

Aby Warburg

The Renewal of

Pagan Antiquity

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**The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity:
Contributions to the Cultural History
of the European Renaissance**

Introduction by Kurt W. Forster

Translation by David Britt

Texts & Documents

Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther (1920)

Preface

The author, who fell gravely ill at the end of October 1918, has consented to the publication of this fragment at the instance of his friend Franz Boll, although he has been unable to carry out necessary emendations, not to speak of the important additions that he had intended to make from a wealth of hitherto unknown material already worked through and prepared. He has nevertheless allowed this fragment to appear, partly in the expectation that this initial attempt will be of use to a later researcher, and partly because, however good or bad the present weaver, the opportunity of threading in new strands from abroad will long be denied to German scholarship. He therefore asks those friends and colleagues who have so tirelessly aided him in the past—Franz Boll foremost among them—to take his consent to this far-from-adequate publication as a mark of his gratitude to them.

Without the extensive help of libraries and archives over many years—and the author is not now in a position to name them all: let us mention only Berlin, Dresden, Göttingen, Hamburg, Königsberg, Leipzig, Munich, Wolfenbüttel, Zwickau; and also Oxford, Madrid, Paris, and Rome—his studies could never have been carried out. The following individuals have assisted him far beyond the immediate call of duty: his late friend Robert Münzel; Professor Paul Flemming, of Pforta; Professor Ernst Kroker, of Leipzig; Dr. Georg Leidinger, of Munich; Father Franz Ehrle, formerly of Rome; Professor Richard Salomon, of Hamburg; and the late Professor Gustav Milchsack, of Wolfenbüttel. Wilhelm Printz and Fritz Saxl, who have remained at his side over the years, deserve his heartfelt thanks. He was unfortunately unable to deliver the paper in person, and in the promised form, to the members of the Religionswissenschaftliche Vereinigung (Association for the study of religion) in Berlin. He hopes that they will nevertheless accept the present publication as a token of his sincere and lasting gratitude for the meeting of 23 April 1918.

I dedicate this study to my dear wife, in memory of the winter of 1888 in Florence.

Hamburg, 26 January 1920

I. Reformation, Magic, and Astrology

Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern:

Vom Harz bis Hellas immer Vettern.

—Goethe, *Faust*, Part 2

There's an old book for browsing in:
From Harz to Hellas all are kin.

The standard work on "The Bondage of Superstitious Modern Man" remains to be written. It would have to be preceded by a study — also as yet unwritten — of "The Renaissance of the Spirit World of Antiquity in the Age of the German Reformation." A lecture delivered by the present writer at the Religionswissenschaftliche Vereinigung in Berlin, on "Pagan-Antique Prophecy in the Age of Luther in Words and Images,"¹ was intended as a highly provisional contribution to this question. That lecture forms the basis of the present essay.

The images that it examines fall within the scope of the history of art in the widest sense (insofar as that term covers image-making in all its forms). However, with the single exception of the portrait of Johann Carion (fig. 121),² they stem from prints or printed books; they lack aesthetic appeal; and without the texts that relate to them (whether printed with them or not), they are unpromising material for the purely formal concerns of present-day art history, in that their strange illustrative quality stems from their content. The idea of examining a mere "curiosity" for its relevance to the history of human thought is one that comes more naturally to historians of religion than to historians of art. And yet it is one of the prime duties of art history to bring such forms out of the twilight of ideological polemic and to subject them to close historical scrutiny. For there is one crucial issue in the history of style and civilization — the influence of antiquity on the culture of Renaissance Europe as a whole — that cannot otherwise be fully understood and resolved.

Only when we bring ourselves to consider the figures of the pagan gods — as resurrected in early Renaissance Europe, North and South — not merely as artistic phenomena but as religious entities, do we begin to sense the power of the determinism of the Hellenistic cosmology, even in Germany, even in the age of the Reformation. The pagan augur who assumed the mantle of scientific learning was a hard adversary to contend with, let alone to defeat.

A classically rarefied version of the ancient gods has been so successfully imposed on us, ever since Winckelmann, as the central symbol of antiquity, that we are apt to forget that it was entirely the creation of humanist scholars: this "Olympian" aspect of antiquity had first to be wrested from its entrenched, traditional, "daemonic" aspect. Ever since the passing of antiquity, the ancient gods had lived on in Christian Europe as cosmic spirits, religious forces with a strong influence in practical affairs: indeed, the cosmology of the ancient world — notably in the form of astrology — undeniably survived as a parallel system, tacitly tolerated by the Christian Church.

The astral deities were faithfully transmitted through a long migration from the Hellenistic world by way of Arabia, Spain, and Italy to Germany (where after 1470 they enjoyed a peripatetic Renaissance, in words and pictures, thanks to the new printing houses of Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Leipzig). They lived on as time gods, mathematically defining and mythically ruling every chronological unit in the annual round: the year, the month, the week, the day, the hour, the minute, and the second. These were beings of sinister, ambivalent, and indeed contradictory powers: as star signs they expanded space, marking the way for the soul's flight through the universe; as constellations they were also idols, with whom, as befitted the childlike nature of man, the mere creature might aspire to mystic union through devotional practices.

The astrologer in the age of the Reformation accepted these opposite poles of mathematical abstraction and devout self-association—irreconcilable though they seem to a modern scientist—as the pivots of one vibrant, primordial psychic state. Logic sets a mental space between man and object by applying a conceptual label; magic destroys that space by creating a superstitious—theoretical or practical—association between man and object. In the divinatory workings of the astrologer's mind, these two processes act as a single, primitive tool that he can use both to make measurements and to work magic. That age when logic and magic blossomed, like trope and metaphor, in Jean Paul's words, "grafted to a single stem,"³ is inherently timeless: by showing such a polarity in action, the historian of civilization furnishes new grounds for a more profoundly positive critique of a historiography that rests on a purely chronological theory of development.

Medieval astrologers brought the Hellenistic inheritance to Northern Europe from Baghdad by way of Toledo and Padua. And so the writings of the Arab and Italian astrologers were among the very first illustrated books to be printed in Augsburg.

In Germany at the turn of the fifteenth century, as in Italy, two attitudes to antiquity confronted each other: one ancient, practical, and religious; the other modern, artistic, and aesthetic. In Italy the latter seemed at first to have gained the upper hand; it also had its adherents in Germany. But it was in Germany that the astrology of antiquity underwent a distinctive (and hitherto insufficiently noticed) Renaissance of its own. Those astral symbols that had survived in the literature of divination—the seven personified planets, above all—gained a new lease on life from the social and political upheavals of the day and became, as it were, the presiding deities of contemporary politics.

Alongside these anthropomorphic rulers of destiny—the astral symbols that are the basis for the systematic, interpretative method of "artificial" (or scientific) divination—we must also consider those terrestrial monstrosities and other portents that formed the subject of "miraculous" divination. We must keep this distinction between "artificial" and "miraculous" divination clearly before us:⁴ as will be shown, it marked the parting of minds between

Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon. We shall take as our point of departure a hitherto unnoticed letter from Melanchthon to the astrologer and historian Johann Carion of Bietigheim, who held an influential position at the court of the elector of Brandenburg.

II. *Elements of Pagan Antiquity in the Cosmological and Political Worldview of the Reformation Period: Astrology and Teratology in Luther's Circle*

II.1. Melanchthon's Letter to Carion on the Comet of 1531

In my search for the letters of Carion, the volume of correspondence published by Johannes Voigt⁵ directed me to the Staatsarchiv in Königsberg, and I am grateful to that institution for making it possible for me to work in the Stadtbibliothek in Hamburg on a batch of his letters. Inserted into the sequence I found a letter in Latin, sent to him by Melanchthon on 17 August 1531. Thanks to the kindness of Professor Flemming, of Pforta, I was able to profit from the textual emendations made by the late Nikolaus Müller and thus to establish the correct reading of the Latin text (see appendix A.1). I shall give a free translation of the entire contents of this document, because every detail is a vivid revelation of Melanchthon's character and of the conflict to which he bears witness—a fateful one for Germany—between humanistic intellectualism and the theological and political desire for Reformation.

Addressed to the most learned Master Johann Carion, philosopher, his friend and dear countryman, "to be placed in his own hands."

... I have tried to adorn <the text> with the most authoritative quotations. It is for others to judge what I have achieved.

The Dictum of Elijah is not to be found in the Bible but in the rabbinical literature, and it is extremely famous. Burgensis⁶ quotes it, and bases himself upon it in arguing against the Jews that the Messiah has already appeared. It is a saying that is widely current among the Hebrews, and I have placed it at the beginning of your history <Carion's *Chronica*>, both to make it better known and to lend commendation to your work. I shall add many more such quotations later. But you see how the prophetic voice points to the future: so aptly <*concinna*: harmoniously?> does the division of the ages fall.

I hope that we shall finish the History this winter; for hitherto I have been prevented by the revision of my *Apologia*, some parts of which I have improved. You will hardly believe how delicate my health is, for I am consumed with cares and toil.

My wife, by God's grace, has been delivered of a daughter, whose nativity <*Thema*> I send you, but not in order to put you to any trouble. I can see that she will be a nun.⁷

We have had sight of a comet for more than a week now. What do you make of it? It seems to be stationary above Cancer, as it sets directly after the sun and rises shortly before dawn. If it were red, it would cause me greater alarm. Without a

doubt, it signifies the death of princes; yet it seems to turn its tail toward Poland. But I shall await your verdict. I shall be most grateful if you will tell me what you make of it.

Now I come to today's tidings. If I knew anything of our adversaries' doings, I would write it all to you, whatever it might be. For we have no need to conceal the plans of our adversaries; rather, it is in our interest to expose them.

So I have long had no certain news of any preparations—apart, that is, from the misgivings harbored by our own people concerning the <not> inconsiderable force of infantry now in Frisia. It may be that on the pretext of war with Denmark they intend to attack us, too. But the electors of the Palatinate and of Mainz are already treating for an end to hostilities; though I hold out no hope of peace, in view of the astrological predictions and the prophecies alike. Hassfurt predicted that King Christian would enjoy an honorable return. Schepperus says he will not return at all. But Schepperus does not trouble me. He is often wrong. Hassfurt also predicted great victories to the landgrave.

A certain citizen of Schmalkalden, known to me, had a wonderful vision concerning all these upheavals, in which I place great credence. It predicts a fairly uneventful outcome, but it does intimate that our terrified adversaries will yield to that Lion <the landgrave of Hesse>. A woman of Kitzingen has foretold terrible things of Ferdinand, how he will wage war against us, but that it will go against him. In Belgium a maiden has even given a prophecy to the emperor, but I have yet to inform myself in detail. All in all, I think there will be some commotion, and I pray to God that he may direct it to a good end, useful to church and state alike.

I was laboring a year ago, to the end that they might make peace with us. If they had done so, there would now be less unrest in Swabia, which has now largely embraced the Swiss theology and effrontery <licentia>. Campeggio wants to involve and ensnare the emperor in a German war, to drain away his strength, and there are some who approve Campeggio's counsels out of personal hatred for us. But God's eye is just. We have certainly taught nothing that was evil, and have freed many good minds from many pernicious errors. Sabinus is sending you my preface in praise of astronomy and astrology, on which I await your verdict. Farewell. On the Thursday following the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1531. I return the letters to you... Φίλιππος.

This letter allows us to look over Melanchthon's shoulder at a critical moment in his life. We find him engaged in literary work in three capacities: as a humanist, as a theologian, and as an astropolitical journalist. First, by introducing the so-called Tradition of the House of Elijah, according to which the course of universal history is divided into three periods, each of approximately two thousand years, he defined the structure of the earliest German history of the world, Carion's *Chronica*, which owed its great influence on German historiography entirely to Melanchthon's involvement with it.⁸

Melanchthon was required to do this at a time when he also bore the massive responsibility of revising the Confession of Augsburg; for the emperor's ultimatum to the Protestants had expired on 30 April, and there was

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an imminent threat of armed conflict between the emperor and the Schmalkaldic League—the very eventuality that Melanchthon was striving with all his might to avert. Clearly, Carion, who was a diplomatic agent in the service of Brandenburg, had asked for more precise information on this, and Melanchthon treated him—it is worth noting—entirely as a partisan of the Schmalkaldic cause.

However, Melanchthon here is no dry political chronicler; for in his desperate desire to keep the peace he has suffered an acute attack of cosmic susceptibility to omens and portents. In this connection he no longer addressed his correspondent from a position of superiority, as a learned dispenser of good advice: he approached the artless Carion⁹ in the guise of a patient in need of comfort, and consulted him as a magus skilled in all matters prophetic and astrological. He sent Carion the natal chart of his own newborn daughter, surely not without hoping for an interpretation of it, and expressly solicited a verdict on his (Melanchthon's) own astronomical and astrological views—as lately published, for example, in his preface to Johannes de Sacro Bosco.¹⁰ Above all, however, he wanted Carion to set his mind at rest concerning the comet—it was Halley's—that had appeared in August and had frightened all Germany, not least Melanchthon himself: it was the first he had ever seen.

In return, he retailed to Carion the current prophecies of other noted astrologers of the day. The warnings of Johann Virdung of Hassfurt had pursued Melanchthon ever since birth: for Virdung, at his father's request, had cast Melanchthon's own natal horoscope. This included a warning against travel to the North and to the Baltic, which—as Melanchthon himself was to admit in 1560—deterred him from ever visiting Denmark.¹¹

As he was at pains to stress, however, it was not these "scientific" predictions that troubled him most, but the *vaticinia*, the directly inspired, "unscientific" prophecies, of the man from Schmalkalden and the woman from Kitzingen. He had first mentioned these considerably earlier, at the end of March, writing to tell both Cordatus and Baumgärtner that the Kitzingen woman was prophesying a great war against the Protestant party, launched with French support, within six months.¹² Her tidings were less bad for the emperor than for King Ferdinand. Again, as early as 11 April, Melanchthon had mentioned the Schmalkalden man's horrendous vision in a letter to Camerarius.¹³

And so, at a moment when his sole salvation lay in an unshakable inner detachment from the age and from its agonies of conscience, the spiritual leader of Protestant Germany stood bereft of all his zest and his resolution—like some pagan augur—by celestial signs and human voices. At least his prophetic voices left him some room for hopes of victory, which he pinned on "Leo," the Lion of Hesse.

Nevertheless, if Melanchthon's own keen critical and philological sense of fact ever gave him pause, he had an answer ready: astrological method, for him, represented a practical survival of the harmonizing worldview of the

ancients, which was the very foundation of his own cosmologically oriented humanism.¹⁴

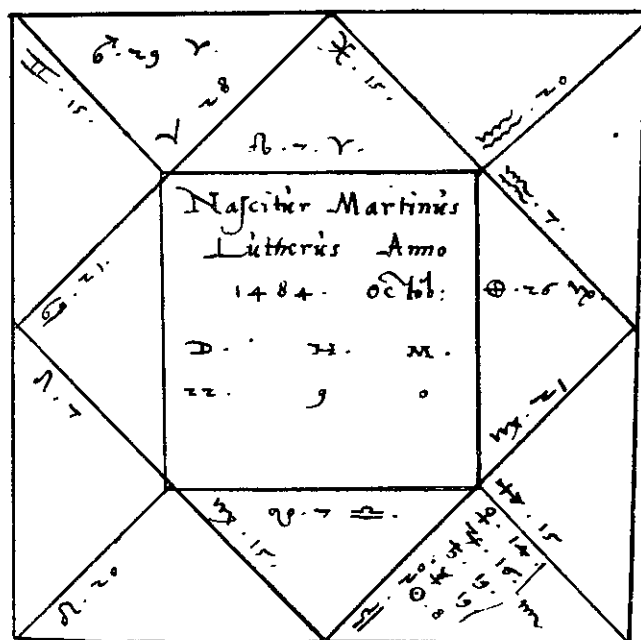
II.2. Astral Divination: Luther's and Melanchthon's Opposing Views of Ancient Astrology

In North and South alike, the Italian civilization of the Renaissance had preserved and revived types of ancient pagan divination composed of so potent and heterogeneous a mixture of elements—rationalism and myth, the mathematician and the augur—that they engaged the attention even of the Wittenberg community, the main bastion of a Christian Germany that was fighting against Rome for its spiritual freedom. Even here, where feelings ran so high against the Christian paganism of Rome, both the Babylonian-Hellenistic astrologer and the Roman augur gained a hearing and—with certain curious reservations—assent. The reasons for this involvement with the arcane survivals of paganism—a paradox in terms of any rectilinear view of history—emerge from the very different responses of Luther and Melanchthon to the superstitious belief in signs and prophecies.

Luther accepted only the mystic and transcendent nucleus of the idea: the miraculous cosmic event, sent by the Christian God in all his inscrutable omnipotence as a prophetic intimation of the future. Melanchthon, for his part, adopted the astrology of the ancient world as an intellectual defense against a cosmically predetermined earthly fate. So strong, indeed, was his faith in the stars that in this matter he constantly risked—as elsewhere he avoided—a confrontation with his more powerful friend. For even when an Italian astrologer, Lucas Gauricus, challenged the great Reformer on the most intimate level by arbitrarily “rectifying” his horoscope to show an entirely false date and time of birth, Melanchthon—together with Carion and other Wittenberg astrological experts—sided with Gauricus, despite the latter's undoubted hostile intent, and despite Luther's own vehement refusal to accept the entirely mythical, astrological birthdate of 22 October 1484.

Luther versus the Astropoliticians, Italian and German—Melanchthon's Attitude to Lucas Gauricus

From Italy, and from Padua in particular—where, to this day, the immensities of the Salone are sacred ground for astrologers—the theory and practice of astrology flowed ever northward into the learned world of Germany; and from time to time Italian practitioners crossed the Alps in person. In 1531, the very year of Melanchthon's letter to Carion, the celebrated Southern Italian astrologer Lucas Gauricus was invited to Berlin by Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg;¹⁵ from Berlin, Gauricus went on to Wittenberg, where he stayed four days and was cordially and respectfully received by Melanchthon, as we know from the latter's letters to Camerarius. This will have been in April 1532. In May of that year, after Gauricus's departure, Melanchthon composed a letter of introduction for him to his friend Camerarius in Nuremberg.¹⁶



hanc nigra
Vivam s/s
Lutivi go!
refin Caratu
mus, de atian
substantia
lub. gr. di
guinibus
fol. 114. 4.

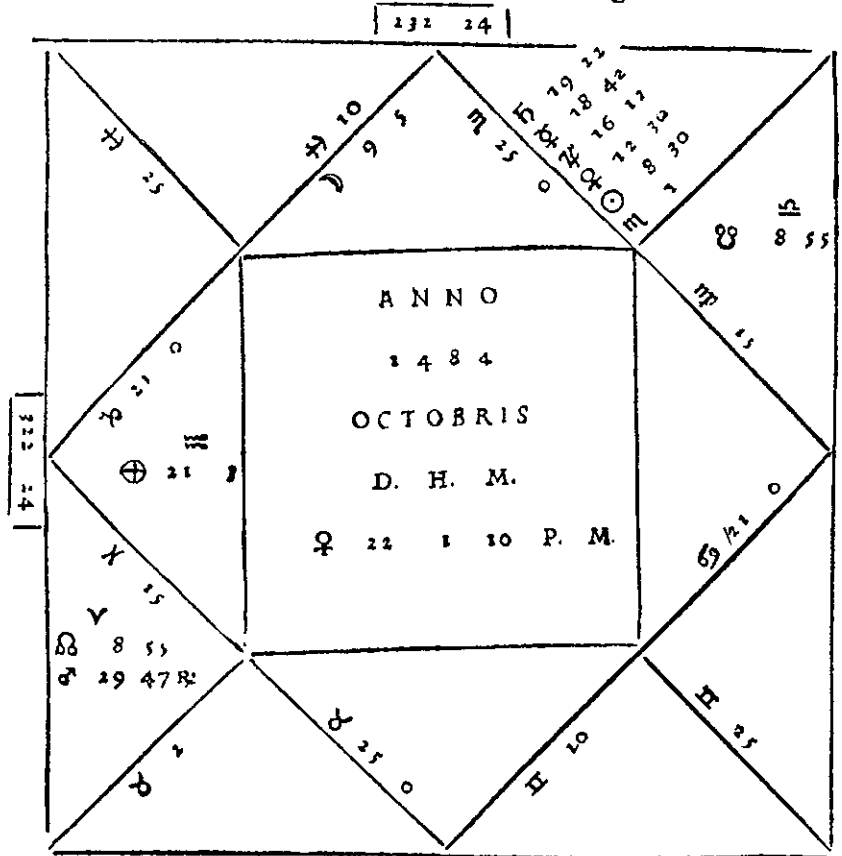
Comitatus

d. fr. et fac hericos viros. & bonum est
t. nos. pro communitatem.
d. in II. Inde est illa elegit.

Fig. 121. School of Lucas Cranach
Johann Carion
Berlin, Preussische Staatsbibliothek
(see pp. 598, 648)

Fig. 122. Horoscope of Luther by Erasmus Reinhold
Leipzig, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. 935, fol. 158
(see pp. 606, 610)

TRACTATUS
Martinus Lutherus Monachus sancti Augustini.



Martinus fuit imprimis Monachus per multos annos, demum expoliavit habitum monialem, duxitq; in uxorem Abbarissam altræ staturæ Vittimbergensem & ab illa suscepit duos liberos. Hæc mira fatiscq; horrenda. s. Planetarū coitio sub Scorpij asterismo in nona cœli statione quâ Arabes religioni deputabant, effecit ipsum sacrilegum hereticum, Christianæ religionis hostem acerrimum, atq; prophanum. Ex horoscopi directione ad Martis coitum irreligiosissimus obiit. Eius Anima scelestissima ad Inferos nauigauit; ab Allecto, Tisiphone, & Megera flagellis igneis cruciata perenniter.

Fig. 123. Horoscope of Luther by Lucas Gauricus
From Gauricus, *Tractatus astrologicus* (Venice, 1552), fol. 69^v
(see pp. 606, 627)

At the beginning of March 1532, Melanchthon sent the *Norica* of Camerarius (a treatise on the significance of portents)¹⁷ to Gauricus, with a fulsome dedicatory epistle in which he hailed him as the "Prince of All Philosophy" and thanked him, in particular, for letters enclosing horoscopes that had been of vital importance to him, Melanchthon, in the furtherance of his own studies.¹⁸ The true political significance of those horoscopes emerges in a letter that Melanchthon wrote to Camerarius later in the same year, on 29 June 1532, sending him at his request the nativities of Emperor Charles V and King Ferdinand.¹⁹ This makes it clear that Melanchthon had made a comparative study of Gauricus's collection of horoscopes and of those of Carion and de Schepper.

Surviving collections of this kind include one in Munich and another in Leipzig;²⁰ and, on close scrutiny, both turn out to be based on horoscopes by Gauricus, only some of which were printed in the 1552 Venice edition of his work. This is significant, since the Leipzig manuscript, compiled—as Ernst Kroker has convincingly shown—in the 1540s by Erasmus Reinhold, professor of mathematics at the university of Wittenberg,²¹ leads us straight to the Reformers and specifically to Luther himself. The horoscope of Luther given by Reinhold²² (see fig. 122) is based not on his true birthdate of 10 November 1483 but on Gauricus's date of 22 October 1484. The pagan and astrological birthday is thus allowed, in the full knowledge of its conjectural nature—as * Reinhold's note, "*Coniecturalis*," makes quite clear—to usurp the place of the true, calendric date.

In the 1552 edition of Gauricus (fig. 123), Luther's horoscope is captioned with a stream of vicious Counter-Reformation abuse.²³ Of course, we can assume that when Gauricus visited Wittenberg in 1532 he did not adopt any such tone of sectarian fanaticism, let alone the spiteful reference to Luther's death; but there can hardly be any doubt that even then he interpreted Luther, astrologically, as a malignant force. In 1525—as has not hitherto been sufficiently noticed—Gauricus had sent Pope Clement VII a prediction of Luther's downfall as a heretic;²⁴ and, as early as 23 March 1524, Luther had surely had him in mind in sending the facts of his own nativity to Georg Spalatin:

*Genesin istam meam jam ante videram ex Italia huc missam, sed cum sic sint hoc anno hallucinati astrologi <a reference to fears of a deluge; see below>, nihil mirum, si sit, qui et hoc nugari ausus sit.*²⁵

I had already seen that horoscope of mine—it had been sent here from Italy. But since the astrologers have been having such bizarre visions this year <a reference to fears of a deluge; see below>, it is no wonder that there is someone who has dared to produce this nonsense.

Hence, also, no doubt, the mention of him in Luther's letter to Veit Dietrich on 27 February 1532:

*Sed...astr...quam ominoso Mathem<atico> quem toties falsum convici, convincam adhuc saepius falsum.*²⁶

But...astr...than that portentous mathematician, to whom I have often given the lie in the past and shall often give the lie in the future.

Luther's attitude to Gauricus springs from the aversion to all astrology that was deeply rooted in his religious faith—an aversion that inevitably led him into forthright disagreement with his friend Melanchthon. In August 1540, Luther said:

*Nemo mihi persuadebit nec Paulus nec Angelus de coelo nedum Philippus, ut credam astrologiae divinationibus, quae toties fallunt, ut nihil sit incertius. Nam si etiam bis aut ter recte divinant, ea notant; si fallunt, ea dissimulant.*²⁷

No one will ever persuade me—neither Paul, nor an angel from heaven, nor even Philipp—to believe in the predictions of astrology, which are so often mistaken that nothing is more uncertain. For if they forecast correctly even two or three times, they mark it; if they are wrong, they conceal it.

In the same year he claimed that Melanchthon had admitted to him that there was no certain art of astrological divination; for which reason, said Luther, he left him to trifle with it as he pleased: "*Es ist ein dreck mit irer kunst.*" (That art of theirs is so much manure.)²⁸ And when Master Philipp again ventured—as he did in 1537, when traveling at New Moon seemed too dangerous—to give Doctor Martinus the benefit of his astrological advice, Luther recalled the incident with some annoyance, as an uncalled-for intrusion on the part of "*der heilosen und schebichten astrologia*" (the unholy drivel of astrology).²⁹

In these circumstances, how was it possible for Luther's friends to tolerate, let alone to advocate, Gauricus's entirely arbitrary displacement of his date of birth? We have it from Luther's own lips, as reported by Heydenreich, that Melanchthon himself subscribed to the mythical birthdate; the same source reveals how the astrological believers were enabled to do so with a clear conscience. Heydenreich records the following exchange:

"Domine Doctor, multi astrologi in vestra genitura consentiunt, constellationes vestrae nativitatis ostendere, vos mutationem magnam allaturum."

*Tum Doctor: "Nullus est certus de nativitatis tempore, denn Philippus et ego sein der sachen umb ein jar nicht eins. Pro secundo, putatis hanc causam et meum negotium positum esse sub vestra arte incerta? O nein, es ist ein ander ding! Das ist allein gottes werck. Dazu solt ir mich niemer mer bereden!"*³⁰

"Doctor, many astrologers agree concerning your birth that the constellations of your horoscope show that you will bring about a great change."

The Doctor: "Nobody is certain of the time of my birth, for Philipp and I differ

by a year on the matter. What is more, do you believe that our cause and my whole enterprise are subject to your uncertain art? No, this is something quite else! This is God's work alone. You will never persuade me of that!"

The astrologers were thus seeking to make Luther's reforming mission contingent on a date on which Luther and Melanchthon could not agree even within a year; and this Luther emphatically refused to accept. The disagreement "by a year" clearly refers to Melanchthon's preference—following Gauricus—for 1484 as against 1483. For 1484 was the year of a great conjunction of planets, calculated generations in advance, and expected to herald a new epoch in Occidental religion.³¹

The natal chart given by Reinhold relates closely—a fact that has escaped previous researchers—to an attempt at astrological compromise, made by Melanchthon at the precise period when, according to Heydenreich, he was still arguing with Luther about the latter's year of birth. Melanchthon was later to acknowledge 1483 as the official year of Luther's birth, both in his biography and in the *Dekanatsbuch* of the University of Wittenberg;³² but even as late as 1539 we find him still uncertain. As he wrote to Osiander:

*Über Luthers Geburtszeit sind wir in Zweifel. Der Tag ist zwar sicher, auch beinahe die Stunde, Mitternacht, wie ich selbst aus dem Munde seiner Mutter gehört habe. 1484 meine ich, war das Jahr. Aber wir haben mehrere Horoskope gestellt. Gauricus billigte das Thema von 1484.*³³

On Luther's nativity we remain in doubt. The day is certain, and almost so the hour: midnight, as I myself have heard from his mother's lips. I believe 1484 was the year. But we have cast a number of horoscopes. Gauricus supported the 1484 nativity.

So Melanchthon had consulted Luther's mother in person. He now knew the day, and the hour—midnight, albeit with the qualification "almost"—but he was still in favor of the year 1484, and thus still under the influence of Gauricus.

In the Munich manuscript horoscope collection (Cod. lat. 27003; see fig. 124), there is a copy of a fragment of a previously unknown letter from Melanchthon to Schoner, probably written around the time of Gauricus's visit to Wittenberg. This shows Melanchthon even more inclined toward drastic astrological intervention in the birthdate controversy, influenced in this case by Carion. The fragment reads as follows:³⁴

Philippus ad Schonerum Genesim Lutheri quam Philo³⁵ inquisiuit transtulit Carion in horam 9. Mater enim dicit Lutherum natum esse ante dimidium noctis (sed puto eam fefelli <sic>). Ego alteram figuram praefero et praefert ipse Carion. Etsi quoque haec est mirrifica <sic> est propter locum ♂ <Martis> et ♂ <coniunctionem> in domos <sic> 5° quae habet coniunctionem magnam cum ascendente

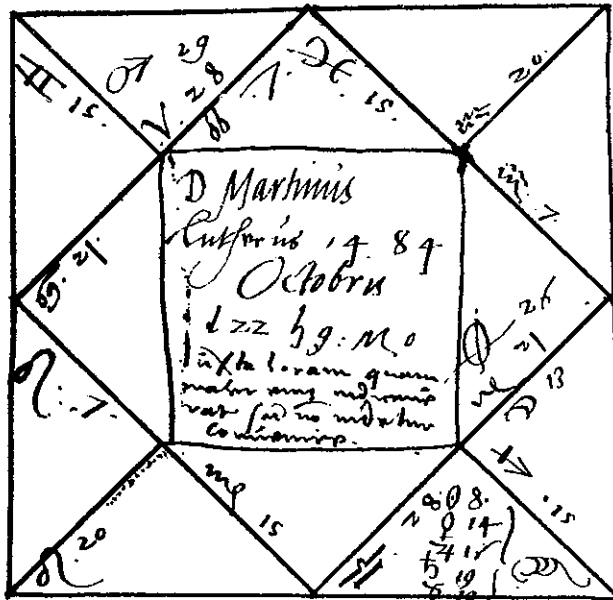
[illegible]

Fig. 124. Horoscope of Luther
Munich, Cod. lat. Monac. 27003, fol. 16 (see p. 608)

Caeterum quacunque hora natus est hac <sic> mira ☿ <coniunctio> in ♏ <scorpi-one> non potuit non efficere uirum acerrimum.

Philipp to Schoner. Luther's nativity, which Philo was inquiring about, Carion has changed to the ninth hour. For Luther's mother says that he was born before midnight (but I think that she was mistaken). I prefer the other chart, and so does Carion himself. Although this one also is extraordinary, it is because of the position of Mars and the conjunction in the fifth house, which has a great conjunction {sic} with the ascendant. But, whatever the hour of his birth, this unusual conjunction in Scorpio could not fail to produce a man of great mental vigor.

Carion's leading part in elaborating this compromise formula, still Italian and pagan in origin, is entirely in keeping with the fact that his initial attitude to Luther had been highly skeptical. We have it on Luther's own authority that, in the days when Carion was his enemy, the astrologer had actually predicted to him the day and hour of his burning as a heretic.³⁶ At one stage in his life, then, Carion had largely shared Gauricus's opinion of Luther.

As the letter shows, Carion was Melanchthon's principal authority for the alteration of the birthdate; and Carion in turn relied on the authority of the physician Philo, Johann Pfeyl,³⁷ who had long resided in Italy: there are thus two clear connections with Lucas Gauricus. The variations proposed by Carion and Pfeyl concern the hour of birth only: Carion favors 9 a.m., and Pfeyl favors 3:22 a.m., whereas Gauricus proposes 1:10 a.m. But the date of 22 October 1484 remains untouched. Pfeyl essentially retains Gauricus's great conjunction (in the ninth house). Carion, on the other hand, by moving to the ninth hour of the day, creates a decisive change. The fateful conjunction shifts from the ninth house to the fifth; and Mars is no longer in the first house but in the tenth. Luther is thus freed from the odium of a diabolical mission without losing any of his role as a bringer of religious change.

Melanchthon thus accepted Carion's horoscope; so we must assume that at one time he was inclined to take this alternative, hypothetical, astrological birthdate seriously. He ultimately came to reject it, presumably as a result of Luther's own opposition to it; but the view adopted by Reinhold, the official Wittenberg mathematician, reveals to us the stubborn persistence of the false Gauricus dating in Carion's horoscope, which—as a close comparison with the Munich manuscript shows, although this can be no more than indicated here—Reinhold took in every detail from the revision by Carion and Pfeyl (fig. 122).³⁸ As the inscription "*Coniecturalis*" proves, Reinhold was well aware that the horoscope was based on a mere conjecture, but he included it because it placed the great conjunction, in which he believed, in a more favorable light than Gauricus did. Here, Jupiter and Saturn are so conjoined in Scorpio as to produce "heroic men"; and the unsuspected Mars in Gemini, in the auspicious eleventh house, has no malefic effect but gives rise to eloquence.³⁹

The most striking proof of the decided stamina of this Italian-devised horoscope is that even Garcaeus,⁴⁰ who at long last gives the true date of

Luther's birth, 10 November 1483, persists in exactly reproducing the planetary positions of the Gauricus horoscope, as redrawn by Reinhold and Carion.⁴¹

At the time of Gauricus's visit to Wittenberg and thereafter, a milder version of the Gauricus horoscope was in circulation, whether cast by Gauricus himself or, more likely, in the reformed Carion-Reinhold version given here. This is corroborated by the commentary written to accompany the horoscope of Luther cast by the Italian astrologer Hieronymus Cardanus (Giralamo Cardano), who changed the natal year to 1483 instead of Gauricus's 1484, while going out of his way to complain of the lack of due Counter-Reformation asperity in the 1484 horoscope then in circulation:⁴² Cardano disperses the planetary conjunction from Scorpio into other signs, including that of Virgo, which presides over religion. At all events, we can take it that, in the 1552 edition of Gauricus, the vituperative commentary, at least, was a late addition inserted under Counter-Reformation pressure. *

In all its sectarian hostility, the Cardano horoscope was well known to Luther, who of course dismissed it out of hand. In 1543 one of his table companions showed him a version of his natal chart printed in Nuremberg, together with those of Cicero and others (see appendix III.3; this must have been the Cardano horoscope):⁴³

Ich halte nichts davon, eigene ihnen gar nichts zu, aber gerne wollt ich, dass sie mir diess Argument solvireten: Esau und Jacob sind von einem Vater und einer Mutter, auf eine Zeit, und unter gleichem Gestirn geboren, und doch gar widerwärtiger Natur, Art und Sinn. Summa, was von Gott geschicht, und sein Werk ist, das soll man dem Gestirn nicht zuschreiben. Ah, der Himmel fraget nach dem nicht, wie auch unser Herr Gott nach dem Himmel nicht fraget. Die rechte christliche Religion confutirt und widerlegt solche Mährlin und Fabelwerk allzumal.

I think nothing of them, and set no store by them; but I would be glad if they would solve this problem for me: Esau and Jacob were born of one father and one mother, at the same time, and under the same stars, and yet they were completely contrary in nature, demeanor, and mind. In short, what comes from God and is his handiwork is not to be ascribed to the stars. The sky pays no heed to this, just as Our Lord pays no heed to the sky. The true Christian religion altogether confutes and repudiates such tales and fables.

The fact is, therefore, that the Italian astrologers Gauricus and Cardano arbitrarily altered Luther's date of birth in order to make more or less hostile political capital out of it; and that two distinct birthdates were therefore current in Luther's own lifetime. His biographers had, as it were, two calendrical "truths" to deal with—one historical and one mythical—and at the same time two very different kinds of natal patron: on the one hand a German Christian saint, Saint Martin, and on the other a pair of pagan planetary spirits, Saturn and Jupiter.⁴⁴ *

Almost more remarkable still is the fact that—for a time—even Melancthon and his friends argued in favor of reassigning Luther's birth to 1484, the year of the great conjunction: the date so firmly rejected by Luther himself.

The stubborn survival of pagan astrology among those closest to the astrology-hating Reformer himself begins to seem somewhat less baffling in the light of the evidence, supplied above, that the Carion-Reinhold horoscope was an attempt at astrological compromise on behalf of the Reforming party. It was a serious effort, on the part of Luther's friends, to disable the hostile planetary configuration—as manipulated by the Italians and introduced by them into Wittenberg itself—by means of a further arbitrary alteration of the hour of birth, and thus to lessen the force of the cosmic decree that German astrologers, too, believed to reside in a great conjunction. The continued potency of a pagan culture is demonstrated by the arbitrary manner in which these Wittenberg astrologers—entirely rooted as they were in Gauricus's world of late medieval belief—were prepared to commit a falsification of their own by variously altering the hour of birth, thus disabling the objectivity of history and subordinating it to a mythic pattern of causation.

So cosmically defined, and thus so authentically Hellenistic, was the late medieval theory of historical epochs that it crucially depended on the appearance of certain planetary conjunctions at specific intervals.⁴⁵ A new prophet required the cosmic sanction of a conjunction of superior planets, and of Saturn and Jupiter in particular. How vivid and immediate such a native affinity with Saturn was felt to be, and how vigorously Luther resisted attempts to foist Saturn on him even as a single patron deity, is shown by a remark he made between 26 and 31 May 1532: that is, a few days after Gauricus's visit to Wittenberg. Luther said:

*Ego Martinus Luther sum infelicissimis astris natus, fortassis sub Saturno. Was man mir thun und machen soll, kan nimmermehr fertig werden; schneider, schuster, buchpinder, mein weib verzihen mich auff's lengste.*⁴⁶

I, Martin Luther, was born with the most inauspicious stars, perhaps under Saturn. The things I need done and made for me will never be completed; the tailor, the shoemaker, the bookbinder, and my wife keep me waiting forever.

This mockery of the supposed Saturnian influences in his natal planetary configuration illustrates how stubbornly—if often good-humoredly—Luther had to defend his own passionately held principles against constant efforts to define him as a "child" of his planet. To understand what it meant to reject the prevalent belief in planetary influences, and the fear of Saturn in particular, it will be necessary to attempt with the aid of pictorial examples to understand the commanding position occupied by the planetary deities in the late medieval cosmos. It was a position that made it possible—even in the age of the Reformation—to maintain two parallel chronologies, with historical

scruple and the pursuit of truth on one side and the "as if" of an astrological fiction on the other.

The Theory of Planetary Conjunctions, Prime Factor in Astrological Divination, as Reflected in German Illustrative Art—Fear of Saturn in Words and Images—Parallel with Italy

It is an incontrovertible fact that in astrology two entirely antithetical mental forces, which might logically have been expected to be in conflict, combine to form a single "method" (see fig. 129). On one side is mathematics, the subtlest operation of the abstract intellect; on the other is the fear of daemons, the most primitive causative force in religion. The astrologer, who comprehends the universe through a clear and harmonious system of linear coordinates, and can precisely compute and predict the relationships of the fixed stars and planets to the earth and to each other, is gripped, as he pores over his mathematical tables, by an atavistic and superstitious awe of those very star names that he wields like algebraic formulas: to him, they are daemons, of which he lives in fear.

Illustrations will be necessary if we are to gain a clear idea of these linear-mathematical and mythical-imaginative entities as they appear to the mind of a medieval astrologer. By what system do they rule the world; and what do they look like? Planets can exercise their rule either singly or jointly. As single rulers, in accordance with an ingenious system worked out by the astrologers of antiquity, they are patrons of the individual months in turn, together with the zodiacal signs that appear therein. All the planets, with the exception of the Sun and Moon, hold sway over two months each. Saturn, for example, rules December with the sign of Capricorn, and January with that of Aquarius; we shall take Saturn as our guiding star through this astral labyrinth, because in the age of the Reformation the fear and awe of Saturn stood at the very center of astrological belief.

In accordance with a further set of tables, every planet also rules over particular days and hours. The days of the week still wear the badges of this ancient servitude; thus, as the name indicates, Saturday stands under the influence of Saturn. This nonmathematical, mythic, iconic identity of the planets, which so perturbed the astrologers, is clearly exemplified in the illustrated planetary almanacs of medieval times.

In his book on the "children" of the planets, our lamented friend Hauber excellently described the survival and evolution of antique calendrical imagery, both verbal and pictorial, through the Middle Ages.⁴⁷ One page from a German manuscript in Tübingen (fig. 125) shows Saturn as the ruler of his month. The Greek god of time, and the Roman seedtime spirit, have here amalgamated into a rustic oaf wielding a mattock, a shovel, and a sickle; in keeping with his earthy nature, his mortal subjects labor on the land, plowing, hoeing, digging, and working grain into bread.

At first sight, this rough-looking Swabian peasant family seems to have nothing to do with classical antiquity or with its spirit world. However,



Fig. 125. *Children of Saturn*
Tübingen, Cod. M. d 2, fol. 266^v (see p. 613f.)

Saturn is revealed as a planetary ruler, in authentic antique style, by the presence of his two zodiacal signs, Capricorn and Aquarius. The Goat is clearly visible on the right; the Water Bearer partly conceals his allegorical nature by doing the baker the practical service of pouring the necessary water into his tub. In his left hand, however, he holds three dice: a surprising detail. For this figure, in however corrupt and derivative a form, is none other than the dicer who was part of the ancient Roman festival of Saturnalia.

Proof of this is supplied by the real Saturnalian dicer who happens to survive as the symbol of December on an antique almanac, the Calendar of 354 (fig. 126); he stands before a table with the dice on it. This detail affords a vivid instance of the persistence of antique traditions even in so iconographically "naive" a work as a medieval popular almanac.

In another almanac, produced by the Hamburg-born printer Steffen Arndes in Lübeck in 1519—which is to say during the early part of Luther's active career—the outward aspect of the figure of Saturn (fig. 127) has already begun to look more authentic. On one arm he holds the dragon-serpent of Time, in remembrance of his identity as the Greek Chronos; furthermore, as the mythical ancestor of the pagan gods, he is engaged in swallowing his own offspring. The Low German verse below summarizes the joyless life and horrid disposition that are to be expected of those born in December and January.

This Saturn owes his more antique air to Italy: for one set of Northern Italian engravings (fig. 128) was the source that greatly influenced (by way of Burgkmair in Augsburg) not only this Low German almanac but also the monumental art of the German Renaissance. Thus we find the same Italian planetary deities, life-size, on the walls of the Rathaus in Lüneburg (1529), on the Brusttuch-Haus in Goslar (1526), in Hildesheim, in Brunswick, and on the Junkerhaus in Göttingen.⁴⁸

Nor must we allow the German or Italian bias in the appearance of the figure to obscure the truth that it retains all the essential attributes of this weird and ancient spirit, reinforced by the transference of his name to the remotest, the dimmest, the slowest-moving, and hence apparently the most mysterious of the planets. From that heavenly body, Saturn received an added measure of ponderous inertia; and so the Christian mortal sin of *acedia* (sloth) became associated with him. Hamlet, too, is a Child of Saturn.⁴⁹ Such is the background of "popularized" Hellenistic antiquity that lies behind one sarcastic remark made by Luther in 1532.

Strong as was the influence of the planets in the course of their shared rule of the annual cycle—their rotation of the chairmanship, as it were—they became gods of the moment, world rulers in an entirely "topical" sense, whenever they could be observed or calculated to be operating jointly and simultaneously: that is, when they were in conjunction. Only at long intervals, known as revolutions, were such conjunctions to be expected. Great and greatest conjunctions were systematically distinguished: the latter, stellia of all three superior planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, were the most perilous of all, but were very infrequent.



Fig. 126. Chronographer of A.D. 354
December: Saturnian Dicer (see p. 615)

Fig. 128. Saturn
From Tarocchi, Series E. Northern Italian engraving
(see pp. 593, 615)

Saturnus



g'Als tollt vnde vneine
Etesit vneise yel ocl mine
Also sint mine hant
De vnder my gebaren sint.

g'Saturnus dyn yel aere al befan
Dyne natur ys tols mye dachis vortans
Nare vnde quat ys al myne wyse

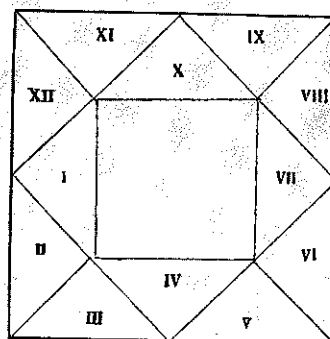
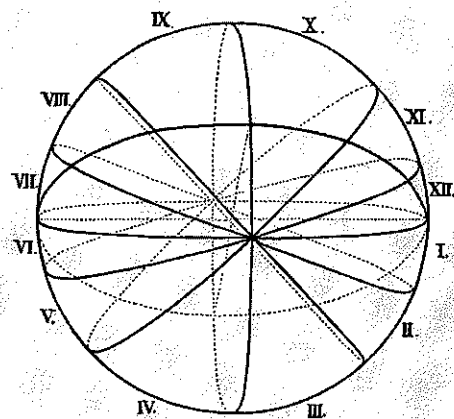


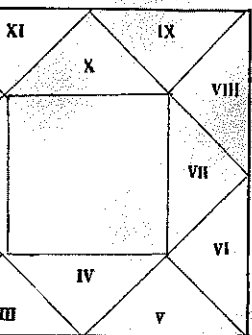
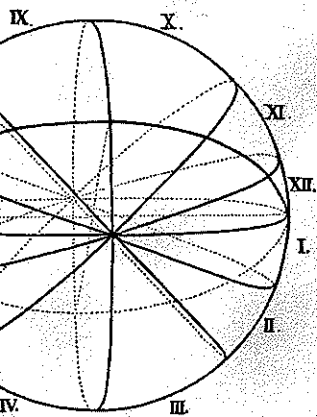
Fig. 127. Saturn
From Nyge Kalender (Lübeck, 1519)
(see pp. 593, 615)

Fig. 129. Astrological cosmos and horoscope chart
After A. Drechsler, *Astrologische Vorträge* (Dresden, 1855)
(see pp. 613, 617)

Saturnus



weine
oet meine
en synt.
uer al befant
pe deucht u ponwand
myne wyf



nder (Lübeck, 1519)
(15)

ogical cosmos and horoscope chart
er, *Astrologische Vorträge* (Dresden, 1855)
(7)

The more planets there were in the conjunction, the more alarming it was, although those known as benefics might exert a moderating influence on the malefics. Such an influence might, for example, be exerted by Jupiter—who tended to be pictured as a benign and studious elderly cleric—on Saturn.

The other decisive factor governing the effect of the conjunction was its location in the sky. The entire celestial globe was divided mathematically into twelve segments, known as houses, each of which was represented on the conventional horoscope “map” by a triangle.⁵⁰ (See fig. 129.) Leonhard Reymann’s almanac of natal astrology (1515; fig. 130)⁵¹ clearly shows how these houses are assigned to the various departments of human life: thus, the first house pertains to Life, the second to Business, the third to Brothers, the others, respectively, to Parents, Children, Health, Marriage, Death, Religion, Government, Beneficence, and Imprisonment.⁵² The division of the cosmos among the members of the astral hierarchy is thus made plain.

In an essay on the astrological interpretation of history in the Middle Ages,⁵³ Friedrich von Bezold has shown us, with exemplary scholarship, how seriously—and with what encouragement from the Christian Church—the belief in the power of such planetary configurations influenced historical thinking all over medieval Europe. A generation earlier, Johann Friedrich, in his work on astrology and Reformation,⁵⁴ was the first to make the arduous but meritorious attempt to work through the vast, scattered, and obscure corpus of prophetic literature, both in Latin and in German, in which he believed that he had found the causes of the social and ecclesiastical unrest that led to the Reformation and the Peasants’ War. A welcome complement to these studies is supplied by G. Hellmann, who in his essay “Aus der Blütezeit der Astro-meteorologie”⁵⁵ affords a penetrating and accurate view of the mass literature that evoked the flood panic of 1524.

That panic was itself rooted in the fear of planetary influences. For many years past, it had been believed that in the month of February 1524 twenty planetary conjunctions—sixteen of them in the watery sign of Pisces—would inevitably bring in their train a catastrophic, universal deluge. All of the most learned astrological scientists of the day either eloquently confirmed this idea or found themselves enlisted by the spiritual and temporal authorities to deny it with equal emphasis, publishing semiofficial messages of reassurance to still the panic.

The same Reymann who composed the 1515 natal almanac was one of those who foretold the worst for 1524.⁵⁶ The illustration for his *Practica* for that year (fig. 131) shows a gigantic fish; from its star-studded belly (the planets in conjunction) a devastating flood descends on a city represented by a few buildings. Under the impact of this cataclysm, the emperor and the pope confer on the right; from the left come the peasants, including *Hans mit der Karst* (Jack with the mattock); their one-legged standard-bearer wields a scythe, for the ancient god of seedtime was the natural emblem of his rebellious children.

The contrasting literature of official reassurance is typified by the refutation published by the imperial astrologer, Georg Tannstetter, with a dedication to Archduke Ferdinand.⁵⁷ Here the seven planets look down from a raincloud on the peasants beneath, rather like spectators in a box at the theater; they are held in check by the hand of God, which emerges from the clouds above (fig. 133).

Also in 1521 Johann Carion, whom we have already encountered as the mathematician to the court of Brandenburg, brought out his own message of reassurance, *Prognosticatio vnd erklerung der grossen wesserung*—in which, however, he simultaneously prophesied all manner of other calamities.⁵⁸ On the title page of the first edition of this work,⁵⁹ now among the treasures of the Berlin library, there is a woodcut showing three separate scenes (fig. 132). On the left we see the threatened storm; on the right a comet, shining on a city, with the date 1521; and below five figures in contemporary costume, engaged in what looks like armed conflict. A pope, down on his knees, is threatened by a knight with drawn sword whose companion, a bare-headed man, also raises his sword. A cardinal throws up his arms in lamentation; the emperor, with crown and scepter, covers his face in horror.

Were it not for the text of the book itself, this might be taken for a premonition of the Sack of Rome by the German lansquenets. On closer scrutiny, however, the emperor turns out to be accompanied by the planetary symbol for the Sun; the pope's mantle bears the sign of Jupiter; and behind the knight is the symbol of Mars. These figures, as emerges from the allegorical verses printed within ("Reymen der Planeten"), illustrate the planetary configuration that accompanied the comet of 1521. For purposes of political prophecy, the planetary figures are identified with conflicting forces within contemporary politics. Sol is the emperor, Jupiter the pope, Mars the nobility; and the man with the sword is an ill-characterized Saturn, the peasant.

Carion's book casts significant light on the history of the press in the period. He denounces a number of sensational illustrated publications as attempts to manipulate the Diet of Worms through the deluge scare propaganda of Seytz⁶⁰ and his like. We sense the impact of woodcut illustration as a powerful new means of working on an uneducated public.

Did not irrefutable evidence compel the historian to take such banal costume groups seriously as part of the history of religion, he would very soon lay such an illustration aside with a superior smile—and thus, as so often, block the deep wellspring of insight into collective psychology that such mere "curiosities" have to offer. The planetary spirits were perceived as real forces: which was why they took on a human shape.

It seems—but is not—paradoxical to say that this group of gods possessed greater immediate numinous power than did the Olympians whom Raphael depicted at much the same time on the ceiling of the Villa Farnesina. So serene and straightforward is the beauty in which the Italian Renaissance clothes the gods of its ancient world that any art historian would reject—as mere antiquarian and philological wrongheadedness—the attempt to discern a trace of

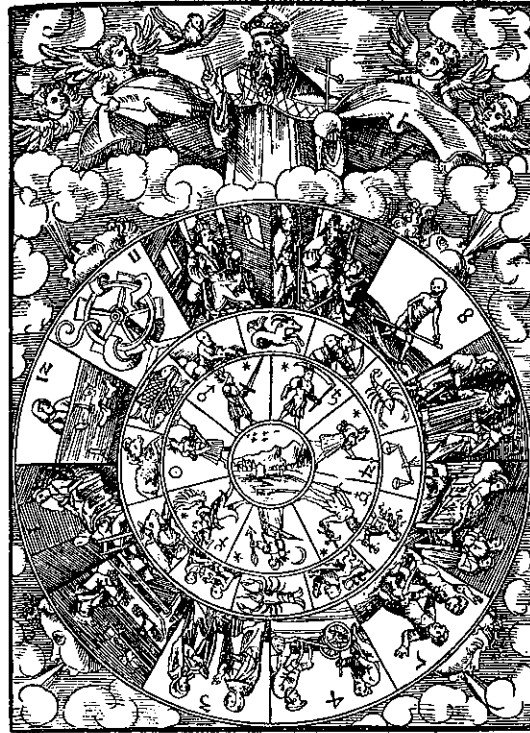


Fig. 130. Erhard Schön
Frontispiece to Leonhard Reymann, *Nativität-Kalender*
(Nuremberg, 1515)
(see p. 617)



Fig. 131. Title leaf of Leonhard Reymann, *Practica* for 1524
Stuttgart, L.B., Hs. Math. Q. 3 (see p. 617)

Prognosticatio und er-

klärung der grossen wesserung / Auch anderer erschrockenlichen
wütungen. So sich begeben nach Christi vnsers lieben hern
geburrt / Funffzehen hundert vñ xxiij. Jar. Durch mich
Magistru Johānem Carion vñ Buerikaym / Chur
fürstlicher gnaden zu Brandenburg Astrono
mū / mit fleysfiger arbeit zusamē gebracht.
Ganz erbermlich zulesen / in nuz vñ
warnung aller Christglaubig
gen menschen ꝛc.

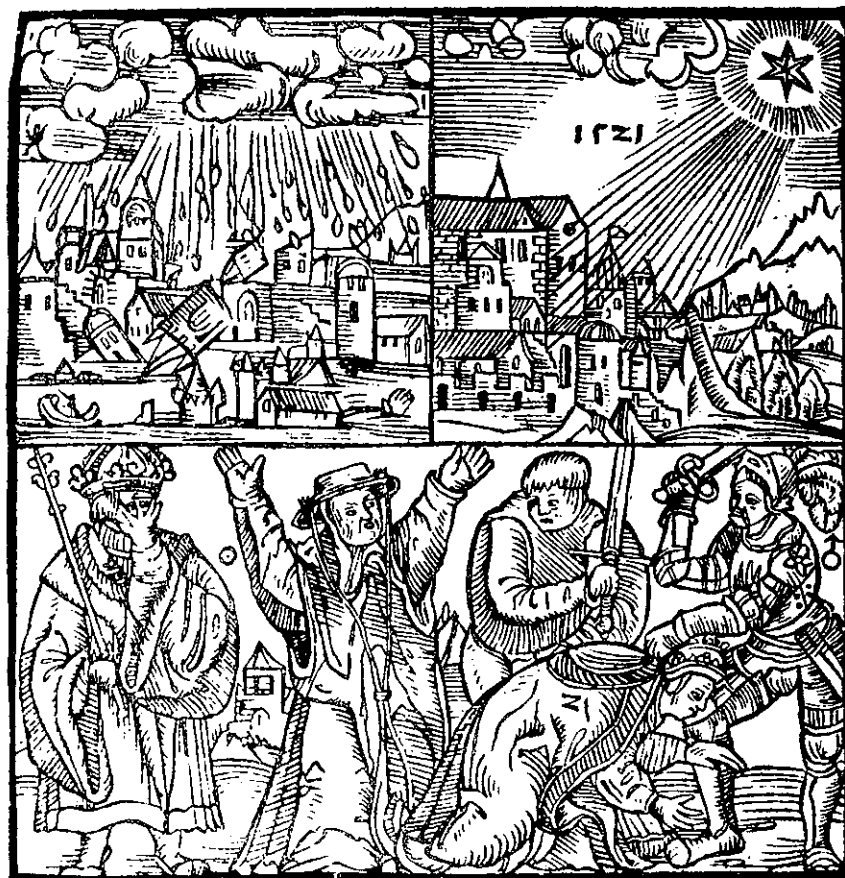


Fig. 132. Title page of Johann Carion, *Prognosticatio*
(Leipzig, 1521)
(see p. 618)

true pagan divinity in Raphael's figures. Even so, he should remember that only a step away, in an adjoining room of the Farnesina, Agostino Chigi simultaneously commissioned Peruzzi to fill the ceiling with pagan astral deities—planets and fixed stars alike—in a set of relationships that are not artistically defined but represent the positions of the stars on the day of Chigi's own birth. For Chigi chose to spend his hours of rural leisure beneath the protection of his own auspicious horoscope, which—deceptively—promised him a long life.

Even in death, Agostino Chigi remained a patron of astrological art. His tomb in S. Maria del Popolo is surmounted by an openwork dome, designed by Raphael, from which the seven planetary deities of antiquity look down, their pagan temperament held in check by an escort of Christian angels commanded by God the Father. The formal beauty of these figures of the gods, and the exquisite taste with which the artist reconciles pagan and Christian belief, must not be allowed to obscure the truth that even in Italy, around 1520, at the time of greatest artistic freedom and creativity, the antique was—as it were—revered in the form of a Janus-faced herm. One face wore a daemonic scowl, exacting superstitious awe; the other face was Olympian and serene, inviting aesthetic veneration.

Luther and the Theory of Planetary Conjunctions: The Deluge Panic of 1524—Luther's View of Johann Lichtenberger's Prophecy That a "Minor Prophet" Would Be Born of the 1484 Conjunction

This panic terror of a deluge was part of Luther's own psychic experience. His response to it, as to all manifestations of systematic astrology, was unequivocally hostile. We possess a humorous and highly dismissive comment that he made some years later:

D. M. L. sagte von der Narrheit der Mathematicorum und Astrologorum, der Sternkucker, die von einer Sündfluth oder grossem Gewässer hätten gesagt, so Anno 1524 kommen sollte, das doch nicht geschach; sondern das folgende 25. Jahr stunden die Bauren auf, und wurden aufrührerisch. Davon sagte kein Astrologus nicht ein Wort. Er redete aber vom Bürgermeister Hohndorf: derselbe liess ihm ein viertel Bier in sein Haus hinauf ziehen, wollte da warten auf die Sindfluth, gleich als würde er nicht zu trinken haben, wenn sie käme. Aber zur Zeit des Zorns war ein Coniunctio, die hiess Sünde und Gottes Zorn, das war ein ander Coniunction, denn die im 24. Jahre.⁶¹

D. M. L. spoke of the folly of the mathematicians and astrologers, the stargazers, who had talked of a deluge or great flood, which was to come in the year 1524, but which did not come to pass; however, in the following year, '25, the peasants rose up in arms. Of which not one astrologer had a single word to say. He went on to speak of Burgomaster Hohndorf, who had a quarter of beer hauled up inside his house to wait there for the Deluge, as if he would not have had plenty to drink when it came. But at the hour of wrath there was a conjunction, which was

II=
kenlichenn
Ben hern
omich
hur
o



that of sin and God's wrath; and that was a very different conjunction from that of the year '24.

At the time of the panic itself, Luther was thus not at all disposed to believe in a deluge occasioned by astrological influences; he did, however, express the view that the conjunction of so many heavenly bodies might well signal the approach of the Last Judgment. For although Luther never accepted that astrology was an exact science, his objections of principle were directed
* against its intellectual and not against its mystical aspect:

Denn die Heiden waren nicht so närrisch, dass sie sich vor Sonn und Monden gefürcht hätten, sondern für den Wunderzeichen und ungeheuren Gesichtern, Portenten und Monstris, dafür fürchten sie sich, und ehreten sie. Zudem, so ist Astrologia keine Kunst,⁶² denn sie hat keine principia und demonstrationes, darauf man gewiss, unwankend fussen und gründen könnte...⁶³

For the heathen were not such fools as to live in fear of the Sun and the Moon, but of signs and wonders, monstrous sights, portents and omens: those they feared and worshiped. Furthermore, astrology is not an art, for it has no *principia* and *demonstrationes* on which to take a sure and certain footing.

The fear of natural signs and wonders, in the heavens and on the earth, was shared by all Europe; and the press of the day exploited it for ends of its own. The invention of printing from movable type had lent wings to learned thought; and now the art of pictorial printing enabled images—their language an international one—to fly far and wide. These stormy petrels darted from North to South and back again, and every party sought to enlist in its own cause the “pictorial slogans” (as they might now be called) of cosmic sensationalism.

On the Protestant side, it seems that Spalatin, a trusted ally both of Luther and of Elector Frederick the Wise, employed astrological and teratological images of impending disaster as part of a press campaign based on both “artificial” and “miraculous” prophecy. As early as 1519, he commissioned an expert opinion on the great conjunction of 1484,⁶⁴ and it was he who asked Luther for clarification of his Italian horoscope.⁶⁵ These two facts alone show that Spalatin was at home in the intellectual context of the prophecies of Johann Lichtenberger, which Luther issued as a pamphlet with a foreword of his own. Translated from the Latin by Stephan Roth, and with woodcuts by Lemberger, this was published in Wittenberg by Hans Lufft in 1527.⁶⁶

In his foreword,⁶⁷ Luther played down the strongly astrological character of the text, presenting the forty-three images in isolation as warnings for delinquent Christians, with the express intention of shaking up the clergy, who, having emerged unscathed from the Peasants' War of 1525, were no longer intimidated by threats of chastisement. The clergy and the princes—all the “bigwigs”—had every reason to fear this book, which presented the ideas

of the Reformation of church and state through a strange blend of obscure pictorial riddles and plainspoken threats and demands. Originally published in Latin, the text was reissued countless times in a variety of languages from around 1490 onward, and was seriously consulted as an oracle in difficult times. It was still being consulted after the battle of Jena in 1806.⁶⁸

Lichtenberger's prophecy had its roots deep in astrological soil. In a spirit of superstitious fanaticism, it connected a specific conjunction of planets, foretold for 23 November 1484, with the expected emergence of a cleric who would bring about a revolution in the Church. In fifteenth-century Italy, as we know from Pico della Mirandola,⁶⁹ this same prophecy had caused distress and agitation for decades on end, very much as the deluge prophecy of 1524 was later to do.

In 1484, when the expected spiritual prophet—like the later deluge—failed to materialize, the first response, Pico tells us, was one of relief. But astrologers are incorrigible. There emerged in Padua a professor of astrology, one Paulus van Middelburg (fig. 134), a Dutch-born cleric, who simply “stretched” the influence of the 1484 conjunction over a period of twenty years and extended its application from the anticipated advent of a monk to embrace every department of human life.⁷⁰ Middelburg firmly predicted the coming of this revolutionary “minor prophet” while making, at times, slavish use of the writings of the Arab astrologer Abū Ma‘šār (died 886).⁷¹ The prophet would be born nineteen years after 1484, i.e., in 1503; he would remain active for nineteen years; and he would be forced to leave his native land—because the Bible says that a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.

For the historian of prophetic literature, it is both philologically and psychologically instructive that—as no one has yet remarked—Lichtenberger's prophecy is lifted, word for word, from Paulus van Middelburg. His mystic edifice thus rests upon a stolen foundation. In 1492 Middelburg himself indignantly drew attention to this in his *Invectiva*,⁷² which must be one of the earliest printed denunciations of plagiarism. Lichtenberger, of whose personality very little is known,⁷³ does not seem to have replied.

The terror of the great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter (fig. 135), and the figure of the “minor prophet,” were thus old-established images, dating from the pre-Reformation period. For various reasons, even so, they inevitably took a new lease on life in Luther's day. At a time of conflict between rulers and peasants, any scene showing Saturn and Jupiter together was bound to look like a topical episode from the Peasants' War; and the astrological text itself acquired curious overtones of humanity when it spoke of the motions of heavenly bodies as if they had been human beings in conflict. Uncannily and spontaneously, the spirit world of antiquity derived new life from the passionate and vibrant age of the Reformation—and so, at a time of true ecclesiastical revolution, did Lichtenberger's image of the prophet monk (fig. 136).

Despite discrepancies in the account of the prophet's birth and exile from

his native land—and in that of the birthmarks and signs on various parts of his body that had already been listed by Abū Ma'sar—the gist of the prophecy fitted the emergence of Luther: for a monk had indeed arisen and assailed the clergy. Luther himself was fully aware of the danger that the illustrations in this book of prophecies might be taken to apply to him; and he took steps to avert it, in one place at least, by supplying Lichtenberger's image of a false prophet with a caption saying "*Dieser Prophet sihet dem Thomas Müntzer gleich*."⁷⁴ (This prophet looks like Thomas Müntzer.) This did nothing to dissuade either friends or foes from applying Lichtenberger's image of two monks to Luther and Melancthon.⁷⁵

In the Stadtbibliothek in Hamburg there is a copy of the early Latin edition of 1492, published in Mainz (fig. 137). Above the two figures—a tall monk with a hood that reaches to the ground and a devil on his shoulder,⁷⁶ and a smaller monk in a frontal pose—an early hand, probably in the sixteenth century, has written in Low German: "*Dyth is Martinus Luther*" (This is Martin Luther) and "*Philippus Melanton*." Given that this is an image that appears to show a monk in a state of diabolical possession, such an inscription might—in the absence of a contextual science of culture—seem to reveal nothing but the malice of a declared enemy of Luther. This is not necessarily so: friends as well as foes were able to apply the image to Luther, using a favorable interpretation based on his own words.⁷⁷

As is well known, however, Luther's papist adversaries strove ad nauseam to associate Luther as closely as possible with the devil, who was even said to have begotten him in the guise of an incubus. The fiercest anti-Lutheran of all, Cochlaeus, has left us a vicious attempt to identify Luther with Lichtenberger's prophet monk. In his book *Von neuen Schwermereyen*, of 1534, Cochlaeus cursed Luther as follows:

*Hoff auch / er sols auf XX. Jahr nicht bringen / Sonder im XIX. jar (wie Liechtenberger von jm schreybt) sol er zu boden gehen / der unselig Münch / der den Teuffel auff der achseln tregt / in Liechtenbergers Practica.*⁷⁸

I hope, too, that he never reaches the twentieth year. But (as Lichtenberger writes of him) may he meet his downfall in the nineteenth: the unholy monk who bears the devil on his shoulders, in Lichtenberger's *Practica*.

Cochlaeus thus applies both the image and its content to Luther as if it were an entirely familiar allusion; it sounds, in fact, as if he were trying to counter some other interpretation more favorable to Luther.

One year later Cardinal Vergerio visited the feared and excommunicated monk in Wittenberg and described his impressions as follows, in a letter to Ambrogio Ricalcati dated 13 November 1535:

...et veramente che quanto più penso a quel che ho veduto et sentito in quel monstro et alla gran forza delle sue maladette operationi, et coniungendo quello che io

culam amplecti vellem: scio pfecto opus meum tene
genitū. cū tot tantisq; sunt angelicam potius q; hu
manā requirant pfectione ergo e silentio potius pmen
tū. cū amplius vni tue pae oratioz pferre nō possi
o est ne tanta audientib; illaz videri faciat: quantā
referre queā. cū in veritate longe sit maior. oculis
e silentio pnam. Ad te ergo redeo bux unitis
ad axum iūne cū in te virtutū omnīū reluceat exem
ptū cepisti era bono pposito desistere noli. doctia
flos aduua. debiles sustenta. astrologos obserua.
inter mortales: qui te statuq; tui incolumē pferet
oluit namq; benignissimū et idem optū ac sapien
tū: bonitatis et sapientie sue dispositioe in reb; p
ausaz moris atq; influx; ita ostendere: ut fides ip
saz deoq; delictis innotesceret. Q. ne cū ita sint bux
quia in tuo pectore ipse liberalis arbor: ipsa pira fa
a demū caritas inhabitant: a te pncipe significen
s et hominib; gratissimū: manus hoc poto suauiss
quansq; in Italia restituent: in tuo numero fides
itaz collocare dignetur. a me excellenē tue decti
q; scptā. Cūq; p rēuosa e inculca pibenti animo su
uos ita te mun; hoc gratissimū impetrasse me fer
incredibilem humanitatē: in auctūq; clemētiā:
non desuam Vale.

Edmundo Paulum de Stoburgo
Zelandie bonarum artium et medicine docto
rem illustrissimi ducis Vrbini pphicu In mar
curiali oppido antwerpiensi impressum. Per
me. Gerardum leeu Anno salutis. MDCCC.
LXXXIII. quarto kalendas Octobris.

last page of Paulus van
ca (Antwerp, 1484)



Das. xxiiij. Capitel.

Die sind vnd werden die zeichen sein/ da bey man
yhn wird erkennen/ Er wird schwarze fleckichen
haben am leibe/ vnd wird einen heilichen leib habe
von braunfleckichten mancherleichen macteln
ymt der rechten seiten/ beym schoe vnd an der buffte/ Er stet
het am teil des glücks/ zur rechten hand des hymels/ vnd ym
gehenden vom horoscopo/ doch/ das der ascendente der beider
beste weiblich sey/ vnd werden sich auff das hintersteil des
leibes am meisten neygen/ Er wird auch noch ein andern zeichen
an der brust haben/ aus dem teil des zeichens/ wilchs ym sechs
sten grade des Leuens erkunden ist. Dieser Prophet (wie
das selbige Firmicus bezeuget) wird erschrecklich sein die Göt-
ten/ vnd den Teuffeln/ er wird viel zeichen vnd wunderwerck
thun/ Seine zukunfft werden auch die bösen geiste fleuchen/ vnd
p die

¶ Monach⁹ i alba cuculla ⁊ diabol⁹ i scapul⁹ eius retro
habena teripium loquum ad iher⁹ cum amplius ei⁹ brachia dñs discipulis fecit stantem.



Fig. 135. Jupiter and Saturn
From Johann Lichtenberger, *Weissagungen*
(Wittenberg, 1527)
(see p. 623)

Fig. 136. *The Two Monks*
Ibid. (see p. 623)

Fig. 137. *The Two Monks*
From the Mainz, 1492, edition of Lichtenberger. Copy in
Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek
(see p. 625)

*so della sua natività et di tutta la passata vita da persone che li erano intimi amici sino a quel tempo che se fece frate, tanto più mi lascio vincere a credere che egli habbia qualche demonio adosso!*⁷⁹

...and, truly, the more I reflect on what I have seen and heard both of that monster, and of the great power of its accursed operations, and adding what I myself know of his nativity and past life, from persons who were his close friends before he became a monk, the more I am inclined to suppose he has a devil on his back.

Even the wording of Vergerio's description reads like a startlingly apt caption to Lichtenberger's image of the prophet monk; and Vergerio proves that he also has Lichtenberger's actual text in mind by claiming to have heard all manner of suspicious things about Luther's "*natività*." I do not think that this word should here be translated by "birth"; in this context, Luther's "nativity" is his natal horoscope.

When Vergerio wrote his letter, an Italian astrologer in Wittenberg had recently traced a link between Luther's nativity and Lichtenberger's prophecies: for these may very well have suggested to Lucas Gauricus, on his visit to Wittenberg in 1532, the choice of 22 October 1484 as the birthdate (see pp. 606 ff., fig. 123). Vergerio is all the more likely to have heard of this, on inquiry, because the use of that date had all along been motivated by political animus against the Reformers—the same animus that eventually inspired Gauricus, in publishing his horoscope of Luther in 1552, to supplement it with a vicious denunciation.

The connection between Lichtenberger and Gauricus can be traced through matters of detail. Closely scrutinized, in ways that can only be touched on here, the Gauricus horoscope reveals an indubitable affinity with Lichtenberger's predictions. This agreement may possibly be explained by supposing a common source, itself Northern in origin. For Paulus van Middelburg, who was Lichtenberger's unavowed source, lived in Italy and was in close personal contact with Gauricus: both men were among those commissioned by Pope Leo X to undertake the reform of the Julian calendar.⁸⁰ We know that Gauricus knew and esteemed Middelburg's work, because he cited him in his *Encomion astrologiae* as one of the leading lights of astral science.⁸¹

Gauricus has simply twisted around the basic idea of the prophecy in order to use it against Luther, so that not merely two planets—as in Lichtenberger—but all the planets, with the single exception of Mars, meet in the sign of Scorpio. Other features of Lichtenberger's prophet-making conjunction are retained by Gauricus: Jupiter and Saturn conjoin in the ninth house—that of religion—and the malefic, Mars, stands in his own sign of Aries, as Lichtenberger explicitly requires. Gauricus adds to this the grouping of the remaining planets in the ninth house. Whether the need to coincide with this event, or some other specific astronomical calculation, underlies his rejection of Lichtenberger's date of 25 (or 20) November, which he replaces by 22 October, is a matter for further examination.⁸²



ss. xxxij. Capitel.

und werden die zeichen sein/ da bey man
ird erkennen/ Er wird schwarze fleckichen
am leibe/ und wird einen heulichen leib habe
traten/ fleckichen mancherleichen macheln
gen/ bey dem schos und an der huffe/ Er ste
liche/ zur rechten hand des hymels/ und ym
roskopo/ doch/ das der ascendent der beider
y/ und werden sich auff das hinterste teil des
neigen/ Er wird auch noch ein ander zeichen
aus dem teil des zeichens/ wilchs ym sech
wens erfinden ist. Dieser Prophet (wie
aus bezeuget) wird erschrecklich sein de Göt
sein/ er wird viel zeichen und wunderwerck
ist werden auch die bösen geiste fliehen/ und
p die

da cuculla 7 diabolus i caput eius retro
in ad rem cum amplexu et in brachia habet illicipitilem flammam.



Monks

Monks

492, edition of Lichtenberger. Copy in
und Universitätsbibliothek



Fig. 138. *Scorpio*
 Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,
 Cod. Vat. Reg. lat. 1283, fol. 7^v (see p. 625)

Luther on Johann Lichtenberger's Prophecies of the "Foul Fiend"

In his foreword, Luther goes to some lengths to stress the shortcomings of astrology; and he would certainly have given short shrift to any attempt to identify him with Lichtenberger's prophet monk on astrological grounds—if for nothing else, because of the imp of hell on the monk's neck (figs. 136, 140). Even so, however, a story first recorded by Herberger in the early seventeenth century, but attributed to reliable sources, goes some way to suggest the contrary:

Von S. Martini vnd D. Martini Feinden

S. Martino haben die bösen Geister viel schalckheit angeleget / wenn sie jhm in mancherley form vnd gestalt sind erschienen. Vornemlich hat er geklaget / dass Mercurius unter dem hauffen der schlimmste sey. Jedermann hat seine plage / wie es Christus selbst muss erfahren / Matth. 4. Zur zeit kam S. Martino der Teuffel entgegen / da er wolte sein Ampt verrichten / vnd sprach: Alle Welt wird dir gram werden: Da antwortet Martinus eben wie Ritter Gordius: Dominus mecum, non timebo mala, ist Gott mit vns, wer wil wider vns: Also hat der Teuffel auch D. Martino viel schalckheit durch seine Werckzeug angeleget / Vornemlich die Mercurialischen geschwinden Köpffe vnd Sophisten haben jhn greulich geplaget.

Hier muss ich etwas denckwürdiges erzehlen. Herr Johan Lichtenberger hat geweissagt / es würde ein Münch kommen / der würde die religion scheuren vnd pantzerfegen / demselben Münch hat er einen teuffel auff den nacken gemalt / nu macht sich Lutherus ein mal vber Lichtenbergers Buch / vnd wil es verdeutschen / D. Iustus Ionas kömpt dazu vnd fragt was er vorhabe: D. Luther sagets. Da spricht D. Ionas: Warum wilt jhr jhn deutschen / ist er doch wider euch. Lutherus fraget vrsach. D. Ionas sagt: Lichtenberger sagt / jhr habt den Teuffel / nu habt jhr ja keinen Teuffel. Da lächelt der Herr Lutherus, vnnd spricht: Ey Herr Doctor / sehet nur das Bild ein wenig besser an / wo sitzt der Teuffel? / Er sitzt nicht dem Münche im hertzen / sondern auff dem nacken / ey wie fein hat ers troffen / Im hertzen da wohnet mein HErr JESVS / da sol mir der Teuffel nu vnnd nimmermehr hinein kommen / aber ich meyne er sitzt mir auff dem nacken / durch Bapst / Keyser vnd grosse Potentaten / vnd alles was in der Welt wil klug seyn. Kan er nicht mehr / so macht er mir im Kopff ein abschewlichs sausen. Wie Got wil / er mag mich eusserlich plagen / es ist / Gott lob vnnd danck / nur ein aussgestossener aussgeworfener Teuffel / wie Christus redet / der Fürst dieser Welt werde jetzt aussgestossen / Ioh. 12.

Diese wort hat D. Iusti Ionae Diener / welcher hernach ein berühmter Prediger worden / ad notam genommen vnd offft erzehlet. Es ist war / der Teuffel gehet herum von aussen / 1 Pet. 5. Lass jhn prüllen wie er will / im hertzen gleubiger Christen hat er nichts zu schaffen / vnser Hertz ist Christi Königlicher eigner Sitz / da wil er Regent vnd Platzmeister bleiben.⁸³

On the Foes of Saint Martin and of Dr. Martin

Saint Martin was much plagued with the mischief of evil spirits, which appeared to him in many forms and guises. He complained that Mercury was the worst of them all. Everyone is tormented in his own way, as Christ himself had to learn: Matthew 4. On one occasion, the devil came to Saint Martin as he was about to say his Office

and said: "The whole world will be wroth with thee." Martin gave the same answer as Sir Gordius: *Dominus mecum, non timebo mala*; if God be with us, who shall stand against us. Likewise, through his henchmen, the devil made much mischief for Dr. Martin; and it was the mercurial quick-brains and sophists who tormented him worst of all.

Here I must recount a memorable fact. Master Johann Lichtenberger prophesied that a monk would come who would cleanse religion and sweep it clean; and he portrayed that monk with a devil on his back. One day, Luther was studying Lichtenberger's book and making ready to translate it into German. Dr. Justus Jonas came along and asked what he was intending to do; Dr. Luther told him.

Dr. Jonas said: "Why translate him? He is against you." Luther asked him why. Jonas said: "Lichtenberger says you have the devil; and you have no devil."

Then Master Luther smiled and said: "Now, Doctor, look more closely at the picture. Where does the devil sit? Not in the monk's heart but on his back. That is quite right! In my heart dwells my Lord Jesus, and there the devil shall never enter, now or hereafter. And yet I think he does sit on my back, through the agency of the pope, the emperor, and the great potentates, and all those in the world who claim to be wise. If he can do no more, he makes a fearful roaring in my ears. As God will: he may torment me outwardly, but God be praised and thanked, this is no more than an outcast devil; as Christ says, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, John 12."

These words were noted down and often recounted by Dr. Justus Jonas's servant, who later became a celebrated preacher. It is true: the devil walketh about, 1 Peter 5. Let him roar as he will, he has no power over the hearts of faithful Christians. Our hearts are the royal throne of Christ himself, and there he is sure to remain as ruler and governor.

This tradition rings true. We possess very similar remarks from Luther about his battle with the headache demon, which for him was a highly personal being.⁸⁴ Herberger's humorous telling of the tale cannot conceal this; for however firmly Luther may have rejected the anthropomorphic planetary spirits, the foul fiend himself remained a vivid and indubitable presence. He went so far as to concede, in his foreword to Lichtenberger,⁸⁵ that on occasion the fiend might speak true prophecy, if only concerning the affairs of this world. We are fortunate enough to have another remark of Luther's, on Lichtenberger's own relationship to the devil. On being asked whether Lichtenberger communed with a good or an evil spirit, Luther replied:

*Fuit spiritus fanaticus et tamen multa praedixit; denn das kan der Teufel woll thun, quod novit corda eorum quos possidet. Praeterea novit conditionem mundi, er siehet wie es gehe.*⁸⁶

It was a fanatical spirit, and yet he foretold many things; for this the devil can certainly do, because he knows the hearts of those whom he possesses. He also knows the condition of the world; he sees how it goes.

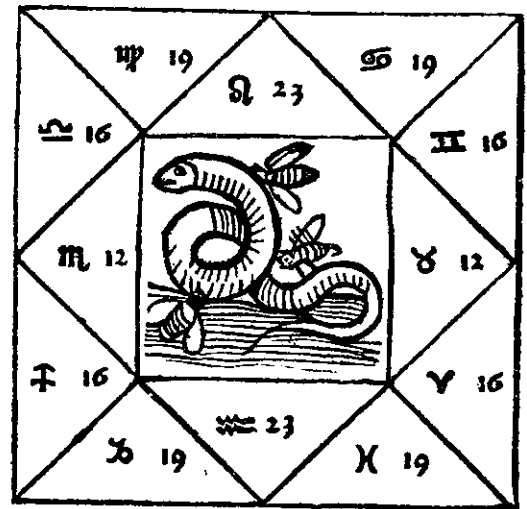
Vir scorpionē tenēs cū collo.

¶ Homo inuidus erit.



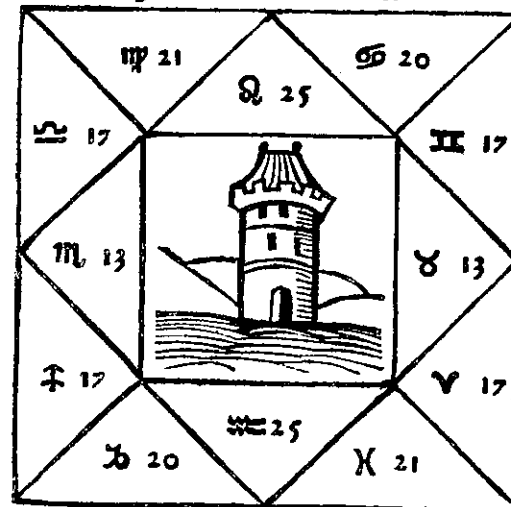
Serpentē magnū musce pugentes.

¶ Homo prudēs erit sed malus.



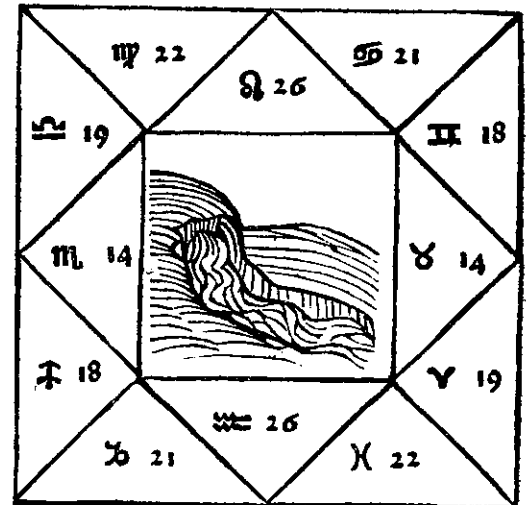
Turris pulchra ac fortis.

¶ Fortis laborator erit.



¶ Puteus ex quo manat aqua.

¶ Homo instabilis erit seuu.



Scorpio
11-14

Fig. 139. Degrees 11-14 of Scorpio
From *Astrolabium Magnum*, ed. Engel (Augsburg, 1488)
(see p. 625)

Luther thus considered demoniacal possession to be entirely compatible with a gift of accurate prophecy in earthly matters. And he accordingly wrote in his foreword:

Denn Gotts zeichen und der Engel warnunge / sind gemenget mit des Satans eingeben und zeichen / wie die wellt denn werd ist / das es wust unternander gehe und nichts unterschiedlich erkennen kan.

For God's signs and the angels' warnings mingle with the inspirations and signs of Satan; for the world deserves no better than to sink into blind confusion.

And so Luther's own friends were able to use the image of the devil-ridden monk in their woodcut press campaign; for, in that age of pictorial polemics, Luther himself gave credence to Lichtenberger—if only as the harbinger of natural signs and wonders.

II.3. The Prophetic Interpretation of Portents: Antiquity and the Use of Prodigies in Luther's Press Campaign

Luther's Portrait in the "Wunderliche Weissagung" of Joachim, by Hans Sachs, and the Leonine Oracle—Luther's and Melanchthon's Political Monsters: Pope Donkey and Monk Calf

In this area, Luther and his friends were working with quite different images, and employing a partisan virulence in controversy that can be excused only by the need for a literary counteroffensive.

Once more, it is possible to detect the influence of Spalatin behind the scenes. In 1521 he took a particular interest in the *Passional Christi und Antichristi*, published in that year with illustrations by Lucas Cranach, which dared to attack the pope as Antichrist.⁸⁷ By the following year,⁸⁸ he had knowledge of the Italian original of the *Wunderliche Weissagung*, which Osiander and Hans Sachs were to publish in Nuremberg only in 1527: this † Italian publication was based on a pseudo-Joachimite catalog of popes invented for divinatory purposes. Luther was delighted to find himself represented, in Sachs's publication, as a figure with a sickle in his right hand and a rose in his left (fig. 141). He wrote to Wenceslaus Link in Nuremberg on 19 May 1527:

*...libellus vester imaginarius de Papatu, in quo imaginem meam cum falce valde probro, ut qui mordax et acerbus tot annis ante praedictus sum futurus, sed rosam pro meo signo interpretari dubito, magis ad officium etiam pertinere putarim.*⁸⁹

...your little book of emblems concerning the papacy, in which I very much like the image of myself with a sickle—as one who, for so many years previously called cutting and pitiless, am about to be so—but I hesitate to interpret the rose as my own sign: I should rather have thought that it, too, pertains to the office.

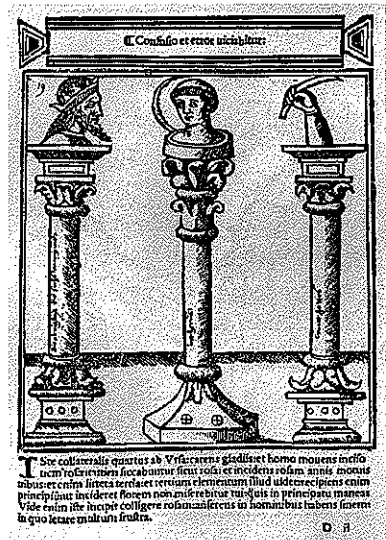


Fig. 140. *The Two Monks*
 From *Propheceien und Weissagen... Doctoris Paracelsi*,
 Joh. Lichtenbergers, M. Joseph Grünpeck, Joan. Carionis,
Der Sibyllen und anderer (Augsburg, 1549) (see p. 629)

Fig. 141. *Luther with Sickle and Rose*
 From Osiander and Hans Sachs, *Wunderliche Weissagung*
 (Nuremberg, 1527) (see p. 632)

Fig. 142. *Corresponding image from Vaticinia Joachimi*
 (Bologna, 1515)
 Copy in Wolfenbüttel, Bibliothek (see p. 635)

Fig. 143. *Jupiter, Saturn, Sol (?)*
 Ibid. (see p. 635)



Fig. 144. Oraculum V
From *Leonis oracula*, ed. Lambecius (Paris, 1655)
(see p. 635)

Figs. 145a,b. Pope Donkey and Monk Calf
From Johann Wolf, *Lectiones memorabiles* (Lauingen, 1608)
(see p. 635)

The Italian book, illustrated with woodcuts (Bologna, 1515), that served as Sachs's source (fig. 142) is still to be found, with his verses copied in Osiander's hand, in the library at Wolfenbüttel.⁹⁰ It is unfortunately impossible to go into detail. The severed human leg demands mention, however, as it also appears in connection with Luther. It survives in the historical list of popes as the canting arms of Pope John XXIII (*Coscia*: thigh).

As has not previously been noticed, the figure itself derives from an effigy of a Byzantine emperor in the celebrated twelfth-century Leonine Oracles (fig. 144).⁹¹ Given the astrological character of those predictions, it is conceivable that somewhere behind all this there lurks an image of Saturn.⁹²

In 1523 Luther's and Melanchthon's political use of prophecy found joint expression, as is well known, in two celebrated broadsheets: Melanchthon's *Papstesel* (pope donkey) and Luther's *Mönchskalb* (monk calf). In these, the report of the discovery of a hideous freak said to have been cast up on the banks of the Tiber in 1495 (fig. 145a), and of the monstrous progeny born to a German cow in Saxony in 1523 (fig. 145b), were given a political interpretation that made them into weapons of raw aggression.⁹³

III. Prophecy Based on Applied Hellenistic Cosmology in the Age of Luther, in the Context of the Revival of Antiquity in German Humanism: Oriental Intermediaries and Sources

Luther and the Teratological and Astrological Ideas of Scholars and Artists in the Circle of Maximilian I: Signs and Wonders, from Sebastian Brant to Albrecht Dürer—Babylonian Practices

Such broadsheets or flysheets on prodigies of various kinds are like detached leaves from the vast—and in spirit entirely antique—annalistic compilation of prodigies⁹⁴ made in the sixteenth century by Conrad Lycosthenes,⁹⁵ who was also the editor of the illustrated Julius Obsequens.⁹⁶ Here, both the pope donkey and the monk calf⁹⁷ reappear; but alongside the pope donkey—and this casts considerable light on the question of sources—there are other monstrosities of Maximilian's reign, as recorded in contemporary depictions and descriptions by such members of the emperor's own immediate circle as Sebastian Brant, Jakob Mennel,⁹⁸ Joseph Grünpeck, and Albrecht Dürer.

Luther saw these monstrosities with the eyes of a classical augur, in keeping with the German early Renaissance revival of the ancient spirit world; but at the same time, he reinterpreted them in Christian and eschatological terms by reference to the Tradition of the House of Elijah, mentioned above. This is made startlingly clear by a passage from his *Chronica deudsch*, in which he says, of the period 1500–1510 (i.e., the years 5460–5470 “*von anfang der welt*,” from the beginning of the world):

Eine neue kranckheit / die Frantzosen / von etlichen aber / die Hispanische seuche genant / komet auff / Vnd wie man sagt / sie ist aus den newgefundenen Jsulen in Occidente / in Europam gebracht. Ist eins von den grossen Zeichen vor dem



Donkey and Monk Calf
Lectures memorabiles (Lauingen, 1608)

*Jüngsten tage. Vnd unter diesem Maximiliano sind im himel wunderbarliche zeichen / vnd derselben viel / geschehen / dazu auch auff erden / vnd in wassern / von welchen Christus sagt / Es werden grosse zeichen sein etc. Also / das von keiner zeit gelesen wird / darin mehr vnd grössere zugleich geschehen weren / Die vns gewisse hoffnung geben / das der selige tag hart fur der thur sey.*⁹⁹

A new sickness now arises, the French, or—as some call it—the Spanish plague. And it is said that it came to Europe from the newfound islands in the West. This is one of the great signs of the Last Day. And under the reign of this Maximilian there were wondrous signs in the heavens, and many of them; also on earth and in the waters; of which Christ speaks: "There shall be great signs," etc. So much so, that we read of no age in which there have been more or greater signs. And these give us a certain hope that the blessed day is close upon us.

An image like that in which Grünpeck shows a collection of freaks from the reign of Maximilian I (who, in a portrait likeness, stands by as a spectator),¹⁰⁰ might well have lain before Luther as he wrote these words.

The divinatory arts of men, directed as they are toward the things of this world, remained for Luther no more than a subordinate instrument by comparison with the highest form of divination, the inner vocation and religious gift of prophecy, which he himself assumed when confronting his enemies at moments of greatest danger:

...weil ich der Deutschen Prophet bin (Denn solchen hoffertigen namen mus ich mir hinfurt selbs zu messen, meinen Papisten und Eseln zur lust und gefallen).

...for I am the Prophet of the Germans (for such is the high-flown title that I must henceforth assume, to divert and please my papists and donkeys).

These were his words in 1531, in his *Warnung an seine lieben Deutschen*, when it fell to him to inspire the waverers in his ranks with courage to resist the bullying excesses of the Imperial camp. So steeped in a pagan reverence for portents was the later Protestant historiography of Johannes Wolf's *Lectioes memorabiles*¹⁰¹ that its cosmic history runs, as it were, on railroad tracks, with cosmic portents for block stations.

In the Germany of the humanistic age, this prophetic vein of imagery—habitually dismissed as, at best, a relic for the religious historian or folklorist, toying with images but unconnected with art—found its way, against all the odds, into the work of a great artist: Albrecht Dürer. So deeply rooted is one part of his work in archetypal, pagan cosmological belief that without some knowledge of this we have no access, for example, to the engraving *Melencolia I*, that ripest and most mysterious fruit of the cosmological culture of the age of Maximilian I.

The prodigies of Maximilian's reign, later used historically by Luther, thus also lead us to Dürer's early works, which testify to his knowledge of the

"modern"—or rather the revived ancient—practice of divination. Dürer's woodcut of a man suffering from the "French sickness," drawn to illustrate a medical prophecy made by Ulsenius in 1496, at once transports us to the world of teratology and of terrifying astrological prophecy: the world of Lichtenberger's great conjunction of 1484 (fig. 146). The upper third of the image is occupied by a celestial globe, in which we see the number 1484. A closer look at the zodiacal sign of Scorpio reveals the menacing planets, all assembled. This is the awesome great conjunction of 1484, as astrologically interpreted by Paulus van Middelburg in his *Prognostica*; for the book is identical in content—and here I refer to Sudhoff,¹⁰² who was the first to establish this—with the chapter of the *Prognostica* that describes the medical consequences of the great conjunction.

In the same year Dürer's engraving of a monstrous sow—at first sight hardly very ominous, politically or otherwise (fig. 147)—shows how much at home he was in the world of prophetic freaks. The engraving shows the prodigious sow of Landser, littered in the Sundgau district in 1496,¹⁰³ with only one head but two bodies and eight trotters. It has been shown that Dürer's source was a broadsheet of 1496 (fig. 148), published in Latin and German by the learned early humanist Sebastian Brant.¹⁰⁴ Like other, similar sheets, this bears a dedication to Emperor Maximilian I, and its prophecies support his policies. In the text—significantly for the present argument—Brant is at pains to present himself in the guise of an antique augur: he relates his own political predictions to the omen of a sow that appeared to Virgil's Aeneas:

*Was wil diss suw vns bringen doch
Gdacht in mir eygentlich das noch
Das man durch Suw in der geschicht
Lisst / kunfftiger ding syn bericht
Als die Su die Eneas fandt
Mit jungen an des Tybers sandt...*

What does this sow betide for us?
It puts me in mind of what we read
In history of prophetic news
Given by sows of things to come;
As with the sow Aeneas found,
With young, upon the Tiber's sand...

This is really a "Natural Horror Sensation Late Extra," written to serve immediate political ends. Brant had every right to point to even more ancient and venerable antecedents: for this up-to-the-minute sensation of his was already there, in cuneiform script, on the clay tablets of Assyria. We know that in the mid-seventh century B.C. the augur Nergal-ētir informed Prince Asarhaddon of the birth of a pig with eight legs and two tails; on the strength

A woodcut illustration of a man in a pointed hat and robe, holding a staff, with a globe above his head and a shield at his feet. The globe features a grid with numbers and various figures. The man is standing on a shield, and there is a small object on the ground to his right.

[illegible]

Guſiſibi vtile ſedam membris depellere morbum
 Richnica caſtoſa vlcera limulibus
 Eſcherea ſapiens primum compoſce mentes
 Foros inſurgat ſpes ſedices pany
 Hauriat ſed ſecus ſupidus in bella cohorte
 Tempus munitibus accumulando nouis
 Non recidet ſatum, non ſi ſeca morte imago
 Vult animos ſaciles, vult pia coſida deus
 Tangere non munit plagas ſed eſpice tunc
 Quod antea munit caſpito ſalutis erit

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Fig. 147. Albrecht Dürer
The Sow of Landser
 Engraving, B. 95 (see p. 637)



An den großmechtigsten aller durchlichtigsten herren

(Maximilian Römischen Künig · Von der wunderbaren Su zu Landfer im Suntgaw des jaro M.CCCC.
XCVI. Vff den ersten tag des merzen geboren Lin verffentlich vhlugung Sebastian Brant.

O Römische rieh du heilige Kron
Was wil du kessig doch nachter gō
So man tiglich empfunde vnd sieh
So vil wunder so sildes geschiehe
So mit vns vnderur zeig an
By wunder/wunderwerck verstan
Vnd das got etwas wurcken wil
Das die natur vor jergen silt
Also hant lüchlich gesehen wie
Das zwifsch kind mit henden vnt
Zweyn köpfften/doch zwen süß allzē
Das zu Nortwil im schawgwaldt scheyn
Zu Rom hat man des selben glück
In kurtzem gesehen wißentlich
Vil wiffen von dem kind zu sagen
Das by Worms ist in kurtzen tagen
Wie eyn houbt/iden zweyn gebort
Van weis noch das jnn nächsten ioren
Der wundersteyn by Landfer schloß
Der lüder gmerken kouff was groß
Die wunderfalken maß dar by
Gesehen/merck ich das es sy
Nicht vilen wiffend künlich gar
Des glück die mung der vogel schat
Die man nach by der stettē stat
Im Schwental gesehen hat
Von feldmiden vogel groß vnd fleyen
Als vns vagnacht zu nächst erscheyn
Halt manchen in eyn schrecken bracht
Der mit forgen feldmido gest gadaht
Was sol ich von dem tier nūn sagen
So man auch hat in kurtzen tagen
Gan Ländlingen gefangen bracht
Wie ich vor hab in gliche gemacht
Des glück auch vil gesehen hant
Den Cometen im oberland
Der wie eyn halber wißbaum scheyn
Vil haben geyt in der gemein
Im Sungaw nach eyn sturm vnd stit
Wie blüthen scheynen lange zit
Als ob eyn heertzug so beschilt
Wandten ducht glück als ob es silt
Man seit das in Juelen sy
Des glück geschilt in Lombaroy
Wie hant empfunden auch das mit
Den erwidern zu nachtes zit
Zim frug nach Jnuocaut
Hant vns basel die erd erscheyt
Ist woltich on bedünnit nirt
Ist vil gewogen anders vil
Satz vns man nāmen mocht die wyle
Zinse zu forgen/voicht/angstbarleyt
So blüth yett all ersten heyt
Betrachten solt gang innentlich
Vnd gegen got erlügen sich

Der vffir so vff allē erd
Ist ich forgen das er größter werd
Des gite dich Su anzeygen mit
Das woltich ist eyn wunder isier/
So mit vns Landfer gendert hat
Wm herr Cristoffel von hatstat
Im merzen vff den ersten tag
Satz ab ich junderlich erschreck
Es was zu sehen grufam gnug
Der oren vnd achte süß sie trug
Eyn köpff dar jnn zwen rachen stont
Vil eynen hals zwo zungen gont
Dich Su vereynt was obman so
Als eyn allzē/doch vndman zwo
Sann noch dein herzen velt sie sich
Das hynder teyl zwo Suwen glick
Ist gadaht hilt gott von hymel rich
Wie sint din geschöpf so wunderlich
Was wil dich suw vns dingen doch
Gadaht in mir eygentlich das noch
Das man durch Suw in der geschichte
Licht/kunstiger ding syn bericht
Als die Su die Lencas fande
Nicht jngen an des Tybers sande
Satz durch der künig zal bedüet
Die Warm regierten zu zit
Durch suw man etwan dünnit macht
Wann man eyn gmeinen freid betracht
Man oppfert Cererē eyn Suw
Die des forns schymmerin ist gunt
Aber was dilt Su bedüt
Weis ich nit ganz/so gfaht mir nit
Das sie so zwifsch jngen hat
Vil gleyder vil eyn suw köpff stat
Nicht ducht lüchlicher vber eyn
Das sint by wurms mit lyden zweyn
Wie wol es wil sich geboren wart
Hant es doch menschlich gestalt vnd art
Vil gleyder vnder eyn houbt syn
Gfaht mit wann dich nit wer eyn scheyn
Vil jngen vnder eyn houbt stan
Lob ich/ das nit wer Suwisch geant
Satz omib vdricht ich dich Su bedüt
Eyn oder teyl der Suwischen hat
Als Tuerken/die man halt dilt
Das ir wesen der Su fry glick
Eyn Su ist eyn wylt vnreyn thier
Die in vnstat sacht allē zier
Als die der Tuerken vnreyn schat
In allem vnstat leben gar
Die Su der Tuerken bruter ist
Vil wued verglicht sie dem enderist
Wann uff dich yett syn zu künste wer
Das doch allzē weyht got der her

Der all ding noch dem besten loby
So mit das scheyffin vff rechte dilt
Vnd die Su nit eyn köpff gewyn
Wann würd sunst ianera liden jnn/
Wann aber vnuerminst gmeinen
Durch dich fūrmānen sich vereynt
Vnd iren houbt dilt widerstand
So ist die wunder Su im land
Das ist das eygen nachter vuch
Das dilt vdricht/das mit wie wie
Es sich halt oder stettē milt
Das wird eygentlich verdrilt
Doch frew nuch das die wundersteyn
Die leng nit ist in leben gsyn
Dann sie nit mer dann vff eyn nacht
Gefelt hat so man mit sie bracht
Als hoff ich das/ob lüchlich wolt
(So vnt vns sort bedüeten sol)
Eyn Suwisch rumot vff eyn entspieng
Das es des glück auch bald ab geyt
Solich wessen wir empfelen got
Vil der yett durch vil wunder hat
Vil anders nunt geseger an
So mögen wir doch lüchlich verstan
So yett dem herzen Römischen rich
Vil lüchlicher nacion des glück
Gescheyen ist zu diser fact
Durch abgang herzog Lberhart
Von wirtemberg des künsten milt
Der des richs stumman in syn schilt
Wit groffen eren hat gefurt
Durch des vernunft diltich regert
Werden all land vnd künig rich
Gorgeb dem künsten augentrich
By un freud in des hymels tron
Vil lüchlich ist er der künsten tron
Vnd spiegel aller tugene gsyn
Gott geb im rüw er ist do syn
Ich weis wol edler künig her
Das die nit wolt mōcht lides mer
Gescheyen syn an bheynem man
Der hat dich lieblich gesehan
Vnd ist din oug vnd herz geyn
Sin gnad hat solich gemacht wolt scheyn
Vor syn mit eren/ yett mit klag
Hie mit kün ich yett vff myn sag
Gott geb dir edler künig her
So vil glück halts silt vnd er
Das mit freud werd egeyn din gnad
Als vngeselt lēd schmerz vnd schad
So diner gnaden widerfart
Gott geb dir was der dichter gert
Vnd vns fryd selig yett vff erd
So mit eyn troystich Su dar vff wart
Ist eyn trile

Fig. 148. The Monstrous Sow of Landser
Broadsheet by Sebastian Brant, 1466 (see pp. 637 ff.)

of this, he prophesied that the prince would accede to the throne, and added that the butcher Uddanu had salted the creature away, evidently to preserve it for the dynastic archive.¹⁰⁵

It has long been established that the Roman arts of divination bore a direct connection, by way of Etruria, with the divinatory techniques of Babylon. That this connection remained so much alive as to span the interval between Asarhaddon and Emperor Maximilian, over two thousand years, was due partly to the efforts of scholarly antiquaries but overwhelmingly to the inner, primeval, compulsive human need to establish a mythical causation.

To some extent, even so, Dürer had already put this Babylonian mentality behind him. His engraving bears no inscription: Nergal-etir, alias Brant, is given no space for prophetic interpretation. The impulse that guided Dürer's burin was his scientific interest in a phenomenon of nature.

The Arab Astrological Handbook "Picatrix" and Dürer's Belief in Planetary Influences: Saturn and Jupiter in "Melencolia I," in Lichtenberger's Prophecy, and in Luther

Before his untimely death, my friend Carl Giehlow¹⁰⁶ earned our gratitude for the selfless scholarship that has made it possible for us to identify a single Hellenistic astrological notion, transmitted by way of the Arabs, as the common foundation of Dürer's *Melencolia I* (fig. 149) and of Lichtenberger's *Practica*. The connection lies in the countervailing influences of Saturn and Jupiter.

First, a superficial point of contact: Maximilian I was familiar with Lichtenberger's ideas, to the extent that the latter's literary source, the *Prognostica* of Paulus van Middelburg, had actually been dedicated to him. He had had occasion to form a view of his own on the remedy for saturnine melancholy, apropos of his own mythical ancestor, the Egyptian Hercules, on whom Konrad Peutinger had written him a memorandum with reference to the *Problemata* of Aristotle. In later years¹⁰⁷ Maximilian was much troubled by a menacing, ill-aspected Saturn,¹⁰⁸ which—in the opinion of the doctor who treated him, Georg Tannstetter—actually led to his death.¹⁰⁹

Aside from these direct, personal connections, however, Giehlow has demonstrated the basis of the medical treatment of saturnine melancholy in Maximilian's day. The physicians of antiquity distinguished two forms of melancholy, heavy and light. The heavy melancholy was derived from black bile and led to maniacal states—as in the case of the madness of Hercules. Against this, the Florentine philosopher and physician Marsilio Ficino advocated a combination of therapies: psychological, scientific or medical, and magical.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, his remedies included mental concentration to enable the melancholic to transmute his sterile gloom into human genius; on the other—aside from purely medicinal treatment to counter excessive mucus formation ("sniffles") and thus facilitate the transmutation of the bile—the benefic planet Jupiter must be enlisted to counter the dangerous influence of Saturn. If the influence of Jupiter was lacking in the patient's true horoscope,

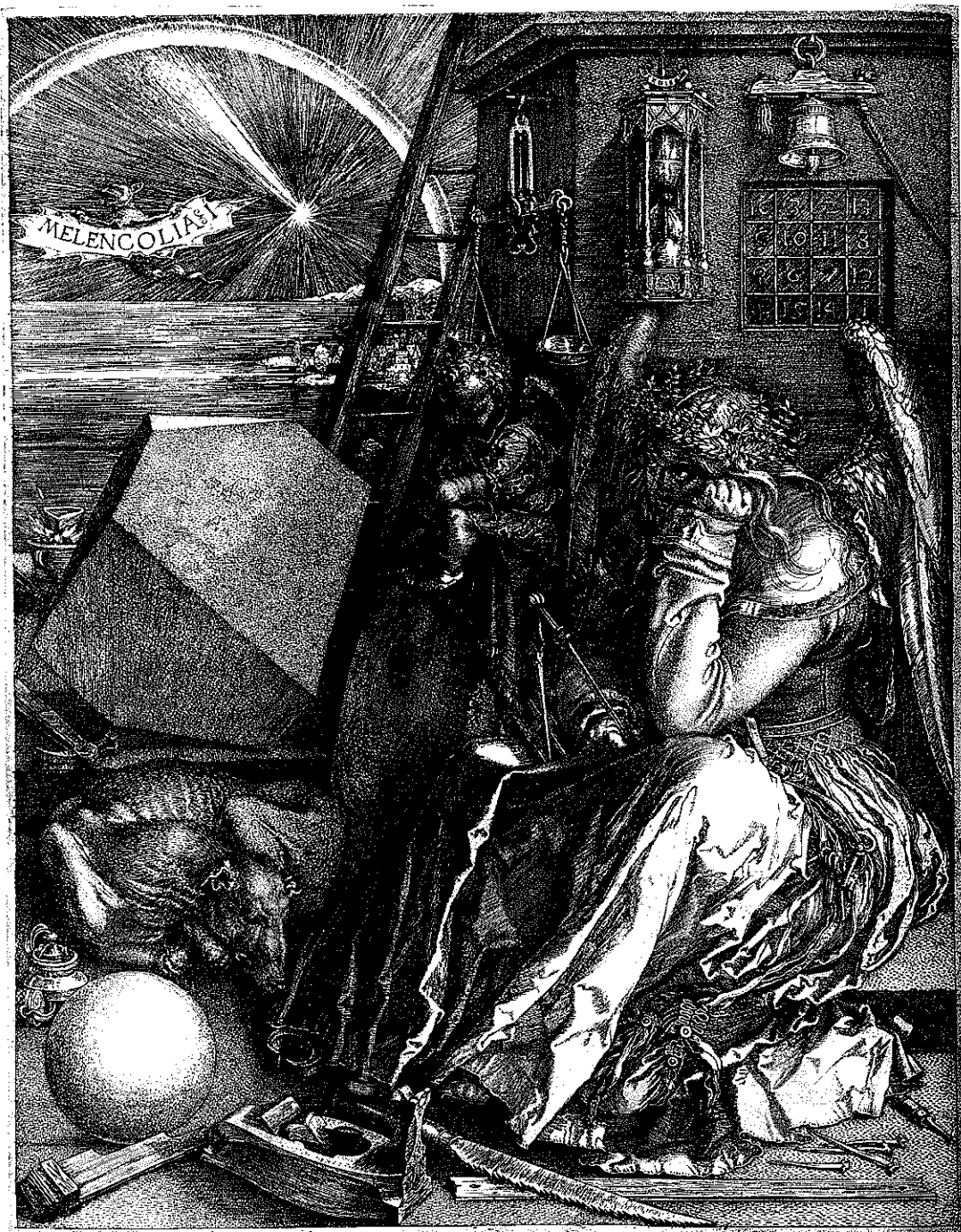


Fig. 149. Albrecht Dürer
Melencolia I
Engraving, B. 74 (see pp. 641, 644, 645 f.)



the favorable aspect could be borrowed by using a magical image of Jupiter; and this, in turn, might be replaced, according to the doctrines of Cornelius Agrippa, by the magic square of the planetary god. And so the magic square of Jupiter (of which more shortly) can be seen built into the wall in Dürer's engraving.

Giehlow, who so acutely and clearly expounded the use of planetary aspects in the treatment of melancholy by the Western occultists of the Renaissance, nevertheless shrank from taking his discovery to its conclusion. He sought to interpret Dürer's magic square of Jupiter, in defiance of Ficino and Agrippa, not "primarily" as an amulet against Saturn but as a symbol of the inventive genius of the saturnine individual. Giehlow failed to carry his discovery through to its ultimate, and most enlightening, conclusion because he was unaware of one crucial factor in the prehistory of the ideas involved: the vast importance for the occult sciences—as practiced by Ficino, Agrippa, and others throughout Europe—of the book known as *Picatrix*, a typical representative of the Arab transmission of late antique astrological and magical practices.

With the assistance of Wilhelm Printz, of the late Erich Gräfe, and of Fritz Saxl,¹¹¹ the present writer has been able to supplement Giehlow's researches and can demonstrate that this Latin work, a prime text of late medieval cosmological occultism, is a translation of a text written by an Arab in Spain in the tenth century and known only by a pseudepigraphic title (itself a misinterpretation of Hippocrates): it is the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* of Abū al-Qāsim Maslama ibn Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī.¹¹² The library of Maximilian I contained two manuscripts of the *Picatrix*, one of them a magnificent illuminated copy, of which we can gain some idea from a manuscript now in Cracow.¹¹³ Ficino himself, in his chapter on magical images, wrote of the Arab intermediaries, whose lapidaries had preserved through the Middle Ages, as an essential component of iatro-astrology, the Hellenistic and Hermetic therapeutic magic of astrological amulets. The *Picatrix*, the most important of these intermediaries,¹¹⁴ furnished Ficino himself with his descriptions of the health-bringing icons of planetary deities. In a manuscript in Rome, supplemented by others in Vienna, Wolfenbüttel, and Cracow,¹¹⁵ all of which derive from the *Picatrix*, these degenerate but fundamentally authentic antique figurative icons are accompanied by magic numerical tables, complete with precise instructions as to their use. Ficino's own magical use of images, and the magic squares of Agrippa, thus essentially belong together as offshoots of very ancient, pagan practices; for both have their roots in Hermetic therapeutic magic, as transmitted by the Arabs.

Giehlow's interpretative caution lays him open to a further objection: if the Saturnine individual was meant to display this magic square, with its unique mathematical rhythms, simply as a symbol of his own inventive genius, then surely he ought to have adopted the square of Saturn and not that of Jupiter. Only the tradition of iatro-astrology gives the square of Jupiter its true meaning here.

The truly creative act—that which gives Dürer's *Melencolia I* its consoling, humanistic message of liberation from the fear of Saturn—can be understood only if we recognize that the artist has taken a magical and mythical logic and made it spiritual and intellectual. The malignant, child-devouring planetary god, whose cosmic contest with another planetary ruler seals the subject's fate, is humanized and metamorphosed by Dürer into the image of the thinking, working human being.

That such an analysis of *Melencolia I* is entirely in the spirit of Dürer's age has since been confirmed for the present writer by the discovery of a passage in Melanchthon, who regarded Dürer's own genius as the highest type of true melancholy, spiritualized by a favorable planetary configuration. Melanchthon wrote:

*De Melancholicis ante dictum est, horum est mirifica uarietas. Primum illa heroica Scipionis, uel Augusti, uel Pomponij Attici, aut Dureri generosissima est, et uirtutibus excellit omnis generis, regitur enim crasi temperata, et oritur a fausto positu syderum.*¹¹⁶

Of melancholy types, as aforesaid, there is a wonderful variety. First, the heroic [melancholy] of Scipio, of Augustus, of Pomponius Atticus, or of Dürer is the noblest type, and excels in virtues of every kind; for it is governed by a tempered mixture and arises from a favorable position of the planets.

This assessment of Dürer's artistic genius is caption enough in itself for *Melencolia I*, for elsewhere we learn the nature of the astral influences to which Melanchthon attributed this transforming power. He derived the loftier melancholy of Augustus from the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Libra:

*Multo generosior est melancholia, si coniunctione Saturni et Iouis in libra temperetur, qualis uidetur Augusti melancholia fuisse.*¹¹⁷

Melancholy is far nobler if it is tempered by the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Libra, as would seem to have been the case with the melancholy of Augustus.

We are now looking into the very heart of the process of renewal that we call the Renaissance. The classical version of antiquity had emerged to compete with the Hellenistic-Arabic version. Access to the ancient writers had breathed new life into the mummified *acedia* of the Middle Ages. For, to Ficino and Melanchthon alike, the train of thought had its source in Aristotle and his *Problemata*.

The history of the influence of antiquity, as observed through the transmission, disappearance, and rediscovery of its gods, has some unexplored insights to

contribute to a history of the meaning of anthropomorphic thought. In the transitional age of the early Renaissance, pagan-cosmological causality was defined in classicizing terms through the symbols of the gods; and these were approached in due proportion to their degree of saturation with human quality: from a religious daemon-worship at one extreme to a purely artistic and intellectual reinterpretation at the other.

Lichtenberger, Dürer, and Luther show us the German soul in three phases of its struggle to cast off pagan cosmological fatalism. Lichtenberger (fig. 150) shows us a pair of debased, repellent planetary spirits contending for the control of human destiny; the object of their struggle, man himself, is absent. Dürer reshapes them; they are reborn into a classical language of form;¹¹⁸ and yet their Hellenistic-Arabic travels have left them bearing the marks of subjection to fate.

Here, the cosmic conflict is echoed in a process that takes place within man himself. The daemonic grotesques have disappeared; and saturnine gloom has been spiritualized into human, humanistic contemplation. Deep in thought, the winged figure of Melancholy props her head on her left hand and holds a pair of compasses in her right; she is surrounded by technical and mathematical instruments and symbols, and before her lies a sphere. According to Ficino, in the old German version, the compasses and circle (and thus also the sphere) are emblems of melancholy:

*Aber die natürlich ursach ist, das zu erfolgung und erlangung der weissheit und der lere, besunder der schweren Kunst, ist not das das gemüt gezogen werd von den äussern dingen zu dem innern zu gleicher weiss als von dem umblauff des zirkels hinzu zu dem mittelpuncten, centrum genannt, und sich selbs dar zu fügen und schicken.*¹¹⁹

But the natural cause is that to attain and achieve wisdom and learning, especially of the difficult Art, the soul must be drawn inward, away from outward things, as it might be from the circumference of the circle to the center, and adapt itself accordingly.

Is Melancholy pondering how to avert the disaster threatened by the comet that looms over the waters in the background?¹²⁰ Or is the fear of the impending deluge already making itself felt?

Dürer shows the spirit of Saturn neutralized by the individual mental efforts of the thinking creature against whom its rays are directed. Menaced by the "most ignoble complex,"¹²¹ the Child of Saturn seeks to elude the baneful planetary influence through contemplative activity. Melancholy holds in her hand, not a base shovel (see the Children of Saturn, fig. 125), but the compasses of genius. Magically invoked, Jupiter comes to her aid through his benign and moderating influence on Saturn. In a sense, the salvation of the human being through the countervailing influence of Jupiter has already taken place; the duel between the planets, as visualized by Lichtenberger, is

Propheceien

etlichen recht ich mein gefalten hend zu dir mit forcht bitte
ende du wollest mit deiner gewaltigen hilf deiner stern
eygenschaft vñ vireyl/ir heffteige einflüß/ offenbarn deincn
knecht Auch/ sein vernunfft mit dem glanz deiner ewigen
klarheyt erleuchten/ vñ richten in den weg der warheyt. er
weck mein vernunfft vñ verstendnuß/ bewege mein ver
nunfft vñnd verstendnuß/ de wege meine zung/ vñd erzeig
mir die rechte foun warzu fügen zükünfftig ding/ Amen.



Fig. 150. *Jupiter and Saturn*

From the same edition of Lichtenberger as fig. 140
(see p. 645)

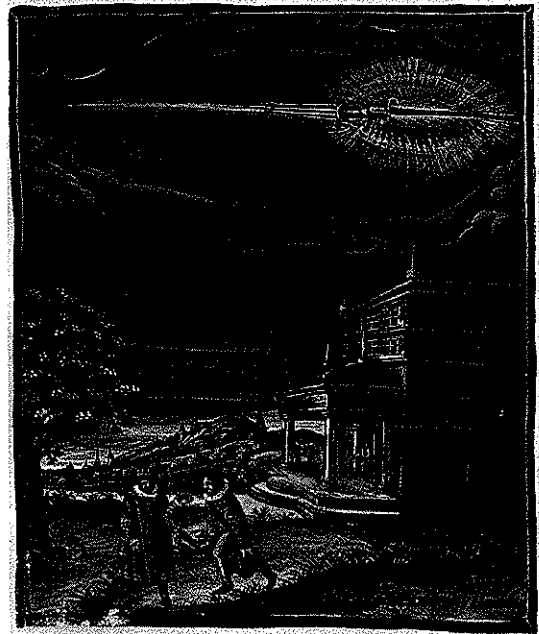


Fig. 151. *Ensiform Comet*

From a French manuscript of ca. 1587
Hamburg, Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg
(see p. 650)

over; and the magic square hangs on the wall like a votive offering of thanks to the benign and victorious planetary spirit.

By contrast, Luther was as much a liberator in his rejection of all this mythological fatalism as he was in his vigorous onslaught on the hostile casters of horoscopes. Any attempt to ascribe daemonic, superhuman identities to the planets was dismissed by him as sinful, heathen idolatry.

Luther and Dürer thus coincided to some extent in their resistance to the myth of the great conjunction. With them, we find ourselves embarked on the struggle for the mental and religious liberation of modern humanity—though as yet only at an early stage. Just as Luther still went in fear of cosmic portents and omens (not to speak of the antique *lamiae*), Dürer's Melancholy has yet to break quite free of the superstitious terrors of antiquity. Her head is garlanded not with bay but with *teukrion*, the classic herbal remedy for melancholy;¹²² and she follows Ficino's instructions by protecting herself against Saturn's malefic influence with her numerological magic square.

This authentically antique astrological conception has the air of a latter-day pictorial scholium on Horace's ode to Maecenas:

... *te Jovis impio*
tutela Saturno refulgens
eripuit volucrisque Fati
*tardavit alas...*¹²³

... The glorious protection of Jupiter
 Snatched you from malign Saturn
 And stayed the wings
 Of swift Fate...

Carion and Zebel—Melanchthon and Alkindi

In attempting to retrace the forgotten migratory path of the ancient planetary gods, we have turned up a further chapter from those manuals of applied cosmology whose encyclopedic source is to be found in Hellenistic culture. Just as the *Picatrix* leads us to Maximilian I and to Dürer, the divinatory manual of Zebel the Arab leads us to Carion and to Elector Joachim I. A German translation has been preserved in a magnificent illuminated manuscript. In 1914, in true appreciation of its rare and precious nature, the Society of Friends of the Berlin Library published a page from it in color reproduction.¹²⁴

This is a book of portents composed by Abū 'Uthmān Sahl ibn Bišr ibn Habīb ibn Hānī,¹²⁵ who lived in Baghdad about the middle of the ninth century; Zebel the Arab is his Latinized name. The pictures (fig. 152) are illustrations to forty-two omens, each of which is interpreted differently for each month of the year. Thus: "When a cock crows, this signifies no good news, revolt among the people, and fear"; or, "When the eye twitches and flickers, then expect good and pleasing news."



Heraldic evidence reveals that the manuscript was copied and illuminated on the orders of Joachim I, elector of Brandenburg, who seems to be depicted on one page. Though robed as an elector, the figure has no portrait likeness (fig. 153). The book was printed, with engravings, several times at the end of the sixteenth century. One edition (Prague, 1592) contains an explicit statement that Carion made one copy for the elector in his own hand, and that this was later given away as a present. This is entirely likely, given that from 1521 at the latest—as can be seen from his *Prognosticatio*—Carion was Joachim's court magician and astrologer.

Johann Carion has yet to receive the attention that is his due. Even his portrait by a painter of the school of Cranach long remained unrecorded, although it is in the Preussische Staatsbibliothek (fig. 121).¹²⁶ It was brought to the present writer's attention long ago by Professor Emil Jacobs (now of Freiburg im Breisgau), who also told him of the Zebel manuscript. This, then, was that sober Swabian whose corpulent person Luther humorously described in a letter as "an overload for Charon's bark." Professor Otto Tschirch speculated in 1906 that the name Carion was a grecized version of that of one Johann Nägelin,¹²⁷ who matriculated at the university of Tübingen in 1514; and this conjecture is confirmed beyond doubt by Carion's canting arms, which show three carnations (German *Nelken*: *Nägelein*, nails, *Caryophyllon*). There is a shrewd gift of observation in Carion's masculine features, and especially in his eye; and it is easy to understand why both the Hohenzollerns and the Reformers valued him as a diplomatic intermediary.

After Carion's death, Luther described him as a magician;¹²⁸ and Reinhold,¹²⁹ too, expressly called him "*insignis necromanticus*" (a well-known necromancer). But this suspicion of magic never deterred Melanchthon—as we know from his letter to Camerarius,¹³⁰ already mentioned—from consulting him on astrological matters; any more than Camerarius hesitated to ask the historical Dr. Faustus for an assessment of the political situation in 1536, although both Luther and Melanchthon in Wittenberg had denounced Faustus as a necromancer and a charlatan. Camerarius even found himself casting a horoscope in competition with Faustus for the Welser family, on the occasion of their expedition to Venezuela—a contest that Faustus appears to have won.¹³¹ In the present context a remark made by Faustus in 1528, and recorded by Kilian Leib,¹³² takes on a particular importance: he said that a particular planetary conjunction (that of the Sun and Jupiter) was closely connected with the emergence of prophets.

Melanchthon, Carion, Camerarius, Gauricus, Faustus, and Brant would all have been eligible for membership of a clandestine "Nergal-eṭir Society" of augurs. For in the theory of comets, as elsewhere, there was much in the Arab-mediated inheritance of Hellenism that stemmed ultimately from Babylon. Anxiously, Melanchthon inquired of his friend Camerarius whether the comet of 1531 was not perhaps one of the sword-shaped or ensiform variety, as defined by Pliny.¹³³ It is characteristic of the Arabs' position as intermediaries between the ancient world and the later West that, as late

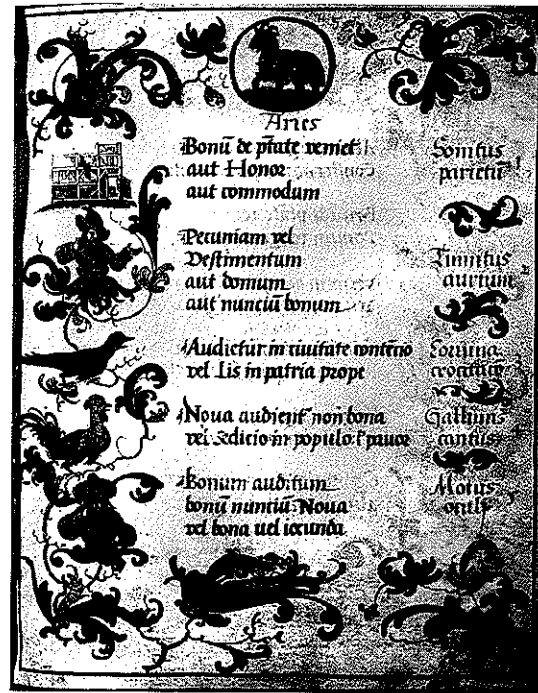


Fig. 152. Aries

From Zebelis liber de interpretatione diversorum eventuum secundum lunam in 12 signis zodiaci. Berlin, Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. 4^o 322 (see p. 647)



Fig. 153. Elector

Ibid. (see p. 648)

as 1587, the caption to a French illustration of an ensiform comet after Pliny (fig. 151) expressly cites an Arab writer, Alkindi, as the source.

Melanchthon wrote to Camerarius on 18 August 1531, one day after the letter to Carion; and on the same day Luther wrote to inform Wenceslaus Link of the appearance of the comet. He gave details of the direction of the tail, and was in no doubt that it was an evil omen.¹³⁴

Melanchthon sought to humanize this celestial prodigy in two ways. The sheer size of it suggested a human artifact with menacing associations, a sword; and he described it as aimed at the earthly heartland of his own party. And so it came to pass that Melanchthon, in his mythopoeic anxiety, lived in fear of the sword in the sky, just when his trust ought to have been placed in the Sword of the Reformation, the landgrave.

It was at around the same time that the astronomer Apian robbed the comet's tail of its terrors by relating it to the Sun. But it was Edmund Halley who, by establishing the laws governing the recurrence of this same comet, was to free it forever from the narrow confines of anthropocentric thought.

Conclusion

This exegetical grand tour thus leads us back to its starting point, in Melanchthon's letter on the comet, and thereby to a curiosity of ancient pagan superstition, and what it can teach us of the history of the age of the Reformation. Celestial bodies were visualized in human form in order to limit their daemonic power by analogy; conversely, so daemonic a man as Luther was set among the stars in his own lifetime (through a near-totemistic connection between his birth and a pair of planets), in order to ascribe his otherwise unaccountable, even superhuman powers to a higher, cosmic cause, dignified by the name of a god.

And so, as we have seen, the spirit world of antiquity was brought back to life by a kind of polar functioning of the empathetic pictorial memory. This was the age of Faust, in which the modern scientist—caught between magic practice and cosmic mathematics—was trying to insert the *conceptual space* of rationality between himself and the object. Athens has constantly to be won back again from Alexandria.

Thus understood, the images and words here discussed—a mere fraction of all that might have been brought to light—are to be regarded as hitherto unread records of the tragic history of freedom of thought in modern Europe. At the same time the intention has been to show, by the example of a positive investigation, how the method of the study of civilization can be strengthened by an alliance between the history of art and the study of religion.

The shortcomings of this tentative experiment have been all too evident to the writer himself. But he has come to the conclusion that the memory of Hermann Usener and Hermann Dieterich is best honored by taking our orders from the problem in hand (in the present writer's case, that of the influence of antiquity), even when it sends us forth into virgin territory. May the history of art and the study of religion—between which lies nothing at present

but wasteland overgrown with verbiage—meet together one day in learned and lucid minds (minds destined, let us hope, to achieve more than the present writer); and may they share a workbench in the laboratory of the *iconological science of civilization*.

Ein grosser Teil dessen, was man gewöhnlich Aberglauben nennt, ist aus einer falschen Anwendung der Mathematik entstanden; deswegen ja auch der Name des Mathematikers mit dem eines Wahnkünstlers und Astrologen gleich gilt. Man erinnere sich der Signatur der Dinge, der Chiromantie, der Punktierkunst, selbst des Höllenzwangs; alle dieses Unwesen nimmt seinen wüsten Schein von der klarsten aller Wissenschaften, seine Verworrenheit von der exaktesten. Man hat daher nichts für verderblicher zu halten, als dass man, wie in der neuern Zeit abermals geschieht, die Mathematik aus der Vernunft- und Verstandesregion, wo ihr Sitz ist, in die Region der Phantasie und Sinnlichkeit freventlich herüberzieht.

Dunklen Zeiten sind solche Missgriffe nachzusehen; sie gehören mit zum Charakter. Denn eigentlich ergreift der Aberglaube nur falsche Mittel, um ein wahres Bedürfnis zu befriedigen, und ist deswegen weder so scheltenswert, als er gehalten wird, noch so selten in den sogenannten aufgeklärten Jahrhunderten und bei aufgeklärten Menschen.

Denn wer kann sagen, dass er seine unerlässlichen Bedürfnisse immer auf eine reine, richtige, wahre, untadelhafte und vollständige Weise befriedige; dass er sich nicht neben dem ernstesten Tun und Leisten, wie mit Glauben und Hoffnung, so auch mit Aberglauben und Wahn, Leichtsinne und Vorurteil hinhalte.

—J. W. von Goethe, "Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre: Roger Bacon," in *Werke*, Cotta'sche Jubiläums-Ausgabe, 40:165

A great part of what is commonly known as superstition springs from a misapplication of mathematics; for which reason the name of a mathematician was formerly equated with that of a charlatan or an astrologer. Think of the doctrine of signatures, chiromancy, geomancy, even conjuration; all these aberrations derive their pale and delusive light from the clearest of all sciences, their confusion from the most exact. Nothing, therefore, is more pernicious than to transport mathematics—as is once more being done in our day—from its natural home in the realm of reason and intelligence into that of fantasy and the senses.

Such abuses are forgivable in dark ages, when they are entirely in character. Superstition is simply the use of false means to a true end, and is therefore neither so reprehensible as it is believed to be, nor so rare in so-called enlightened centuries and among enlightened people.

For who can claim that his manner of satisfying his own inescapable needs is invariably pure, correct, true, irreproachable, and complete—or deny that, even at times of the most earnest work and achievement, his mind is occupied not only with faith and hope but also with superstition and delusion, frivolity and prejudice?

Appendix A: Melanchthon and Astrology

A.1. Melanchthon's Letter to Carion on the Comet of 1531

[Address on the outside, fol. 2^v:]

Viro doctissimo D. / Johanni Carioni / philosopho, amico / et conterraneo
suo / Carissimo. / Zu eigen handen /

... ^a ornare honestissimis laudibus conatus sum. Quid / assecutus sim aliorum sit iudicium. / fol. 1^r

Dictum Heliae extat non in Biblijs. sed apud / Rabinos, et est celeberrimum. Burgensis¹³⁵ allegat, et disputat ex eo contra Judeos / quod Messias apparuerit. Receptissima apud / Ebreos sententia est, et a me posita / in principio tuae historiae, ut^b omnibus / fieret notissima et afferret commendationem / tuo operi. Tales locos multos^c dein / ceps admiscebo. vides autem prorsus esse / prophetica vocem. Tam concinna temporum / distributio est. /

Historiam, ut spero, hac hyeme absolueamus / Nam hactenus fui impeditus recognitione / meae Apologiae,¹³⁶ quam in certis locis / feci meliorem. Sed vix credas quam / tenui valetudine utar, consumor enim / curis, et laboribus. /

Mea vxor, dei beneficio filiam enixa est, / cuius Thema tibi mitto, non ut faciam / tibi negocium, video enim monacham fore /

... ^a Cometen vidimus diebus plus octo.^d Tu / quid iudicas. videtur supra cancrum / constitisse occidit enim statim post solem, / et paulo ante solem exoritur.^e / Quod si ruberet, magis / me terreret. Haud dubie principum / mortem significat. Sed videtur / caudam vertere versus^g poloniam. / Sed expecto tuum iudicium. Amabo te / significa mihi quid sentias. / fol. 1^v

Nunc venio ad hodiernas literas. Si / scirem aliquid de nostrorum aduersariorum / conatibus,^h totum tibi scriberem, / quidquid illud esset. Nihil enim opus / est nosⁱ celare aduersariorum¹³⁷ consilia, / magis prodest nobis ea traducere. /

Nihil itaque certi audiui diu iam de / ullo apparatu, preter suspensiones quas / concipiunt nostri propter illum exiguum numerum / peditum qui sunt in Frisia. Fortasse / pretextu belli Danici, nos quoque adoriri /^k cogitant. At Palatinus et Moguntinus / iam agunt de pacificatione cum^l nostris, etsi / ego spem pacis nullam habeo, moueor enim non / solum astrologicis predictionibus sed etiam vaticiniis.^m / Hasfurd predixit Regi christierno¹³⁸ reditum hone / stum, Schepperus negat reditum esse. Sed me non mouet Schepperus. Sepe enim fallitur. / predixit item Hasfurd Landgrauio maximas vi / ctorias. Et quidam ciuis Smalcaldensis / mihi notus habuit mirabile visum, deⁿ / his motibus quod vaticinium plurimi / facio. Catastrophen satis mollem habet. / Sed tamen significat perculosos terrore / aduersarios nostros illi Leoni cedere. Quaedam / mulier in Kizingen de Ferdinando / horribilia predixit,^o quomodo bellum / contra nos moturus sit, sed ipsi infoelix / In Belgico quaedam^a virgo Caesari / etiam vaticinata est, quae tamen non satis / habeo explorata. Omnino puto motum / aliquem fore. Et deum oro, ut ipse guber / net, et det bonum exitum utilem Ecclesiae / et reipublicae. Ego ante annum fol. 2^r

laborabam / diligenter ut nobiscum pacem facerent. Quod. / si fecissent, minus esset turbarum in Sue / uia, quae magna ex parte iam amplectitur / Helueticam theologiam et licentiam. Ses Campegius / cupit inuoluere et implicare Caesarem germanico / bello, ut vires eius labefactent, et Campegij / consilium probant nonnulli odio nostri priuato. / Sed deus habet iustum oculum. Nos enim certe / nihil mali docuimus. et^r libera / uimus multas bonas mentes a multis / perniciosis erroribus. Sabinus mittit tibi prefaci / onem¹³⁹ meam de laudibus astronomiae et Astro / logiae. de qua expecto quid sentias. Bene vale / donerstag post Assumptionem b. Marię 1531 / Remitto tibi literas <two or three deleted words>. Φίλιππος. /

Textual Notes

The superior letters in the text above refer to the following notes. Words and letters marked with an asterisk are those deleted from the text by Melanchthon's own hand.

^aUpper margin cropped, hence some text lost. ^bai* ^csu* ^dplus octo caught by trim, so reading not quite certain. ^eInitially: Hoc / mihi*, then Na* ^finte* ^gorien* ^hplan ⁱces* ^kno* ^lnostri* ^mAdded by another hand: tuis ⁿvictotia* ^osed* ^pnos ^qmulier* ^rmultos per* ^sThese words may have been intended to refer to Sabinus, as another hand has added, almost directly beneath: Sabini tuas.

Original: two folio sheets with trace of seal.¹⁴⁰ The upper part of the first sheet is missing, with four or five lines of text on either side.

Königsberg, Herzogliches Briefarchiv, A.Z. 3. 35. 125 (II).

{This letter is translated in full in the text, pages 600–601.}

A.2. Melanchthon to Camerarius, on Gauricus and Carion

Melanchthon, *Opera* 2, col. 600–602

No. 1064. Ioach. Camerario. Epist. ad Camerar. 190. 29. Iun. 1532

Viro optimo Ioachimo Camerario Bambergensi, amico suo summo, S. D. Tuas literas accepi hodie, in quibus Genesin Regiam petis. Quod autem de Gaurico significas, quale sit, non plane potui intelligere. Aberat enim epistola illa, nescio cuius amici tui, quam te mittere ais de illius sermonibus.¹⁴¹ Id eo scribo, ut scias eam periisse, nisi consulto retinuisti. Quicquid autem est, non valde moror, novimus enim totius illius gentis ingenia et voluntates erga nos...

Mitto tibi geneses eorum, quorum petiisti, ac alterius quidem¹⁴² et altera circumfertur, sed Gauricus affirmabat hanc veram esse, si recte memini. Mars erat in fovea, in eo catalogo, quem Cornelius Scepperus habebat. Neque hic multo aliter se habet.

Carion habet τοῦ χρονώου,¹⁴³ quae paululum ab hac differt, in qua Saturnus et Mars sunt in Quinta, sed exemplum non habeo; misissem enim alioqui. Postremo, ut etiam laeti aliquid scribam, vidi carmen cuiusdam Itali, quem Gauricus dicebat fuisse Pontani praeceptorem,¹⁴⁴ in quo planetarum † motus mirifice describuntur. In fine addit vaticinium de coniunctione quadam

*magna, in qua de his ecclesiasticis discordiis satis clementer vaticinatur,
caetera quo pertineant, μαντιχῆς ἔργον . . .*

Pontani praeceptor Laurentius Miniatensis.

Ast quoque quae nostris iam iam ventura sub annis

Est melior, nostrae legis vix pauca refringet.

Aspera quae nimium sacris et dura ferendis,

Et genus omne mali tollet, pompasque sacrorum,

Ac regem dabit innocuum, qui terminet orbem.

Hic reget Imperio populos, gentemque rebellem

Imperio subdet, toti et dominabitur orbi.

Philippus.

To the excellent Joachim Camerarius of Bamberg, best of friends: greetings. I received your letter today, in which you request the royal horoscope. I could not, however, fully understand what it is that you intimate about Gauricus. For the letter which you said you were sending, from some friend of yours, about his conversations, was missing. I write this so you will know that it has been lost, unless you deliberately kept it. Whatever it is, I am not seriously set back, for we know the ways of thinking of that whole tribe and their inclinations toward us . . .

I am sending you the horoscopes you requested, and also another's: a second one is being circulated, but Gauricus asserts that this is the true one, if I remember correctly. Mars was in a pit in the list that Cornelius Scepperus had. And he is not much differently placed here.

Carion has that of the "Son of Saturn," which is slightly different from this one, in which Saturn and Mars are in the fifth house; but I have no copy, otherwise I would have sent it. Finally (so that I may also write some happy news), I have seen a poem by a certain Italian, who Gauricus said was the tutor of Pontanus, in which the movements of the planets are admirably described. At the end he adds a prediction about a certain great conjunction, in which he sees a fairly mild prophecy concerning these discords in the Church; but what the rest pertains to is work for the diviner's art . . .

Lorenzo Miniato, tutor of Pontanus.

But also that which soon, soon to come in our time

Is better, will take away scarcely anything of our law.

It will remove all that is too harsh and severe from the rites to be conducted,

And will remove every kind of evil, and pomp from the sacred rites,

And will produce a blameless king to mark the boundaries of the world.

This man will rule the peoples for the Empire, and will subjugate

The rebellious people to the Empire, and will have dominion over the entire world.

Philipp.

Appendix B: Luther and Artificial and Natural Divination

B.1. Luther Rejects the Notion of Astrology as a "Science" *

Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke, Erlangen ed., 62:322

Da einer D. M. L. eine Nativität (wie mans nennet), zeigete, sprach er: "Es ist eine feine lustige Phantasei, und gefällt der Vernunft wohl, denn man geht immer fein ordentlich von einer Linien zu andern. Darumb ist die Art und Weise, Nativitäten zu machen und auszurechnen und dergleichen, dem Papstthum gleich, da die äusserlichen Ceremonien, Gepränge und Ordnung, der Vernunft wohl gefällt, als, das geweihte Wasser, Kerzen, Orgeln, Zimbeln, Singen, Läuten und Deuten. Es ist aber gar keine rechte Wissenschaft und gewisse Erkenntniss, und diejenigen irren gar sehr, dis aus diesem Dinge eine gewisse Kunst¹⁴⁵ und Erkenntnis machen wollen, da doch keine nicht ist; denn es gehet nicht aus der Natur der Astronomie, die eine Kunst ist; diess ist Menschensatzung.

When someone showed Dr. M. L. a nativity (as they are called), he said: "This is a fine and amusing fancy, and highly gratifying to the reason; for always there is an orderly progression from one line to the next. In this, the practice of casting nativities and the like resembles popecraft; for the external ceremonies, the splendor and the order of the service, entirely gratify the reason: namely, the holy water, candles, organs, cymbals, singing, bell ringing, and gesturing. But this is no true science or sure knowledge, and those who seek to make these things into a certain art and knowledge are much mistaken; for it is nothing of the kind; it does not follow from the nature of astronomy, which is an art; for this is a human device.

Luthers Tischreden in der Mathesischen Sammlung, ed. Ernst Kroker (Leipzig, 1903), 164, no. 259

2-7 August 1540

Ut sint in signa.

"Deus intelligit certa signa, ut sunt eclipses solis et lunae, non illa incerta. Praeterea, signa heist nicht, ut ex iis divinemus. Hoc est humanum inventum."

Let them be for signs.

"God recognizes certain signs, such as the eclipses of the sun and the moon; and there is nothing uncertain about them. At the same time, 'signs' does not mean that we are to divine from them. This is a human invention."

B.2. Luther Opposes Melanchthon's Belief in Astrology

Luthers Tischreden in der Mathesischen Sammlung, ed. Ernst Kroker (Leipzig, 1903), 164, no. 258

2–7 August 1540

De astrologia

"Nemo mihi persuadebit nec Paulus nec Angelus de caelo nedum Philippus, ut credam astrologiae divinationibus quae toties fallunt, ut nihil sit incertius. Nam si etiam bis aut ter recte divinant, ea notant; si fallunt, ea dissimulant." Tum quidam: "Domine Doctor, quo modo est solvendum hoc argumentum: Divinatio est in medicina, ergo etiam est in astrologia?" "Medici," inquit, "habent certa signa ex elementis et experientia et saepe tangunt rem, etiamsi aliquando fallunt; sed astrologi saepissime fallunt, raro veri sunt."

On Astrology

"No one will ever persuade me—neither Paul, nor an angel from heaven, nor even Philipp—to believe in the predictions of astrology, which are so often mistaken that nothing is more uncertain. For if they forecast correctly even two or three times, they mark it; if they are wrong, they conceal it."

Then someone said: "Doctor, how is this argument to be resolved: There is divination in medicine, therefore it also exists in astrology?"

"Physicians," he said, "have certain signs, from the elements and from experience, and they often hit the target, even if they are sometimes wrong; but astrologers most often err, and rarely are they correct."

Ibid., 124, no. 156

21 May–11 June 1540

Ego dixi: "Foris nihil habent argumenti pro astrologia nisi auctoritatem Philippi."—Tum Doctor: "Ego saepe confutavi Philippum ita evidenter, ut diceret: 'Haec quidem vis est!' Et confessit, esse scientiam, sed quam ipsi non teneant. Quare ego sum contentus, si non tenent eam artem; so lass ich in damit spilen. Mihi nemo persuadebit, nam ego facile possum evertere ipsorum experientiam incertissimam. Saltem observant, quae consentiunt; quae fallunt, praetereunt. Es mag einer so lang werffen, er wirfft auch ein Venerem,¹⁴⁶ sed casu fit. Es ist ein dreck mit irer kunst. Seine¹⁴⁷ kinder habent alle lunam combustam!"¹⁴⁸

I said: "They have no argument in favor of astrology beyond the authority of Philipp."—The doctor answered: "I have often confuted Philipp so manifestly as to make him admit: 'That is a strong argument!' And he has confessed that it is a science, but one that they themselves do not possess. I am content with that, so long as they do not consider it an art; and so I leave him to play with it. Nobody will ever persuade me, for I can easily overturn their flimsy evidence. They take note of everything that supports their case; whatever does

not, they pass over in silence. If a man throws dice for long enough, he will throw a Venus, but that happens by chance. That art of theirs is so much manure. His children all have the Moon combust!"

Ibid., 177, no. 292

7-24 August 1540

Astrologia

"*Dominus Philippus*," inquit Doctor, "*der hielt mich zu Schmalkalden¹⁴⁹ ein tag auf mit seiner heilosen und schebichten astrologia, quia erat novilunium.¹⁵⁰ Sic etiam wolt er ein mahl nicht uber die Elb faren in novilunio. Et tamen nos sumus domini stellarum.*"

Astrology

"Master Philipp," said the doctor, "once detained me at Schmalkalden for a whole day with his unholy drivel of astrology, because it was New Moon. And what is more, once he even refused to cross the Elbe at New Moon. And yet we are the masters of the stars."

B.3. Luther's Horoscope

B.3.1. His Natal Planets

Sol

Luthers Tischreden in der Mathesischen Sammlung, ed. Ernst Kroker (Leipzig, 1903), 303, Mathesius no. 599

Winter 1542-1543

Magna molestia regere

"*Im haus ist nur ein knecht der herr... So hats das ansehen mit den regenten auch. Es scheint, als wer es was köstlichs; wenn man aber ansehet, so sihet man, was es ist. Ich regire nicht gern. Es giebt meine natur nicht.*"

Tum Dominus Philippus: "*Ir habt <solem in nativitate>.*"¹⁵¹ Doctor: "*Ei, ich frag nicht nach euer astrologia! Ich kenne mein natur und erfar es. Staupitzius solebat hanc sententiam cant. 8 'Vinea mea coram me est,' sic interpretari: 'Gott hats regiment zu sich genumen, das nicht iderman stolzirn möcht.'*"

To Rule Is a Great Hardship

"The master of the house is but a servant... And it appears to be the same with rulers. It seems like something of great price; but look more closely and you will see what it truly is. I do not like to rule. It does not suit my nature."

Then Master Philipp said: "You have [the Sun in your horoscope]. The doctor: "I care not for your astrology! I know my nature and learn it. Staupitz used to interpret the saying in the Song of Solomon, chapter 8: 'My vineyard, which is mine, is before me,' as follows: 'God has taken the rule unto himself, lest everyone become overproud.'"

Saturn

D. Martin Luthers Werke, Weimar ed., *Tischreden* 3:193

No. 3148

26–31 May 1532

Ego Martinus Luther sum infelicissimis astris natus, fortassis sub Saturno. Was man mir thun vnd machen soll, kan nimermehr fertig werden; schneider, schuster, buchpinder, mein weib verzihen mich auffs lengste.

I, Martin Luther, was born with the most inauspicious stars, perhaps under Saturn. The things I need done and made for me will never be completed; the tailor, the shoemaker, the bookbinder, and my wife keep me waiting forever.

B.3.2. Luther and the Astrological Politics of Johann Lichtenberger's Prophecy

Luthers Tischreden in der Mathesischen Sammlung, ed. Ernst Kroker (Leipzig, 1903), 320, no. 625

Heydenreich, Spring 1543

Tum quidam: "Domine Doctor, multi astrologi in vestra genitura consentiunt, constellationes vestrae nativitatis ostendere, vos mutationem magnam allaturum." Tum Doctor: "Nullus est certus de nativitatis tempore, denn Philippus et ego sein der sachen umb ein jar nicht eins. Pro secundo, putatis hanc causam et meum negotium positum esse sub vestra arte incerta? O nein, es ist ein ander ding! Das ist allein Gottes werck. Dazu solt ir mich niemer bereden!"

Then someone said: "Doctor, many astrologers agree concerning your birth that the constellations of your horoscope show that you will bring about a great change." The doctor: "Nobody is certain of the time of my birth, for Philipp and I differ by a year on the matter. What is more, do you believe that our cause, and my whole enterprise, are subject to your uncertain art? No, this is something else! This is God's work alone. You will never talk me into that!"

Valerius Herberger, *Gloria Lutheri* (Leipzig, 1612), 94.

Vmbs Jahr Christi 1483. hat Johan Hilden zu seinen München gesaget: Mercket das Jahr 1516. da wird einer kommen / der mich vnd alle die / welchen jhr habt vnrecht gethan / wird rechnen. Eben vmb dieselbe zeit hat auch gelebet Johan Lichtenberger / welcher den Herrn Lutherum, vnnd ein klein Männlein hinter ihm / welchs ihm zu seinem vorhaben sehr dienstlich seyn solte (das ist Philippus Melanchthon gewesen) gemahlet hat / wie droben concione prima gedacht worden.

In the Year of Our Lord 1483, Johann Hilten said to his monks: "Mark well the year 1516. For then a man will come who will avenge me and all those you

have wronged." At the same time lived Johann Lichtenberger, who depicted Master Luther with a little man behind him who was to be of great service to him in his undertaking (this was Philipp Melanchthon), as mentioned above in the first discourse.

B.3.3. *Luther and Cardano*

Cardano's Commentary on His Horoscope of Luther

Hieronimus Cardanus, *Libelli duo . . . item geniturae LXVII* (Nuremberg, 1543), fol. N IV^v.

HAnc ueram genituram Lutheri, non eam quae sub anno 1484 publicè circumfertur,¹⁵² esse scito. Nec tanto negotio minor genitura debetur, aut tali geniturae minor euentus. Existimo autem non intelligentes huius artis fundamenta, eam corrupisse: nam nec illa robore huic aequalis est, nec si damnare uelis, deest hic quod possis accusare. Nam Mars, Venus, Iupiterque, iuxta uirginis spicam coeunt ad coeli imum ad unguem, ut ex horum conspiratione regia quaedam potestas decernatur, sine sceptro: sunt enim erraticae sub terra. Porro quòd ad religionem pertineat, iam saepius adeò dictum est, propter spicam uirginis,¹⁵³ ut repetere pigeat. Incredibile igitur quantum augmenti breui tempore habuerit hoc dogma: nam Germaniae maximam partem adegit, Angliam totam, multasque alias regiones, cum adhuc uiuat, nec ulla est provincia ab huius sectatoribus immunis, praeter Hispanias. Feruet mundus huius schismate, quod, quia Martem admixtum habet & caudam, soluitur in seipso, infinitaque reddit capita, ut si nihil aliud errorem conuincat, multitudo ipsa opinionum ostendere tum possit, cum ueritas una tantum sit, plurimos necessariò aberrare. Porro firmitatem dogmatis Sol & Saturnus cum lance meridionali,¹⁵⁴ in loco futurae coniunctionis magnae ostendunt, cum diu trigonus ille iam dominaretur. At Luna iuxta ascendens, longitudinem decernit uitae: uerum cum Soli Saturnus adiungatur, pro tanto rerum motu, nullam dignitatem decernit. *

Know that this is the true nativity of Luther, not the one that is generally circulated under the year 1484. So great a matter deserves no lesser horoscope, nor such a horoscope a lesser outcome; I think, however, that those who do not understand the principles of this art have corrupted it: for it is not equal in strength to this present one—nor, should you wish to condemn, is matter for reproach lacking.

Mars, Venus, and Jupiter are conjunct Spica Virginis at the Imum Coeli in Libra, so that from their concord a certain royal power may be discerned, but without a scepter: for they are erratics below Earth. Further, as regards religion, this has already been said so often, on account of Spica Virginis, that it would be tedious to repeat. It is therefore incredible how much that belief has grown in a short time: for it has bound most of Germany, all of England, and many other regions, while he still lives, and no province is free of his followers except Spain. The world is in ferment with this man's schism, which, because he has Mars and the Dragon's Tail mixed in, fragments itself of its own accord

and grows countless heads; even if there were nothing else to refute the error, the very multitude of opinions suffices to show that (since there is only one truth) a great many are inevitably going astray. Further, firmness of dogma is shown by the Sun and Saturn with Lanx Meridionalis in the position of the future great conjunction, since for a long time that triplicity was dominant. The Moon on the Ascendant confers length of life: but when Saturn is conjunct the Sun, in view of so great an upheaval, it confers no great dignity.

Luther against Cardano

Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke (1543), Erlangen ed., 62:321

D. M. L. ward seine Nativität, Ciceronis und vieler Anderen zu Nürnberg gedruckt bracht;¹⁵⁵ da sagt er: "Ich halte nichts davon, eigene ihnen gar nichts zu, aber gerne wollt ich, dass sie mir diess Argument solvireten: Esau und Jacob sind von einem Vater und einer Mutter, auf eine Zeit, und unter gleichem Gestirn geboren, und doch gar widerwärtiger Natur, Art und Sinn. Summa, was von Gott geschicht, und sein Werk ist, das soll man dem Gestirn nicht zuschreiben. Ah, der Himmel fraget nach dem nicht, wie auch unser Herr Gott nach dem Himmel nicht fraget. Die rechte christliche Religion confutirt und widerlegt solche Mährlin und Fabelwerk allzumal."

Dr. M. L. was shown his horoscope, that of Cicero, and many others, printed at Nuremberg. He said: "I think nothing of them, and set no store by them; but I would be glad if they would solve this problem for me: Esau and Jacob were born of one father and one mother, at one time, and under the same stars, and yet completely contrary in nature, demeanor, and mind. In short, what comes from God, and is his handiwork, is not to be ascribed to the stars. The sky pays no heed to this, just as Our Lord pays no heed to the sky. The true Christian religion altogether confutes and repudiates such tales and fables."

B.4. The Deluge Panic of 1524

Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke, Erlangen ed., 62:327 f.

D. M. L. sagte von der Narrheit der Mathematicorum und Astrologorum, der Sternkücker, "die von einer Sündfluth oder grossem Gewässer hätten gesagt, so Anno 1524 kommen sollte, das doch nicht geschach; sondern das folgende 25. Jahr stunden die Bauren auf, und wurden aufrührerisch. Davon sagte kein Astrologus nicht ein Wort." Er redete aber vom Bürgermeister Hohndorf: "derselbe liess ihm ein viertel Bier in sein Haus hinauf ziehen, wollte da warten auf die Sindfluth, gleich als würde er nicht zu trinken haben, wenn sie käme. Aber zur Zeit des Zorns war ein Conjunctio, die hiess Sünde und Gottes Zorn, das war ein ander Conjunction, denn die im 24. Jahre."

Dr. M. L. spoke of the folly of the mathematicians and astrologers, the stargazers, "who had talked of a deluge or great flood, which was to come in the year 1524, but which did not come to pass. In the following year, however, '25, the peasants rose up in arms—of which not one astrologer had a single

word to say." He went on to speak of Burgomaster Hohndorf, "who had a quarter of beer hauled up inside his house to wait there for the Deluge, as if he would not have had plenty to drink when it came. But at the hour of wrath there was a conjunction, which was that of sin and God's wrath; and that was a very different conjunction from that of the year of '24."

B.5. Luther on Divination from Natural Portents

Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke, Erlangen ed., 62:327

... denn Gott hat sie geschaffen und an das Firmament gesetzt und geheftet, dass sie das Erdreich erleuchten, das ist, fröhlich sollen machen, und gute Zeichen sein der Jahre und Zeiten... Sie aber, die Sternkücken, und die aus dem Gestirn wollen wahrsagen und verkündigen, wie es einem gehen soll, erdichten, dass sie die Erde verfinstern und betrüben und schädlich sein. Denn alle Creaturen Gottes sind gut, und von Gott geschaffen, nur zum guten Brauch. Aber der Mensch machet sie böse mit seinem Missbrauchen. Und es sind Zeichen, nicht Monstra, Ungeheuer. Die Finsternisse sind Ungeheuer und Monstra, gleichwie Missgeburten.

... For God created them and set them and fixed them in the firmament to give light upon the earth; that is, to make it joyful, and to be fair signs for the years and for the seasons... They, on the other hand, the stargazers, and those who seek to prophesy and foretell from the stars what the future holds, imagine that these things darken the earth, and trouble it, and are harmful. For all God's creations are good, and created by God only to be put to good use; but man makes them evil by his ill use of them. These are signs, but not portents or evil omens. Eclipses are evil omens and portents, as are monstrous births.

Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke, Erlangen ed., 62:319 f.

Am 8. Decembris 1542 hatte einer von Minkwitz eine Deklaration öffentlich in der Schule, darinnen er lobete die Astronomiam und Sternkunst. Da nun Doctor Martin Luthern solches angezeigt ward, wie er diesen Spruch Jeremiä am zehenten widerlegt hätte: Ihr sollt euch nicht fürchten für den Zeichen des Himmels usw., gleich als wäre dieser Spruch nicht wider die Astrologiam, sondern redte nur von den Bildern der Heiden; sprach der D.: "Sprüche kann man wohl confutiren, widerlegen, aber nicht erlegen und niederlegen. Dieser Spruch redet von allen Zeichen am Himmel, auf Erden und im Meer, wie auch Moses thut. Denn die Heiden waren nicht so närrisch, dass sie sich vor Sonn und Monden gefurcht hätten, sondern für den Wunderzeichen und ungeheuren Gesichtern, Portenten und Monstris, dafür fürchten sie sich, und ehreten sie. Zudem, so ist Astrologia keine Kunst, denn sie hat keine principia und demonstrationes, darauf man gewiss unwankend fussen und gründen könnte..."

On 8 December 1542 a man from Minkwitz gave a public address at the School in which he praised astronomy and the art of the stars. When

Dr. Martin Luther was apprised of this, and how the man had denied the saying of Jeremiah in the tenth chapter: "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven . . .," saying that this was not directed against astrology but only against the images of the heathen, the Doctor said: "Sayings can be contradicted and refuted, but not confuted and denied. This saying concerns all signs in the heavens, on earth, and in the sea; as Moses also does. For the heathen were not such fools as to live in fear of the Sun and the Moon, but of signs and wonders, monstrous sights, portents and omens: those they feared and worshiped. Furthermore, astrology is not an art, for it has no *principia* and *demonstrationes* on which to take a sure and certain footing."

Appendix C: Prefaces and Extracts from the Prophecies of Johann Lichtenberger

Die Weissagunge Johannis Lichtenbergers / deudsch / zugericht mit vleys. Sampt einer nutzlichen vorrede vnd vnterricht D. Martini Luthers / Wie man die selbige vnd der gleichen weissagunge vernemen sol. Wittemberg. M.D.xxvij.

Colophon: *Verdeutscht durch Stephanum Rodt. Getruckt zu Wittemberg durch Hans Lufft. M.D.xxvij.—*

Vorrhede Martini Luthers. Auff die Weissagung des Johannis Lichtenbergers
WEil dis buch des Johannis Lichtenbergers mit seinen weissagungen / nicht alleine ist weit auskomen / beyde ynn latinischer vnd deudscher sprache / sondern auch bey vielen gros gehalten / bey etlichen auch veracht ist / Sonderlich aber die geistlichen sich itzt des hoch trosten vnd frewen. Nach dem aus diesem buch ein fast gemeine rede ist entstanden gewest / Es wurde ein mal uber die pfaffen gehen / vnd darnach widder gut werden / Vnd meinen / es sey nu geschehen / sie seyen hindurch / das yhr verfolgung durch der bauren auffrur vnd des Luthers lere sey von diesem Lichtenberger gemeinet. Vmb des alles willen bin ich bewogen / mit dieser vorrhede den selbigen Lichtenberger noch eins aus zu lassen / mein vrteil druber zu geben / zu vnterricht aller / die des begeren / Ausgenomen die geistlichen / wilchen sey verboten / sampt yhrem anhang / das sie mir ia nichts gleuben / Denn die mir gleuben sollen / werden sich doch on sie wol finden.

Erstlich sind etliche Propheten / wilche alleine aus dem heiligen geiste weissagen / wie Zacharia. 7. spricht. die wort die der HERR Zebaoth durch seinen geist sandte ynn den Propheten / Wie auch Petrus zeuget. 2. Pet. 1. Die weissagung der schrift / kumpt nicht aus eigener auslegunge / denn es ist noch nie keine weissagung aus menschen willen erfurbracht / Sondern / die heiligen menschen Gottes haben geredt / getrieben vom heiligen geist. Diese weissagung ist gericht vnd gehet darauff / das die gottlosen gestrafft / die frumen erloset werden / vnd <A ii> treibt ymer dar / auff den glauben an Gott vnd die gewissen zu sichern vnd auffzurichten / Vnd wenn not vnd trubsal da ist odder komen sol / trostet sie die frumen / Vnd gehet auch die frumen alleine an / mit den gottlosen hat sie nichts zu thun / denn das sie yhn drewet

und sie straffet / Nicht aber troestet noch verheist. Widder diese weissagung hat der Satan auch seine weissagunge / das sind die falschen Propheten / rothen / secten und ketzer / durch wilche er den glauben an Gott verderbet / die gewissen zustöret und verfuert mit lügen troestet / mit falscheit drewet / Vnd ficht also on vnterlas widder die reyne weissagunge vnd lere Gottes.

Dieser art is der Lichtenberger keiner / denn er berümbt noch berufft sich nicht auff den heiligen geist / wie die rechten vnd falschen Propheten thun sondern grundet seine weissagung ynn des hymels lauff vnd naturliche kunste der gestirne mit yhren einflüssen vnd wirckunge. Auch so nympt er sich widder des glaubens noch der gewissen an / widder leret noch verfuert / widder troestet noch straffet / Redet aber schlecht daher von zukunfftigen dingen / eitel treffe gottlosen odder frumen / wie es yhm seine kunst ym gestirne gibt. Er redet wol auch von der Christlichen kirchen / aber nicht anders / denn wie sie eusserlich stehet ynn leiblichen geberden vnd gütern vnd hirschafften / Gar nichts / wie sie ym glauben vnd trost des heiligen geistes stehet / Das ist / er redet nichts von der rechten Christlichen kirchen / Sondern gleich wie die selbige Sternkunst von allen andern heidnischen hirschafften vnd königreichen pflegt zu reden. Darumb er auch der Hussiten / als feinde der kirchen gedенckt / Vnd des geschlechts Dan / daraus der Endechrist komen solle. Vnd stehet seine reformation darynn / das man die langen har verschneyte / die schnebel an den schuchen abthut vnd bretspiel verbrennet / das sind seine Christen / Also das gar eine leibliche weissagung ist / von eitel leiblichen dingen.

Summa / seine weissagung ist nicht eine geistliche offinbarung / <A ii> denn die selbige geschicht on die sternenkunst / vnd ist auch der sternenkunst nicht vnterworfen / Sondern es ist eine heidnische alte kunst / die bey den Römern vnd auch zuuor bey den Chaldeen fast herlich vnd gemein war / Aber sie kundten dem könige zu Babilon seine trewme nicht sagen noch deuten / Daniel muste es thun durch den geist / So feileten die Römer auch gar offte. Darumb ist zu sehen / ob die selbige kunst auch etwas vermüge vnd könne zutreffen / denn ich selbs diesen Lichtenberger nicht weis an allen orten zuuerachten / Hat auch etliche ding eben troffen / sonderlich mit den bilden vnd figuren nahe hin zu geschossen / schier mehr denn mit den worten.

Hie ist zu mercken / das Gott der alleine alles gemacht hat / auch selbs alles regiret / auch alleine zukunfftiges weis vnd sagen kan / Hat er doch zu sich genomen / beyde seine Engel vnd vns menschen / durch wilche er wil regiren / das wir mit yhm / vnd er mit vns wircke / Denn wie wol er kundte / weib vnd kind / haus vnd hof / on vns regiren / neeren vnd beschirmen / so wil ers doch durch vns thun / vnd setzet ein den vater odder hausherrn vnd spricht / Sey vater vnd mutter gehorsam. Vnd zum vater / Zeuch vnd lere deine kinder. Item also kundt er auch wol on konige / fursten / herrn vnd richter / weltlich regiren / fride halten vnd die bösen straffen / Er wil aber nicht / sondern teilet das schwert aus vnd spricht / straffe die bösen / schutze die frumen vnd handthabe den friden. Wie wol ers doch selbs durch vns thut / vnd wir nur seine laruen sind / vnter wilcher er sich verbirget vnd alles ynn

allen wirckt / wie wir Christen das wol wissen. Gleich wie er auch ym geistlichen regiment seiner Christen / selbs alles thut / leret / tröstet / straffet / vnd doch den Aposteln das wort / ampt vnd dienst eusserlich befilhet das sie es thun sollen. Also braucht er vns menschen / beyde ynn leiblichem vnd geistlichem regiment / die welt vnd alles was drynnen ist / zu regiren.

Eben so braucht er auch der Engel / wie wol wir nicht wissen <A iii> wie dasselbige zugehet / denn er befilhet yhn nicht das schwerd / wie der weltlichen öbirkeit / noch das eusserliche wort / wie den predigern / noch das brod vnd kleid / vihe vnd haus / wie den haushaltern vnd eltern. Denn wir sehen noch hören der keines von den Engeln / wie wirs von den menschen sehen vnd hören. Dennoch sagt die schrift an viel orten / das er die welt durch die Engel regire / Eym yglichen keyser / könige / fursten / herrn / ia eym yglichen menschen seinen Engel zuuerordent / der sein bestes bey yhm thu / vnd fodder yhn ynn sein regiment vnd hirschaft / Wie Danielis .x. der Juden Engel klagt / das der Persen engel yhm widerstanden habe / Aber der Kriechen Engel kome yhm zu hulffe. Wie aber die lieben Engel hieruber eyms bleyben fur Gott / vnd doch widderinander sind fur den menschen / gleich wie die konige yhn befolhen / widderinander sind / las ich hie dis mal anstehen vmb der satsamen geister willen / wilche ynn einem augenblick können lernen / alles was Christus vnd alle nötige artikel des glaubens fodder / vnd darnach auff fragen fallen / sich bekümmern / was Gott fur der welt gemacht habe / vnd der gleichen / auff das sie hie auch yhren furwitz zu bussen haben mit den lieben Engeln / Sondern wollen das fur nemen / das aller leichteste / wilchs sie auch so bald sie es hören / kostlich wol verstehen.

Nemlich das / Weil Gott die gottlosen ynn weltlicher öbirkeit durch sich vnd seine Engel regirt (wie gesagt ist) allermeist vmb seines worts willen / das es muge gepredigt werden / wilchs nicht kondte geschehen / wo nicht fride ynn landen were / So nympt er sich auch desselbigen mit ernst an / Vnd lest sie zu weylen durch seine Engele furen vnd gluck haben / zu weylen auch wunderbarlich dem ungluck entgehen / wie denn alle Heiden selbs bekennen / das streit vnd sieg stehe schlechts nicht ynn menschen krafft noch witze / sondern ym gluck / Wilchs also zu gehet / das die lieben Engel da sind vnd durch ynnwendige anregen plotzlich einen rad odder synn eingeben / odder eusserlich ein zeichen vnd anstos ynn weg legen / damit der mensch gewarnet odder gewendet wird dieses zu thun / das zu lassen / diesen weg zu zihen / diesen zu meyden / auch oft widder den ersten fursatz. Denn / weil sie mit Worten nicht reden zu vns / thun sie das mit synn eingeben / odder eusserliche ursache plotzlichen furlegen / gleich wie wir pferde vnd oxen anschreyen / odder holtz vnd steyn ynn weg legen / das sie nicht ynn graben fallen. Soche eusserliche zeichen odder ursache / nennen die Heiden Omina / das ist / böse anzeigung odder warnunge / Dauon yhr bucher vol sind / denn sie sehen wol / das es geschicht / sie wissen aber nicht / wer es thut / Dauon were wol viel zu schreiben vnd exempel anzuzeigen.

Solchs thun die Engel auff erden / Vber das thut Gott ym hymel auch seine zeichen / wenn sie ein ungluck treffen sol / vnd lest schwantzsterne entstehen /

odder Sonn vnd Mond schein verlieren / odder sonst ein vngewöhnliche gestalt erscheinen. Jtem auff erden grewliche wunder geborn werden / beyde an menschen vnd thieren / Wilchs alles die Engel nicht machen / sondern Gott selbs alleine / Mit solchen zeichen drewet er den gottlosen / vnd zeigt an zukunfftig vnfall vber herrn vnd lande / sie zu warnen. Vmb der frumen willen geschicht solchs nichts / denn sie durffens nicht / drum wird yhn auch gesagt. Sie sollen sich fur des hymels zeichen nicht furchten / als Jeremias spricht / denn es gilt yhn nicht / sondern den gottlosen.

Hiraus ist nu komen die sternkunst / vnd warsager kunst / denn weil es war ist / das solchs geschicht / vnd die erfahrung beweiset / das vngluck odder gluck bedeut / Sind sie zu gefaren / vnd habens wollen fassen vnd ein gewisse kunst draus machen / da sind sie gen hymel gefaren vnd habens ynn die sterne geschrieben / Vnd weil sie feine gedancken gehabt / das sichs mit der sternarten reymet / mussens nu die sterne vnd natur thun / das Gott vnd die Engel thun / Gleich wie die ketzer zu <A iv> erst yhre gedanken finden / darnach die selbigen ynn die schrift tragen / vnd mus denn schrift heissen / was yhn trewmet. Da ist denn der teuffel zu geschlagen / hat sich drein gemenget / vnd wie er ein herr der welt ist widder Gotts herrschafft / hat er auch des gleichen zeichen viel angericht auff erden / die sie Omina heissen / Vnd hat an manchen orten warsager erweckt / als zu Delphis vnd Hammon / die solche zeichen gedeutet / vnd kunfftige ding haben gesagt. Nu er denn der welt furst ist vnd aller gottlosen konig vnd herrn sampt yhren lenden / synn vnd wesen fur yhm hat / dazu alle erfahrung von anfang der welt gesehen / hat er leichtlich können sehen / wo er mit yhn hinaus wolle. Aber weil er nicht gewis ist (denn Gott bricht yhm oft die schantz vnd lest yhn nicht ymer treffen) gibt er seine weissagunge mit solchen wanckenden Worten eraus das / so es geschehe odder nicht / er dennoch war habe / Als da der konig Pyrrhus fragt / ob er die Römer schlagen wurde / Antwort er / Dico Pyrrhum Romanos vincere posse / als wenn ich auf deudsche spreche / Ich sage Hansen Petern schlagen muge / Es schlahe nu Hans odder Peter / so ists beydes durch die wort verstanden / Vnd der gleichen hat er viel gethan durch Gotts verhengnis vnd thuts auch noch / Vnd trifft oft / das geschicht / aber Gott lessts nicht allewege treffen / darumb ist die kunst vngewis / vnd behelfen sich damit / feylets an einem ort / so trifft doch am andern / Widderferets nicht disem / so widderferets doch yhenem.

Was sagen wir denn zum Lichtenberger vnd des gleichen? das sage ich. Erstlich / Den grund seiner sternkunst halt ich fur recht / aber die kunst vngewis / das ist / Die zeichen am hymel vnd auff erden feylen gewislich nicht / Es sind Gotts vnd der Engel werck / warnen vnd drewen den gottlosen herren vnd lenden / bedeuten auch etwas / Aber kunst darauff zu machen ist nichts / vnd ynn die sterne solchs zu fassen. Zum andern / es mag dennoch wol daneben sein / das yhn Gott odder sein En- <A iv> gel bewegt habe / viel stücke / wilche gleich zutreffen / zu schreiben / wie wol yhn dunckt / die sterne gebens yhm / Aber nichts desten weniger / auff das Gott sehen liesse / das die Kunst vngewisse sey / hatt er yhn lassen feylen etliche mal.

Vnd ist das summa summarum davon / Christen sollen nichts nach solcher

weissagunge fragen / denn sie haben sich Gott ergeben / durffen solchs drewens vnd warnens nicht. Weil aber der Lichtenberger die zeichen des hymels anzeucht / so sollen auch die gottlosen herren vnd lender fur allen solchen weissagungen furchten / vnd nicht anders dencken / denn es gelte yhn / Nicht vmb yhrer kunst willen / die oft feylen kan vnd mus / sondern vmb der zeichen vnd warnunge willen / so von Gott vnd Engeln geschicht / darauff sie yhre kunst wöllen grunden / denn die selbigen feylen nicht / des sollen sie gewis sein / Als zu vnsern zeiten haben wir viel sonnen / regenbogen vnd der gleichen am hymel gesehn. Hie ist kein sternkundiger / der gewis hette können odder noch können sagen / es gellte diesem odder jenem konige / dennoch sehen wir / was dem konige zu Franckreich / Denemarck / Hungern gewislich widderfahren ist / Vnd wird noch andern konigen vnd fursten auch gehen gewislich.

Derhalben schencke ich den Lichtenberger vnd des gleichen / den grossen hansen vnd lenden / das sie wissen sollen / es gellte yhn / vnd wo er trifft / das solchs geschicht aus den zeichen vnd warnunge Gottes / darauff er sich grundet / als die da gewislich den grossen hansen gelten / odder durch verhengnis Gottes aus des Satans eingeben. Wo er aber feylet / das solchs aus seiner kunst vnd anfechtung des Satans geschicht / Denn Gottes zeichen vnd der Engel warnunge / sind gemenget mit des Satans eingeben vnd zeichen / wie die wellt denn werd ist / das es wust vnternander gehe vnd nichts vnterschiedlich erkennen kan. Das sey mein vrteil vnd vnterricht / die Christen verstehen wol / das so recht ist / Was die ander gleuben / da liegt mir nichts an / Denn sie mussens erfahren / wie man den narren die kolben lauset.

Das nu meine vngnedige herrn die geistlichen sich frewen / als seyen sie hinüber / vnd solle yhn nu hinfurt wol gehen / da wündsich ich yhn glück zu / sie dürffens wol / Aber weil sie yhr gottlose lere vnd leben nicht bessern / sondern auch stercken vnd mehren / wil ich auch geweissagt haben / das / wo es kumpt vber eine kleine zeit / das solch yhr freude zu schanden wird / wil ich gar freundlich bitten / sie wolten mein gedencken / vnd bekennen / das der Luther hab es besser troffen / denn beide der Lichtenberger vnd yhre selbs gedanken: Wo nicht / so wil ich yhn hie mit ernstlich gepotten haben / das sie es bekennen müssen on yhren danck / vnd all vnglück dazu haben / da für sie doch Gott behuete / so ferne sie sich bekeren / Da gebe Got seine gnade zu / AMEN.

<Lichtenberger> Vorrede vber das folgend Buchlin

Wje wol Gott der Herr zeit vnd stunde yhm allein ynn seiner gewalt furbehalten hat / Wie Christus die ewige warheit selbs bezeuget / Er auch alleine zukunfftige ding weis / Vnd niemand ist ynn dieser welt / der den morgenden tag / odder was daran geschehen sol / wüste vorhin zu verkündigen / Nichts deste weniger / hat der selbige gütige Gott / aus seiner milden vberflüssigen güete vnd barmhertzigkeit / mancherley gaben yn seine Creaturen gegossen / damit er yhnen etliche ding / die noch ferne vnd zukünfftig sind / zuuerstehen vnd zu wissen vergünnet hat / doch nicht gantz klar / <Bv> sondern aus

etlichen gleichnissen / umbstenden / zeichen vnd abnemung der geschehen ding / gegen die / so noch zukunfftig ergehen sollen. Also verkündigen die Vögel ym gesange vnd mit yhrem fliegen / des gleichen auch andere thiere / ynn mancherley weise / die zeit vnd verenderung odder geschicklichkeit der zeit / auch der gleichen mehr dings / wie es damit zukunfftig sol ergehen. Also bedeut abendröte / das der zukunfftige morgen werde schön werden / vnd morgenröte bedeut / das es auff den abend regenen werde. Solche ding sehen wir alle so natürlich geschehen / durch schickung vnd ordenung der natur / yhr von Gott eingegeben / Wie solchs die natürlichen meister die man Philosophos / Mathematicos vnd Astrologos nennet / volkömlich beschrieben haben.

Es lasse sich hierynne niemand yrren / diesen spruch Aristotelis da er also sagt / Von den zukunfftigen / zufelligen dingen / hat man keine gewisse warheit. Denn der selbige Aristoteles spricht auch / Alles was da zukunfftig ergehen sol / das mus von not wegen komen / Kompt es nu not halben odder sonst anderswo her / so mus es yhe eine vorgehende ursache haben / wie Plato gesagt hat / Solche vorgehende sache / eigentlich vnd volkömlich / weis alleine Gott / der schepffer aller dinge. Er hat aber dem menschen gegeben / vernunft / verstentnis vnd krafft allerley hyn vnd widder zu betrachten / damit er aus den vorgangnen dingen zukunfftige abnemen vnd ermessen künde / Der selbige Gott hat dem menschen auch verliehen kunst vnd erkenntnis der sterne am hymel / daraus man mancherley geschicht / dazu einen das gestirn zeucht / zukunfftig vorhyn sagen mag.

Auff das man aber den grund dieser dinge eigentlich abnemen möge / ist zu mercken / das Gott ynn dreyerley weise dem menschen geben hat zukunfftige ding zu wissen / die ein iglicher der vleis ankeren wil / alle / odder yhe etliche erforschen vnd begreifen mag. Zum ersten (wilchs auch vnter allen die <B ii> gemeinste weise ist) So der mensch lange zeit lebet / mag er durch lange erfahrung sehen vnd hören / vnd also viel dinge durch gleichnis vnd vernünfftliche prüfung zukunfftig sagen / wie denn alte leute das zeugen vnd beweisen.

Die ander weise ist aus den sternem vnd aus der kunst der Astronmey / wie Ptolemeus spricht / Wer die ursachen der yrdischen dinge erfahren wil / der mus erstlich vnd vor allen dingen acht haben auff die hymelischen körper / Denn / als Aristoteles sagt / so rüret vnd henget diese unterste welt an der obersten / so genaw vnd eben / das auch alle yhre krafft von den hymelischen vnd obersten corporen regirt werde. Auch spricht Ptolomeus / das die menschen yn sitten vnd tugenden durch die sterne unterweiset vnd geendert werden / Denn die sterne geben etlich neygung den menschlichen corporen / aber sie nötigen doch gantz vnd gar niemand.

Zum dritten / wird dem menschen gegeben / zukunfftige ding zu wissen / durch offenbarung / Denn / wie wol der Vater ynn ewigkeit yhm alleine ynn seine gewalt gesatzt hat / zukunfftige ding zu wissen / hat er doch etlichen sonderlichen menschen solche ding offenbaret / entweder ym geiste / odder ynn einem gesichte / vnd als in einem tuncckeln vnd verborgenem retzlein / odder auch durch öffentliche gesandte Engel / vnd vormittelst mehr andern