

THE APOCALYPTIC EUCHARIST AND RELIGIOUS DISSIDENCE
IN STEFAN MICHELSPACHER'S
CABALA: SPIEGEL DER KUNST UND NATUR, IN ALCHYMIA (1616)

URSZULA SZULAKOWSKA

The iconography of the alchemical Eucharist has long been familiar to historians¹; but none have, so far, restored this theme to its original setting within the religious strife of the German Reformation. The present argument attempts to redress this contextual absence by locating the alchemical Eucharist more specifically within Lutheran and Spiritual eschatology of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The alchemical eschaton and its related soteriology of Christ's body and blood finds its most comprehensive exposition in the four engravings of Stefan Michelspacher's *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia* (Augsburg: David Francke 1616)². The pictures are loosely related to a brief traditional account of chemical work, structured in terms of four visions of three mirrors appearing to Michelspacher 'through the power of a radiating celestial fire'. The first mirror is a fiery sapphire, displaying the philosophical Mercury and the "Sal sapientum", while the second one shows him the philosophical Sulphur. The third mirror is of a divinely rosy colour, all in flames, in the midst of which there appears a very great "arcanum", which is the philosophical fire through which all things come to maturation. Putting together the three mirrors, he makes a fourth, the "thesaurus thesaurorum", in which he sees God perfectly³.

¹ Carl Gustav Jung provided the first interpretation of this theme in his *Psychology and Alchemy*, 396 ff.

² See Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game*, 52-58. He mentions a rare German edition of 1615. Three Latin editions were reprinted in Augsburg in 1654, 1667 and 1704 as *Cabala, Speculum Artis et Naturae, in Alchymia...e Germanico Latnio (sic) versa...* The first German edition of 1615 does not have the dedication to the Rosicrucians which was added to the 1616 edition and subsequently retained. Klossowski also refers to a translation in British Library MS Sloane 3676, 1-36. The plates were engraved by Raphael Custos, or Custodis.

³ Michelspacher, *Cabala*, Augsburg 1654, f. B1v: 'Primum enim Speculum jucundo Saphyre colore, ignea proprietatis, plurimo albo compersum inveni, cujus gratia vidi Mercurium et Sal sapientum tam manifesto, ac si in mea manu essens. Hinc aliud Speculum vi et virtute puri chalybis adeptus fui, in quo vidi sulphur Sophorum instar floris chelidonium dicti, tam divitis salis naturae vegetabilis quasi crescendo et augendo, ut florum ibidem ad sufficientiam decerpere non potuerim, tam fructuosum hoc speculi mihi comparuit. Tertium Speculum ex hisce

Little is known about Michelspacher, to whose name the texts append his place of origins, “Tyrolensis”. Some additional clues concerning his political and religious allegiances may be gained from two other known works, one of which concerns the nervous system of the human body, *Pinax microcosmographicus* (Augsburg 1615)⁴. This indicates that he was probably a physician and possibly also an artist, since he claims to have illustrated the treatise himself. The frontispiece displays a maxim “Nosce te ipsum”, the motto of the ancient Greek mystery religions: a maxim frequently used by Erasmus, which locates Michelspacher among the inheritors of the Catholic humanist tradition⁵. The motto was subsequently adopted by Spirituals such as Sebastian Franck, Valentin Weigel and Jacob Boehme. Michelspacher’s work is dedicated to ‘Philipp Heinhofer [sic] of the city of Augsburg’⁶. The second publication by Michelspacher concerns a completely different subject, namely the graphic art of single-point perspective, which indicates that he had received some artistic training: *Opera das ist Grundliche doch Kurze Anzeigung Wie Nothwendig die Lobliche Kunst der Geometriae sive inn der Perspectiv* (Augsburg: David Francke 1616)⁷. The text, according to the author, is based

duobus speculis perfecte prosluit, ignea plane rubedinis et instar ignis, parum per enim agitatum statim incalescebat et uti purus ignis inflammabatur, ita ut sine timore illud manu prehendere non debueram, quia quo dedico vidi divinam potentiam maximque arcanum intus latitare. Nam Sapientum ignem ibidem inveni, cujus beneficio omnia in omnibus maturantur, mediante visibili elementalī igne, qui ignis plurimis quaesitus, paucis vero inventus erat. Tria nunc haec specula sedula diligentia, Artis spagyricae ope, uni coniunctim speculo conclusi, in quo et Deum et omnia cum pauperum gazis perfectissime quando libet video; unde nuncupari thesaurus thesaurorum recte meretur. Illud sollicite me furto mihi auferretur, aut cum eo aliis noxia inferretur apud me custodio’.

⁴ The full title is *Pinax microcosmographicus hoc est Admirandae Partium Hominis Creaturam Divinarum praestantissimi Universarum Fabricae, Historica brevis at perspicua Enarratio, Microcosmico tabulis sculpto aeneis Catoptro lucidissimo, explicationis vice addita, Impensisque; maximis Stephani Michelspacheri Tirolensis*.

⁵ At the base of this frontispiece there are two nudes displaying the arterial blood system of the human body, beneath which is some geometrical equipment. At the top of the page there is a skeleton above a coat of arms which I have, so far, not been able to identify. It bears at the left a fleur de lys above two diagonal bars, while on the right there stands a wild man with a staff. It does not belong to a civic context, being unrelated to any in either the Augsburg district or in Austria. On the left of these there is a naked boy with a lit taper and on the right a dead naked boy with a dead taper. Below the living boy it is written ‘Ingrediēmur vitam nudi’ and beneath the dead one ‘Egrediēmur eandem nudi’. At the very foot of the page is a snake, coiled in the manner somewhat of the number 8 with a crown on its head. On the body of the text are written the word ‘Cum morietur Homo haereditabit serpentes et Bestias et Vermes. Eccles. 10. Capit’. The frontispiece is a memento mori.

⁶ The full text reads: ‘In omnium utilitatem et jucunditatem divulgata. Viro generis nobilitate, autoritatis splendore, digna virtutem laude, praestantique; artium aestimatione, clarissimo Dn. Philippo Heinhoferi Civi Augustano, Domino suo unice calendo, S. Calends. Febr. Anno 1615’.

⁷ David Francke came from a long lineage of successful Augsburg printers. His father was

on Vitruvius, Alberti, Dürer, and Laurentii Sirigatti, among others. He also mentions Wenzel Jamnitzer, the south German engraver. The book is similarly dedicated to Philipp Heinhofer (also written as “Hainhofer”, “Ainhofer” or “Hannhofer”). Michelspacher records that he collected texts from Thurn, Strassburg and Nuremberg: cities which, along with Augsburg and the Tyrol, had provided a harbour during the sixteenth century for dissident Protestants of a Spiritualist tendency, including groups of Paracelsians.

The name “Pacher” originates in south Tyrol and is still a common name in the Alto Adige of the present day; but it does not originate historically in any one particular family, being rather a generic name for any kind of wayfaring load-bearer. By the fifteenth century, numerous unrelated families of this name had moved to Brunico from the surrounding valleys. It is intriguing in the present context, however, that the famous painter Friedrich Pacher (c. 1435-1508) and the sculptor Michael Pacher (c.1437-1498), both of Tyrolean origins although seemingly unrelated, had introduced the Italian single-point perspective system into Austrian art – an aesthetic and mathematical interest which their namesake Michelspacher continued into the early seventeenth century⁸. It is even possible that he adopted this surname as a pseudonym, for Klossowski de Rola mentions a rare first edition of the *Cabala* printed in 1615 in which the surname appears as “Muschelspachen”; however, no Austrian families of that name have been traced. The coat-of-arms refers only to the alchemical principles and is not a personal bearing⁹.

Michelspacher’s Paracelsianism, which is evident from the *Cabala*, may account for his removal from the climate of the oppressive Jesuit Counter-Reformation in the Tyrol to the more tolerant atmosphere of Augsburg, where

Matthaus Francke (active 1559-1568) also known as Francus, who married Barbara Hofer, a card maker and letter writer. His printing house was in the Krughaus of the Steuerbezirk “vom Newen Thor”. Michael Manger (1570-1603) from Opferbaum near Würzburg, married his widow in 1569 and inherited his printing works. Augsburg printers, working collectively under the sign “Ad insigne Pinus”, 1594-1619, included David Francke and Christoph Mang in 1603. This collective issued books in Greek and Latin. Its patrons were the Stadtpfleger Marcus Welsch, rector of St. Anne’s gymnasium and the librarian David Hochsel. When Manger died in 1603, David Francke (1604-1625) continued the family business. Christoph Mang (1603-1624) had worked with Manger and probably continued to work for Francke. See Benzing, *Buchdruckerlexikon des 16. Jhrs.*, 17, 18, 19, 20 and also Benzing, *Buchdrucker des 16 und 17 Jhrs.*, passim.

⁸ For Friedrich Pacher see *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 19, 746-48 and also Rasmo, *Michael Pacher*, 15ff, 245-46 for family trees. In 1467 Michael was working as a citizen of Bruneck (Brunico), but Rasmo thinks that his family probably came from one of the neighbouring valleys such as the German valley of Vila (Wielenbach), from where a Pacher family came as jewellers to settle in Brunico. Friedrich Pacher came from Novacella. Neither Friedrich’s nor Michael Pacher’s coat of arms is related to the one in Michelspacher’s *Pinax Micr.*

⁹ Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game*, 52.

the “Parität” (1555-1618) provided equality for both Protestants and Roman Catholics. A free city, like the neighbouring Nuremberg, Augsburg had a long tradition of tolerating religious dissidence¹⁰. An immediate cause for Michelspacher’s transference to Augsburg could have been the Jesuit persecution of Adam Haslmayr, a vocal early promoter of the Rosicrucian Manifestos¹². In the Tyrol the Counter-Reformation had been introduced by Peter Canisius in the early 1550s, and Jesuit houses were established at Graz, Innsbruck, Olomouc and other centres. With the death of Ferdinand I in 1595, the Tyrol had largely returned to Roman Catholicism (with the exception of the inaccessible mountains of the Vorarlberg)¹³. In spite of these repressions, a thriving network of Paracelsian alchemists existed in the Tyrol during the early seventeenth century. Carlos Gilly has examined the evidence of their interactions and has specifically identified Haslmayr, who lived in Heiligen Kreutz, as a central figure. Haslmayr polemicised against the Jesuits and printed a response to the *Fama Fraternitatis* in 1612, claiming that he had seen it in manuscript in the Tyrol in 1610¹⁴. He believed that the Rosicrucians were the harbingers of Elias Artista, sent by God to spread the true theosophy – by which he meant Paracelsianism. Haslmayr was an eschatologist, referring to the coming of the Lion (which Gilly has interpreted as a reference to the account of the Seven Seals in *Revelation*) and the imminent Judgment. From 1603, Haslmayr, like other Tyrolean Paracelsians¹⁵, was pursued by the archduke Maximilian and the Jesuits. In 1618 the Jesuits accused Haslmayr of heresy, and Maximilian sent him to the galleys in 1623.

Gilly notes that Tyrolean and Augsburgian alchemists corresponded with each other in this period, Paracelsian activity in Augsburg being centred on the Collegium Medicorum, which would have provided an accommodating milieu for Michelspacher. His artistic interests were placed, it appears, under the auspices of Philipp Hainhofer (1578-1647), an art-advisor and political agent for many of the major European courts. Michelspacher would have found Hainhofer to be in sympathy with his religious affiliations as well, for Hainhofer

¹⁰ Gottlieb et al, *Geschichte der Stadt Augsburg*, 392-411; Russell, *Lay Theology*, 114ff.

¹² See Evans, *Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 346-449 and Evans, *Rudolf II and his World*, 84-115.

¹³ A useful historical overview of this region is provided in Bucking, *Kultur und Gesellschaft in Tirol um 1600*, passim.

¹⁴ The standard authority on this topic is Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr*, passim. According to Gilly, Haslmayr was a notary in Hall in Tyrol, having been formerly a Latin schoolmaster in Botzen. His musical compositions were published in Augsburg in 1592.

¹⁵ Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr*, 33ff. In 1605 Haslmayr was in contact with alchemists in Tyrol such as Lorenz Lutz, Georg Fuger, Urban Kumpfmüller, Armer Leutt, Bartholomäus Wietaller (Salzburg), Abraham Schnitzer and daughter Anna Maria Lacknerein (Innsbruck).

belonged to a family of evangelicals associated with loosely-organised groups of pietistic laity who were critical of the Lutheran church.¹⁶ The Hainhofer family had temporarily abandoned Augsburg in 1582-1591, in protest at the city council's adoption of the reformed papal calendar¹⁷. In his work as an art-agent, Hainhofer obtained substantial commissions for Augsburg artists; his most famous project was the art-cabinet for Duke Philipp II of Pommern-Stettin, which involved twenty-four masters in the creation of a cosmic "Wunderkammer" including a pharmacy as well as art-works, books, clocks and musical instruments¹⁸. Hainhofer's patronage was crucial to the survival of the city's artists, artisans and intellectuals, including Michelspacher.¹⁹

The essence of Michelspacher's own theology and political position is displayed in the fourth and final engraving of the *Cabala*, which depicts a crowned figure seated in a fountain as Christ the philosopher's stone, the goal of the alchemical process and the source of both spiritual and physical regeneration (fig. 4). He administers the communion of his own blood in two chalices to the Sun and Moon (Sulphur and Mercury), representing soul and body. Since wine was offered to the laity only in the reformed Church of this period, such an image indicates that Michelspacher was a Protestant. It is necessary, however, to ascertain the exact nature of Michelspacher's Protestant convictions, and more specifically that of his theology regarding Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist as well as in his alchemical theory. In this context, it is necessary to consider a late medieval iconographic motif which appears at the top right of the same engraving, that of the cross-bearing Christ standing in a wine-press operated by an angel hovering over him. The blood that comes from the suffering body of Christ streams down the picture, to feed the fountain in which the resurrected Christ is seated as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity (as indicated by his crown). It is essential to note that the theme of the wine-press has its origins within the Roman Catholic discourse of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and, moreover, that by the sixteenth century it was being used in southern Germany and France as a manifesto of the dogma

¹⁶ For the evangelicals in Augsburg and Nuremberg see the account in Russell, *Lay Theology in the Reformation*, 25ff, 37, 41ff.

¹⁷ For Philipp Hainhofer (Ainhofer) see *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 8, 524-25.

¹⁸ See Hausmann, 'Der Pommersche Kunstschränk', 337-52. Also Bruno Bushart, 'Kunst und Stadtbild' in: Gottlieb, *Geschichte der Stadt Augsburg*, 382 ff.

¹⁹ Hainhofer's correspondence with Herzog August of Braunschweig exists in 17 volumes in the Wolfenbüttel Bibliothek und Staatsarchiv. In the Augsburger Stadtarchiv are his diaries from April 1632 to October 1635 (but this is too late to be relevant to the history of Hainhofer's patronage of Michelspacher). Hainhofer's writings were published variously from 1778 in Augsburg.

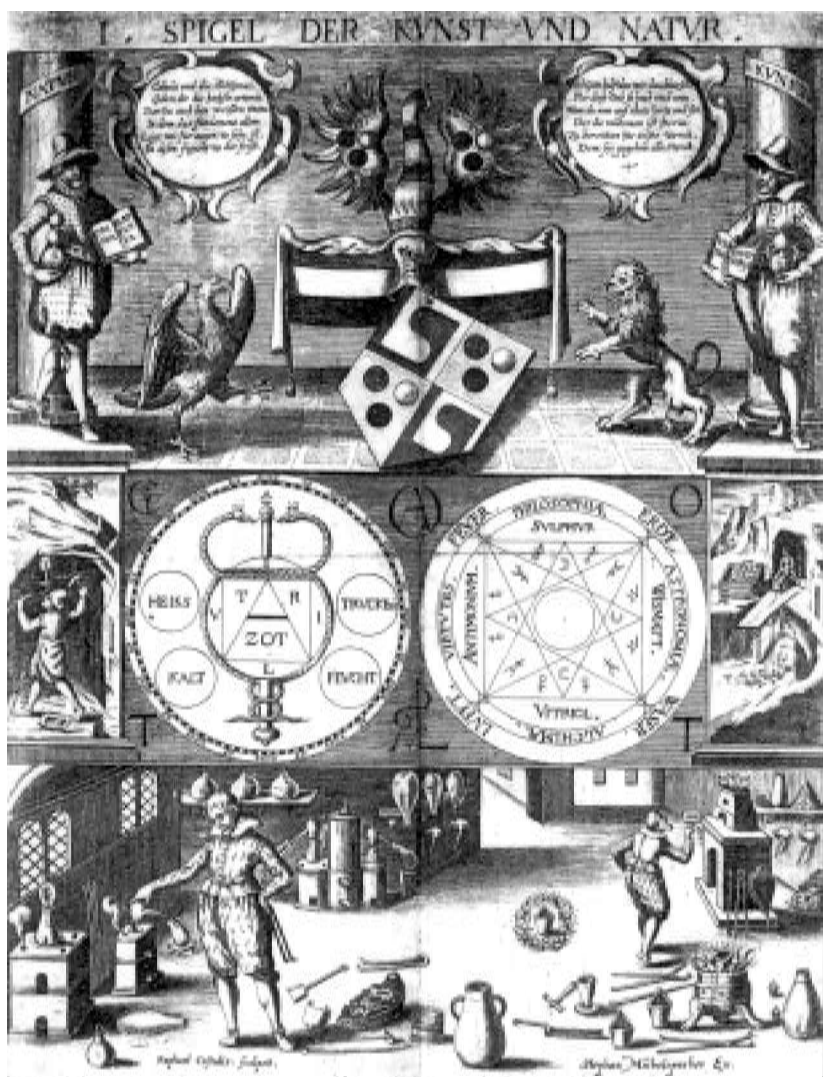


Figure 1: Stefan Michelspacher, “1. Spiegel der Kunst und Natur”, first engraving, *Cabala*, 1616.

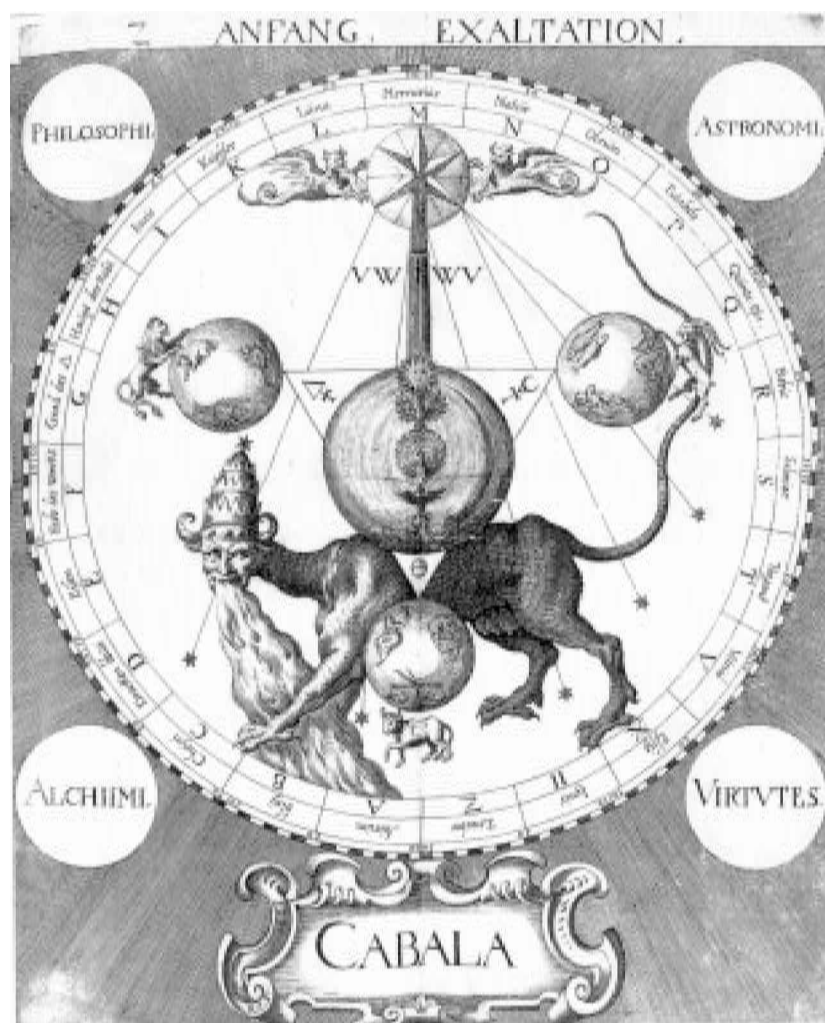


Figure 2: Stefan Michelspacher, “2. Anfang: Exaltation”, second engraving, *Cabala*, 1616.

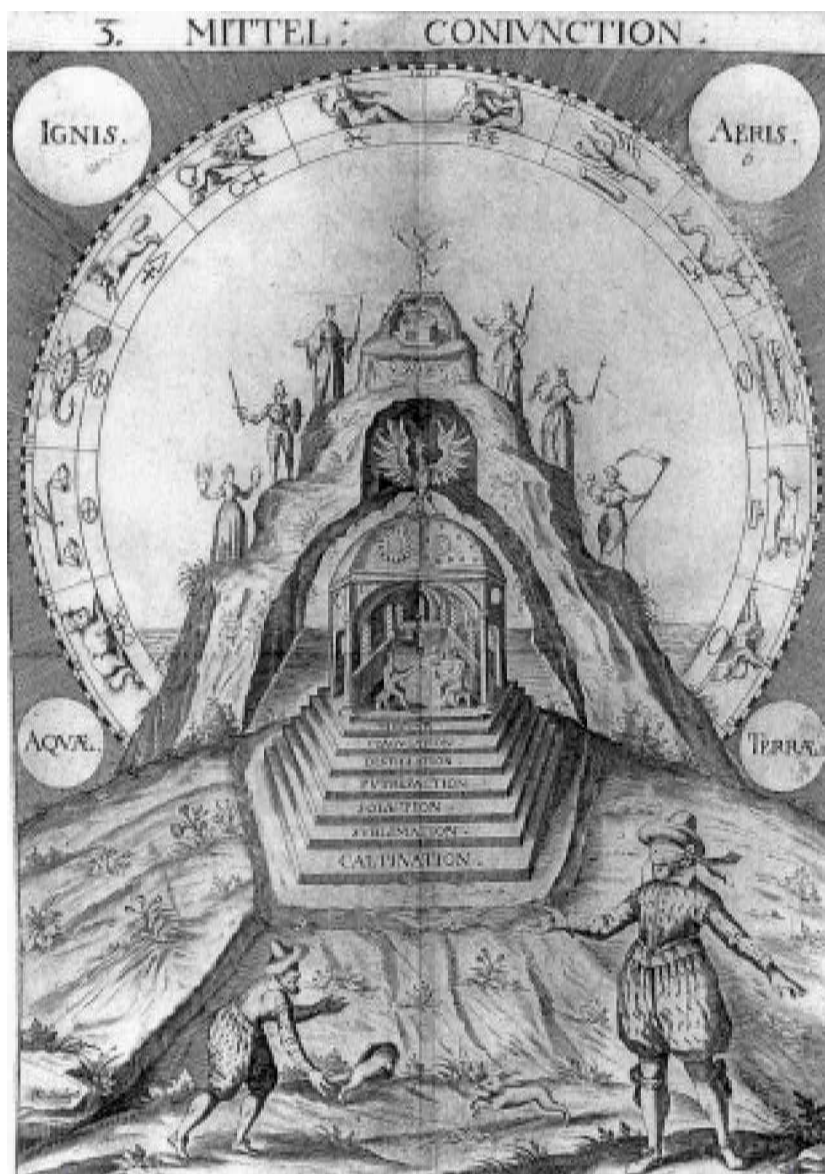


Figure 3: Stefan Michelspacher, “3. Mittel: Coniunction”, third engraving, *Cabala*, 1616.

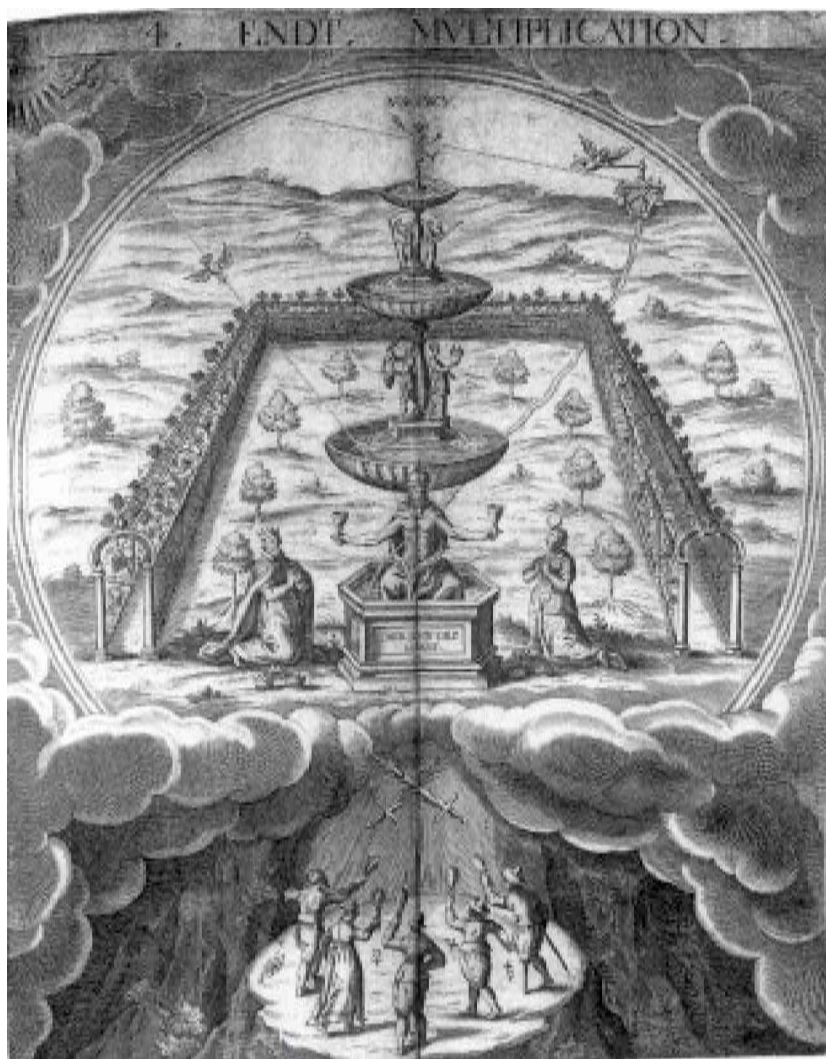


Figure 4: Stefan Michelspacher, "4. Endt. Multiplication", fourth engraving, *Cabala*, 1616.

of transubstantiation against the Protestants²⁰. Yet, in Michelspacher's engraving the rite of communion is that of the Protestant denomination. How is this doctrinal contradiction between Protestant and Catholic belief to be understood in Michelspacher's context? The most likely possibility is that these opposing eucharistic doctrines are reconciled through Michelspacher's adherence to the beliefs of the Paracelsian Spirituals, the third generation since the 1520s of dissidents who were more at odds with Lutheran orthodoxy than they were with Roman Catholicism.

At the top left of Michelspacher's engraving appears the Tetragrammaton, the Hebrew Name of God, shining in an aureole of light (fig. 4). Flying from the Mystic Wine Press towards the Tetragrammaton is the dove of the Holy Spirit, who thence descends to the Fountain of Life. The bird's trajectory along with that of the stream of blood produce the shape of an equilateral triangle, whose apex lies in the Tetragrammaton, while the Fountain and Wine Press form the corners of its base. The scene is set within the semi-circle of a rainbow, while the Fountain is specifically located within a square vineyard that forms an enclosed garden or sanctum. The geometrical structure subtly created by the composition of these various images is that of a squared circle. This geometry of the fourth engraving is conceptually related to two other geometrical diagrams which appear in the first engraving, displaying the same configuration of circle, square and triangle (fig. 1). In the earlier engraving the diagram is stated to be an image of the Paracelsian "Azoth", the alchemical and cosmological quintessence, which Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) had already equated with Christ in his *Amphiteatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (Hamburg, 1595)²¹.

In Khunrath's *Amphiteatrum* his gnostic pneumatology had been exhibited in a circular engraving of Christ (1595), shown as resurrected in his glorified physical body. In this image Christ's grace was dispersed through the whole of a cabbalistic universe by the fiery dove of the Holy Spirit. Within a later rec-

²⁰ The issue is examined in Vloberg, *L'Eucharistie dans l'Art*, 172-183.

²¹ See the discussion of Khunrath's theosophy in Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light*, 79-137. Khunrath's gnosticism led to his political persecution. The primary model for his own system was the kabbalism of Johannes Reuchlin in his *De Verbo Mirifico* in which Christ was identified with the cabbalistic sephiroth of the "Ruah-Elohim", the creative principles of the material universe. Khunrath amplified Reuchlin's cabbalistic Christology by taking recourse to Paracelsus and Weigel. Thus, Christ, the Ruah-Elohim, also became the Paracelsian "azoth", the fifth essence which is both spiritual and material in nature. Khunrath refers to the "Ruah-Elohim" as being the Christ who redeemed creation through the sacrifice of his blood. See Khunrath, *Vom Hylealischen ... Chaos*, 75. He compares the philosopher's stone to Christ who is the Paracelsian universal panacea in Khunrath, *Von Hylealischen ... Chaos*, 86-88. Christ is also identified with the Paracelsian "Salt", the prime matter of creation.

tangular image in the *Amphiteatrum* of 1602, which depicts Khunrath's persecutors, one of the most demonic is captioned 'Blasphemat sit anathema maranatha'²². The Aramaic word "maranatha" was associated with apocalyptic soteriology, as well as with the earliest Christian rites of the Eucharist. In 1 Corinthians 16:22, the exclamation "maranatha" accompanies pronouncements of anathema against any non-believers who may be present at the communion rite. For the early Christians it was a prayer for the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ, 'Come Lord!' Paul was thereby referring to the punishment awaiting the unbeliever on the Last Day²³. In Khunrath's Spiritualist context his reference to the misuse of the word "maranatha" expresses a criticism of both the Roman and the Lutheran sacraments, which were merely external signs but did not effect a genuine spiritual renewal in the body and soul of the recipient. Both churches perpetrated an unpardonable offence against the Holy Spirit, a blasphemous action which destined them to eternal perdition²⁴. Apocalyptic terminology thus enabled Paracelsian alchemists to justify their own soteriological beliefs, and permitted them to threaten with divine punishment their religious and political foes.

André Séguenny has recently offered a particularly clear analysis of the first Spirituals of the 1520s-1530s who were opposed to Luther while continuing to reject the Roman Church. They required a personalised religion to supersede that of the Lutheran church, for the inadequacies of which they found a solution in the Catholic humanism rejected by Luther himself²⁵. Like Erasmus, the Spirituals rejected Luther's definition of humanity as an essentially abject creation distanced inexorably from a Wholly Other God. Instead the Spirituals divinised human nature and made it into an integral part of God's own Being, destined to return to Him through union with the Christ-Logos already existant within the human soul. The power of the Transcendent Spirit awakened and quickened the soul to the renewal of its pristine holiness. Christ's redemptive role for the Spirituals lay in the fact that he exemplified the perfect man; his bloody sacrifice on the cross was pushed into the background. In accordance with this, the Spirituals rejected the sacraments of the church as not essential to salvation (Erasmus himself, as well, had been indifferent to these rites). Nor was the Spiritual's concept of the Holy Spirit the same as that of the Lutherans, for whom he was the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. The Spirituals, in contrast, rationalised the Spirit into an interior metaphysical force, an impersonal Transcendence, which transformed the sinner

²² See Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light*, fig. 35 at top right.

²³ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 60.

²⁴ Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light*, 139-149.

²⁵ Séguenny, *Les Spirituels*, passim.

into the “new man”, God’s self-generated son: like Christ, and not a lesser creation. Séguenny argues that the Spirituals were developing an existentialist philosophy rather than a religion with tenets of belief, and he distinguishes their rationalising religion from the spontaneous mystical insight described in the *Theologia Germanica*.

In addition to Séguenny, I would suggest that the intermediary between these early Erasmian-influenced Spirituals – such as Jörg Hauck, Hans Denck and Sebastian Franck – and the Paracelsian Spirituals of the 1580s to 1620s was Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561): it was he who enabled them to reconsider the doctrine of transubstantiation in the communion rite. As a result of their encounter with Paracelsian alchemical models of transmutation, later Spirituals such as Khunrath, Michelspacher, Boehme and Frankenberg restored the soteriological role of the Eucharistic rite in varying degrees. Certainly it is clear that by the late sixteenth century certain Paracelsians had come to understand the Eucharist in terms of a metaphysical chemistry aided by the astral virtues of Nature, not by the Holy Spirit alone. Of course this was not an entirely new concept: comparable ideas can be found in the fourteenth century in the work of Arnald of Villanova, in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, as well as in the *Aurora Consurgens* of the early fifteenth century, which also referred to the Last Judgement²⁶. These earlier alchemists, however, had used the iconography of the Eucharist to devise for themselves a parallel transmutational rite in which their chemicals were changed in a manner comparable to the transubstantiation of the communion bread. The ritual of the Roman mass enabled them to prove that it was possible to unite Nature with God. The scope of the Paracelsian Eucharist, in contrast, was far more ambitious. In the early sixteenth century the notion of an alchemical mass in which matter was glorified as to become part of the body of Christ was hazarded tentatively by Melchior Cibirensis of Hungary, a Protestant courtier at the Imperial court who lost his life for his beliefs²⁷. His alchemical ritual ended inconclusively before the moment of transubstantiation. Some of the later Paracelsians did produce a full alchemical communion in which the alchemist himself was transmuted into the essence of Christ. Such a heretical concept reached its fullest development in the work of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624)²⁸ and Abraham von

²⁶ See von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, 390-392. Also Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 374-375.

²⁷ Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 396 nt 157. Melchior Cibirensis was the same person as Nicolaus Melchior Szebeni, chaplain and astrologer at the court of King Ladislas II from 1490. Cibirensis remained with Louis II from 1516 until 1526, when he moved to the court of Ferdinand I in Vienna, where he was executed in 1531.

²⁸ For example, Boehme, ‘Von Christi Testamenten’ in: *Samtliche Schriften*, 6, no pag.

Frankenberg (1593-1652)²⁹ where it attained a cosmological significance in which both man and Nature realised their monistic identity with God. In fact, Frankenberg's best known work, *Raphael das ist Einheiliges Licht ... Artzeney* (1639), was a cryptic and indirect alchemical disquisition on the thaumaturgic powers of the spiritual Eucharist. Furthermore I would suggest that the spiritual Eucharist is also the half-concealed but actually central theme of Robert Fludd's *Medicina Catholica* (Frankfurt: William Fitzer 1629-31).

Schwenckfeld's influence may have encouraged the Paracelsian Spirituals to restore the doctrine of transubstantiation, although they did not reaffirm the sacramental authority of the Lutheran church, the rituals of which most of them regarded as redundant. Schwenckfeld's beliefs concerning transubstantiation extended its doctrinal logic into an astonishing heresy: he believed that Christ had been entrusted by God with the transformation of the carnal human body into his own resurrected and glorified body, a union in which everyman became God himself³⁰. A more specifically identifiable intermediary between early Spirituals and Paracelsian alchemists was Valentin Weigel (1535-1588): the first Spiritual to adopt Paracelsian hermeticism. He identified both God and the individual soul with the Universal Soul of Nature. Moreover, he stated in his *Gnothi Seauton* ("Know Thyself" (1571) that if the sacrifice of Christ was to be of any use, then the "vita Christi" had to occur within the soul itself, since 'Christus extra nos non salvat'³¹. In the *Kirchen- oder Hauss-Postill* (1578-1579) he argued, like the other Spirituals, that humans were not merely the adopted children of God but his real offspring, in that they were joined with Christ "somatikos", "leibhäftig": having his flesh and blood within them. Weigel retained the sacraments while believing, like Sebastian Franck, that they had become corrupted.

As in Schwenckfeld's and Khunrath's Spiritualism, it is the eternal glorified Christ within the soul – rather than the historical Christ crucified – who is the essential factor in Michelspacher's soteriology. In order to clarify this point, Michelspacher's engraving can be usefully compared with Lucas Cranach's (1472-1553) illustrations of Lutheran Christology, and more specifically with Cranach's emphasis on the historic Christ and his redeeming blood in the main altarpiece of the State Church in Weimar. In comparison, Michelspacher depicts his cross-bearing Christ as a tiny figure, hidden away at the top right of

²⁹ Crisp, *Abraham von Frankenberg*, 3-7.

³⁰ *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*, 6, 554: '...durch ...welche solche verclerung nu nichtss anderss weder die gottwerdung des menscheng in Christo/ unnd gegleubt werdenn'.

³¹ Weigel, 'Kirchen- oder Hauss-Postill' in: Peuckert and Zeller, *Valentin Weigel: Sämtliche Schriften*, 17, 57, 232, 287.

his engraving. In assessing the Christology of the Paracelsians it may be noted in addition that, apart from this one instance, the Passion of Christ is never depicted in late Renaissance German alchemy. In contrast, some earlier alchemical illustrators of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had ventured to use the icon of Christ on the cross, as seen most specifically in *Das Buch der Heiligen Dreifältigkeit* which had appeared in the southern German areas in the 1420s³². Despite the heretical appearance of this eccentric treatise, Obrist has demonstrated that its theology was completely conventional, designed as a rhetorical political tool. In short, the sheer absence of scenes from Christ's Passion in later Paracelsian alchemy may amplify the evidence that its origins lay in the context of religious groups alienated from institutionalised dogma.

Another well-known alchemical image which has been frequently mentioned by historians for its eucharistic allusions appears in Michael Maier's *Symbola Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (Frankfurt: Luca Jennis 1617). It illustrates an unorthodox Lutheran mass in its earliest form, still quite similar in its rites to that of the Roman Church. Maier (1568-1622) had commissioned this illustration to accompany the alchemical treatise of Cibirensis, who had displayed his Protestant affiliations by dedicating his work '...to the saving reformation of the church...'. Maier's own religious beliefs were never clearly stated in his treatises, but they must have been coloured by Paracelsian eschatology, as is suggested by his supportive commentary on the Rosicrucian Manifestos in his *Themis Aurea* (1618). It was surely a daring act on Maier's part to print the treatise of an alchemist who had been condemned for heresy by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I in 1531.

The eschatological context in Maier's engraving is provided by the image of the Virgin Mary suckling her new-born son. This motif implies that the Eucharistic host, elevated by the priest in the picture, contains the Real Presence of Christ, although not according to the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation. In Luther's understanding of the Eucharist there was a "communicatio idiomatum" which was the effect of the ubiquity of Christ's physical humanity by virtue of the ubiquity of his divinity. Hence, in the Eucharist Christ's body co-existed with that of the bread and wine. Equally significant is the fact that Maier's image of the Virgin corresponds to that of the Apocalyptic Virgin in the book of Revelation (12:1-6, 13-16), which describes the vision of a 'woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars', who gives birth to a male child. The dragon who pursues her is doomed to be crushed under her feet. Lutherans interpreted this

³² See Obrist, *Les débuts de l'imagerie alchimique*, 142ff on the Nuremberg manuscript and figs. 17, 18, 20, 21, 26, 34.

female figure as the Reformed Church, the forerunner of the New Jerusalem, pregnant with the true faith whose persecutor, the dragon, was the Roman Church. The Catholic interpretation, conversely, held that she was the Virgin Mary, the new Eve, who bore the Messiah and was, thus, the mother of the one true Apostolic Church. In Maier's context, moreover, she could be manifesting on behalf of the Paracelsian Spirituals as a warning of impending judgment, evoking mentally the eucharistic cry "maranatha" against the non-elect in the Lutheran church.

Maier's apocalyptic Eucharist may serve to interpret the second engraving of Michelspacher's *Cabala*, which also clearly derives its visual terminology from the book of Revelation (fig. 2). It depicts a beast that, at one level, symbolises the alchemical prime matter. At another level, however, it is related iconographically to Lutheran engravings of the papal Antichrist. Among orthodox Lutherans the obsession with the Last Days and the Second Coming had been brought to a feverish pitch by Luther and the first generation of the reformers³³. Eschatologists influenced by Melancthon's humanistic curiosity drew on evidence from history to complement biblical prophecy, but also on astrology, mathematics, occultism and alchemy³⁴. Such information was made available by the enormous growth of the publishing industry in centres such as Strassburg, Nuremberg and Augsburg³⁵. Barnes has argued that, in fact, Luther's theology was by its very nature eschatological and apocalyptic³⁶. In Luther's view, since Germany had failed to keep the true faith, the heavy punishment of God was imminent³⁷. The Antichrist had been identified by Luther with the Papacy whose triple crown was transposed to the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17: 1-7) in the Wittenberg Bible of 1522. The standard apocalyptic iconography of the Reformation period did not develop according to the model of Albrecht Dürer's apocalyptic engravings (1498) but, emerging from Luther's social circle, was created primarily by Lucas Cranach in his woodcuts of the *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521) and his illustrations for Luther's *Septembertestament...* (1522). Rome was cast as Babylon and the Papacy as the Beast from the bottomless pit (Revelation 11: 7)³⁸.

Michelspacher's Beast is more heterogeneous than Cranach's in that it

³³ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 2ff.

³⁴ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 72-73, 79, 87.

³⁵ Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture*, passim, and Eisenstein, *The Printing Press*, passim.

³⁶ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 39ff.

³⁷ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 60-66.

³⁸ John Huss and Savonarola had identified the Pope with Antichrist for moral reasons, rather than on the basis of historical evidence. See also Martin, *Martin Luther und die Bilder zur Apokalypse*, 100-108.

conflates four characters from Revelation, that is to say, the two Beasts from the Sea and the Earth (in Lutheran tradition the Turks and the Pope respectively), the dragon who pursues the Apocalyptic Virgin (the Roman Church) and the Whore of Babylon (the Papacy). This startling creature wears a papal crown, a set of dragon-like feet and tail, and cow's udders and horns. A woman's face belching hell-fire completes this winsome ensemble. The apocalyptic references of the *Cabala*'s second engraving imply that the fourth engraving should be read within the same context. This last scene expounds a more specific text than that of Christ as the Philosopher's Stone, or even of the alchemical process as equivalent to the eucharistic ritual. In actual fact, Michelspacher's treatise pictures nothing less than the feast celebrating the wedding of the Messiah to the New Jerusalem at the Parousia, to which the Heavenly Bridegroom invites the elect (Revelation 19: 7-9).

The question arises: who are these elect in Michelspacher's own soteriology? Are these images a general reference to the broader political problems of the Lutheran church, or can they be read still more precisely so as to reveal the political divisions within the Protestant community itself? For example, in the second engraving the Beast lashes with his tail at six stars: at the first level of signification these indicate the lower metals, while at the head of this picture stands the five-pointed star of the alchemical quintessence, the azoth. In the first chapter of Revelation the dragon is described as sweeping away the stars with his tail³⁹. The text states that '...the seven stars are angels of the seven churches...' (Revelation 1: 20), that is to say the communities of the faithful who alone have merited the real presence of Christ. Perhaps Michelspacher was alluding to communities of Paracelsians threatened by the Counter-Reformation in his native Tyrol, rather than to the general Lutheran unease of the period. Visual evidence favours this suggestion, since it indicates that Michelspacher's apocalypticism was distinct from that of Melanchthon's sanctioned followers, his own iconography being mediated rather by Paracelsian sources. For example, an image similar to that of the Beast in the *Cabala* appears on the frontispiece to the first edition of Paracelsus' commentary on the Nuremberg Figures published in 1569 in Basle (fig. 5; these were anonymously produced apocalyptic images of a political character dating from the early sixteenth century)⁴⁰. Moreover, the design of the seven stars in Michelspacher's engraving of the Beast is closely related to a scene of the seven planets on the frontispiece of Paracelsus's *Practica...gemacht auf Europen* (Nu-

³⁹ Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 105ff on the dragon and the 'seven lampstands' (i.e., churches). Lampstands and stars are equated in Revelation 1: 20.

⁴⁰ See Sudhoff, *Paracelsus: Samtliche Werke*, 12, xi-xiii and figs. 2.



Figure 5. Paracelsus, *Auslegung der Figuren, so zu Nurnberg gefunden*, 1st ed., Basle: Peter Perna, 1569.



Figure 6. Paracelsus, *Practica...gemacht auf Europen*, Nuremberg: Alexander Weyssenborn, 1529.

remberg 1529), a frequently reprinted compendium of his astrological predictions (fig. 6)⁴¹.

The other two engravings in Michelspacher's *Cabala* superficially appear to carry references only to practical laboratory work. Nonetheless, visual priority over such pragmatic concerns is given to elaborate geometrical figures which relate immediately to the fourth engraving of Christ. These geometries are Michelspacher's "cabala": in this period the term could refer to any system of mathematical and geometrical calculation, not only to that of the Jewish tradition. They also carry eschatological meanings. In the first engraving (fig. 1), two diagrams are set within a large rectangle, the circle on the left referring to "azoth", the quintessence or Christ, while the circle on the right records the alchemical principles and their location among the liberal arts according to a Lullian model. It is the more obscure lettering, half-hidden in the opaque background around the edges of the rectangle, however, which is most significant in these figures. At the four corners capital letters form the word "GOTT", while additional letters in the middle of the rectangle form an "A" within an

⁴¹ Sudhoff, *Paracelsus: Sämtliche Werke*, 7, 40ff, figs.12, 12a, 13.

“O”. Below this appears Michelspacher’s personal monogram in the form of the entwined letters “M, L, P, S”, equivalent to “M[iche]L SP[acher]”. The “A O” of course refer to Revelation 1: 8 (“I am the Alpha and the Omega”, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty...’). The same theme is encountered in Revelation 1: 17, when Christ says of himself ‘I am the first and the last’, and again in Revelation 22: 13: ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’. “AO” is a latinisation of the name of God “YHWH”⁴².

The third engraving of the *Cabala* also appears to indicate a purely alchemical context, that of the conjunction (fig. 3). It shows the seven planets standing on the sides of a mountain at whose heart is concealed a phoenix, symbolising resurrection, perched on the roof of a summer-house. Within this dwelling sit the naked king and queen of the alchemical process. Outside, at the foot of the mountain, a blind man stands helpless at the bottom right, while a man who has sight catches rabbits. The kabbalistic elements of Michelspacher’s treatise do not refer to the Hebrew kabbalah itself but to other historic computational systems, in this case that of pseudo-Lullian alchemy and of astrology. Hence the cabbalistic content of this particular image, in fact, consists of the circle of the Zodiac around the mountain, although the constellations do not appear in their natural order of procession. Instead they are grouped in pairs, so as to represent the conjunction of the opposing elements. The apocalyptic content of this third engraving is signified by the figure of Mercury, whose position at the summit of the mountain signifies his perfection as the azoth, in itself a combination of matter and spirit. He is standing within the fountain and garden enclosure which reappear in the fourth engraving: a clear equation with the apocalyptic Christ.

The combination of the mountain and the blind and sighted men could be another reference to political problems in Michelspacher’s native Tyrol for those who claim to have “gnosis” or inner vision. In Revelation 21: 10 the city of the New Jerusalem descends onto a great mountain, a vision derived from Ezekiel 40: 2 of the cosmic mountain where heaven and earth meet, and of Paradise (Ezekiel 28:14). The images of miners within mountain caves in the first engraving may be another allusion to the same Tyrolean political context. Silver miners from Saxony had settled in Austria where they had proved to be a particularly receptive audience for evangelical preachers proclaiming both spiritualised forms of belief and a church run by a lay apostolate.

There is yet another cryptogram hidden within the second and third engravings of the *Cabala*, namely, the letters “VWIWV” which stand for ‘Unser

⁴² Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27ff.

Wasser ist Wasser Unser'. This old alchemical axiom is christianised within the apocalyptic discourse of the *Cabala* and now carries connotations of the text of John 4: 14: 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life'. The water is that of baptism as well as of the eucharistic wine. St. Paul in I Corinthians 11: 27-34 and II Corinthians 5: 10 regards the Eucharist as a projection of the Last Judgment which partly fulfills and strengthens the promise of judgment and pardon received in baptism. In the fourth engraving, Christ is enthroned in a baptismal font, labelled "Der Brün des Lebens". Baptism redeems through the Holy Spirit that descends from the risen Christ, but Michelspacher's image could be referring to a personal transformation rather than to the institutionalised rite⁴³.

For it must be remarked that the image of the vineyard of the fourth engraving not only promises the bliss of salvation but also has an additional and much darker, indeed menacing, aspect. This is the threat of perdition for the non-elect, which becomes apparent when Michelspacher's picture is recontextualised within the narrative of Revelation 14: 17-20 concerning the gathering and pressing of the grapes. The wine-press signifies punishment inflicted on the unjust and unfaithful. In the book of Revelation the vintage is part of the narrative of the congregation of the kings of the earth and their armies at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16: 12-14), and of the subsequent judgement of the nations at the Parousia (Revelation 19: 15)⁴⁴.

Those who survive Armageddon are welcomed by the banquet of which the Eucharist is an anticipation, as a soteriological covenant proclaimed at the time of the Last Supper – for example, in Luke 22: 20 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood'. In John 6: 54 Christ states '... he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day...'. The theme is subsequently reiterated by St. Paul. The Old Testament, moreover, had also used an image of feasting for the chosen of God, for example, in II Baruch 29: 5, in a description of the eschaton: '... on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster shall produce a thousand grapes, and each grape shall produce a

⁴³ The New Jerusalem includes the water of life, cf. Revelation 22: 1-2. Another alchemical interpretation of the "VWIVV" is in a commentary by an anonymous author appended to Frankenberg's *Raphael ...*, ed. pr. in Amsterdam 1706, 45: 'Unser Wasser ist Wasser Unser: ein himlisch Wasser/ ein Wasser des Lebens: ein Schlich Wasser/ welchem alle Geister lieben. ... Es kommet nur aus einem Einzigem Brönnen auf das Erden/ so da liegt an einem heimlichen Ort in Judea: und hat einen so grossen Ausfluss/ das sein Wasser über die gantze Welt fleust/ und jederman behalt'. The text depicts three geometric symbols: circle, triangle, square, as well as their tabulation, and is entitled "De aqua – V W+VW sapientum".

⁴⁴ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 96-98.

cor of wine. And those who have hungered shall rejoice...'⁴⁵ In Michelspacher's engraving, another symbol of the sacramental covenant is the rainbow around the throne, which recalls God's promise to Noah in Genesis 9: 13, reiterated in Revelation 4: 3, where John sees around the throne of the Lamb 'a rainbow like an emerald in appearance'.

A close examination of the two people kneeling before Christ brings to mind other apocalyptic elements. For example, there are the joyous connotations of the Marriage Feast of Cana, another prefiguration of the Last Supper, the changing of water into wine, and a symbol of the feast on the Last Day. Lying on the ground between the couple are three crowns, symbolising the three principles of salt, mercury and sulphur but also recalling the casting-down of their crowns by the twenty-four elders in the first chapter of Revelations. The male and female figures are also reminiscent of the two witnesses in Revelation 11: 3-13, who are martyred and resurrected, and ascend to heaven after three and a half days. This accords with the alchemical process in which the prime materials are considered to be "tortured" and resurrected, since only mortification can purify matter sufficiently to permit its union with the spirit. Finally, the happy pair is depicted as the elect among metals. The other five, like the Foolish Virgins in Christ's parable of the Parousia, are rejected and remain below the earth in purgatory. They wait, heads bent, pleading for the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit and offering the alchemical bellows to Christ who does not acknowledge their presence. In this image, Christ is the Logos whose sacraments are an inner enlightenment reserved for an elite group.

The Lutheran concern with eschatology had triggered a huge revival of astrological interest in Germany in the mid-sixteenth century, and Michelspacher's alchemical apocalypse should be located within this context. From the outset even Luther had had to accept certain aspects of astrology since, according to Luke 21: 25, Christ had stated that the first signs of the end would appear in the sun, moon and stars. Moreover, by the 1530s the astrological predictions of Paracelsus were widely dispersed. Paracelsus had foretold that one "Elias Artista" would appear to reform the arts and sciences, and the Paracelsians had seen in the new star of 1604 the harbinger of his advent⁴⁶. The quintessential star in the *Cabala's* second engraving could be a reference to this phenomenon, modelled on treatises such as those of Paul Nagel of Leipzig, a Paracelsian chiliast in his *Himmels Zeichen. Grosse Conjunctiones Planetarum superiorum, und neuer Wunderstern, so Anno 1604...* (Hall in Sachsen 1605) and in his *Catoptromantia Physica* (Leipzig 1610). Nagel

⁴⁵ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 19-22.

⁴⁶ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 216-19.

stated that in order to read the heavens correctly, it was necessary to know mathematics, medicine, scripture, the biblical prophets, such as Daniel and Ezekiel, as well as Revelation. Moreover, only the elect who understood apocalyptic astronomy would be saved at the eschaton.

More specific references to these astrological predictions may also exist in the second engraving of the *Cabala*, where there appears an obscure arrangement of astral constellations, the water signs being governed by Capricorn representing earth, the water signs by Leo representing fire, while the air signs are ruled by Taurus whose element is earth (fig. 2). They are joined together by a geometrical triangle in whose corners are placed the signs for sulphur, mercury and “materia”. The traditional alchemical reference would be to the circulation of the elements whereby they are transmuted into their opposites, but there could also be present here an apocalyptic meaning. In this case, the inverted triangle of the elemental stars cuts into the body of the papal Beast. In astrology such trigonal astrological alignments traditionally heralded doom for the established order. In Michelspacher’s picture, the large star of the quintessence has the form of an (albeit irregular) geographical compass. If north is at the top, then from its southern region the star showers the fiery south wind onto the alchemical flask and through the constellations onto the Beast⁴⁷. There had been one such trigonal governed by the fiery constellations and planets in 1584, and it had had caused enormous excitement. Eustachius Poyssel in *Die Schlüssel David, Esaie: 22, Apocalip: 3* (1594) and in *Die Braut dess Lambs, Das Himmlische Neue Jerusalem...* (1591) had predicted more ominous trigons for the early seventeenth century.

Other apocalyptic prophecies issued in the same period as the *Cabala* were those of Johann Faulhaber of Ulm, many of whose students were from Switzerland and Austria. His *Himlische gehaime Magia Oder Neue Cabalistische Kunst...* (Nuremberg, 1613) was succeeded by a pro-Rosicrucian treatise, *Mysterium arithmeticum* (1615). Faulhaber’s apocalyptic Rosicrucianism was emulated by David Meder’s *Iudicium Theologicum von Brüderschafft des Rosen Creutz* (1616). A slightly earlier source for the eschatological messianism of the original Rosicrucian Manifestos was Simon Studion’s *Naometria* (“New Measurement”) of 1604 in which he employed Poyssel’s analytical methods in dating the Parousia for 1623⁴⁸. Michelspacher dedicated the 1616 edition of his treatise to the Rosy Cross Fraternity, and the influence of such apocalyptic mathematicians and astrologers on his work is undeniable.

⁴⁷ In the *Aurora Consurgens* the south wind is fiery, like the alchemical fire, and so is the Holy Spirit; see von Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, 386.

⁴⁸ Studion’s Mss is in the Württemberger Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, and there is a facsimile of the manuscript in the Warburg Library, London.

In conclusion, the apocalyptic symbology in Michelspacher's *Cabala* represents a judgment on those who are not united with Christ within the soul but only within the empty formulas of external ritual. In both Roman and Lutheran dogma the sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist were integrally related, the water of life being the blood of Christ. The Eucharist in particular was considered to be an instance of election through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Michelspacher's Paracelsian eschatology had further narrowed down the criteria for the elect, by demanding from them a personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit experienced in the regeneration of both body and soul. Hence, the theme of the fourth engraving of the *Cabala* is not only salvation and transformation, but also judgement on the rejected among both the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics.

Urszula Szulakowska, lecturer in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, is engaged in research into the history of alchemical illustration, with specific interest in the late Renaissance period and the twentieth century.

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Apokalyptische Eucharistie und religiöse Dissidenz in Stefan Michelspacher's Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia (1616).

Der vorliegende Beitrag handelt von der Ikonographie des alchemistischen Abendmahls im Kontext der deutschen Reformation und der damaligen lutherischen Eschatologie. In diesem Zusammenhang werden vier Kupferstiche analysiert, die unter dem Titel *Spiegel der Kunst und Natur* (Augsburg : David Francke 1616) die Kabbala von Stephan Michelspacher illustrieren: auf diesen Bildern werden nämlich die Endzeit im Sinne der Offenbarung des Johannes (Apokalypse) und das Erlösungswerk durch Jesu Christi Leib und Blut in paracelsischer Hinsicht dargestellt. Da der paracelsische Spiritualist Michelspacher wegen der jesuitischen Gegenreformation in Tirol als Ketzer betrachtet werden konnte, mag er in der toleranten Atmosphäre von Augsburg eine Zuflucht gefunden haben. Man muß aber feststellen, daß seine Abhandlung auch gegenüber der lutherischen Kirche sehr kritisch ist. Darum werden im vorliegenden Beitrag die in Michelspachers Kabbala dargestellten religiösen Gedanken eher mit den spiritualisten Strömungen der Schwenckfelder und Paracelsisten verglichen. Jene Außenseiter bildeten eine zweite und dritte Generation von Protestanten, die sowohl die lutherische Kirche, als auch die römisch-katholische Kirche verwarfen und einen unorganisierten Zusammenschluß von frommen Einzelnen förderten.

