In 1594, Kepler was summoned to the Protestant seminary in Graz before completing his studies in theology at the University of Tübingen. There in the Styrian capital, Kepler was responsible for teaching mathematics and publishing astrological calendars. At the time, the mathematical curriculum was commonly divided into four parts, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music, together known as the ‘quadrivium.’ Astrology, an essential part of astronomy, involved the observation of causes and effects widely considered as the “ordinances of God.” It has been correctly said that astrology, as taught in the quadrivium, “was part of a complete philosophical system of the world,” and Kepler certainly saw it that way. The basic principles of astrology, however, were applied in different ways, depending on different areas of interest: medical astrology relied on celestial configurations for the administration of medicine and the diagnosis of patients; judicial astrology foretold the fates of individuals, groups, and nations; electional astrology sought to ‘seize the moment,’ determining the best occasions for holding important events; natal astrology predicted, sometimes retrospectively, the accomplishments and characteristics of individuals according to their natal chart, their personal map of the positions of the planets at their time of birth; horary astrology explored particular queries according to the ‘birth’ of the question and the natal chart of the questioner; and astrometeorology considered the sympathies, often realized in the form of weather conditions, between the sublunar and celestial spheres. Whether for the treatment of illness, the prediction of political uproar, or the forecast of major meteorological events, astrology in much of early modern Europe was thought to put
practitioners in touch with divine decrees. And for scholars such as Giro-
lamo Cardano (1501–1576), astrology was “more delightful and divine than
any other discipline.”

At first, Kepler saw his position in Graz as a temporary obligation to
fulfill before returning to Tübingen to complete his studies in theology. Soon, however, he discovered that his research in astronomy could reveal
another form of learned reverence. Inspired by the discoveries that led
to his first major publication, the Cosmographical Mystery (1596), Kepler
described himself as a priest who studied “the book of nature,” the work
of the divine creator glorified by the astronomer. Conceiving this role as
complementary to the study of Sacred Scripture, Kepler invested profound
importance in the study of the stars. He expressed this view in a letter to
Herwart, where he made clear his goal as the glory of the creator:

Yet I am of the opinion that, since we astronomers are priests of the highest
God with respect to the book of nature, we do not promote the praise of the
intellect but above all behold the glory of the creator. He who is convinced
of this does not easily bring to light anything other than what he himself
believes, nor does he abruptly alter anything in [astronomical] hypotheses
unless he hopes that from them the phenomena can be demonstrated with
greater certainty.

Kepler’s sketch of the astronomer’s role contains a scathing critique of
those whom he saw as the clever combiners of “ancient hypotheses and
the new ones of Copernicus.” Kepler argued that astronomers such as
Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) and Nicolaus Raimarus Ursus (1551–1600) had
wrongly viewed their vocation as “outshining those two great luminar-
ies, Ptolemy and Copernicus.” Their suggestion of a ‘compromise system,’
Kepler wrote, was a vain attempt to surpass these authorities “in the glory
of invention” rather than faithfully grasp and glorify the work of their
creator.

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6 Kepler’s summons to Graz has been described as “a bitter personal struggle” that left
the aspiring theologian “torn between his calling and his duty.” See Voelkel, 1999a, p. 23.
7 JKGW, 13, 193.14–19: “Ego verò sic censeo, cum astronomi, sacerdotes dei altissimi ex
parte libri naturae simus: decere non ingenii laudem, sed creatoris praecipuè gloriam spec-
tare. Qui hoc sibi persusum habet, is non facile aliu quicquam in lucem emittit, quàm
secum ipse credit, nec temerè quid in hypothesibus mutat, nisi certius ex illis phaenomena
demonstari posse speret.”
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid. Kepler also named Philip Lansberg, Giovanni Antonio Magini (1555–1617), and
Helisaeu Roeslin.