

Spotlight on Medieval Mysticism

Hermes, Suso, Lull,
and Lichtenberger

at

DR. JÖRN GÜNTHER · RARE BOOKS AG
Manuskripte und seltene Bücher
Basel / Stalden

MERCVRII TRISMEGISTI LI-
BER DE POTESTATE ET SAPI-
ENTIA DEI E GRAECO IN LATI-
NUM TRADUCTVS A MARSILIO
FICINO FLORENTINO AD
COSMVM MEDICEM PATRIAE
PATREM. PIMANDER INCIPIT.

AUm de rerum natura cogita-
rem: ac mentis aciem ad sup-
na erigerē: sopitis iam corpis
sensibus: quemadmodum ac-
cidere solet iis: qui ob saturitatem: uel defa-
tigationem: somno grauati sunt. subito mihi
uisus sum cernere quēdam: immensa magni-
tudine corporis: qui: me nomine uocans: in
hūc modum clamaret. Quid est o Mercuri:
quod et audire: et intueri desideras? Quid
est: quod discere atq; intelligere cupis? Tū
ego: qui inquam es inq;? Sum inquit ille Piman-
der mens diuinæ potentiaē. at tu uide: quid
uelis. ipse uero tibi ubiq; adero. Cupio inquam
rerum naturam discere. deumq; cognoscere.
Ad hæc ille. Tua me mēte complectere: &

natura reru

Hermes Trismegistus, *De Potestate et
Sapientia Dei*. Translated from Greek
into Latin by Marsilio Ficino.
Treviso, Gerardus de Lisa de Flandria,
18 December 1471. 1st edition, 204 x
132 mm, 56 leaves

Hermeticism is a religious,
philosophical, and esoteric tradition
that is primarily based on writings
attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

Under the title *De potestate et sapientia
Dei*, this book, printed in 1471, is the
very rare, first edition of the Hermetic
works I-XIV rediscovered only some
fifteen years earlier.

Also called *Pimander* after the first
treatise, the texts reveal divine
mysteries attributed to Thoth, the
philosopher-king and priest of ancient
Egypt. This god of wisdom and patron
of astrology and alchemy, who is
called 'thrice greatest', was thought to
have been a contemporary of Moses.

ARGVMENTVM MAR SILII FL
CINI FLORENTINI IN LIBRĒ
MERCVR II TRISMEGISTI AD
COSMVM MEDICEM PATRIAE
PATREM.

Quo tēpore: quo Moyses natus
est: floruit Athlas astrologus
Promethei phisici frater. ac
maternus auus maioris Mer-
curii: cuius nepos fuit Mercurius Trisme-
gistus. Hoc autem de illo scribit Aurelius
Augustinus. Quāq̄ Cicero: acq; Laetantius:
Mercurios quinq; per ordinē fuisse uolūt.
quintumq; fuisse illum: qui ab ægyptiis
a grecis autē Trismegistus appel-
latus est. Hunc asserunt occidisse argū: ægt
ptiis præfuisse: eisq; leges: ac lras tradidisse.
Litterarum uero caracteres in animalū ar-

In the *Corpus Hermeticum* – dialogues mixing Platonism with Gnostic, Hebraic, Mithraic, and ancient Egyptian traditions – philosophy is put to the service of religious concepts.

Pimander, the first Hermetic treatise, tells the story of the Creation similar to that in Genesis, but in the form of a dialogue between Hermes and Pimander, the divine. Hermes in his sleep asks to know God and suddenly sees in Pimander a great light, then darkness.

To live according to the mystery of God, Pimander tells Hermes he must live a pure and holy life, and 'at death, the immortal element of man will ascend and return to the sphere of God whence it came ...'

Tu quisquis es: qui hæc legis: siue grama-
ticus: siue orator: seu philosophus: aut theo-
logus: scito. Mercurius Trismegistus sū: quē
singulari mea doctrina & theologica: ægypti
prius & barbari: mox Christiani antiqui the-
ologi: ingēti stupore attoniti admirati sunt.
Quare si me emes: & leges: hoc tibi erit com-
modi: quod paruo ære cōparatus summa re-
legendem uoluptate: & utilitate afficiā. Cū
mea doctrina cuiuscunq; aut mediocriter eru-
dito: aut doctissimo placeat. Parce oro: si ue-
rum dicere non pudet: nec piget. Lege modo
me: & fatebere non mēturum: sed si semel le-
ges: rursus releges: & cæteris consules: ut
me emant & legant. Bene uale.

FRAH. RHOL. TARVISANVS.
GERAR. DE LISA SCRIPTORI:
MEI COPIAM FECIT.
VT IPSE CAETERIS
MAIOREM COPIAM
FACERET.
TARVISII.
.M. CCCC. LXXI. NOVEMB.

ARGVMENTVM MARSILII FL-
CINI FLORENTINI IN LIBRŪ
MERCVR II TRISMEGISTI AD
COSMV M MEDICEM PATRIAE
PATREM.

HO tēpore: quo Moyses natus
est: floruit Atlas astrologus
Promethei phisici frater. ac
maternus auus maioris Mer-
curii: cuius nepos fuit Mercurius Trisme-
gistus. Hoc autem de illo scribit Aurelius
Augustinus. Quāq; Cicero: acq; Lactantius
Mercurios quinq; per ordinē fuisse uolūt.
quintumq; fuisse illum: qui ab ægyptiis
a grecis autē Trismegistus appel-
latus est. Hunc asserunt occidisse argū: ægti-
ptiis præfuisse: eisq; leges: ac lras tradidisse.
Litterarum uero characteres in animalū ar-
borumq; figuris instituisse. Hic in tanta ho-
minum ueneratiōe fuit: ut in decq; numerū
reclatus sit. Tempa illius numinis cōstrueta
q̄ plurima. Nomen eius proprium: ob reuerē-
tiam quandam pronūtiare: uulgo ac temere

The texts found favour in humanist circles and soon exerted great influence. Considered to be the earliest work of 'Perennial Philosophy', the *Corpus Hermeticum* became a core book in collections of Renaissance thought – being the 'primordial fount of Wisdom'.

Only in the 17th century, the great philosopher Hermes was found to be legendary. Later it was discovered that the texts, written in Greek, originated in Egypt, presumably in Alexandria in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.



Bedruckt vnd vollendet ist dicz büch (des ge
leich·noch bessers dē laien mit kund ist sein le
ben zebessern·genant der Seüße) von Antho-
nio sorg·in der keyserlichen stat Augspurg·
an dem nächsten freitag vor sant Jörgen tag
do man zalt nach Cristi gepurt·tausentvier-
hundertzwaiundachzig iar·

Heinrich Seuse (Latin: Suso; c. 1295-1366) was one of the greatest figures in German mysticism.

He studied in Strasbourg and Cologne, where he was deeply influenced by teachings of the celebrated mystic Meister Eckhart.

Around 1361-1363, Suso compiled and revised his four major German writings into one volume, the *Exemplar*, as in this codex.

Included are Suso's *Vita*, his authentic autobiography – *Das Büchlein der ewigen Weisheit*. Booklet of Eternal Wisdom: the most beautiful book of German mysticism. – *Das Büchlein der Wahrheit*. Booklet of truth, his earliest work. – *Briefbüchlein*, selected letters sent to Elsbeth Stigel and other nuns.

Henricus Suso, *Das Buch ... genannt der Seüße*. – Hendrik Herp (d. 1477), *Von der Bruderschaft der ewigen Weisheit* – [Rulman Merswin, d. 1382], *Buch von den neun Felsen*. Augsburg: Anton Sorg, 19 April 1482.



Der Sunnen bild ist so fein – Er übertrifft der stern schein.

Printed in 1482, this is the 1st and only 15th century edition, illustrated with 20 woodcuts (4 of which historiated initials) by the Augsburg *Kreuzfahrt Meister* in contemporary colouring. Only 4 copies are known in this colouring, added in the printing office.

Suso's ideas are summarized in the form of a conversation with his devout follower, the nun Elsbeth Stigel. In this, he tries to define God for her, using the language and imagery of Pseudo-Dionysius: One of the names of God is 'good', the divine darkness is 'itself the clearest of all light', and 'God is both outside as in all things', but God is also 'Eternal Wisdom', which speaks to his disciples.

At left: Both God (with the globe of the world) and Suso hold scrolls, encouraging the love for Eternal Wisdom.

Henricus Suso, *Das Buch ... genannt der Seüße*. – Hendrik Herp (d. 1477), *Von der Bruderschaft der ewigen Weisheit* – [Rulman Merswin, d. 1382], *Buch von den neun Felsen*. Augsburg: Anton Sorg, 19 April 1482.

Ditz nachgende bild beweiset ains wol anua
 henden menschen raitzliches gesuchte nach göt
 lichem trost.
 das vii-capitel.



ER het im selb ernewert etliche band. vnd do
 ward geschach an der engel nachte. do was
 im vor in der gesicht. wie er hort engelisch ge
 sang. vnd süßes himelisches gedöne. da von
 ward im als wol das er alles seines leidens ver gah. do
 sprach ie einer zu im. sich als du geren hörst von vns
 das gesang der ewigkeit. also hören wir von dir gete
 das gesang von der ewigen würdigen weisheit. vnd
 sprach aber darnach also. Dies ist des gesangs. das die
 auser wölten lieben heyligen werden frölichen singen

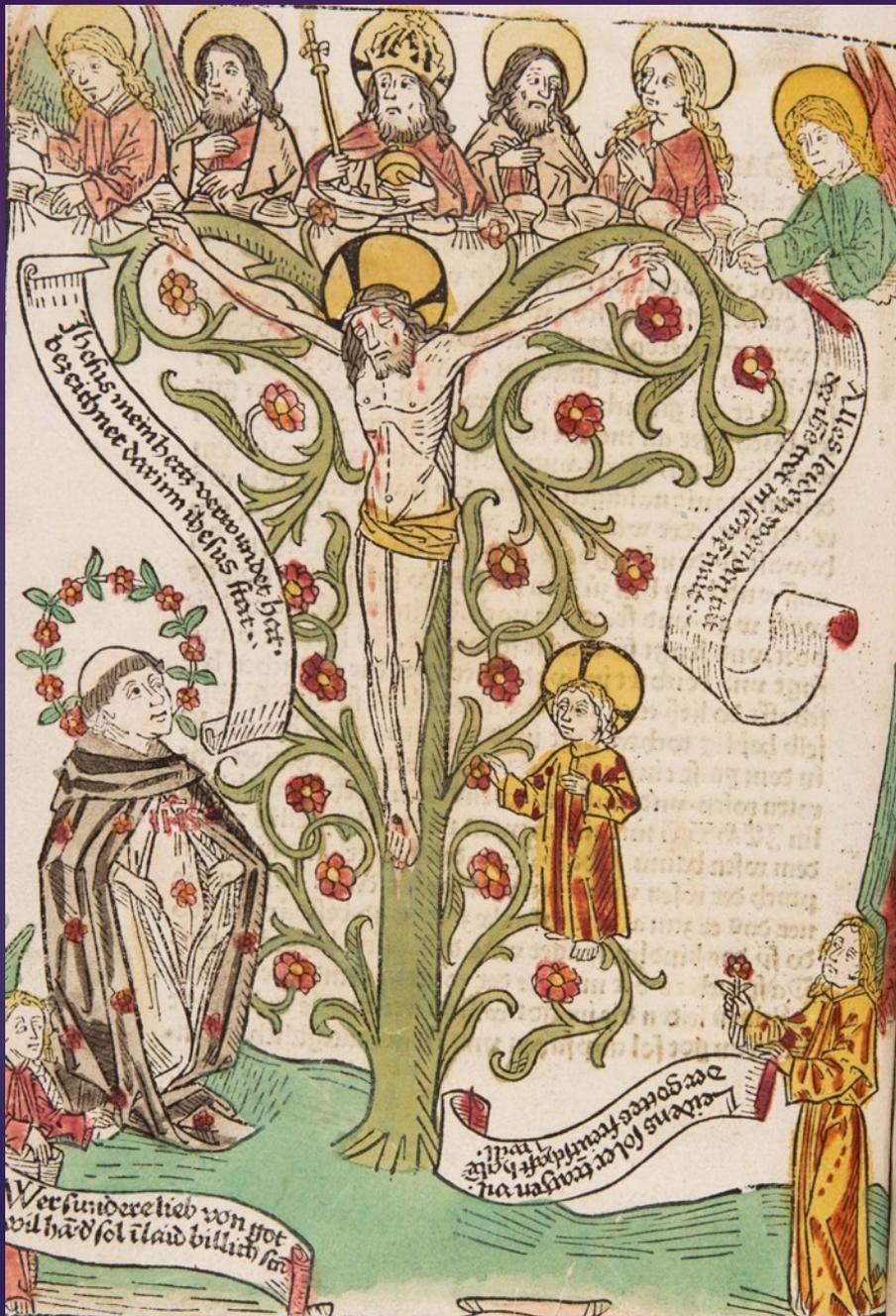
*Ditz nachgende bild beweiset ains wol anuahenden
 menschen raitzliches gesuoche nach goetlichem trost
 (Chapter 7, f. 14v)*

Suso, servant of Eternal Wisdom, embraces
 Eternal Wisdom. Eternal Wisdom embraces the
 soul of the servant.

The wreath of roses was an element of medieval
 courtship. Usually, women gave it to their lovers.
 Suso takes on the role of both the male and the
 female, as he wears a wreath and also offers one.

Suso considered Wisdom to be the divine bride of
 the soul. His search for Wisdom was like
 searching for the embrace of the bride. He
 articulated in ascetic language the lessons of
 Wisdom and the way in which man could come to
 them.

Knowledge of the divine is thus found through
 knowledge of the human passion and suffering of
 Christ.



Christ crucified on a rose tree, while a young Christ below holds a rose. Suso describes the symbolism of roses: white roses signify purity, while red roses stand for Christ's patience. A garland of roses is also a symbol of multiple sufferings.

These texts exude a strong desire for love and put the beloved soul in the centre. The divine inspiration emanates from a 'she', who is Eternal Wisdom, and lifts people above 'the self'.

One can learn the inner-self in meditation and spiritual conversation. One can also learn to systematically work on building that self and strengthen it.

Wisdom is Christ. The divine being, the origin of all good, is Eternal Wisdom.

Leren leyden cristus rex mengelich:



Leren leyden Cristus rex menglich

Vision of the crucified Christ as a seraphim with six wings. The tree of vines refers to Christ's sacrifice.

"I am the vine: you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. ...My commandment is that you love one another. You are my friends...If you keep in my commandments, you will abide in my love."
(John 15:1-8)

Suso kneeling before his vision of the crucified Christ: he has the sacred monogram IHS engraved on his chest.



Die ewig weijshait. In meinem götlichen schirm willich sy haben die meine namen IHU in irer begird wollen tragen.

The young men at the bottom of the image are looking at and praying to the sacred monogram floating in front of them. The kneeling monk (Suso) has already taken the name to heart, literally, as it appears on his chest.

An angel presents two women holding symbols of roses and Scripture.

God's love is to be shared by all. Among the *Gottesfreunde* /Friends of God, Suso established a society called the *Brotherhood of the Eternal Wisdom*.



Especially Suso's texts on Eternal Wisdom have been widely read as *Horologium*, or a Clockwork of Eternal Wisdom, in the Hours of Eternal Wisdom or in the Hundred articles of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. These texts are often included in Dutch Books of Hours as composed by the Dutch reformer Geert Grote.

Duyst van Voorhout Book of Hours, manuscript written in Dutch and illuminated in Delft, c. 1450-1460. 160 x 112 mm, 210 leaves, vellum. With 14 full-page miniatures, 5 initials, and various decorative borders. Presumably made for Adriana Duyst van Voorhout as a gift from her parents.

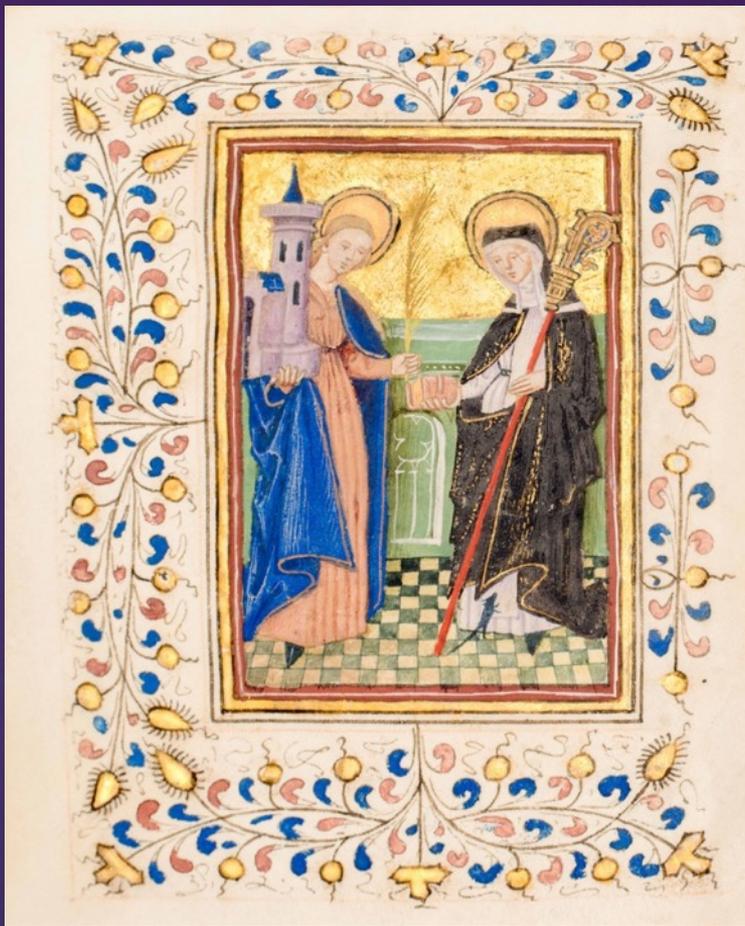


ff. 165r-192r Henry Suso, 100 Hundred
Articles of the Passion: ...*dese hondert
articulen of ghedenckenissen sijnre bitterre
passien mit hondert vaersen of ghebeden die hier
na volghen daghelix oversegghen...*

Suso pointed out that the love of Wisdom
could be renewed through simple daily
exercises. Every day one had to read the
Hours of Eternal Wisdom, as a first step up
the ladder. Wisdom teaches everyone who
wishes to find the right path to choose
eternal, divine wisdom as his bride.

Suso's *Hundred Articles or Meditations*
consist of prayers for the days of the week,
directed by a demanding routine of
standing, kneeling, and lying down. Such
texts were more popular in monastic circles
than among laics.

Duyt van Voorhout Book of Hours, in Dutch.
Manuscript illuminated by the Masters of the
Delft Half-Length Figures in the coloured Delft
style. Holland, Delft, c. 1450-1460.



Book of Hours, presumably given to Adriana Duyst van Voorhout, who was likely a nun at St. Barbara's in Delft.

Delft manuscripts were written by members of various religious institutions, not only by men, but also by women. In these circles, Books of Hours were given a distinct following order of prayers, new texts were added, and various styles of miniature painting and decoration were applied. This, together with devotions to specific saints, made Delft books particularly attractive and outstanding.

We also know that there was direct contact between Delft and the *Gottesfreunde* in Alsace. Suso's *Van der Ewiger Wijsheit* and Rulman Merswin's *Neun Felsen Buch* were among the study books in St. Barbara's .



Raimundus Lullus, *Arbor scientie*. Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 20 August 1505. 1st edition with illustrations. – *Apostrophe: Raymundi*. Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 14 August 1504. 1st edition.

299 x 213 mm. I: 182 leaves, 18 woodcuts. II: 12 leaves, title woodcut. With extensive 16th-century manuscript annotations presumably from Mallorca, where the book belonged to the Collegium Monte Sion, founded in 1530.

The Catalan mystic and poet Ramon Llull (1232-1316) experienced mystical visions of Christ on the Cross. This 'doctor illuminatus' saw the Universe reflecting the Divine, and conceived a method to reduce all knowledge to its basic principles.

In his *Arbor scientiae* (*The Tree of Knowledge*), he uses logic and complex mechanical techniques involving symbolic notation and combinatory diagrams to relate all forms of knowledge. As a universal system and compendium of knowledge, the *Ars Lulliana* remained influential until charges of confusing faith with reason led to the condemnation of Llull's teachings in 1376.



Although Lull's first objective was to reveal the 'truth of Christianity' to nonbelievers, the *Arbor scientiae* provided a single methodological basis to classify all 'branches' of knowledge – from theology to the natural and human sciences. Lull's writings helped to develop the Catalan language and widely influenced mysticism.

Woodcuts depicting allegorical trees introduce the chapters. Each large tree is placed in the centre, its roots and branches spread out symmetrically. Two figures are pictured next to the tree, sometimes labelled as Raymond and monk, recalling a typical master-disciple iconography in a didactic work. Parts of the trees (trunk, branches, flowers, fruits) bear scrolls, and the end of their roots are marked by circles, providing space for inscriptions.

The *Arbor Vegetalis* introduces the second chapter.

Raimundus Lullus, *Arbor scientie Raymundi*.
Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 20 August 1505. 1st edition,
with illustrations.

mirabile: q̄ igit̄ erit̄ ̄ igne: v̄le ̄ p̄ficulare suū. De hac pena ita magna p̄narrare nolo: q̄m̄ modū
cū ē illud: q̄d dicere posse ē respectū magnitudis pene: q̄ ē ī euināre: q̄ colliget̄ ī cozpe m̄l̄r / 2 ī aīa
sp̄āl̄r / 2 q̄ colliget̄ ī aīa p̄ cozp̄: ī q̄ cozp̄ q̄d plenū finib̄ ad aīaz v̄it̄ r̄oe gl̄oziat̄ōis: ad aīaz v̄it̄ va
cūū finib̄ aīa toznt̄is. Et ī b̄ passū cognoscat̄ ignis m̄l̄: p̄ q̄ aīa h̄t̄ tormētū: ī cozpore cū illa p̄iūcto.



The trees constitute a symbolic structure to explain the principles, relations, and levels of reality of each category of knowledge.

The categories include, for example, elements, senses, imagination, humanity, morality, law, church, astronomy, and spiritual subjects such as angels, paradise and hell, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and theology.

The shapes of the trees differ mainly in the number of boughs, appropriate to the category they represent.

Another distinguished shape is a tree with the trunk split into two, each with seven branches, and the figure of Jesus Christ appearing between them in the upper crown. This illustration appears first as *arbor moralis*, opening a treatise in two parts on the virtues and vices.

Raimundus Lullus, *Arbor scientie Raymundi*.
Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 20 August 1505. 1st
edition, with illustrations.



Apostrophe:



Raymundi.

The author inspired by the Holy Ghost on the verso of the title page as a kind of frontispiece: the half-page size woodcut shows a portrait of Ramon Llull standing and holding a book as he looks up to the dove of the Holy Ghost in the upper right corner. It was already used as the title woodcut in the *Apostrophe Raymundi*, which was printed one year before and is bound at the end of the present copy.

Raimundus Lullus, *Arbor scientie Raymundi*. Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 20 August 1505. 1st edition, with illustrations. – *Apostrophe: Raymundi*. Barcelona: Pedro Posa, 14 August 1504. 1st edition.

299 x 213 mm. I: 182 leaves. With 18 woodcuts. II: 12 leaves, with title woodcut. With extensive 16th-century manuscript annotations presumably from Mallorca, where the book belonged to the Collegium Monte Sion, founded in 1530.

Prefatio in Opusculum sequens.

Vanquā solus deus in sua potestate sibi tē-
pora et momenta ut veritas ipsa testatur re-
semauerunt preteritis quoque futuroque solus ipse ac nemo
omni in hoc mundo constitutus qui diem possit crastinum
polliceri et in eadem certum quid futurum fore predicere. Nihil
omnis tamen idem ipse ac optimus deus sine liberalissima
bonitate plurima in creaturas suas transfudit dona quibus
ea que futura ac pericula sunt videre et prescere permittit. pre-
sare inquam non certo penitus sed ut deus ipse voluit come-
turali quodam ac discursivo iudicio. Sic aures canu et vox
latu aliisque aialia alijs modis ipsa ipsoque dispositioes ac alia
sua pulchra sunt pronuntiat. Sic sol sero rubes maceremur
tatem aurem indicat mane vero si rubet vespernas pluuas in sinuat que omnia per naturam reb? ipse



sis ex ordine adeo indita sic scribere. Nec obstabit dicit veritas. qui et idem Aristoteles ait etiam aliunde oportebit scire et deterrminatam conditio-

tionem intellectum et potentiam scientiam et cognitionem astrorum predicere valent. Et ut ra predicendi viam quis vel sentit. Prima via que omni est magis ex vultu preteritis per se habent senes. Secunda viam causas reprimaturis primo cōibus superioribus. ut Aristoteles et iteque Ptolomeus hōies per astra ipsa prestant corporibus nonumquam et si solus patetis est. Melius ipse vel in vultu bulclam oculis modis que hoc de Sibilla apud gentes ait. Hec ipsa templi eternitatem nata est ac innumera alia in veteri testamento propheta in hoc nōi tempore nono testamēto in fine seculi ventura reuelatus reuelatōes in ope subiectus Lofbards ut suis loci operis que seculi inordinabilem ac

Capitulum Secundum

Quitas super montem posita iuxta euangelicam expositionem Matthei. v. non sunt absconditi his temporibus. Nam antequam huius reterum eclipsis influxus preceat nonnulla pericula discrimina ecclesie dei et nauiculae sancti Petri imminere videntur. Ista nauicula bene variis hinc inde agitata turbantibus fluctibus atque periculis quassabit. eius quoque saluatio aut intereundi periculum velut in equalibus ponderibus vel equilibri posita natabunt. Et nisi benignissimus ac idem optimus deus eam custodierit. multa pericula discrimina et ex scilicet naufragium passura videbitur. Cum tamen quod nauicula sancti Petri nunquam mergitur. quoniam multis periculis mans et tempestatibus fluctuet et taceat fluctuat et nunquam mergitur illa nauis.

Idam et ena hic stare debent ut preuaricatores significantes ecclesiam.



Johannes Lichtenberger, *Prognosticatio in Latino*. [Heidelberg: Heinrich Knobloch, after 1 April 1488]. 1st edition.

290 x 207 mm. 38 leaves. With 45 large woodcut illustrations. Rare in commerce.

Court astrologer to Emperor Frederick III in the 1470s and a prophet (c. 1440–1503), Lichtenberger became known for this work *Prognosticatio*. His predictions were based particularly on the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that happened under the sign of Scorpio (related to Mars) in November 1484 when he was parish priest in a village in his native Palatine region. After an introduction on astrology and prophecy, the work treats, in three parts, the fate of the Church, the Empire, and the laity. It concerns German politics, clerical reforms, the threat of the Turks, and failures of morality. There are predictions up to the year 1576.



Ptolomeus. Aristoteles Sibilla Brigida Reinhardus

Johannes Lichtenberger, *Prognostocatio*. [Heidelberg:
Heinrich Knobloch, after 1 April 1488].
1st edition.

Elements of alchemy as well as prophecies were included. Predictions alternate with juridical theory and discussions of the impact of the stars on human destinies.

The illustrations to the prophecies were meant to impress the reader. They depict several prophetic figures who received divine inspiration: Ptolemy, Aristotle, the Cumaean Sibyl, St. Bridget, and Reinhard the Lollard. The text was highly influential and gained widespread popularity.

Lichtenberger's name, however, did not appear on the title-page until 1525.

Arbor Thureor hic stare debet depicta cū quindecim
ramis. Necessitas debet esse arida.



Capitulum vicinūquintum.

Anielis scdo legit post visionē regis respondit daniel. Vobis qz vidisti pte pedū
testeā. ptem ferream. Sicut ferz nō p̄t miseri teste. sic erunt sub romāo imperio dis
cordie inter catholicos ⁊ infidelissimos thurcos. pars solidabit sub imperio Constā
tinopolitano ps altera p̄teret scz Trapelundoꝝ imperiū tunc suscitabit deus regnū celi qd
stabit in eternum.

Ottomān⁹ p̄m⁹ thencer oīm thencroꝝ gubnatoꝝ p̄m⁹ extitit impator bellicosissim⁹. hic
miscuit ferz in cristianos semp cū Portugens. Polonis. Tartaris Ruthenis gwerzans.
hinc inde strenuus in ⁊ cōtra fideles xpianos in oīm vicinatu sp̄ vbiqz Turcū caput statue
xpiane religionis intoricās. Ergo inter oēs p̄ores gubernatores. captaneos ⁊ retores thur
coꝝ ab eisdem sic est cognominatus ⁊ connumeratus

Thamarjū⁹ xpianus maxim⁹ ⁊ antiquissim⁹ rex atqz fortissim⁹ olim alemānoꝝ. armenoꝝ. uqz
ymmo ⁊ tartareoꝝ maioris ⁊ minoris Lapodoacoꝝ oīs memendissim⁹. Sp̄ contra oēs

Johannes Lichtenberger, *Prognostocatio*. [Heidelberg:
Heinrich Knoblochtzter, after 1 April 1488].
1st edition.

Prognostic traditions and late medieval
prophetic texts profited from the new medium
of print. These works were bestsellers for many
printers. In early modern culture, printed
prophecies were used by many, each for their
own purposes. Today they provide unique
insights in social and printing history.

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