Some had tried to obscure
his work, but his books were “mighty” and teach “how all external and internal
pains and diseases can be stilled and cured.”101 For Bodenstein, it was Paracelsus
who had at last brought to light all that was hidden and that would serve as the
basis for the new golden time.

97 Idem, Congeries Paracelsicae Chemiae (1581), reprinted in: Theatrum Chemicum (1602),
557–646.
98 Dorn, Congeries Paracelsicae Chemiae, 610: “Arcana plura transmutationes exhibentia
reperiuuntur, et si paucis cognita, quae licet aliqui manifestentur à Domino Deo, non
propeterea statim erumpit rumor cum arte, sed omnipotens cum ipsis dat pariter
intellectum haec & alia celandi usque in adventum Heliae Artistae, quo tempore nihil
tam occultum quod non reuelabitur.”
99 Ibid., 626. Other passages are also used by Dorn, compare ibid., 608–609, and Pseudo-
Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, 1, 4: 395–397.
100 Toxites, cp, vol. 2, nr. 52, 281: “[...] das die zeit vorhanden/ da es alles offenbar werden sol.
Dann laßt vns Got der Herr die Bücher zuhanden kumen/ so will er auch das wir vns
darinn vben/ vnnd suchen/ biß er vns den Eliam artistam gar zuschicket/ der alles wirt
erklaerien [...]”
101 Bodenstein, cp, vol. 1, nr. 23, 460: “Dvrcleuchtigster/ hochgeborner Fürst gnedigster
Herr/ dieweil Aureoli Paracelsi/ Helie artiste lucubrationes in re medica/ metallica/ ja
aller philosophia/ wie ers in seinem irdischen leben geweissaget/ fein ein andern nach
offenbaret werden/ wol aber etvann von wenigern in solchen sachen/ verstandigern/ die
dann vonn wegen des harteßlichen schreibens Theophrasti nicht allein den buchstaben/
sonders den rechtien innhalt verdunklen vnnd obscurieren thun/ vnnd aber ann mich
gereicht/ diese gegenwirtigen libri metamorphoseon/ so also großmechtig im werck war-
lich seind/ das ich inn der welt meine tag keine bücher gelesen (ausserhalb Göttlicher) so
diesen vergleichene können werden/ Weil jhr begriff lehnet/ alle euserliche vnnd inner-
liche schmertzen vnnd kranckheit zü stillen/ zü medieren [...]”
This apocalyptic task of Paracelsus was also mentioned in the manifestos. When in the *Fama* the brethren referred to the Fiery Trigon, the new cycle of conjunctions taking place in the three fire signs (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius), they also made reference to some heroes exemplary of the new time it announced, among whom was Paracelsus. Paracelsus was thus explicitly mentioned as one of the men who had revealed and announced imminent changes, and was thereby seen to have played a role similar to that of the Elias Artista of the Paracelsians as well as to that of Christian Rosencreutz.

### 2.3 Alchemy and Medicine

The famous physician Paracelsus and the legendary figure Christian Rosencreutz share further profound resemblances, as uncovered by further examination of the alchemical and medical influence of Paracelsus on the manifestos. Like the interpretations of Elias Artista, both Paracelsus and Christian Rosencreutz originated from German-speaking regions, and both men were acquainted with medicine. Paracelsus is primarily known as a physician, but the protagonist of the Rosicrucian manifestos was also acquainted with the healing arts, which he had practiced while in Damascus among the Turks and which he used to prevent diseases in other people. Together with the first brethren of the fraternity, he agreed that the only profession they would practice was medicine. "Most of the brethren," according to the *Fama*, "were known and praised among very old people due to their medicine." These brethren seem to have been able to prolong life, using their medicine for rejuvenation.

Both Paracelsus and Christian Rosencreutz had also travelled widely. Throughout his career, Paracelsus had travelled through Europe as a surgeon and physician. He claimed to have worked as a military surgeon in six different
countries, and to have medical experience from at least twelve. Especially after he was forced out of Basel, Paracelsus wandered from place to place, practicing his medicine and preaching his sermons. Rosencreutz, in turn, travelled widely through the Arab world, and studied subjects that were not taught in European regions. He afterwards promoted them in European lands, and—perhaps in parallel with Paracelsus’ medical reformation—they formed the basis of his project of general reformation which he later initiated in Germany.

But the likeness between the two men extends beyond such bibliographical similarities. The knowledge Rosencreutz acquired in Damcar and Fez became the foundation for his fraternity. Paracelsus, too, shares similarities with Arab sources. Like other alchemists, he drew on the Mercury-Sulphur dichotomy of medieval Islamic alchemy, although he adapted it to his own medical purposes within his own reform programme. He amended this dichotomy by adding salt so as to form the *toria prima* of Mercury (with liquid or fluid characteristics), Sulphur (oily or fiery), and Salt (alkaline or solid). Salt was also discussed in Arab texts, but there and in texts of the European Middle Ages it was not added to the dichotomy. For example, the famous but spurious Arab *Book on Alums and Salts* was written in the name of Muhammad ibn Zakarya al-Rāzī (ca. 853–925). This text deals with several types of salt, and had acquired enormous popularity during the Middle Ages and in the early modern period. Al-Rāzī was criticised by Paracelsus on numerous occasions, as was Avicenna, for example in relation to the Mercury-Sulphur dichotomy.

Paracelsus further understood his *toria prima* first and foremost as principles rather than elements or minerals, and he believed that every thing and every body consisted of these principles in different combinations. Against the ancient philosophers and their followers, he wrote:

---

106 *Fama*, 94–98, 118.
107 On the diverse meanings that Paracelsus attributed to these three principles, see: Webster, *Paracelsus*, 132–139.
Now notice in this: they say after the ancient philosophical teaching that from mercury and sulphur all metals grow, and that similarly no stone grows from clean soil. Now, what lies! What should be the cause for which the matter of the metals should be solely sulphur and mercury, while the metals and all mineral things consist of three things and not of two?111

The doctrine of the *tria prima* was also relevant to Paracelsus’ medicine, which was based on alchemically prepared cures. According to Paracelsus, every individual body has in it a minor alchemist, a so-called “archeus,” seated in the stomach with several sub-archei in every organ, which were responsible for separating the pure from the impure. Medicine, he thought, should work similarly, and should separate the pure from the impure when the archeus cannot effect this separation on its own. In analogy with the alchemical worker within humans, also physicians should proceed alchemically. When bad influences enter the body (invasion and contagion), and the archeus cannot work properly so that a person becomes sick, a physician should apply a chemically prepared cure which has to correspond to the disease in order to cure the body.112 Because medicines could also be extracted from poisonous substances, which was a radical claim at the time, medicines had to be chemically prepared and purified and then applied in a most minimal dosage as remedies to the ill person. The famous term *spagyria* is applicable here, which originates from the Greek words *span* (to draw out) and *ageirein* (to bring together), and was used to designate this specific Paracelsian type of medicine.113 Paracelsus, indeed, advocated the separation and recombination of medicines-to-be, such as herbs and minerals. He was very clear about the use of alchemy for medicines: “[...] because in the arcana [here: ‘secret’ or ‘hidden’ medicines] lies the determining factor, the foundation must be alchemy, through which the arcana can be prepared and made.”114 And it is “not, as they say, that alchemy

111 Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, i, 8; 147–148: “nun merken in dem: sie sagen nach der alten philosophischen ler, aus mercurio und sulphure wachsen alle metall, item vom reinen erdlich wechst kein stein. Nun secht was lügen! Dan ursach, wer ist der, der do die materia der metallen allein sulphur und argentum vivum [mercury] sint zu sein, diwel der metall und alle mineralischen dinge in drei dingen standen und nit in zweien?”

112 On this, see especially: Paracelsus, *Opus Paramirum*, i, 9; 39–230; idem, *De causis morborum invisibilium*, i, 9; 251–350; see also: Schott, “Invisible diseases.”


114 Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, i, 8; 186: “darumb so in den arcanis der beschlußgrunt ligt, so muß hie der grunt alchimia sein, durch welche die arcana bereit und gemacht werden.”
makes gold, makes silver; here the purpose is to make arcana and to direct them against the diseases.”

Paracelsus did not invent alchemical medicine. It had been practiced by medieval alchemists such as Rupescissa, Roger Bacon, and Arnald of Villanova, to whom Paracelsus also referred, as well as by pseudo-Ramon Lull, and later it had attracted physicians in the fifteenth century. Roger Bacon, for example, had argued that the corruption of the body as a result of the Fall could be resolved through alchemical cures. Paracelsus reshaped and popularized this medieval application of alchemy to medicine, as a result of which it became increasingly popular amongst those who wished to distance themselves from traditional medicine. It is well known that Paracelsian spagyric medicine, mostly practiced and taught outside of universities, became particularly popular after 1570 for its chemically prepared cures. Early Paracelsians, especially those responsible for the dissemination of Paracelsus’ medical works, remembered Paracelsus primarily as an iatrochemist, a chemical physician. They themselves, too, practiced, described, and prescribed (the study of) chymiatria.

---

115 Ibid., 185: “nicht als sie sagen, alchimia mache gold, mache silber; hie ist das ftirmnem mach arcana und richte dieselbigen gegen den krankheiten.”
116 Lull himself probably never wrote alchemical texts, but such texts were published under his name. See further: Rupescissa, Liber de consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum deutsch; Benzenhöfer, Johannes de Rupescissa liber de consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum deutsch; Pereira, The Alchemical Corpus Attributed to Raymond Lull; idem, “Medicina in the Alchemical Writings attributed to Raimond Lull”; Newman, “An overview of Roger Bacon’s Alchemy”; Principe, The Secrets of Alchemy, 69–73; Devun, Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time; see also: Newman and Princede, “Alchemy vs. Chemistry”; Moreau, “Eléments, atomes, et physiologie,” 117–120. On Paracelsus and medicine, see also the chapters included in: Dopsch, Goldammer, and Kramml (eds.), Paracelsus (1493–1541) ‘Keines andern Knecht ...’.
117 DeVun, Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time, 83–84.
118 Examples are Adam von Bodenstein, Michael Toxites, Gerhard Dorn, Alexander Von Suchten, Oswald Croll, Samuel Eisenmenger, Joachim Tancke, Pseudo-Paracelsus. Cf. Eisenmenger (Siderocrates), De methodo iatromathematicae conjunctionis qua astrologiae fundamenta certissima indicantur; Dorn, Artificii chymistici physici (1569); Von Suchten, Tractatus secundus de antimonio vulgari (1604); Croll, Basilica Chymica; the letters by Bodenstein, Toxites, Dorn, Von Suchten, Penot and others reproduced in: Kühlmann and Telle, Corpus Paracelsisticum, vols. 1–3. Several alchemical Paracelsian tracts were also included in the six volumes of Theatrum chemicum, published by Lazarus Zetzner in the seventeenth century. The Theatrum chemicum included works by the Paracelsians Thomas Moffett, Dorn, and Penot. The spurious Manual on the Medical Philosophical Stone also describes the use of alchemy for the benefit of medicine: Manuale de lapide philosophico medicinali, 1, 14: 421–432. See further: Hannaway, The Chemists and the Word; Kühlmann,
So novel and antithetical were Paracelsus’ ideas that he was soon dubbed the “Luther of medicine,” especially and pejoratively by his opponents. Paracelsus emphatically rejected this epithet and argued: “With what mockery have you made me a caricature, calling me the Luther of physicians, with the explanation that I am a heresiarch [arch-heretic]? I am Theophrastus and I am more than he with whom you compare me. I am myself and I am the king of the physicians.” Despite his objections to this comparison, his medicine was indeed considered heretical to established medical scholars.

Like Paracelsus, the Rosicrucians were also pursuing a reform of medicine, and one which would involve the use of alchemy. It should be remembered that, in their view, “[p]hilosophy includes much of theology and medicine,” and that the reform of one implied the reform of the others. Although the transformation of medicine was not explicitly addressed in the manifestos, passages about Rosencreutz and the brethren as physicians, like those examples provided above, indicated that the reform of medicine was one of their most abiding concerns. The brethren, after all, understood themselves first and foremost as physicians working outside of universities, and claimed that alchemy opens medicine and was “the highest medicine of the world.” By linking alchemy to medicine, with the first being used for the benefit of the latter, the Rosicrucians advocated the use of alchemically prepared cures which their hero Paracelsus had popularised.

This use of spagyria represented a break with tradition. Traditional medicine was based on the works of Hippocrates of Kos (460–370 BC), Galen of Pergamon (129–ca. 215) and Avicenna or Ibn Sina (980–1037). After the rediscovery of ancient texts in the eleventh century and their translations into Latin, Galen’s medical and anatomical works became the standard authority within medicine during the Middle Ages. They were used alongside Avicenna’s Canon of Medicine, a medical textbook also inspired by Galen’s writings, which was

---


Paracelsus, Paragranum, 1, 8; 62–63: “mit was spot habt ir mich ausplasimirt, ich sei Lutherus medicorum, mit der auslegung ich sei haeresiarcha? Ich bin Theophrastus und mer als die, den ir mich vergleichent; ich bin derselbig und bin monarcha medicorum [...].” Cf. ibid., 43.

Confessio, 45: “[philosophia] theologiae ac medicinae plurimum [...] habeat.”

Although the Chemical Wedding is an overtly alchemical text, it does not express or relate to the general reformation of the other two manifestos, which is the central theme of this study.

Confessio, 58–59. Cf. above, n. 86.
used at universities up to the eighteenth century (and was presumably the book burned by Paracelsus in Basel). Galenic medicine, influenced by the humoral theory of Hippocrates, treated diseases by correcting a surplus or shortfall of the humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) that were thought to make up the human body. The humours, in turn, were related to the four temperaments and qualities. These four humours were also closely related to the four Empedoclean and Aristotelian elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and especially their qualities (each element had two of the qualities dry, wet, cold, and hot), by which also the Galenic humours were characterised. Traditional, Galenic medicine, based on the works of these authorities, remained dominant at universities in Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but came under increasing pressure, especially by Paracelsus and his followers because it was unable to cure diseases such as leprosy, syphilis, and epilepsy. Paracelsus, rejecting Galenic medicine and the humoral theory, viewed human beings as individuals with individual diseases (rather than with humoral imbalances), which were to be cured by corresponding alchemically prepared cures.

In the eyes of Paracelsus, not only was the Mercury-Sulphur dichotomy to be replaced by a trichotomy, but the theory of the four humours was a mere invention, because human beings consisted of the tria prima, instead. In his foremost challenge to traditional medicine, his Buch Paragranum (the book that goes against the grain), he provocatively wrote:

Although this philosophy of Aristotle, Albert, etc. has been written down, who will however believe the liars, who do not speak from philosophy, that is, from the light of nature, but from fantasy? Just as they invented in medicine the four humours, [namely] black bile, phlegm, etc., so also in philosophy they made up the lie about mercury and sulphur.

---

124 On Galen and Galenic medicine, see for example: Hankinson (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Galen; Tempkin, Galenism.

125 Cf. for example: Paracelsus, Von der Französischen Krankheit, 1, 7; 67–181; Bodenstein, CP, vol. 1, nr. 23, 462.

126 In Paracelsus’ Astronomia Magna, one of the four pillars foundational to medicine is titled “alchemy”; see: Paracelsus, Astronomia Magna, 1, 12; 3–444.

127 Paracelsus, Paragranum, 1, 8; 148–149: “Wiewol disse philosophie van Aristoteles, Alberto, etc beschriiben ist, wer wil aber glauben den lügern, die do nicht aus der philosophie reden, das ist aus dem liecht der natur, sonder aus der fantasei? gleich wie sie haben erdart in der medicin 4 humores, choleram, phlegma, etc, also haben sie auch hie in der philosophie erdart die lügen mit mercurio und sulphure.” On this lie, see above, n. 11. “Choleram” originates from the Greek word “chole,” meaning “bile.” Cholera, then, was thought to
The authors of the manifestos were obviously aware of the increasing rejection of Galenism by authors such as Paracelsus and his followers. While promoting the reform of medicine, the Rosicrucians included in their criticism of established learning specifically Galenic physicians, who feel that “one should stick to the old tunes and esteem the pope, Aristotle, Galen—indeed everything that has the appearance of a codex—more than the clear and manifest light; who [sc. Aristotle and Galen] if they were alive no doubt would happily correct their errors; but here man is too weak for such great works.”\footnote{Fama, 93: “[Man] bleibe bey der alten Leyren [...] und muß Bapst, Aristoteles, Galenus, ja was nur einem Codice gleich siehet, wieder das helle offenbahre Liecht gelten, die ohn zweifieel, so sie lebten, mit grossen Frewden sich corrigirten: hie aber ist man so grossen Werken zu schwach [...]”; see also above, section 1.3.} Contemporary Galenic physicians were seen as perpetuating Galen’s mistakes and were considered so vain that they cared more for their own reputations than for the truth. The Rosicrucian manifestos explicitly challenged and rejected the traditional medicine taught at universities, and endorsed a different type of medicine instead. No doubt this found its origin in the Paracelsian promotion of a new medicine at the expense of accepted authorities. Paracelsus and Christian Rosencreutz were understood to have been the heralds of this transformation.

According to the Fama, medicine was to be reformed, just like theology and law, and was also viewed as subordinate to philosophy. Unlike the other two disciplines, medicine was not sanctioned directly by the authority of the Church (unlike theology or canon law) or by the empire (unlike civil law), for which reason the Rosicrucian support of alchemically prepared cures and their criticism of Galenism was a direct offence neither to the Church nor to the empire. But the Rosicrucian reform of medicine and rejection of authorities was, of course, an offence to traditional university-taught and established physicians.

Because Galenism and Aristotelianism were so closely related, the rejection of the one implied the rejection of the other. In rejecting Galenism, both Paracelsus and Christian Rosencreutz were also dismissing the traditional Aristotelian natural philosophy as taught at universities, and seeking to replace it with their own philosophy. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter,
Rosencrutz formed his brotherhood in opposition to established teaching, and the authors of the manifestos were dismissive of Aristotle and his followers. The imperative to remove the pope as the Antichrist was mirrored by challenges to the authority of Galen and Aristotle, and the need for their legacies to be dismantled and replaced.

Aristotelian philosophy was the basis of the standard curriculum at universities. In the mid-twelfth century, Aristotle’s work had been translated into Latin. The commentaries and scholarship that thereafter accrued to his work meant that his logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy subsequently came to form the foundation of university education. It is in the rejection of this received wisdom that we encounter the essence of the Rosicrucian call for a reform of philosophy. In the manifestos, the brethren instead promoted their own ideas, constituting a reform of natural philosophy.

In this regard they were, once more, following in the footsteps of Paracelsus and his disciples-at-a-distance, who in numerous places and in no uncertain terms had expressed their distaste for traditional philosophy in general and Aristotelianism in particular. Admonishing traditional university philosophers who followed medieval Arabic, Greek, and Latin authors, Paracelsus had suggested:

[...] you must follow me with your Avicenna, Galen, Al-Rāzī, etc., it is not me who must follow you. But you me, you from Paris, Montpellier, Salerno, Vienna, Cologne, Wittenberg, and all of you in the crowd, and none should be excluded, not remain even in the most remote little spa, because I am the monarch [...]. How would it be for you cuckolds, that Theophrastus will be the prince of the monarchy? And you the heaters [of spas]? What do you think of it, that you will have to enter my kingdom of philosophy and shit on your Pliny and Aristotle, and piss on your Albert, Thomas, Scotus etc., and [you] will say: ‘They could lie well and subtly, what great fools are we and our predecessors that they and we did not notice it.’


This fierce rejection of established philosophical and medical thought and the promotion of Paracelsus’ own ideas was copied by early Paracelsians. Bodenstein, for example, claimed that true knowledge had been lost upon the entry to the philosophical stage of Aristotle, whom he described as having been “the wonder of nature and a demonic man.” University scholars erred because they still followed his example: “The theologians who followed Aristotle, fell in many disgraceful ways into errors and brought excessively loathsome heresies into the churches, because they mingled the sacred with the profane and the heaven with the earth.”\textsuperscript{131} Just like the authors of the manifestos, Bodenstein referred to the practice in universities with the term “heresy,” because scholars persisted in errors that were offensive to God.\textsuperscript{132} This label applied especially to the theologians, who involved the pagan Philosopher in theological matters.

Bodenstein was the son of the religious reformer Andreas Karlstadt von Bodenstein (1486–1541), who originally collaborated with Luther and was aware of, and influenced by, Luther’s early uncompromising criticism of Aristotle and scholastic philosophy in general.\textsuperscript{133} Bodenstein’s dismissal of the use of Aristotle in theology perhaps found its origin in his father’s criticism of this practice in the early days of the Reformation. During the Wittenberg movement, when Luther was exiled at Wartburg Castle, Karlstadt distanced himself from the famous reformer and developed views that were soon deemed too radical by Luther himself. During this time, Karlstadt preached vehemently against the mixture of pagan Aristotelianism and theology that he felt ought to be concerned with divine matters.\textsuperscript{134} It was mainly Karlstadt’s radicalism that prompted Luther to return from his exile to steer matters into a different direction. Upon Luther’s return, Karlstadt was forced to leave Wittenberg and to lead a life quite like that of Paracelsus, as a lone drifter.\textsuperscript{135} Bodenstein may well have been inspired both by his father’s stance, which drew such fierce early criticism, and by Paracelsus’ outbursts against the Philosopher. The Karlstadt-
connection, in any case, provides the religiously abstruse backdrop to some of the Rosicrucians’ precursors.

The reform of knowledge propagated by the Rosicrucians involved the formulation of a better alternative to Galenic, Aristotelian, and scholastic practices, for which they turned to Paracelsus. Importantly, however, and for reasons that remain obscure, the Rosicrucians never referred specifically to Paracelsus concerning (alchemical) medicine or the rejection of Aristotelian thought. Like Paracelsus and the early Paracelsians, they described themselves as physicians, supported *spagyria*, and scorned Galenic physicians, but they were never explicit in their adoption of Paracelsian medicine. This is surprising, given that it was his medicine that formed the primary basis for Paracelsus’ popularity around 1600. While Paracelsians were not the only ones to use chemically prepared cures as a remedy for diseases, and while some physicians came to use these cures in combination with Galenic medicine, alchemical medicine remained first and foremost related to the medicine of Paracelsus, and Paracelsus was still primarily known more for his iatrochemistry than for his other, e.g. religious, contributions. Although the Rosicrucian criticism of Galenism and scholastic Aristotelianism was not explicitly derived from Paracelsus or Paracelsians, it must have been motivated by the growing rejection of Galen and Aristotle by Paracelsians.

2.4 Philosophical Inspirations

The Rosicrucians implicitly sided with Paracelsus and early Paracelsians in their rejection of scholastic thought and acceptance of spagyrrical medicine, but, more importantly still, they explicitly accepted and promoted the new philosophy of Paracelsus and his followers as their own. By doing so, they positioned Paracelsus as a precursor of the Rosicrucians’ own philosophy and, indirectly, of their general reformation. While his name occurs several times in the *Fama*, there are no references to him in the *Confessio* and the *Chemical*...

136 Severinus and Sennert are well known for having combined both strands of medicine, although Sennert accepted fewer Paracelsian ideas than Severinus; see: Severinus, *Idea Medicinae*; Shackelford, “The Early Reception of Paracelsian Theory”; idem, “To Be or Not to Be a Paracelsian”; idem, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine*; Hirai, “Living Atoms, Hylomorphism and Spontaneous Generation in Daniel Sennert”; Moreau, “Eléments, atomes, et physiologie”. Other examples include Johannes Hartmann and Joseph DuChesne (Quarcetanus); see: Moran, *The Alchemical World of the German Court*; Kahn, “Alchimie et Paracelsisme.”
The repeated suggestions that Paracelsus’ name appears in a cryptogram inscribed on a basin in the *Chemical Wedding* cannot be verified. Kienast’s reading of the cryptogram ignores any possible astronomical or alchemical symbolism, and one can only make out a reference to “Paracelsus Hochheimensis Medicinae Doctor” when one reads into four strange characters four letters from three different alphabets (Greek, German, and Latin). The characters said to refer to Paracelsus could just as easily be interpreted to refer to anything else. Moreover, a reference to Paracelsus would make little sense: it would be a unique instance in the *Wedding*, and there is no obvious connection between Paracelsus and what, according to Kienast, are occult elements in the cryptogram. Contrary to the *Fama* and the *Confessio*, the *Wedding* does not reveal any Paracelsian inspiration, even if alchemy constitutes part of the subject matter. A reference to Paracelsus would be at odds with the rest of the text and therefore lacks plausibility.\(^{137}\)

The centrality of Paracelsus in the *Fama* is evident from the episode recounting the rediscovery of Christian Rosencreutz’s vault, a central episode of this manifesto. Hidden in the vault, deep below the house of the Rosicrucian brotherhood called *Holy Spirit*, and next to the body of the founder of the fraternity, a Paracelsian work was discovered. As the third generation of brethren of the fraternity opened the vault, they discovered the following:

Each side [of the vault] had a door to a chest, in which lay various things, especially all our books, which we already possessed, together with the *Vocabulary* of Theophrastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim and those books of which we faithfully report daily: Herein we also found his *Itinerary* and *Vita*, from which most of this [work] is taken.\(^{138}\)

---

\(^{137}\) For the cryptogram, see: *Chemical Wedding*, 118. Scholars suggesting that Paracelsus’ name could be read here include: Kienast, *Johann Valentin Andreae und die Vier echten Rosenkreutzer-Schriften*, 90, followed by: Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible*, vol. 1, 198; Edighoffer, *Rose-Croix et société idéale*, 237 idem, “L’énigme Paracelsienne,” 238; Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, 7; idem, “Vom ägyptischen Hermes,” 72.

\(^{138}\) *Fama*, 116–117: “Eine jede der seyten [des Gewölb] hatte eine Thür zu einem Kasten, darinnen unterschiedliche sachen lagen, besonders alle unsere Bücher, so wirh sonstigen auch hatten, sampt deme Vocabulario Theop. P. ab: Ho. und denen so wirh täglich ohne falsch mittheilen: Hierinn funden wirh auch sein Itinerarium und Vitam, darauf dieses meisten theils genommen [...].” “Theop. P. Ab: Ho” is short for “Theophrastus Paracelsus ab Hohenheim.” Tilton claims that in the vault books were found containing the “prisca sapientia,” but this is not clear from the description in the *Fama*: Tilton, “The Rosicrucian Manifestos and Early Rosicrucianism,” 128.
The *Itinerary* and *Vita* are presumably Rosencreutz’s, not Paracelsus’, because only Rosencreutz’s itinerary and life are described in the *Fama*. But next to the society’s important founding works lay Paracelsus’ *Vocabulary*. Both the explicit reference to Paracelsus as well as the sacred place where his book was found are indicative of the importance the authors attached to this philosophical, medical, and religious reformer. But to what does the *Vocabulary* refer? Is this a reference to a work unknown to us today? It is well known that the cryptic nature of Paracelsus’ works meant that they were often difficult for readers to interpret. Might the *Vocabulary* therefore have been a work that enabled the Rosicrucian brethren to unlock the full significance of Paracelsus’ writings by providing clear and authoritative definitions for his terminology? It certainly seems that the fraternity was claiming unique authority to expound Paracelsus’ writings based on a treatise that could unlock his code. The implication of this reference to the *Vocabulary* is that the Rosicrucians have fully incorporated Paracelsian concepts into their worldview.

From the point of view of a literal interpretation, it is impossible that works by Paracelsus or Paracelsians could have been found in the vault. The legendary Rosencreutz is said to have died in 1484, ten years before Paracelsus’ birth in 1493/4, and the vault allegedly was not opened before 1604.139 Perhaps the authors of the manifestos were unaware of Paracelsus’ dates of birth and death. But on the more likely supposition that they were aware of Paracelsus’ biography, they deliberately placed him outside of time, thereby conferring upon him a mythological status. He then inhabits a mythological world, similar to the one attributed to both Elias Artista and Christian Rosencreutz, from where he inspires the Rosicrucians’ philosophy and their narrative context.

Still, the reference to Paracelsus is not entirely unforeshadowed, because in the years before the manifestos were drafted the publication of hundreds of his works was answered with a similarly prodigious flow of books by other authors who popularised his philosophy. The authors of the manifestos must have been aware of this flood of publications and owed an intellectual debt to the medical reformer. Paracelsus, using a specific and unconventional terminology, had at times provided explanations of individual terms, which could have been known to the Rosicrucians.140 It could also be that the *Vocabulary* refers to one of the thematic lexica published at the end of the sixteenth century. One of these was the *Dictionary of Theophrastus Paracelsus* (1584) by Dorn, in which Paracelsian terms are discussed and explained. It might also have been

139 The vault was described as having been hidden for 120 years, see: *Fama*, 113, 119.
140 See, for example: Paracelsus, *Vom Bad Pfäffers*, Huser, VII, 242ff.
a reference to one of the Onomastica (thematic lexica) published in the 1570s and 1580s by authors such as Toxites, Bodenstein, and Thurneysser, who themselves contributed greatly to the diffusion and popularisation of Paracelsus’ writings. The opaque writing style of Paracelsus, alongside the occasionally chaotic structure of his texts and his habit of inventing new words, had proven challenging to the early modern reader. Works like those by Dorn and Thurneysser organised and codified Paracelsus’ texts. Since such works were key resources for understanding the obscure language of Paracelsus, it is plausible that the brethren referred to one of them, and were thereby claiming to have the key to unlock the meaning of Paracelsus’ new philosophy.

What, then, was this new philosophy? What was Paracelsus’ explicit contribution to the Rosicrucian cause and their call for a general reformation? We have seen that the authors of the manifestos referred to the efforts of unnamed heroes towards the reformation of the world on the eve of the new period. The only one such hero mentioned by name was Paracelsus:

We must certainly acknowledge that the world even in those days was already pregnant with great commotion and was labouring to give birth, and that she already brought forth tireless, worthy heroes, who forcefully broke through the darkness and barbarism, so that we weaker ones could press on after them. They were the tip in the Fiery Trigon, whose flames now shine even more brightly and will certainly kindle in the world the final fire. One of these men, in his calling, was Theophrastus.

That the world was labouring to give birth depicts metaphorically the birth of the new age. As preparation for this birth, Theophrastus Paracelsus had

141 Toxites, Onomasticon i & ii (1574); Thurneysser, Onomasticon (1574–1583); Bodenstein, Onomasticon Theophrasti Paracelsi (1575); Dorn, Dictionarium Theophrasti Paracelsi continens obscuriorum vocabularum, quibus in suis scriptis passim utitur definitiones (1584); see also: Edighoffer, Les Rose-Croix et la crise, 164.

142 The claims by Paracelsus’ assistant, Johannes Oporinus, that Paracelsus would dictate his writings to students, sometimes even while he was still drunk from the night before, might lend further explanation to the impenetrability of his works; see: Sudhoff, Paracelsus. Ein deutsches Lebensbild aus den Tagen der Renaissance, 46–49.

143 Fama, 100–103: “Gewißlichen wir 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 hindurchgebrochen und uns schwachern nur nachzudrucken gelassen und freilich der Spitze im Trigono igneo gewesen, dessen Flammen numehr je heller leuchted und gewißlichen der Welt den letzten Brand anzünden wird. Ein solcher ist auch in seiner Vocatio gewesen, Theophrastus [...].”
appeared alongside some other worthy heroes whom the Rosicrucians would follow and whose contributions were to be used for the future reformation. Paracelsus worked his way through darkness and barbarism, which presumably signified scholastic thought, and reformed some of the arts. As part of the imminent final fire—a reference to the idea that the world will be consumed in a final conflagration before being made new again—the Fiery Trigon signals in the skies the advent of the new period. Although less likely, the blazing fire might also have carried an alchemical connotation. According to Paracelsus’ *Paragranum*, calcination was one of the first steps in transmutational alchemy, which was accepted as a *parergon* in the manifestos. Calcination was conducted under the influence of fire.\(^{144}\) In this sense, it might be regarded as the first step towards the renewal of the world by fire, in which case transmutational alchemy would play a significant role in the renovation of the world.

Immediately after the passage just quoted, it becomes clear in what sense Paracelsus was taken to be a worthy hero announcing and contributing to the Rosicrucians’ reformation. The *Fama* expands on Paracelsus’ specific merits as follows:

\[\ldots\] although he [Paracelsus] never entered our fraternity, he had nonetheless diligently read the Book M., which had ignited his sharp mind. But this man was so hindered in his best course by the preponderance of the learned and the know-it-alls, that he could never peacefully discuss his considerations concerning nature with others. Therefore, in his writings he rather mocked these know-it-alls than revealing himself fully.\(^{145}\)

Throughout his life, Paracelsus was unable to engage in peaceful dialogue with others, and his writings are verily interspersed with sarcastic comments on

---

\(^{144}\) Paracelsus, *Paragranum*, 1, 8; 187: “[...] also hier auch im feur die zerbrechung geschihet. Und da fermentiren sich die arcanen und geben von inen die corpora und gehent in ir aufsteigen zu iren exaltationibus, deren zeit ist calcineren, sublimiren, reverberiren, solviren, etc.” Through calcination metals or minerals turn to dust or powder under the influence of fire.

traditional philosophers and physicians. Medically, Paracelsus had become increasingly notorious, especially after the expulsion from Basel. Religiously, by the end of his life, he claimed “[t]hat is the foremost reason that has hindered me to write: that I have not been taken for an entitled Christian; that has troubled me much.” Paracelsus had never matriculated in theology, and was therefore not taken seriously by university-taught theologians who may have questioned his Christian fidelity, but who in any case problematised the fact that Paracelsus styled himself as a doctor in Scripture.

Here we find another similarity between the heterodox physician and Christian Rosencreutz: according to the manifestos, both men had studied the Liber M. Paracelsus was said to have read this book, while Rosencreutz had translated it into Latin and brought it with him from Damcar. With this analogy, the Rosicrucians once more co-opted Paracelsus as an ally of Rosencreutz and the Rosicrucian cause.

The Liber M. in the manifestos was perhaps the Liber mundi, the “Book of the World” or the Book of Nature, referred to also by Paracelsus. But the Rosicrucians' Liber M. must refer to something else, or more, than simply to nature as it appears before our eyes, otherwise Rosencreutz did not need to translate it from Arabic and bring it with him to the German-speaking regions. The Rosicrucians claimed to have in their possession secret knowledge, about which Rosencreutz was taught in Fez, and it may very well be that the Liber M. was the key that granted them (and others) knowledge of the secrets hidden in nature, making this book a manual that could help to decrypt nature’s mysteries. Understood in this sense, most people had forgotten or lost the ability to probe beyond nature’s surface and properly read the book of nature— with the exception of a few enlightened men in Fez who had preserved this secret knowledge—and the Liber M. served as a repository of this information.

The idea that the Liber M. signifies a unique code to decipher nature’s secrets is testified by another reference to the Liber M. in the Fama. This reference

---

146 Paracelsus, De secretis secretorum theologiae, 11, 3: 169: “[... ] und über alles das, das ich erzelt hab, das dann der wenigste teil ist. der mehrer ist groß, daß ich ihn nit beschreiben mag. das ist die grösste ursach die mich gehindert hat zu schreiben, daß ich nit für ein volmächtchen christen bin geachtet worden; das mich hart betrübet hat [...]. mir ist entgegen gestanden ein anderer hauf und reich, der da gesagt: du als ein lai, als ein paar, als ein gemein mann solt von den dingen nit reden, was die heilig geschript antrift, sonder uns zubahören, was wir dir sagen, dabei bleiben, und kein anderen sollst hören oder lesen dann allein uns.”

147 Kühlmann and Telle, Corpus Paracelsisticum, vol. 1, 536.

148 Fama, 95: “In Damcar lehnet er die Arabische Sprach besser, wie er dann gleich in folgendem Jahr das Buch und Librum M. in gut Latein gebracht, unnd mit sich genommen.”
implies that by means of secretly reading the "Book M.,” the Rosicrucians could observe the entire world “before their eyes.”¹⁴⁹ In the Salzburg manuscript version of the Fama, this passage refers to the “Book mysteriorum” rather than to “Book M.”,¹⁵⁰ which further gives the impression that the book contained the key to all the mysteries of the world. Likewise, the Confessio stated that “the Book of Nature is opened wide before the eyes of all, even though few can either read or understand it.”¹⁵¹ The study of nature required a unique means to decipher all its secrets, and the Rosicrucians seemed to believe that they now had such a key in their possession. Paracelsus was thus seen as one of the few humans capable of studying and understanding the secrets buried in the Book of Nature.

A third and final reference to this book—and in the Salzburg version to the “Book mysterium”¹⁵²—explains that Rosencreutz began writing the first part of the Book M. together with the first brethren of the Rose Cross. As the task of writing the Book M. became too heavy for them, others were admitted into the brotherhood to help out with their daily chores.¹⁵³ That Rosencreutz translated the book into Latin, and that he wrote it together with the other brethren, may suggest—despite the incongruity of writing a book that he had translated earlier and that thus was already in the brethren’s possession—that it was to serve as a means to make hidden knowledge public. Latin was still the lingua franca of the scholarly community, and scholars communicated their ideas to the international intellectual community predominantly through Latin works. It may be that the Rosicrucians had similar objectives in mind for this book.

According to tradition, the Book of the World was interpreted as the Book of Nature, creation, complementing the Book of Scripture. Traditionally, both

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 109: “[...] was wihr auch auß dem Buch M. heimlichs erfahren/ (wiewohl wihr der ganzen Welt imaginem und contrafactur könnern für augen haben), ist uns doch weder unser Unglück und Serbstündlein bewust [...].”
¹⁵⁰ Fama Fraternitatis, Universitätsbibliothek Salzburg, ms M 1463, 6r.
¹⁵¹ Confessio, 55: “De sua quidem voluntate jam praemisit nuncios Deus, Stellas in Serpentario atque Cygno exortas, quae magna profecto magni Consili signacula illud docere possunt, quam junctis is, quae humanum ingenium adinvenit, suae occultae scripturae insinerve faciat, ut Liber Naturaee in omnium quidem oculis expansus adapertusque sit; pauci tamen vel legere omnino, vel intelligere possint.”
¹⁵² Fama Fraternitatis, Universitätsbibliothek Salzburg, ms M 1463, 4r. Note that this time the text reads “mysterium” rather than “mysteriorum.”
¹⁵³ Fama, 104: The first brothers "machten auch den ersten Theil des Buchs M. weil ihnen aber die Arbeit zu groß vorder und der Kranken ungläublichen zulaff sie sehr hinderen, auch allbereit sein newes Gebäw Sancti Spiritus genennet, vollendet war, beschlossen sie noch andere mehr in ihr Gesell und Brüderschaft zu ziehen." See also the reference to the Book M. on ibid., p. 109.
books, scriptural and natural, were thought to be the means through which God expressed himself.\textsuperscript{154} The Bible was the revealed Word of God, but God had revealed Himself also through His creation, in order for His existence to be knowable to all people, even to those who had not received His Word.\textsuperscript{155} The French theologian Alanus ab Insulis (Alan of Lille, 1120–1202) wrote a famous poem that was thought to refer to the Book of Nature, and which begins with the following triplet:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Omnis mundi creatura,} \\
\text{Quasi liber, et pictura} \\
\text{Nobis est, et speculum.}
\end{align*}
\]

Each creature of the world, is like a book, and a picture for us, and like a mirror.\textsuperscript{156}

The theory of the two books, Nature and Scripture, was well known in the Middle Ages, but became popular—and open to a variety of interpretations—especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It influenced the works of such natural philosophers and scientists as Oswald Croll (1563–1609), Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Robert Boyle (1627–1691), and others. This analogy between Scripture and nature occasionally mixed with traditions like the \textit{philosophia perennis}, and some concluded that while after the Fall humans were cut off from immediate divine inspiration, through Scripture and nature they were still able to acquire such original knowledge.\textsuperscript{157} Both the theory of the two books, as well as the \textit{philosophia perennis}, were central to

\begin{enumerate}
\item Alanus ab Insulis, \textit{De Incarnatione Christi}, in \textit{Patrologia cursus completus}, series Latina, 210, p. 579. On Alanus, see, for example: Evans, \textit{Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century}.
\item Bono, “The Two Books and Adamic Knowledge,” 301–307. These authors could not have been sources for the Rosicrucians. Croll’s \textit{Basilica Chymica} (1609), in which he adopted the two-books theory corresponding to two lights, became very popular after Croll’s death in 1609.
\end{enumerate}
the Rosicrucian general reformation; they were each fundamental to the new citadel of truth which for the Rosicrucians was to replace traditional thought.

Paracelsus gave his own description of the Book of Nature. He had suggested that one should study nature just as his predecessors had studied books. Studying paper books, he argued, would help us neither to acquire new knowledge nor to understand local or new diseases. In analogy with Alanus, Paracelsus argued that one should instead read nature like a book:

> Then this is what I want to attest concerning nature: whoever wants to investigate it, should study its books with his feet. Scripture is studied through its characters, but nature from country to country: A country is like a page. Thus is the codex of nature, thus must its leaves be turned.\[158\]

Paracelsus, distancing himself from the bookish study of the scholastics, turned his attention to the external world to acquire empirical knowledge—while never neglecting the importance of Scripture and divine inspiration. Bodenstein later testified that Paracelsus “used new principles, which he proved by means of the Holy Scripture and experience itself [...].”\[159\] Both this passage and Paracelsus’ numerous studies and interpretations of biblical texts indicate his concern for the natural and scriptural books.

Corresponding to the two books, Paracelsus postulated two lights, the light of nature and the light of the spirit.\[160\] The light of nature, he argued, comes from God the Father, to inspire human beings to study all worldly things. The light of the spirit (or the light of grace) comes from God the Son, to illuminate matters of faith, especially regarding the life of Christ and the life in Christ.\[161\]

With the help of the light of nature, one could cure diseases, study nature, and create artefacts:

\[158\] Paracelsus, *Sieben defensiones*, 1, ii; 145–146: “[D]an das wil ich bezeugen mit der natur: der sie durchforschen wil, der muß mit den füßen ire bücher treten. Die geschirft wird erforschet durch ire buchstaben, die natur aber durch lant zu lant: als oft ein lant als oft ein blat. also ist codex naturae, also muß man ire blatter umbkeren.”

\[159\] Bodenstein, *cp*, vol. 1, nr. 6, 117: Paracelsus “nouis principijis est usus, quae sacris literis ipsaque experientia probat [...].”

\[160\] Paracelsus, *Liber de sancta trinitate*, 11, 3; 259–260: “Zwei liecht seindt, menschlich und geistlich und komben beide von gott, nemlich das liecht der weisheit und das liecht des menschlichen leben und das liecht des glaubens und des geistlichen leben [...] eine zu menschlicher vernunft, die ander dienet zum glauben. und eine gehört auf erden, unter uns zum leben in der liebe des nechsten, die ander hört in den glauben, zum ewigen reich [...].”

The light that is given to man by God the Father is such a light that through this light humans learn all worldly things, which belong to the world, [and] to the body. When something is equal to the light of nature, it is known properly. Because the light of nature, the knowledge of humans about all worldly things, is nothing but the Holy Spirit of God the Father.\footnote{Paracelsus, Liber de sancta trinitate, 11, 3; 262–263: “[S]o ist das liecht so vom vatter dem menschen geben wird, ein solches liecht, daß durch dasselbig liecht die menschen alle weltliche ding lernen, die in die welt gehören, zu dem leib. ist etwas gleich dem liecht der natur, in dem so es recht erkent wird. wann lumen naturae, das wissen des menschen in allen weltlichen dingen, ist nichts als der heilig geist von gott dem vatter [...].”}

It is the light of nature, originating from God, which Paracelsus believed would enable humans to study the Book of Nature. The Rosicrucian characterisation of Paracelsus as student of the Liber M. presumably found its origin in such passages.

The theory of the two books continued to be influential among later followers of Paracelsus. A case in point was Toxites, who had already referred to the light of nature, and claimed:

God wants the human being [...] to study the secrets in all of God's gifts, in the heavenly and earthly philosophy and astronomy, so that he focuses on the natural and the eternal in the work, so that he may not only know God correctly through it, and serve his fellows, but so that he may reveal himself with it, so that others may perceive his work and acclaim and praise God.\footnote{Toxites, preface to Astronomia Magna, Avi-Avii: “Derhalben will Gott daß der Mensch nicht feire oder müßig gehe/ sonder daß er in teglicher ubung bleibe/ zu erforschen die heimigkeiten in allen gaben Gottes/ in der Himlischen und irdischen Philosophe und Astronomey/ damit er das natürlich/ und das ewig in das werck richte/ auff das er nicht allein Gott dadurch recht lerne erkennen/ und dem Nehesten damit diene/ sonder daß er sich damit offenbare/ damit andere seine werck sehen/ und Gott darumb loben und preisen.”}

Like the authors of the manifestos, Toxites suggested that knowledge of the natural and divine realms was possible.\footnote{Fama, 91–92, see above, section 1.3.}

In two ways, this analogy between Scripture and nature stands in contrast to the Lutheran notion of \textit{sola scriptura}. Firstly, Luther put the emphasis on Scripture alone and never complemented this one book with another; his
Reformation was solely grounded in *scriptura* and *traditio*. Secondly, Luther turned to Scripture in order to salvage faith and not as a means to knowledge. The Rosicrucian study of both books, instead, provided insights into natural and divine things, and both the Rosicrucian and Paracelsian views are in keeping with the renewed stress on human agency as opposed to divine revelation alone.

In the manifestos, the external world that was to be studied also corresponded to the inner world of man: both worlds, the macrocosm and the microcosm, were understood to be in harmony. The microcosm and macrocosm were each a mirror to the other; everything in the macrocosm had its equivalent in the microcosm. The *Fama* described this harmony as follows:

> Just as every seed contains a whole good tree or fruit, likewise the entire great world is contained in a small human being, with his religion, politics, health, bodily parts, nature, speech, words and works, all in the same tone and melody with God, heaven and earth.\(^{165}\)

The potential for human beings to find themselves in harmony with God, the firmament, and the external natural world, implies that as microcosms they contain something within them corresponding to God, heaven, and earth. This is an important element of the Rosicrucian understanding of human nature. It is also again contrary to Luther's view: if humans were “in the same tone” as God, they were not corrupted by sin, while also religion was understood to be an internal experience and not solely an outward expression of the lived service of God.

Already on the opening page of the *Fama*, humans are introduced as microcosms of the universe. We recall from above that God was said to have revealed secrets and previously hidden creatures in the macrocosm, and highly illuminated minds were said to have come to renew the arts. Thanks to these important developments, the *Fama* stated, “the human being may understand his nobility and glory, in what way he is the microcosm, and how far his art extends into nature.”\(^{166}\) Because of the harmony between the microcosm and the macrocosm, revelations in the universe and the renewal of the arts and philosophy on

---

\(^{165}\) *Fama*, 97–98: “[G]leich wie in jedem Kernen ist ein guter gantzer Baum oder Frucht, also die gantze grosse Welt in einem kleinen Menschen were, dessen Religion, Polisey, Gesundheit, Glieder, Natur, Sprache, Worte und Wercke, aller in gleichem tono und Melodey mit Gott, Himmel und Erden ginge.”

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 92: “[…] damit doch endlich der Mensch seinen Adel und Herrlichkeit verstande, welcher gestalt er Mircocosmus, und wie weit sich sein Kunst in der Natur erstrecket.”
the eve of the new age implied a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of humans themselves. Within them, that which was in harmony with the macrocosm, was divine; that which was not, could be considered devilish.\textsuperscript{167}

In the \textit{Confessio}, the authors explained: “Philosophy [...] examines heaven and earth through a more careful anatomy, or, to put it briefly, we say it expresses sufficiently the one man, the microcosm.”\textsuperscript{168} For the Rosicrucians, philosophy could be used to study the nature of the universe, the macrocosm, as well as the nature of human beings, the microcosm. It encompassed astronomy and natural philosophy for the study of the heavenly and natural worlds, and religion for the study of the divine. Astronomically, humans were seen as the centre of the cycles of the sun and the moon.\textsuperscript{169} Religiously, having a

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 97–98.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Confessio}, 45: “[...] philosophia [...] caelum atque terram exquisitiori Anatomia scrutetur, aut ut summam dicamus, Unum hominem Microcosmum satis exprimat.” This is one of the sentences also found in the \textit{Theca gladii spiritus} (1616), 31, nr. 177, written by Andreae but published under Hess’ name; see the Appendix.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Confessio}, 62–63.
The paracelsian impetus

divine counterpart within, they may once again understand their (original) glory. They were both actors of the general reformation as well as objects of study in all their earthly and heavenly aspects. The renovation of philosophy thereby cleared the path for the renovation of the world.\textsuperscript{170}

These statements about humans as microcosms echo earlier ideas. The famous phrase on the *Emerald Tablet* (Tabula Smaragdina), to which Bodenstein referred, was attributed to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus and reads as follows: “That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below.”\textsuperscript{171} During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, this formula had a considerable influence. Ficino invoked the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm in his *Three Books on Life* (De vita libri tres), which was written in the 1480s.\textsuperscript{172} But it was in fact Paracelsus to whom the authors of the *Fama* referred when speaking of this harmony:

This harmony is profoundly present in his [Paracelsus’] works, which he would have shared with the learned without doubt, if he had found them to be worthier of higher art rather than of subtle mocking. So he wasted his time living free and carefree, leaving the world to its own foolish pleasures.\textsuperscript{173}

While Paracelsus had discussed the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in his works, the Rosicrucians were nevertheless critical of him for squandering his life away.\textsuperscript{174} As for Paracelsus himself, he knew Ficino’s work, as is clear from a reference to the latter as the “best of the Italian physicians” in a letter to Christoph Clauser.\textsuperscript{175} Later Paracelsians were also familiar with Ficino and with the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{170} *Confessio*, 45. Cf. above, section 1.3.
  \item \textsuperscript{171} On Hermes, see: Kahn, *Hermès Trismégiste*. The notion of man as microcosm is not specifically a Paracelsian or Hermetic idea, but it was a widespread concept also in other traditions in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. See, also for further literature: Weeks, *Paracelsus. Essential Theoretical Writings*, i, n1 and n2.
  \item \textsuperscript{173} *Fama*, 101–102: “[... ] gedachte Harmonia [ist] gründlich bey ihm [Paracelsus] zu finden, die er ohn zweifel den Gelehrten mitgetheilet hette, da er sie grösserer Kunst, dann subtiles vexiresn würdiger befunden, wie er dan auch mit freyem unachtsamen Leben seine zeit verloren und der Welt ihre thörichte Frewde gelassen.”
  \item \textsuperscript{174} For the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in Paracelsus’ work, see, for example: Paracelsus, *Das Buch Paragranum*, 1, 8; 33–221.
  \item \textsuperscript{175} Paracelsus, *Begleitbrief an Clauser* (1527), 1, 4; 71: “[...] Italorum vero Marsilius medicorum optimus fuit.” On Paracelsus and Ficino, see: Schütze, “Zur Ficino-Rezeption bei Paracelsus.”
\end{itemize}
harmony he described between man and the world. That both Christian Rosencreutz and Paracelsus relied on the microcosm-macrocosm analogy is a final similarity between the two.

As is clear from the passages above, the anatomy of the universe was thought to reflect the anatomy of human beings. This is reminiscent of views expressed by Paracelsus, who understood human beings as having an image which mirrors the external world. While Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564) and Michael Servetus (1511–1553), for example, conducted anatomical investigations by which they corrected Galen's anatomy—with Vesalius' famous On the Fabric of the Human Body (1543) being published by Paracelsus' former assistant, Oporinus—Paracelsus used the term “anatomy” to refer to the inner framework of man. The physician should probe beyond the appearances, but not through dissection, in order to see the inner anatomy, the Biltinus or image of man. According to Paracelsus, humans were intimately related to the universe through astral and supernatural influences. For him, they contained within themselves all things in the universe, its entire pattern including all elements and, beyond the earth, the firmament. Man and the cosmos were thought to be different from each other in appearance, in form, and in figure. But in “scientia,” a word used by Paracelsus in an unusual way, meaning something like ‘(the study of) invisible reality’, they were similar: “From this it follows that heaven and earth, air and water are a human being in scientia, and the human being is a world with a heaven and an earth, with air and water, similar in scientia. So Saturn of the microcosm takes after Saturn of the heaven [...]” as do the other internal planets. Not only all earthly elements but also all heavenly stars had their counterparts in human beings, in similarity to the medieval melothesia, the image of man with his parts assigned to the different signs of the Zodiac.

177 Paracelsus, Opus Paramirum, 1, 9, 62: “Aber nicht anderst ist zugedenken und zuwissen, dan das alle ding in dem bild stent. Das ist alle ding sind gebildet. In diser biltinus ligt die anatomei. Der mensch ist gebildet; sein biltinus ist die anatomei, eineim arzt voraus notwendig zuwissen [...], zu solcher biltinus der anatomei sollen wir uns fleißen, dan on die wird uns die natur nicht arzt heissen”; see also: Weeks, Paracelsus, 21–47, especially pp. 31–32.
178 Paracelsus, Opus Paramirum, 1, 9; 95: “Darauf so folgt nun das himel und erden, luft und wasser ein mensch ist in der scientia, und der mensch ist ein welt mit himel und erden, mit luft und wasser, dergleichen in scientia. also nimpt der saturnus microcosmi an saturnum coeli, [...]” Paracelsus’ theory of the elements, in which fire was replaced by heaven as a superior element, was taken over by several later Paracelsians; see, for example: Roeslin, De opere Dei creationis, 11–12.
Corresponding to these philosophical views, Paracelsian medicine worked from the supposition that the world—God's creation—was a complex aggregation of individual entities linked together through sympathy and antipathy, astral influences, and magical and invisible powers. As described in his *Volumen Paramirum*, diseases could be caused by bad food, the human constitution, the imagination, astral influences, or by God.\(^{179}\) Paracelsus used the microcosm-macrocosm analogy to the advantage of his medicine. By observing the signs, or symptoms, of the disease, he searched for the corresponding cure in nature.

\(^{179}\) On the influences of diseases, see: Paracelsus, *Volumen Paramirum*, 1, 1; 165–239. Here, Paracelsus described 5 *entia* (origins of diseases), namely *ens astrale, ens veneri, ens naturale, ens spirituale*, and *ens dei*. 
From the microcosm-macrocosm analogy it follows that something in the external world could cure humans, that is, “the external member is a medicine to the internal member,” to the illness shown through its symptoms.180

To Paracelsus, this understanding of man as microcosm was related to his *Signaturenlehre*, the belief that there are signs in nature that reveal the essence of things and diseases.181 Everything in nature was seen to be endowed with hidden virtues or powers (*Kräfte*), which are revealed through signs. According to Paracelsus’ theory of signatures, the form of an object reveals its essence. For example, if something is crooked in its form, it probably is so also in its essence. The possibility of understanding a thing’s essence or “virtue” through its form allowed Paracelsus to find in nature medicines for ailments and apply the cure on the basis of the homeopathic principle of ‘like cures like’, which had earlier been used also by Hippocrates. The remedies to the disease found in nature were believed to carry the same “virtues” as the disease itself.182

These signs in the visible world, in the macrocosm, correspond to the *arcana*, the secrets, of the invisible world.183

Thus nature has ordained that the outer signs indicate the inner works and virtues, thus it has pleased God that nothing will remain hidden, but that through the sciences it will be revealed what lies [hidden] in all creatures.184

The signs reveal the essence, or anatomy, of a thing. Through the signs, “the secrets of hidden, invisible things” were recognised and discovered.185

---

180 Paracelsus, *Opus Paramirum*, i, 9; 94: “aus solches so ist das eußer glid des innern glids arznei.”

181 Edighoffer suggests that the theory of signatures is also found in the manifestos, but there is no evidence in these texts that supports this; see: Edighoffer, “Die Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer,” 164–165.

182 Paracelsus, *Opus Paramirum*, i, 9; 94–95; idem, *Astronomia Magna*, i, 12; 173.

183 Idem, *Opus Paramirum*, i, 9; 97.

184 Idem, *Astronomia Magna*, i, 12; 177: “Also hat die natur verordnet, das die eußerzen zeichen die innern werk und tugenzt anzeigent, also hat es got gefallen, das nichts verborgen bleibe, sonder das durch die scientias geoffenbart würde, was in allen geschöpfn ligt.”

185 Ibid., 173–175; “Dieweil nichts so heimlich im menschen ligt, es muß geoffenbaret wer- den, so wissent, das solches geschicht in dreierlei weg: durch die zeichen der natur, das ist, durch das signatum, durch welches nichts verschwigen bleibt, und zum andern durch selbs angeben [...] also zum dritten durch göttl urteil [...]. Also mag nichts im menschen sein, das nicht außerhalb von im bezeichnet werde, durch welchs der mensch erkennen mag, was in dem selbigen sei, der das signum signatum tregt. und zugleicheweis wie ein arzt sein kunst hat in der erkanntus, die er nimpt aus dem signo signato, also
physician should read the characters visible in the macrocosm like the letters of a book, and use them to prepare a medicine for the microcosm, thereby opening up all the mysteries hidden in nature. For Paracelsus, the microcosm and the macrocosm indeed mirrored each other.

Similar ideas were expressed in *On the Internal Signatures of Things* (1609) by the alchemist and Paracelsian physician Oswald Croll. Croll described the analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and proposed tables of correspondences between the two. He explained how herbs and plants can work as a medicine for the microcosm based on their signatures, and which plants correspond to which diseases. Euphrasia (eyebright) and *Paris quadrifolia*, for example, correspond to the eyes, and can therefore be used to treat ocular problems, whereas the fruit *citrium* corresponds to the heart and could help in heart diseases.  

Several other Paracelsians also emphasised this analogy between microcosm and macrocosm in their works. Julius Sperber referred to the inner anatomy of human beings and explained that “the human being, as the microcosm” was in harmony with the macrocosm. Bodenstein’s reference to the *Emerald Tablet* revealed that he, too, believed the microcosm to be in harmony with the macrocosm, and that the efficacy of medicine depended on this correlation. He further claimed that:

In the third place, they [sc. the doctors] encounter the elements and everything that emerges from them, through which the individual parts of the greater and smaller world, that is, of human beings, are known. Because the parts of the two worlds correlate to one another in a certain proportion, connection, and necessity.
Toxites referred to this analogy in his edition of Paracelsus’ *Astronomia Magna*:

The human being has not been made out of nothing like heaven and earth, but from a matter, that is, from the great world, which is why he is also called ‘microcosm’. Because everything that is essentially in heaven and on earth, is also spiritually in the human being.\(^{190}\)

Human beings were similar to the external world, but, again, only in what Paracelsus called the human *Biltnus*, their image. For Toxites, this meant that human beings were the most exalted of all of God’s creatures: “The human being should be correctly acknowledged as the most noble creature, and should be held in high esteem by many, not only because he is the microcosm and a miracle of the world, but rather because God created him in His image.”\(^{191}\)

With this claim, Toxites associated himself with the Renaissance philosophy of, amongst others, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. For both Toxites and the manifestos, humans as microcosms mirror not only the external world, but, echoing Genesis 1:26, also God: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness [...].”

Such ideas in the Paracelsian movement obviously exercised an influence on the authors of the manifestos and occupied a prominent place in their plans for the announced reformation. Paracelsus was remembered for having studied and described such powers and structures of the universe, while not only he, but also some of his early followers held such views. Although these ideas were not solely Paracelsian and some of them had a long history also in other traditions, the Rosicrucian manifestos explicitly associated them with Paracelsian thought. Owing to such ideas, Paracelsus was understood to have been a fore-runner of the Rosicrucians. Paracelsus was thus neither regarded as a practitioner of transmutational alchemy, nor mentioned as a medical innovator, but he was instead heralded for his Hermetical-philosophical views. This is a cru-

---

\(^{190}\) Toxites, preface to *Astronomia Magna*, Aiiiv: “[...] Dann der Mensch ist nit auß nichts wie himmel und Erden/ sonder auß einer materia/ das ist/ auß der grossen Welt/ gemacht worden/ daher er auch Microcosmus genent wirt. Dann alles was in Himmel und Erden wesentlich ist/ das ist auch im Menschen geistlich [...].”

\(^{191}\) Ibid., Aiiiv–Aiiiv: “[...] so soll der Mensch billich als die Edlest Creatur recht erkennt [werden]/ und in hohen Ehren von meniglichen gehalten werden/ nicht allein daß er Microcosmus/ und ein miraculum Mundi ist/ sonder viel mehr darumb daß ihn Gott ihm zum Bildtnuß geschaffen [...].” Pico had different reasons for granting man this position, but in his view also, man has every aspect of the external world within him; see: Pico, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, theses 1–23, 27–30.
cial point, because anti-Paracelsian physicians of the time, such as Andreas Libavius (1555–1616) and Thomas Erastus (1524–1583), criticised Paracelsian medicine not so much for its chemically prepared cures, but instead for its natural-philosophical concepts, such as the microcosm-macrocosm analogy and the theory of signatures. These were the exact elements in the manifestos that were explicitly associated with Paracelsus, which means that it was this Paracelsian philosophy that was to become the foundation of the new age.192

2.5 Primeval Wisdom

The microcosm-macrocosm analogy corresponded to ideas in the Hermetic tradition, which was a movement related to the tradition of a philosopha perennis. In the years before the manifestos were drafted, Paracelsus had come to be known as the German Hermes Trismegistus, a title that appeared on several of his posthumous publications, including those edited by Huser.193 The Rosicrucian authors drew some of their inspiration from these traditions, as they claimed to be the inheritors of the primeval wisdom known to some ancients in the far past, which was to serve as the foundation for their “citadel of truth.”194 Their philosophical renovation was therefore at the same time also a restoration of a long-lost philosophy. Through God’s revelation and the study of nature one could still acquire divine knowledge, even after the Fall. A similar idea of a primeval philosophy coming back to light is found in the Paracelsian tradition. Paracelsus himself had been equivocal in his statements about ancient wisdom. In his On Elevating the Hearts, he referred to ancient figures and biblical ones as having been led “by a divine voice,”195 but else-
where he claimed that only God and Christ possessed the truth. Generally for Paracelsus, true wisdom comes only from Christ, and only true Christians could acquire true wisdom—all those preceding Christ had fallen short of that standard.

The author of On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers, in turn, having used the name of Paracelsus pseudonymously so that, at the time the manifestos were written, his text was thought to have been drafted by Paracelsus, spoke highly of Hermes Trismegistus. He argued against an unnamed “sophist” that “the Emerald Tablet [of Hermes] gives evidence of even more art and experience of philosophy, alchemy, magic, and so forth, than could ever be learned by you and your gang.” Pseudo-Paracelsus thus incorporated the Hermetic tradition into his understanding of Paracelsianism.

Similarly, just before the manifestos were published, Sperber claimed that true wisdom had already been known to Adam. Originally written in 1597, one anonymous editor dedicated Sperber’s About the Highest Treasures to the Rosicrucian brotherhood when it was eventually published in 1615 as the Echo of the Divinely Illuminated Fraternity and Commendable Order of the Rose 2 Cross. In the original preface of 1597, entitled Preface to the Christian reader, Sperber claimed that “Adam has after the Fall kept all sorts of insight and knowledge of such divine wisdom in his memory,” and that now humans could once again “come to the attainment of such wisdom of God.” This resonated with

196 Idem, De summo et aeterno bono, ii, suppl.; 14: “Salomon und andere seindt nit unsere vorgeher, allein Christus!”; idem, Liber de venerandis sanctis, NPE 1, 425: “Wieviel mehr ist er dann gegen gott, dass er uns sein reich des himmels offenbart hie uf erden, was dasselbig sei, wie wir darein sollen kommen. Wer wollt uns das gelernt haben unter allen uns schädlichen menschen? Nit Abraham von ihm selbst, nit Moses, nit David, nit Salomon, nit Plato, nit Cato, allein der vom himmel ist, der kann uns die wahreit sagen.”

197 Pseudo-Paracelsus, De tinctura physicorum, i, 14; 391: “So zeigtdie alt schmaragdinische tafel noch mer kunst und erfarung der philosophei, der alchimei, der magica und der gleichen an, dan imermer von dir und deinen haufen wird gelernt werden.” See also: ibid., 392–393.

198 Sperber, Von der höchsten/ allerbesten unnd thewresten Schätze, republished in the Echo, 1615. Gilly doubts that Sperber was the author of the About the Highest Treasures (Echo), see: Gilly, Johann Valentin Andreae, 31. Here, we will refer to him as the author of the text, but his authorship should be studied carefully in future literature.

a statement in the *Fama*’s that “our philosophy is nothing new but is the same which Adam received after his Fall.”

Sperber’s view was akin to that of Steuco, as well as to that of Ficino, who had provided a genealogy of ancient wisdom starting from Hermes through Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato through to later authors. Ficino believed that Hermes was, if not identical with Moses, then at least a contemporary of Moses, thereby linking the Egyptian and Greek lines of true wisdom with the knowledge of the foremost prophet. For Sperber, original and true knowledge was a pious philosophy, which in his opinion entailed primarily magic. From Adam it was passed down to Abraham and Zoroaster, and “from this Zoroaster such an art descended afterwards to the Chaldeans and then to the Persians, who used it for a long time like the Egyptians [...]. The excellent scholar Plato says about this magic that it is a cult of the gods.”

This magic, Sperber explained, “is nothing but the pious wisdom, that is a beatific wisdom,” which had also been known to the Jewish Kings David, Samuel, and Solomon, and their disciples. It was termed Kabbalah by the Jews and was ultimately known to Christ and his mother Mary. Christ had then started his own magical school to further disseminate the divine wisdom—identifying original wisdom with Christian thought. Compare this again with the *Fama*: “[...] 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 it comes together.”

---

200 *Fama*, 123–124: “unser Philosophia ist nichts newes sondern wie sie Adam nach seinem Fall erhalten.”

201 On Steuco, see above, section 1.3. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 11, 125; 14, 61; 16, 83.

202 Sperber, “Preface,” *Von der höchsten Schätze*, 7–8: “Von dies ein Zoroaster ist nu solche kunst hernach auff die Chaldeer und folgends auff die Persianer kommen, bey welchen sie wie auch bey den Egyptianern sehr lange im brauch gewesen [...]. Der treffliche Gelehrte Mann Plato beschreibt die Magiam das sie eye eine cultus Deorum.”

203 Ibid., 8: “Dann magia ist ein Persianisch wort/ wie Porphirius bezeuget/ So gibt es der Persianischen Sprach art und eigenschat/ das es nicht anders sey, denn pia sapientia, das ist eine Gottselige weisheit [...].”


205 Ibid., 20.

206 *Fama*, 123–124: “[...] 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 kömnet zusammen [...].”
Pious wisdom and primeval wisdom were identified in both the *Fama* and in Sperber’s preface to *About the Highest Treasures*, in line with traditions such as the Mosaic physics.

According to Sperber, this original wisdom had been lost, because after the era of the saints “this high study […] was increasingly more forgotten […] so that it could unfortunately happen that almost in the entire world one does not know anything specific anymore about this holy and very high discipline.” Still, it was not entirely lost, because “in all ages one could find among Christians some individual and very few people, who were inclined to such a study,” among whom Sperber listed mystics, Neoplatonic philosophers, and Cabalists such as Cornelius Agrippa, Johannes Reuchlin, Johannes Tauler, Marsilio Ficino, Guillaume Postel, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Sperber believed that the original philosophy had come to light and was preserved in the thought of these authors who drew on ancient arts and philosophy, and who defined their own ideas as explicitly Christian in nature.

Sperber, as if expressing the aims of the Rosicrucian brotherhood, wanted to found a society on the basis of this rediscovered pious wisdom for anyone who took an interest in his book, so as to discuss magic and secrets and to spread original and divine wisdom. The good reader, he noted, “should not doubt me that he will read this work with great use and benefit, and that he will find in it explained many passages from the Holy Scripture, which had previously appeared somewhat obscure to him.” Like the manifestos after him, Sperber

---

207 Sperber, “Preface,” *Von der höchsten Schätze*, 24: “also ist auch dieses hohe studium von derselben Altvater zeiten der Heiligen je lenger je mehr vergessen […], also das es leider darhin geruht das man von solchem heiligen und aller höchsten studio fast in der ganzen Welt nichts mehr sonderliches weis.”

208 Ibid., 25–26: “man noch zu jeder zeit, wiewol allein einzlich unnd sehr wenig Leute, unter den Christen gefunden die ihnen solch studium haben angelegen sein lassen, darzu auch etwa mediate et immediate andeutung und nachweisunge bekommen. Als der sonderlich gewesen sein (wie aus ihren Schriften zum theil abzunehmen): Heinricus Cornelius Agrippa; Aegidius de Roma; Gerhardus Zurphaniensis; Johannes Hagem de Indagine; Johannes Reuchlinus; Taullerus ein Prediger Münch; Perrus Galatinus und Franciscus Georgius beyde Minoritaner Münche, Marsilius Ficinus Theologus, und Medicus Guilhelmus Postellus, Henricus Harpius Theologus, Picus comes Mirandulanus; Marcus Antionius Mocenicus ein Venetianscher patricius und Stephanus Conventius und andere mehr […].” Most, if not all of these men had studied magic and Cabala.

209 Ibid., 40–41, 50: “[…] der gutherzige Leser […] zweifelt mir alsdann nicht, er werde solchen tractat mit grossem nutz und frucht lesen, auch im selben viel örter der heiligen Schrift so ihme zuvor etwas dunkel werden furkommen sein, deutlich und wol erkläret finden.”
believed that the primeval wisdom of the ancients expressed biblical secrets, was witnessing a restoration, and was to become the new philosophy for the new age.

We have already seen that Bodenstein believed that the newly restored medicine had once been practiced and conveyed by Hermes Trismegistus, and that he borrowed from both Hermeticism and the *philosophia perennis*. He emphasised the link with original pious thought by bringing the wisdom of the ancient philosophers in line with the knowledge of the Church Fathers and interpreters of the Holy Scripture:

> When they [sc. the Church Fathers and interpreters of the Bible] for the first time received the rules and revelations of God and perceived His miracles, they dedicated themselves first and foremost to a divine philosophy, which is manifest in the Cabala, in Mercurius Trismegistus, Berosus,210 Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and the entire philosophy of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians. All of them taught much about the spirit, God, about the divine and secret causes. After Plato the Greeks fell for the most part from this more noble philosophy to a cruder and rudimentary philosophy.211

Bodenstein compared the divine wisdom of the earliest philosophers also to theology.212 Thus knowledge of the ancients, understanding nature through magic and Cabala, had in Bodenstein’s view provided a wisdom similar to Scripture, and was likewise studied by the Church Fathers.

In some pseudo-Paracelsian texts, specifically alchemy was used for the purpose of bringing back to light ancient knowledge. The pseudo-Paracelsian *Apocalypse of Hermes* and *On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers* purported to reveal the “secret of secrets.” According to *On the Tincture*, this secret had been sought and found by Hermes Trismegistus, [pseudo-]Aristotle,213 Avicenna, Albertus Magnus, and others, and it combined ancient wisdom and divine

---

210 Pseudo-Berosus, i.e., Annius of Viterbo (ca. 1432–1502), who published his forgery in 1498.
211 Bodenstein, *CP*, vol. 1, nr. 6, 115: “Nam, primi Dei praecepta et reuelationes, ubi [patres sacrarum literarum interprætes] acceperunt, et miracula uiderunt diuinam philosophiam maximè coluèrent, quod liquet in Cabala, in Mercurio Trismegisto, Beroso, Orpheo, Pythagora, Platone, totæque philosophia Aegytorum, Chaldaeorum et Assirorum. Illi, de mente, Deo, diuinis et ocultis causis multa docuerunt. Post Platonem Graeci maiori ex parte a nobiliori defecerunt ad crassiorem et elementarem [...]”
212 Cf. *Fama*, 123–124; see above, section 1.3.
secrets. The sought-after ancient secret was an alchemical preparation that would counteract bane, return youth, and prolong life—one of the key functions of the philosophers’ stone.214 This stone, the *quinta essentia*, was said to be prepared alchemically in order to restore health, and was referred to as the “lily of medicine and alchemy,” or “the most quiet and highest secret of nature, that is, the spirit of the Lord.”215 In similarity to the restoration of divine secrets, medicine was also thought to reverse the consequences of the Fall. This medicine was the Spirit of the Lord, meaning that God himself was responsible for the restoration of original purity and that He had revoked His original punishment, granting some humans access to His Spirit through their work in alchemy.

That this material could counteract the consequences of the Fall was made explicit in the pseudo-Paracelsian *Apocalypse of Hermes*, which reads: “Then our ancestors Adam and Eve were given death as punishment, which cannot be separated from their descendants.” But the treasure that was hidden in all “elemental creatures” was found again by a few, among whom notably Hermes and Aristotle, who named it the “secret of secrets.” It was this treasure “from which Adam and the other Patriarchs had had their bodily health and long life.”216


215 Pseudo-Paracelsus, *De tinctura physicorum*, 1, 14; 393: “ich werde euch lernen die tinctur, die arcana, oder das quintum esse, in welchem alle heilmilet, grunt und werk ligt.” Ibid., 394: “Darumb die materia tincturae das gröszt perlin und edlester schaz ist, das nach des almechtigen eröfnung und aller menschen betrachtung auf erden sein mag. und is die lili der arznei und alchimei, welche die philosophi so heftig und streng gesucht haben, aus gebreesten ganzer erkanntus und vollkomner bereitung, doch nicht perfect zum end gebracht.” Ibid., 398–399: “Das ist die tinctur, dardurch etliche von den ersten physicis in Egypten, wie dan auch noch auf disse zeit, hundert und fünfzig jar gelebt. viler vita hat sich aug lengert und etvan auf etlicul secula erstreet, wie die historien öffentlich ausweisent und solchs doch niemants glaubwürdig gedünkt. dan ir kraft ist so wunderbarlich, das sie den leib höher, dan die angeboren cimplexion erzeigt, bringt, und in dem selben grad stanthaffig erhelt, das er vor allen krankheiten frei bewart und ob er mit alter behaft scheinet, gleichsam seiner vorigen jugent zugestelt were […]. Dan das ist die catholicum physicorum, darumb das alle physica dem langen leben seinnd nachgangen”; cf. Pseudo-Paracelsus, *Apocalypsis Hermetis*, 679: “Diese Göttliche Werck ist gar zu tieff/ daß es kein Narr verstehen kan/ dann es ist das leiste und höchste Geheimmuß der Natur/ das ist/ der Geist deß Herren/ […]”

The rediscovered secret was hidden throughout nature and had the capacity to restore and improve health, and presumably worked as *panacea*, as a cure to all diseases. Both the instauration of lost knowledge and the regeneration of the body would counteract the consequences of the Fall and enact a reversal of original sin.

The elemental creatures were beings living within the four elements. They were discussed by Sperber and in the pseudo-Paracelsian *Liber Azoth.*

Paracelsus had described these creatures earlier, for example in *On the Long Life*, which deals, as the title suggests, with longevity, and which work was edited by Bodenstein in 1560 and 1562. The theme of longevity returned in the *Brief Consideration of the More Secret Philosophy* to which one of the first editions of the *Confessio* was appended in 1615. This text specifically refers to Paracelsus several times, including one reference to his *On the Long Life*.

Both the elemental figures and the notion of longevity return also in the Rosicrucian manifestos. According to the *Fama*, Christian Rosencreutz was educated by elemental beings in Fez about various unnamed secrets of nature—which again indicates his knowledge of what was hidden beyond the surface in nature. Likewise, not only the rediscovery of lost knowledge and the return of prelapsarian conditions were mentioned in the Rosicrucian manifestos, but also the restoration of the original human body. According to the *Fama*, the bodies of the Rosicrucian brethren remained healthy throughout their entire lives. They died, but not as a result of diseases, but because it was time for their spirits to return to God. They could keep their bodies healthy thanks to the *panacea*, which the brethren claimed to have in their possession. This means that they could restore bodies to paradisiacal conditions.

---

*Sperber, Von den dreyen seculis, 208; Pseudo-Paracelsus, Liber Azoth, 1, 14; 582–583.*

*Sperber, Von den dreyen seculis, 208; Pseudo-Paracelsus, Liber Azoth, 1, 14; 582–583.*

*Paracelsus, De vita longa, 1, 3; 249–292.* For elemental forces in other works by Paracelsus, see: Paracelsus, *Astronomia Magna* 1, 12; 3–597; idem, *Paragranum*, 1, 8; 135f.; Weeks, *Paracelsus. Essential Theoretical Writings*, 12, 17, 26, 28, 30, 130; idem, *Paracelsus*, 9.

*Philippo à Gabella, Secretioris philosophiae consideratio brevis, 11, 39, 41; Clulee, "Astronomia inferior," 218. On the manifestos’ association with this text, see below, section 3.1.*

*Fama, 96–97.*

*Fama, 108, 119.*

Elsewhere, perfect bodies were merely mused upon: *Confessio*, 47–48: "Qui itaque sordeant nobis tanta; si Nobis tantum haec scire, et non potius seculi sui ornamento data..."
The Rosicrucian reformation of philosophy consisted in bringing back the pious wisdom of the ancients, and possibly even prelapsarian conditions and perfectly healthy bodies—intentions that had earlier been voiced in the works and thought of Paracelsus and his followers. The instauration of such knowledge was fundamental to the Rosicrucian general reformation.

In Sperber, we find a writer who expressed further ideas similar to the Rosicrucian reformation. Before the manifestos had been drafted, he specifically wrote about the reform of theology, medicine, and philosophy. With respect to theology, Sperber characterised the first age by the Jewish theology of the law; the second age by a Christian theology, and “in the last time there will be a theology of the Holy Spirit, which is named by Johannes an eternal gospel: An angel will announce it, to those who will dwell and live on earth.”223 This clearly resonates with Joachim’s three statuses or ages: the age of the Father or the Old Testament, the age of the Son or the New Testament, and the age of the Holy Spirit.

In medicine, Sperber argued, some changes for the better had already occurred. While in the first age, physicians practiced an empirical medicine, and in the second age a rational medicine, “in the last time of the Holy Spirit there will be the chemical or spagyric medicine.”224 Although Sperber, like the manifestos, did not explicitly refer to Paracelsus in this sense, the spagyric art of which he speaks is obviously Paracelsian. While discussing medicine, he reiterated Paracelsian elements relevant to medicine such as the microcosm-
macrocosm analogy, the inner anatomy of man, and, notably, the influence of the imagination on diseases.\textsuperscript{225}

Philosophically, “in the third and last age will come and remain in highest perfection and certainty another perfect and permanent philosophy, together with the seven liberal arts.”\textsuperscript{226} As already described above, also for Sperber this state of perfection resonated with primeval wisdom, so that he combined the \textit{philosophia perennis} with the traditional medieval liberal arts. In that future age, magic, the divine wisdom, would also be perfect.\textsuperscript{227} Previously a secret and hidden wisdom, magic in the last age will be entirely revealed.\textsuperscript{228}

The reform described by Sperber differed in its details from that of the brethren, but the overall framework, that is, the changes within the fields of theology, medicine, and philosophy, on the eve of the new age, is strikingly similar. Sperber’s emphasis on the reform of these areas, complemented by magic and restored wisdom, resonates with the goals of the Rosicrucian brethren’s reform agenda just a few years later.

\subsection*{2.6 Concluding Remarks}

In Chapter One, several elements in the manifestos were established that announced an imminent new age, but these did not specify in precisely what way the new age should be different, and from where the Rosicrucian philosophy for the new period was to come. With respect to Paracelsianism, in turn, there are few elements originating from that movement that also indicate the new age: the Antichrist and celestial portents are largely absent, and instead of a political-spiritual figure—the lion—early Paracelsians expected a figure based on Elijah, the alchemical prophet Elias Artista. Paracelsianism did not provide the context of the Rosicrucians’ general reformation, but its contents. Taking into account, besides Paracelsus’ medicine and philosophy, also apocalyptic themes and works by Paracelsus’ followers, has enabled us to shed fresh

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 206–209; Paracelsus, \textit{Volumen Paramirum}, 1, 1; 165–239.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Sperber, \textit{Von den dreyen seculis}, 81: “In der dritten unnd letzten zeit aber wird eine andere gewisse vollkommenne unnd bestandigene Philosophia, sampt den sieben Freyen Künsten/ in höchstervollkommenheit unnd gewisheit aufkommen und bestandig bleiben”; see also: ibid., 210.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 82–85.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 219: “Und ob woll auch im ersten unnd andern Seculo diese Magia gar eine heimliche unnd verborgene Weißheit ist: So wird sie doch dort im letzten Seculo ganz offenbahr werden. [...] Es is nichts verborgenes/ daß nicht offenbahr werde.”
\end{itemize}
light on the Paracelsian influence on the manifestos. Although the manifestos refer only to Paracelsus, the parallels with the early Paracelsians are unmistakeable.

In their apocalyptic views, the Rosicrucians shared very little with Paracelsus’ own religious notions, and were much more closely aligned with early Paracelsians. Early Paracelsians, such as Bodenstein and Sperber, expected a new earthly age before the end during which all things will be revealed and Paracelsian medicine and natural-philosophy will thrive.

The new medicine advocated by the Rosicrucians must have been Paracelsian, even though they do not refer to it as such. But the figure of Paracelsus himself was no doubt inspirational, as is evident from the various references to him and the similarities between him and Christian Rosencreutz. The Rosicrucians aligned themselves with the growing rejection of scholastic thought by Paracelsus and early Paracelsians, and were aware of the new medicine and its corresponding natural-philosophical worldview that was promoted by Paracelsus and further communicated by early Paracelsian editors. Here, we may also observe the possible influence of pseudo-Paracelsian texts: Cabala, longevity, and the promise of perfect conditions and bodies—mentioned in the manifestos—can be traced back particularly to pseudo-Paracelsian writings such as *On the Nature of Things*, *On the Tincture of the Natural Philosophers*, and *The Apocalypse of Hermes*.

Wels argues that the manifestos are not heterodox, and only convey a very moderate sense of Paracelsianism, one grounded in Lutheranism. On the contrary, more so than providing the millenarian imagery and its ingredients, Paracelsus and his followers offered the content of the Rosicrucian reformation. With respect to philosophy, the influence of Paracelsus is unquestionable, but these ideas are not as mystical as has sometimes been suggested. Notions such as the microcosm-macrocosm analogy and the Book of Nature are explicitly derived from Paracelsus and are a central aspect of the Rosicrucian reformation. In “the new kingdom” of Paracelsus, Paracelsian philosophy was

---

229 This is contrary to what has been argued in: Murase, “Paracelsismus und Chiliasmus,” 11–19.

230 Cf. Paracelsus, 1, 14; for *De natura rerum*; see: Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, 345, 392; for *De tinctura physicorum*, see, ibid., 189–190, 235, 268, 392; Sudhoff, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1, 14: xii–xvi.

231 Wels, “Die Frömmigkeit der Rosenkreuzer-Manifeste.”

232 Edighoffer, for example, who perhaps discussed the Paracelsian influence on the manifestos at greater length than most, speculated about the meaning of their philosophical elements and its mystical and esoteric character; see especially: Edighoffer, *Rose-Croix et société idéale*, vol. 1, 270–278; idem, “Die Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer.”
to prevail at the expense of scholastic philosophy; likewise for the Rosicrucians, this type of philosophy provided the foundation for the new age.

Paracelsus’ followers associated themselves with the *philosophia perennis*, and their many publications may have prompted the authors of the *Fama* to refer to a *Vocabulary* that would unlock Paracelsus’ code. Because, as the brethren claimed, the new age was a return to the beginnings and a restoration of the order of nature, their new philosophy was—in terms contrary to orthodox Lutheranism—at the same time also a restoration of long-lost knowledge. Like early Paracelsians, the Rosicrucians identified primeval philosophy with Paracelsian thought. In particular Sperber’s belief in a new age, combined with the instauration of lost knowledge and the reformation of philosophy, religion, and medicine, would have been a singular example to the Rosicrucian authors.