

Correspondences 2.1 (2014) 67–104

ISSN 2053-7158 (Online)

correspondencesjournal.com

Between Alchemy and Pietism Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann's Philological Quest for Ancient Wisdom*

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Abstract

A minor figure undeservedly forgotten, Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann (1633–1679) has received only limited attention from historians of alchemy and church historians. He is known chiefly either for his idiosyncratic Phoenician reconstruction of the *Tabula Smaragdina*, a foundational text of alchemy attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, or alternatively for writing one of the earliest sustained defenses of Pietist conventicles to appear in print. In an attempt to bridge this unsatisfactory segregation, this paper argues that the notion of ancient wisdom (*prisca sapientia*) provided a crucial link between these seemingly disparate areas. First, Kriegsmann's largely philological works on alchemy published between 1657 and 1669 are discussed, with particular emphasis on how they framed the relationship between alchemy and religious piety. As Kriegsmann joined the cause of the first Pietists in

* In the process of writing this article, I have incurred many debts. The editors of *Correspondences*, particularly Aren Roukema, have been indefatigable in their support. Apart from sharing minor remarks and stimulating ideas, two anonymous readers have encouraged me to better contextualize the main argument. Jacqueline Borsje, Peter J. Forshaw, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Paul J. Koopman, Hanns-Peter Neumann, Joyce Pijnenburg, Boudien de Vries and Lana Zuber have read and commented on various drafts. Guido Naschert generously shared his knowledge on the relationship between Breckling and Tackius with me. Among the many libraries that provided me with access to, and copies of, rare sources, I would like to single out the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, where I was able to study Kriegsmann's devotional writings in the course of a research workshop on alchemy convened by Martin Mulsow and the late Joachim Telle, and the Landesbibliothek Coburg, which digitized the rare first edition of *Symphonies Christianorum* free of charge.

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the early 1670s, he was inspired to announce a whole range of books, some of which were never published. In the year 1676, he made the transition from an occult reading group to a Pietist conventicle. In its explicit combination of complete knowledge and practical piety, Kriegsmann's call to restore the Bible wisdom (*bibliosophia*) of the ancient Jews is considered and placed in the context of other spiritualist and Pietist appropriations of ancient wisdom.

Keywords

Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann; *Tabula Smaragdina*; Hermes Trismegistus; Plato; alchemy; ancient wisdom; Pietism

Introduction

In spite of his relatively short life, Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann (1633–1679) wore many different hats: he was a political advisor, literary translator, lay theologian, oriental philologist and armchair alchemist.¹ While his political and literary activities lie beyond the scope of this paper, it is my aim to show how the latter three roles relate to each other. Predicated on ancient wisdom (*prisca sapientia*), oriental philology and antiquarianism provided a crucial link between the two aspects of his life that have hitherto always been studied in complete isolation: alchemy and Pietism.² On the one hand, historians of alchemy have noted Kriegsmann's idiosyncratic work on the *Tabula Smaragdina* (1657), which argued that this brief text had originally

¹ A recent summary of his life can be found in Joachim Telle, "Kriegsmann, Wilhelm Christoph," in *Killy Literaturlexikon: Autoren und Werke des deutschsprachigen Kulturraumes*, ed. Wilhelm Kühlmann, 13 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008–12), vol. 7, 47–48. Among the older biographical outlines mentioned there, I have found the following treatment to be particularly valuable: Friedrich Wilhelm Strieder, *Grundlage zu einer Hessischen Gelehrten und Schriftsteller Geschichte: Seit der Reformation bis auf gegenwärtige Zeiten* (Kassel: Cramer, 1781–1817), vol. 7, 341–46. The biographical data given are largely derived from these two sources.

² For a seminal essay in the recent historiography of alchemy, see William R. Newman and Lawrence M. Principe, "Alchemy vs. Chemistry: The Etymological Origins of a Historiographical Mistake," *Early Science and Medicine* 3, no. 1 (1998): 32–65. As chemistry and alchemy were synonymous throughout the seventeenth century, Kriegsmann used the terms "chemia" or "chymia" mostly with reference to what is usually held as the key area of alchemy, *chrysopeia*, the art of making gold. For a survey of early-modern alchemy and its wider scope as chymistry, see Lawrence M. Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), chs. 5–7. For accounts of Pietism generally, see Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Martin Brecht et al., eds., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993–2004).

been written by Hermes Trismegistus in the lost Phoenician language.³ On the other hand, church historians have focused on Kriegsmann's role as one of the earliest defenders of Pietist conventicles in print through his *Symphonesis Christianorum* (1677/78).⁴ Yet in spite of twenty intervening years, I would argue that the disconnect apparent in existing scholarship is unjustified. This observation is also borne out by taking into account Kriegsmann's less known publications and other activities: his first work of lay theology, *Eusebie* (1659), was written only two years after his study of Hermes' emerald tablet, whereas his continued interest in alchemy is documented into the 1670s.

When talking of Pietism within the scope of this paper, I am largely referring to the moderate, Lutheran variety, though admittedly at a time before the various strands differentiated themselves. I attempt to describe the connection between alchemy and Pietism (a specific historical movement in Lutheran Germany) as evident in the life and work of Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann. Hence, Pietism is not to be confused with piety even though these terms are sometimes used in almost the same sense, especially in Anglophone scholarship.⁵ As a historian, I am interested in Pietism, whereas Kriegsmann—who died when the movement was still in its formative phase and the term was not yet coined—was concerned with piety. While a number of figures in the period connected alchemy and Pietism, Kriegsmann is an unusual case because he made the connection between alchemy and Pietism through ancient wisdom. In nearly all other cases in which alchemy and Pietism occur together, in whatever form, another element best identified as spiritualism took the place of ancient wisdom, though this did not rule out the integration of appeals to the latter.⁶ Ancient wisdom was, after all, the dominant paradigm through which the early-modern period under-

³ Julius Ruska, *Tabula smaragdina: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1926), 220–24; Thomas Hofmeier, "Exotic Variations of the Tabula Smaragdina," in *Magic, Alchemy and Science 15th–18th Centuries: The Influence of Hermes Trismegistus*, ed. Carlos Gilly and Cis Van Heertum, 2 vols. (Venice/Amsterdam: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana/Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 2002), vol. 1, 540–63.

⁴ Claudia Tietz, *Johann Winckler (1642–1705): Anfänge eines lutherischen Pietisten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 179–270, esp. 200–209; Heinrich Steitz, "Das antipietistische Programm der Landgrafschaft Hessen-Darmstadt von 1678," in *Der Pietismus in Gestalten und Wirkungen*, eds. Heinrich Bornkamm, Friedrich Heyer and Alfred Schindler (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1975), 444–65.

⁵ See e.g. Christian T. Collins Winn et al., eds., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

⁶ Though dated in opposing alchemy and chemistry, a valuable survey is provided by Christa Habrich, "Alchemie und Chemie in der pietistischen Tradition," in *Goethe und der Pietismus*, eds. Hans-Georg Kemper and Hans Schneider (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), 45–77.

stood human history and the transmission of culture.⁷ Not to be confused with spiritism, the term “spiritualism” refers to a strain of religious thought particularly strong in post-Reformation German lands that privileged the inner dimension of faith over outward expressions, sometimes going as far as deeming the latter wholly irrelevant.⁸ Consequently, spiritualist rhetoric was often used to denounce institutionalized churches as mere walls of stone. Though the connection between spiritualism and Pietism remains under-researched, scholars increasingly agree on its importance and note the direct continuation of spiritualism in radical Pietism, which thus replaces moderate Pietism as the more original form.⁹ While evidence from his own writings is scarce, Kriegsmann moved in circles that eagerly discussed spiritualist literature. Beyond this, his interest in alchemy confirms the growing scholarly awareness of the importance alchemy and esoteric currents played in the pre-history and early phase of Pietism.¹⁰

The connection between spiritualism and alchemy can be traced back to Paracelsus (1493–1541), who left behind an enormous body of works

⁷ This argument is advanced with particular force by Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁸ An excellent introduction can be found in Volkhard Wels, “Unmittelbare göttliche Offenbarung als Gegenstand der Auseinandersetzung in der protestantischen Theologie der Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Diskurse der Gelehrtenkultur in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Herbert Jaumann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 747–808. Though slanted towards Anabaptism, see also John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, eds., *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁹ See Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*, ch. 6; Johannes Wallmann, “Kirchlicher und radikaler Pietismus: Zu einer kirchengeschichtlichen Grundunterscheidung,” in *Der radikale Pietismus: Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Wolfgang Breul, Marcus Meier, and Lothar Vogel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 19–43. A very early statement of this view can be found in Heinrich Bornkamm, *Mystik, Spiritualismus und die Anfänge des Pietismus im Luthertum* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1926).

¹⁰ W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. ch. 1; Andreas Deppermann, *Johann Jakob Schütz und die Anfänge des Pietismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 7–30; Ulrich Bubenheimer, “Schwarzer Buchmarkt in Tübingen und Frankfurt: Zur Rezeption nonkonformer Literatur in der Vorgeschichte des Pietismus,” *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 13 (1994): 149–63. For a general discussion of the relation between Christianity and esotericism in the early-modern period, see Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Esoterik und Christentum vor 1800: Prolegomena zu einer Bestimmung ihrer Differenz,” *Aries* 3, no. 2 (2003): 127–65. The following address the relation between Pietism and esotericism specifically: Dietrich Blaufuß, “Pietism,” in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, et al. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill 2006), 955–60; Markus Meumann, “Diskursive Formationen zwischen Esoterik, Pietismus und Aufklärung: Halle um 1700,” in *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Rezeption, Integration, Konfrontation*, ed. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2008), 77–114; Lucinda Martin, “The ‘Language of Canaan’: Pietism’s Esoteric Sociolect,” *Aries* 12, no. 2 (2012): 237–53.

providing crucial stimuli in both areas.¹¹ The link was passed on to the seventeenth century through Valentin Weigel (1533–1588), a Lutheran pastor with a posthumous career as a heretic, and Johann Arndt (1555–1621), a Paracelsian and Lutheran minister considered to be an important ancestor of Pietism. Their influence also reached Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), the controversial cobbler-gone-mystic.¹² Thence it was spread among the radical Pietists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, including, among others, Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), the controversial church historian.¹³ As there are only the faintest echoes of spiritualism in his works, Kriegsmann largely falls outside of this trajectory. Due to his education and interest in philology, he is much better associated with late Renaissance humanism than with German spiritualism. While his early work is characterized by a fascination with pagan antiquity, Kriegsmann only shared the Biblicism and anti-academicism of many other Pietists to a limited extent in that he argued, later in life, that the Bible should be privileged over pagan sources of learning.¹⁴ But, in contrast to Boehme, who treated the German translation of the Bible as divinely inspired, this still meant studying the Bible in Hebrew and Greek as well as applying philological methods.

¹¹ The literature on Paracelsus is vast; I only mention two important monographs: Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance*, 2nd, revised ed. (Basel: Karger, 1982); Charles Webster, *Paracelsus: Medicine, Magic and Mission at the End of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Webster, in particular, argues convincingly that Paracelsus needs to be seen in the context of the radical Reformation, in spite of having remained nominally Catholic.

¹² On Weigel, Andrew Weeks, *Valentin Weigel (1533–1588): German Religious Dissenter, Speculative Theorist, and Advocate of Tolerance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); “Valentin Weigel and *The Fourfold Interpretation of the Creation: An Obscure Compilation or Weigel’s Crowning Achievement at Reconciliation of Natural and Spiritual Knowledge?*,” *Daphnis* 34, no. 1/2 (2005): 1–22. On Arndt, Hanns-Peter Neumann, *Natura sagax – Die geistige Natur: Zum Zusammenhang von Naturphilosophie und Mystik in der frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel Johann Arndts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004); Hermann Geyer, *Verborgene Weisheit: Johann Arndts “Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christentum” als Programm einer spiritualistisch-hermetischen Theologie*, 3 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001). On Boehme, Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Lawrence M. Principe and Andrew Weeks, “Jacob Boehme’s Divine Substance *Salitter*: Its Nature, Origin, and Relationship to Seventeenth Century Scientific Theories,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 22, no. 1 (1989): 53–61.

¹³ Regarding Arnold, I would like to single out a paper that draws attention specifically to his treatment of alchemists: Douglas H. Shantz, “The Origin of Pietist Notions of New Birth and the New Man: Alchemy and Alchemists in Gottfried Arnold and Johann Heinrich Reitz,” in *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn, et al. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 29–41.

¹⁴ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *De bibliosophia Ebraeorum veterum in orbem literarium reducenda. Dissertatio epistolaris* (Darmstadt: Typis Henningi Mülleri, 1676). This text will be discussed in greater detail below.

After briefly outlining his upbringing and university studies, I turn to Kriegsmann's treatises on alchemy as well as Hermes Trismegistus and Plato, published between 1657 and 1669. He described both Hermes and Plato as having had insights paralleling Christian doctrines due to the observation of alchemical processes. This shows that, for Kriegsmann, alchemy occupied a key position in the wisdom of the ancients. The early 1670s brought with them a number of changes in Kriegsmann's life; most importantly, he made contact with the nucleus of Lutheran Pietism, the conventicle in Frankfurt am Main led by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), an important Lutheran minister and networker who became the leading figure of Pietism during its first three decades. Kriegsmann published another work of devotional theology, *Theopraxia* (1675), followed by a short treatise on the Bible wisdom (*bibliosophia*) of the ancient Hebrews in 1676. I explore the links between these two publications and place them in the context of other spiritualist and Pietist appropriations of ancient wisdom. The epilogue is dedicated to the final years of Kriegsmann's life, during which he wrote his defense of Pietist conventicles. As Pietism had to defend itself against charges of novelty, Kriegsmann was able to present this practical approach to religion as the true, original form of faith by appealing to the ancient Hebrews and early Christians. Since little is known about Kriegsmann, I will present my argument with an account of his life that will be more detailed than is perhaps conventional.

Kriegsmann's Early Life and Studies (1633–1657)

Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann was born to Barbara, née Ulrich, and Alexander Veit Kriegsmann (1604–1681) in 1633. At the tender age of fifteen—in the year that finally brought peace to German lands after the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648)—Wilhelm Christoph embarked on his university education in Jena, where he studied theology for three years, and then went on to Helmstedt for another two years. Throughout the entire seventeenth century, Helmstedt theology was characterized by the irenic approach of Georg Calixt (1586–1656) and his son, Friedrich Ulrich (1622–1701).¹⁵ Kriegsmann mentioned the latter affectionately in his disputation analyzing the notion of God's omnipresence, held in October 1653.¹⁶ In spite of a curriculum fo-

¹⁵ Johannes Wallmann, "Helmstedter Theologie in Conrings Zeit," in *Hermann Conring (1606–1681): Beiträge zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Michael Stolleis (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1983), 35–53.

¹⁶ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann and Johannes Homborg, *Exercitatio philosophica de omnipraesentia Dei* (Helmstedt: Typis Henningi Mulleri Acad. typ., 1653).

cused on theology and philosophy, it appears that oriental languages were Kriegsmann's real passion, and due to his great skill in philology, he was even offered a professorship at the age of twenty, which he declined.¹⁷ His inclination towards devotional and practical faith may have influenced this decision not to pursue a university career, and his later publications contain outspoken rejections of academic disputations, particularly in theology.¹⁸ Instead, he became private tutor at the court of Landgrave Friedrich Emich von Leiningen-Dagsburg-Hardenburg (1621–1698). Kriegsmann served this lord for the next twenty years, eventually as an advisor on matters of the church. This is the setting in which he first found the leisure to study ancient alchemy.

Kriegsmann's Philological Study of Alchemy (1657–1669)

As the study of languages was Kriegsmann's favourite intellectual pursuit, it is with alchemy at its most philological that he engaged in his first independent publication: in 1657, roughly four years after his graduation, he published his reconstructed Phoenician rendering of the *Tabula Smaragdina*. One of the most mysterious but also most influential texts in the canon of alchemical literature, this short work—barely a paragraph in length—was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the mythical inventor of both alchemy and the art of writing. The *Tabula Smaragdina*, transmitted in several Latin versions, was held to contain all the secrets of alchemy in a nutshell. Accordingly, numerous alchemists—including Isaac Newton (1642–1727)—wrote hundreds of pages trying to unravel its meaning.¹⁹ Hermes Trismegistus was a striking figure for another reason as well: the *Corpus Hermeticum*, containing his philosophical works, was interpreted as conveying a very clear description of Christian doctrines in spite of the fact that it was held to antedate Christianity by many centuries. When Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) translated most of the philosophical, Hermetic treatises from Greek into Latin for the first time, he introduced Hermes Trismegistus with quotations from Cicero

¹⁷ Strieder, *Grundlage*, vol. 7, 342. The university at which this took place is unfortunately not mentioned.

¹⁸ E.g., Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Symphonesis Christianorum Oder Tractat Von den einzelnen und privat-Zusammenkunfften der Christen/ Welche Christus neben den Gemeinen oder Kirchlichen Versammlungen zu halten eingesetzt* (Frankfurt a.M.: Bey Johann David Zunnern, 1678), 47–50.

¹⁹ E.g. B. J. T. Dobbs, "Newton's Commentary on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus: Its Scientific and Theological Significance," in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (Washington: Folger Books, 1988), 182–91.

and the church fathers Lactantius and Augustine. They situated the Egyptian sage firmly in the pre-Christian era, though a chronologically precise placement remained uncertain.²⁰

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, the authority of Hermes had experienced a harsh blow: for philological reasons, a number of scholars came to doubt the authenticity of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, transmitted only in Greek.²¹ In 1614, drawing on previous discussions, the Calvinist scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) proved that it stemmed from the early Christian era and not from the time of Moses, as widely believed.²² In Kriegsmann's day, then, Hermes Trismegistus had many critics, and a particularly outspoken one lectured at the University of Helmstedt: Hermann Conring (1606–1681), a professor of law who also taught medicine. Conring's *De Hermetica Aegyptiorum vetere ac Paracelsorum nova medicina* (1648) mounted a devastating critique of so-called Hermetic medicine and a polemical attack on Paracelsianism at the same time.²³ Kriegsmann was familiar with Conring's work and quoted it several times; he may well have met the author during his studies in Helmstedt.²⁴ Nevertheless, he was convinced that Hermes Trismegistus was authentic and much older even than Moses.

²⁰ A classic account can be found in Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), ch. 1; see also Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 45–46.

²¹ This discussion is documented in Martin Mulso, ed. *Das Ende des Hermetismus: Historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance. Dokumentation und Analyse der Debatte um die Datierung der hermetischen Schriften von Genebrard bis Casaubon (1567–1614)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

²² Anthony Grafton, "Protestant versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus," in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800*, ed. Anthony Grafton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 145–61.

²³ Hermann Conring, *De Hermetica Aegyptiorum vetere et Paracelsicorum nova medicina liber unus* (Helmstedt: Typis Henningi Mulleri acad. typ. Sumptibus Martini Richteri, 1648). For brief summaries of the arguments against the authenticity of the Hermetic writings and medicine, see Nancy G. Siraisi, "Hermes among the Physicians," in *Das Ende des Hermetismus: Historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance. Dokumentation und Analyse der Debatte um die Datierung der hermetischen Schriften von Genebrard bis Casaubon (1567–1614)*, ed. Martin Mulso (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 189–212; Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 97–100. For Conring's attack on Paracelsus, see Edwin Rosner, "Hermann Conring als Arzt und als Gegner Hohenheims," in *Hermann Conring (1606–1681): Beiträge zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Michael Stolleis (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1983), 87–120.

²⁴ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Conjectaneorum de Germanicae gentis origine, ac conditore, Hermete Trismegisto, qui S. Moysi est Chanaan, Tacito Tuito, Mercuriusque gentilibus; Liber unus; isque in Taciti de moribus Germanorum opusculum, diversis locis commentarius posthumus*, ed. Johann Ulrich Pregizer (Tübingen: Impensis Philiberti Brunni, Bibl. Tub. Typis Johann-Henrici Reisi, 1684), 4, 19, 29, passim.

Kriegsmann argued these claims in two treatises that had been meant to appear around the same time (1657), but one of them was only published posthumously. Considering the strong presence of Conring in Helmstedt, Kriegsmann's enthusiastic support of Hermes might be surprising, but there was another, perhaps more dominant side to Helmstedt as well: the city was known for the irenic theology of Georg Calixt.²⁵ Denounced by the theologians of Wittenberg as syncretistic, Calixt emphasized the church fathers and ancient authorities in a manner reminiscent of late Catholic humanism.²⁶ This background accounts for Kriegsmann's far from typically Lutheran approach to the wisdom of the ancients.

For the same reason, it made sense that Kriegsmann dedicated his work to a Catholic potentate, Johann Philipp von Schönborn (1605–73). Like the theologians of Helmstedt, the archbishop of Mainz was known and esteemed for his tolerant and irenic attitude.²⁷ Kriegsmann introduced himself to Schönborn as “a youth investigating the *arcana* of things after studies in divinity and humanities.”²⁸ This was neither the first nor the last time that the archbishop became the dedicatee of books touching on matters of chymistry: the young philologist also found himself in the company of such practically-minded practitioners as Johann Rudolph Glauber (1604?–1670) and Johann Joachim Becher (1635–1682).²⁹ Yet Kriegsmann's approach was very different, philological rather than entrepreneurial: whereas Glauber presented a new way to industrially manufacture *tartarus* or *Weinstein* (a salty sediment found in wine barrels), Kriegsmann offered “an emerald which value, not weight, commends,” a priceless insight that could not be turned into financial gain, though it might ultimately lead to the philosophers'

²⁵ Kriegsmann and Homborg, *Exercitatio philosophica*, fol. B2v.

²⁶ On the profile of theology in Helmstedt, see Wallmann, “Helmstedter Theologie in Conrings Zeit.”

²⁷ Allison P. Coudert, *The Impact of Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614–1698)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1999), 29, 34.

²⁸ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Hermetis Trismegisti Phoenicium Aegyptorum sed et aliarum gentium monarchae conditoris ... Tabula Smaragdina a situ temerariique nunc demum pristino genio vindicata* (Frankfurt a.M.: [Apud Thom. Matt. Götzium], [1657]), dedicatory epistle, no pagination. “Juvenis post divina et humanitatis studia, arcanis rerum operans.”

²⁹ Johann Rudolph Glauber, *Gründliche und warbaffige Beschreibung/ Wie man auß der Weinbefen einen guten Weinstein in grosser Menge extrabiren soll* (Nürnberg: In Verlegung Wolfgang des Jüngern/ und Johann Andreae Endter, 1654); Johann Joachim Becher, *Parnassus medicinalis illustratus*, 4 vols. (Ulm: In Verlegung Johann Görllins, 1662–63). In Becher's case, only the third volume deals with alchemy, integrating chrysopoetic clues into a natural history of metals and minerals. On Becher, see Pamela H. Smith, *The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

stone.³⁰ Kriegsmann was hoping that his philological insights would prove useful in *chrysopoeia*—the branch of chymistry that investigated how base metals could be turned into gold.

On another level, Kriegsmann also saw his work as a defense of Hermes Trismegistus against the doubts of Casaubon and others. As he explained in the dedicatory epistle, the differing and even contradictory interpretations of the *Tabula* “erode the dignity of the Hermetic name.”³¹ His philologically restored version was intended to redress this wrong and finally bring clarity regarding the meaning of the *Tabula Smaragdina*. But not only its inventor, the Hermetic art of alchemy itself was also the subject of criticism. For this reason, Kriegsmann added “A Defense of Our Chemical Studies against the Censors” as the final chapter of his treatise.³² “To me,” he clearly stated, “the chemical philosophy ought to follow after theology, the disciplines and philology.” This tied in both with his education and the marginal status of chymistry as an artisanal practice in the world of learning. After arguing that he was still young enough to potentially waste his time with “chemical pursuits” (*chemica studia*), he stated that “Hermes had exercised the powers of the mind and was as if inspired by a certain divine spirit.”³³ Thus, he ought to be valued in the same manner as other ancient authorities. Kriegsmann’s attempt to restore the *Tabula* to its pristine shape and alchemy to its rightful status was therefore also a defense of Hermes and the art he had invented.

Based on his philological skills, Kriegsmann sensed a Semitic original behind the Latin renderings of the famous *Tabula Smaragdina*. (As Julius Ruska noted after the discovery of the Arabic source, Kriegsmann’s basic intuition had indeed been correct.)³⁴ Yet according to the young philologist, Hermes was neither Egyptian, as tradition held, nor had his *Tabula* first been written in Greek, as those who held the writings of Hermes to be forgeries would have it.³⁵ Rather, the ancient sage was identified as Phoenician and had thus originally composed the *Tabula* in this lost language. Taking his cue from the magnificent *Geographia sacra* (1646) by the Huguenot scholar

³⁰ Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, dedicatory epistle, no pagination. “Smaragdum enim offero, quem pretium commendat non pondus.”

³¹ *Tabula Smaragdina*, dedicatory epistle, no pagination. “Dignitatem Hermetici nominis erodant.”

³² *Tabula Smaragdina*, ch. 9, 29. “Apologia studiorum nostrorum chemicorum adversum censores.”

³³ *Tabula Smaragdina*, 30. “Ego fateor, me chemicae philosophiae post theologiam, disciplinas, ac philologiam esse debitum”; “Hermetem natura ... mentibus viribus excitatum, et quasi divino quodam spiritu afflatum fuisse.”

³⁴ Ruska, *Tabula smaragdina*, 220–23.

³⁵ Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, 11–12.

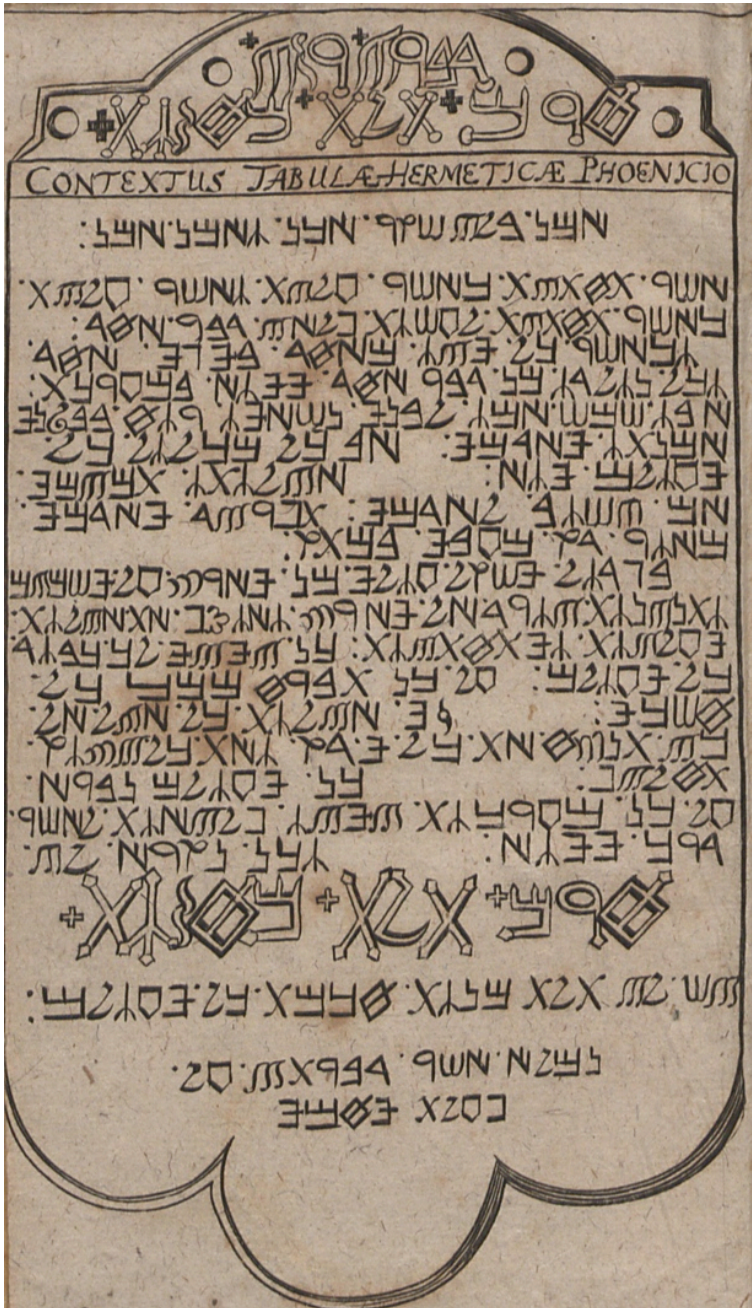


Fig. 1. Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, the Phoenician reconstruction in the shape of a tablet, just as Abraham's wife, Sarah, would have found it.

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Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), Kriegsmann understood Phoenician to be a dialect variant of Hebrew.³⁶ Due to this insight, Kriegsmann claimed that “light was born everywhere, which—after the fogs had been dispersed—allowed me to clearly understand that recondite mind of Hermes, to penetrate into which is permitted to hardly a single wit out of a thousand.”³⁷

After meticulously taking his readers through the whole text to establish its original meaning, Kriegsmann concluded “that the emerald tablet treats of the universal mercury of the philosophers, which lays bare subtle as well as solid bodies for penetration, ... [and] of the fifth, catholic essence of the four elements.”³⁸ The *Tabula Smaragdina* treated the quintessence and the mercury of the philosophers. Most alchemists would have agreed that these are both greatly relevant for accomplishing the great work of the philosophers’ stone, though precious few of them would have agreed as to what was meant by these terms in practice. Kriegsmann’s philological reconstruction and interpretation was probably of little help when it came to actual laboratory work.

In *Conjectaneorum de Germanicae gentis origine ... liber unus*, a related publication that had been announced and was meant to appear at roughly the same time as the restored *Tabula Smaragdina*, Kriegsmann identified Hermes Trismegistus as both Noah’s grandson, Canaan, and the founding father of the Germans. The book catalogue for the Frankfurt Easter fair of 1657 announced both Kriegsmann’s *Tabula Smaragdina* and his edition of Tacitus’ *Germania*, accompanied by his conjectures on the origin of the Germans. The *Tabula Smaragdina* was published according to plan and in time for the fall fair of 1657, whereas Kriegsmann’s Tacitus edition was not.³⁹ A professor at the University of Tübingen, Johann Ulrich Pregizer (1647–1708), posthumously published Kriegsmann’s conjectures surrounding Hermes as the founding father of the German nation in 1684. Based on his baroque etymologizing, Kriegsmann proved to his own satisfaction that Hermes Trismegistus was identical not only to Canaan but also to Taaut as he was called among the Phoenicians, Theut among the Egyptians, and Teutates

³⁶ On Bochart and this monumental work, see Zur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550–1700*, Scientific and Learned Cultures and Their Institutions 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), ch. 4, esp. 180–85.

³⁷ Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, dedicatory epistle, no pagination. “Lux undique coorta fuit, quae dispulsis nebulis clare intuendam mihi obtulerit abstrusam illam Hermetis mentem, in quam vix e mille uni ingenii perspicacia penetrare licuit.”

³⁸ *Tabula Smaragdina*, 29. “Agere tabulam smaragdinam de *universali philosophorum mercurio*, qui et tenuia et solida corpora penetrando enodat, ... de quinta scilicet illa quatuor elementorum essentia catholica.”

³⁹ B. Fabian, ed., *Kataloge der Frankfurter und Leipziger Buchmessen 1594–1860* (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1977–85), 1657 (Ostern), fol. E2r; 1657 (Michaelis), fol. B4r.

among the ancient Germans. According to Kriegsmann, all these variants were used by different peoples to refer to one and the same person. The approach of using etymological arguments for making far-reaching claims on ancient history was common enough, and similar claims were made in other national contexts: in Sweden, Olaus Rudbeck (1630–1702) argued that the fabled Atlantis was actually Scandinavia, and Aylett Sammes (1636?–1679?) had claimed that the Phoenicians were the ancestors of the British people.⁴⁰ What made Kriegsmann special was that he specifically wanted to claim Hermes Trismegistus for the genealogy of the Germans, even as the ancient sage was no longer an unquestioned authority.

Besides providing further support for the authenticity and great age of Hermes Trismegistus, Kriegsmann's argument had two important consequences for alchemy. First, it helped sever the associations between alchemy and sorcery that critics often brought to bear. According to Kriegsmann, since the invention of chymistry could be attributed to a human actor genealogically tied to the patriarchs, its "origins were undeservedly and through error attributed to evil spirits."⁴¹ Kriegsmann traced this mistaken assumption back to Zosimos of Panopolis (fl. 300 CE), who had attributed the invention of chymistry to the fallen angels who seduced women (Genesis 6:1–4) based on a simple misreading of one Hebrew letter.⁴² Second, and more importantly, the fact that alchemy had been invented by none other than Noah's grandson firmly embedded it within the trajectory of divine providence. According to Kriegsmann, in the promised land of Canaan, "in a cave near Hebron," the tablet "was taken out of the hands of Hermes' corpse by a woman, Zara." This woman was none other than "Abraham's wife, Sarah."⁴³

This discovery tied in with accepted chymical lore and, moreover, served to explain it historically. It was a commonplace that the biblical patriarchs, for instance, were extremely knowledgeable in alchemy. Chymists had long known that the episode in which Moses destroyed the golden calf and made the Israelites drink it (Exodus 32:20) was a reference to *aurum potabile*.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision: Olaus Rudbeck and Baroque Science* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1994); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 11.

⁴¹ Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, 29 and 31–33, resp. "Chemia, cuius initia immerito et per errorem in malos genios referunter."

⁴² *Conjectaneorum de Germanicae gentis origine*, 32. For an account of Zosimos, his alchemy and Gnostic faith, see Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*, 15–24.

⁴³ Kriegsmann, *Tabula Smaragdina*, 13. "In antro prope Hebron a muliere Zara manibus cadaveris Hermetis exempta ... de Abrahami uxore Sara intelligatur."

⁴⁴ Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 37.

Moses' sister, Miriam, in particular, was often included among the greatest *adepti* as “Mariah the prophetess” or “Jewess,” for instance in Michael Maier's *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum* (1617).⁴⁵ As Kriegsmann related elsewhere, it was rumored that she had “completed the great work in three hours.”⁴⁶ He went beyond this commonplace in providing a historical explanation: since he held Phoenician to be a dialect of Hebrew, Abraham and Sarah were able to readily understand the emerald tablet. This accounted for the fact that they and their descendants possessed the greatest secrets of alchemy—why else would Abraham have been so rich in gold and silver (Genesis 13:2)?⁴⁷ For the young philologist, the philosophers' stone was therefore part and parcel of the temporal blessings God bestowed upon the ancient Hebrews and, by extension, his faithful followers. Alchemy was thus part of the ancient wisdom of the biblical patriarchs and they acquired it at a precisely identifiable point in time.

The title that Kriegsmann chose for his second treatise on alchemy, *Taaut Oder Außlegung der Chymischen Zeichen* (1665), contained the original Phoenician name of Hermes Trismegistus. Based on the assumption that Hermes had invented not just writing in general but the signs still used by alchemists in particular, Kriegsmann argued that these conveyed knowledge regarding the hidden properties of alchemical substances.⁴⁸ Due to the origin of these signs, it would be sorely mistaken to assume that they were arbitrary: every dot and line used to form a given character had to convey knowledge about the hidden qualities of the alchemical substance it designated. As a lot of time had since gone by, Kriegsmann suspected that many of the signs in use had become corrupted, though he was confident regarding others.⁴⁹ Based on this assumption, Kriegsmann was fairly convinced that it was also possible to investigate substances by solely analyzing their signs—instead of analyzing their behavior in the alchemist's furnace.

It is also in Kriegsmann's *Taaut* that we find the first evidence of his contact with the court of Darmstadt. There, Kriegsmann managed to estab-

⁴⁵ Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum* (Frankfurt a.M.: Typis Antonii Hummii, impensis Lucae Jennis, 1617), bk. 2. On the actual historical background, see Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*, 15–16. On Maier, see Hereward Tilton, *The Quest for the Phoenix: Spiritual Alchemy and Rosicrucianism in the Work of Count Michael Maier (1569–1622)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Taaut Oder Außlegung der Chymischen Zeichen; Damit die Metallen und andere Sachen von Alters her bemerckt werden: Auff Begehren beschrieben* (Frankfurt a.M.: Bey Thoma Matthia Götzen, 1665), 64. “*Maria Prophetissa* aber sol das hohe Werck in drey Stunden verrichtet haben.”

⁴⁷ E.g. Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, 22.

⁴⁸ Kriegsmann, *Taaut*, 4–7.

⁴⁹ *Taaut*, 25.

lish a long-lasting intellectual exchange with a highly learned practitioner of alchemy, Johann Tackius (1617–1676). His senior by twenty-five years, Tackius was both court physician in Darmstadt and university professor in Gießen, where he spent most of his time unless “court business” called him away.⁵⁰ Kriegsmann himself, before moving on to Darmstadt, was based in Hardenburg (today a part of Bad Dürkheim). An ideal meeting place, Darmstadt was situated halfway between Gießen and Hardenburg. During their encounter, Tackius had given Kriegsmann several of his own chymical works, for which the latter thanked him through the dedication of *Taaut*.⁵¹ Additionally, Kriegsmann was grateful to have made contact with Landgrave Ludwig VI of Hessen-Darmstadt (1630–1678) through the mediation of Tackius.⁵² Taken together with other printed documents, this allows us to establish that their exchange on chymical matters began as early as 1665 and continued beyond the *Epistola* (1669), as Kriegsmann’s laudatory poem in the third volume of Tackius’ *Triplex phasis sophicus* (1673) documents.⁵³ There is no reason to suppose that it did not last until the physician’s death in 1676.

The intellectual exchange among them also directly inspired Kriegsmann’s next work on alchemy. Sometime in the winter of 1668/69, Kriegsmann visited Tackius in Darmstadt. Together they studied a canonical text of alchemy, “the excellent chymical treatise of Petrus Bonus the Lombard of Ferrara, who gave it the title *Precious Pearl*.”⁵⁴ The *Margarita pretiosa novella* by Petrus Bonus (fl. 1330) was a famous work of late-medieval alchemy that saw its first edition at the Aldine press in 1546 and was reprinted several times throughout the seventeenth century: the Strasbourg-based printer Lazarus Zetzner (d. 1616) alone published two editions in 1602 and 1608, and the work was also included in his monumental *Theatrum chemicum*, a collection of alchemical treatises that kept growing throughout the century.⁵⁵ Inspired by the *Margarita pretiosa* and the conversation that had revolved

⁵⁰ Geneviève Miller, “An Autograph of Johannes Tackius (1617–1675),” *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 5 (1937): 933–35. “Aulica ... otiosa.” For an outline of Tackius’ life, see Strieder, *Grundlage*, vol. 16, 93–96.

⁵¹ Kriegsmann, *Taaut*, fol.)(2r.

⁵² *Taaut*, fol.)(1v.

⁵³ Johann Tackius, *Triplex phasis sophicus: Solis orbe expeditus, Humanaeque fragilitati et Spei resurrectionis rerum consecratus*, 3 pts. (Frankfurt a.M.: Sumptibus Johannis Petri Zubrodt & Haered. Joh. Baptistae Schönwetteri, 1673), pt. 3, fol.)(2r.

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Epistola quod Plato Evangelio S. Johannis conformia aliqua doceat, sitque insignis scriptor Chymicus* (Darmstadt: Typis Christophori Abellii, 1669), fol. A2r. “Incidimus in egegium [sic] Petri Boni Lombardi Ferrariensis Tractatum Chymicum, cui Margaritæ pretiosae titulum fecit.”

⁵⁵ Chiara Crisciani, “The Conception of Alchemy as Expressed in the *Pretiosa Margarita Novella* of Petrus Bonus of Ferrara,” *Ambix* 20, no. 3 (1973): 165–81; Rita Sturlese, “Lazar

around it, Kriegsmann returned to Hardenburg and wrote an epistolary treatise addressed to Tackius, dated February 8, 1669, and subsequently printed in Darmstadt.

Kriegsmann's *Epistola* (1669) argued "that Plato taught certain things conforming to the Gospel of St John and was a distinguished chymical writer," as its title indicates.⁵⁶ It deals with Plato, but in a context that might seem strange to modern readers: Plato is presented both as a pagan philosopher, who nevertheless taught much that agrees with the Gospel of John, and as an authority on chymistry. The ease with which Kriegsmann moves from theology to alchemy and back suggests that, to him, there were close links between these two aspects of Plato's wisdom. Yet as the epistle also notes, Tackius was much more sceptical on this matter.⁵⁷ To understand what their debate was about, the chapter of the *Pretiosa margarita* from which they took their point of departure must be taken into account.⁵⁸ Petrus Bonus argued that God had revealed himself to the pious, wise pagans of old through alchemy. In part, this argument hinged on a peculiarity of alchemical jargon: as alchemists often simply referred to themselves as philosophers, the ancient philosophers in turn were held to have been alchemists as well. This conflation is even apparent in the name given to the ultimate goal of alchemy: *lapis philosophorum*, the philosophers' stone.

Bonus described alchemy as an art that was partly natural and partly divine. A secret stone, *lapis occultus*, was an important prerequisite for success, yet it was only attainable through initiation, when the aspiring alchemist was guided by an experienced adept, or alternatively through divine revelation. Due to this, the hidden stone was God's gift—*donum Dei*. The divine component of alchemy also became apparent in the prophetic revelations it afforded the wise ancients: "And beyond this, in describing this divine art, the ancient philosophers of this art prophesied of certain future things in a way."⁵⁹ Specifically, they perceived that the world was not eternal and would be judged by God at the end of time, that there would be a bodily resurrecti-

Zetzner, 'Bibliopola Argentinensis'. Alchimie und Lullismus in Straßburg an den Anfängen der Moderne," *Sudboffs Archiv* 75 (1991): 140–62. The *Theatrum chemicum* first appeared in three volumes in 1602; a fourth volume was added upon re-edition in 1613, a fifth in 1622 and, finally, a sixth in 1661.

⁵⁶ Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, title page. "quod Plato Evangelio S. Johannis conformia aliqua doceat, sitque insignis scriptor Chymicus."

⁵⁷ *Epistola*, 4 and 21.

⁵⁸ Petrus Bonus, *Margarita pretiosa novella exhibens introductionem in artem chemiae integram ante annos plus minus ducentos septuaginta composita* (Strasbourg: Impensis Lazari Zetzneri Bibliop., 1608), ch. 6.

⁵⁹ *Margarita pretiosa novella*, 143. "Et praeterea antiqui philosophi hujus artis, in quibusdam futuris, hanc artem divinam scribendo, quoquo modo prophetaverunt."

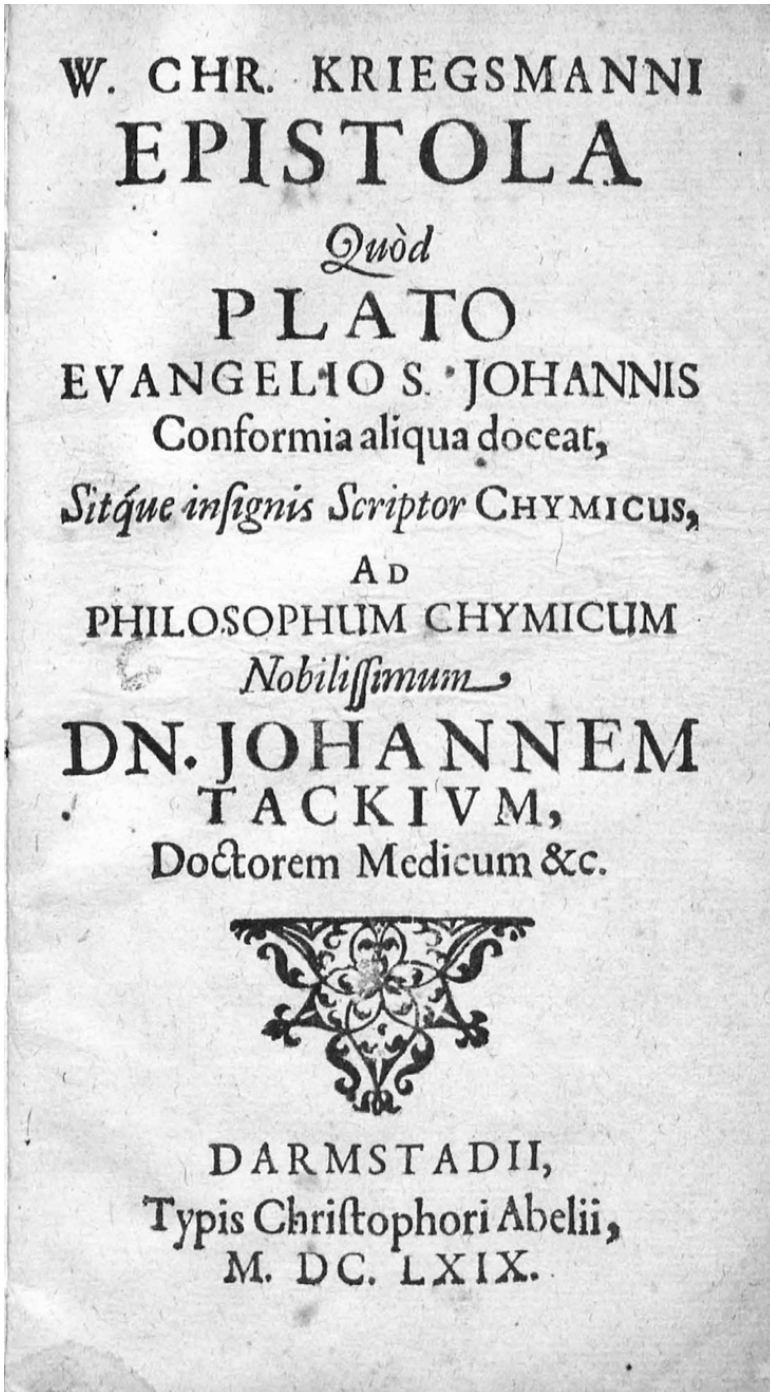


Fig. 2. Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, title page mentioning the addressee and the bold claims argued.

on of the dead—with bodies subtle enough to pass through coarser masses. Additionally, they knew about the immaculate conception and God’s incarnation.⁶⁰ Thus, the wise ancients had had profound insights into key doctrines of Christianity. According to Bonus, the piety of the ancients was therefore based on their knowledge of chymistry. Kriegsmann followed him in this and even tended to emphasize this aspect more strongly.

One of the philosophers that Bonus singled out in this respect was Plato: “Similarly, when Plato wrote on alchemy, he wrote a gospel that, a long time after him, John the Evangelist more clearly wrote and completed.”⁶¹ In Kriegsmann’s rendering, we find the even more striking statement that “Plato wrote a chymical gospel.”⁶² To support the statement regarding the gospel Plato had supposedly written, Bonus quoted a central passage from Augustine’s *Confessiones*, in which the church father narrated his turn towards Christianity through the mediation of neo-Platonic writings.⁶³ And while the Italian author had excluded an important hedging remark, Kriegsmann consulted the original and reproduced the passage in full. Augustine related that he had found the prologue of John’s gospel in the writings of the Platonists, “of course not in the same words, but nevertheless the same on the whole [in meaning].”⁶⁴ But that did not prevent Kriegsmann from intensifying Bonus’ claim. For him, the only decisive difference that placed Plato and John in different categories was that the latter had been “directly inspired by the Holy Spirit,” whereas the former had had to work hard for his knowledge of alchemy and, by the same token, Christian theology.⁶⁵ Hermes Trismegistus, as the inventor of alchemy, was placed somewhere between these two extremes: it is worth reminding ourselves that Kriegsmann had characterized him as someone who was “as if inspired by a certain divine spirit.”⁶⁶

To make sense of these surprising claims, we need to consider an account of Plato’s life that was defining for the early modern period—Ficino’s *De vita Platonis*, which accompanied his Latin translation of Plato’s works.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *Margarita pretiosa novella*, 143–46.

⁶¹ *Margarita pretiosa novella*, 146. “Similiter Plato scribens in alchemicis, scripsit evangelium, quod post eum per tempora longa valde scripsit Joannes Evangelista et complevit.”

⁶² Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, 9. “Platonem chymicum scripsisse evangelium.”

⁶³ William Watts, ed., *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 2 vols. (London/New York: William Heinemann/The Macmillan Co., 1912), vol. 1, bk. VIII, ch. 9, 364–67.

⁶⁴ Qtd. in Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, 7. “Non quidem his verbis, sed hoc idem omnino.”

⁶⁵ *Epistola*, 12. “Immediato Spiritu S. afflatu.”

⁶⁶ *Tabula Smaragdina*, 30. “Quasi divino quodam spiritu afflatum fuisse.”

⁶⁷ On the context and Ficino’s conception of Plato “as a Christ-like *primus philosophus*,” see Denis J.-J. Robichaud, “Marsilio Ficino’s *De vita Platonis*, *apologia de moribus Platonis*. Against

Kriegsmann used Ficino's biography to support his arguments. According to this biography, Plato travelled widely to attain his great wisdom, and the most important station in this context was Egypt, traditionally considered the origin of both Hermes and his art, alchemy. In spite of Kriegsmann's earlier case for a Phoenician Hermes Trismegistus, he also allowed for the standard account and simply called the ancient sage the "founding father of both the Phoenicians and the Egyptians."⁶⁸ According to Ficino, Plato had visited the wise men of Egypt: "From these [the Pythagoreans in Italy] he went to the prophets and priests in Egypt. He had also decided to travel on to the Indians and the *magi* [associated with Persia]; yet because of the wars in Asia, he desisted from this endeavor."⁶⁹ Instead, Plato returned to Athens. Kriegsmann commented that, therefore, Plato "had met the most distinguished teachers of this art."⁷⁰ And that was, of course, the art of "the Egyptian, i.e. chymical philosophy," the central aim of which consisted in turning base metals into gold.⁷¹ This was in keeping with the Renaissance understanding of Plato that saw in him an important link in the transmission of *prisca sapientia*, along with Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras and Moses.⁷²

To complete his argument that Plato was an adept of alchemy who held genuine Christian beliefs, Kriegsmann needed to prove that Plato had indeed known much about alchemy. According to him, the Greek philosopher hid his alchemical knowledge in *Critias*, which dealt with the war between the peoples of Atlantis and of Athens: "Here, one will find, if one will have considered the issue carefully, the matter of the philosophers together with the solvent, as well as the vessel, the oven, the weight, the colours, the decoction and whatever is necessary for the knowledge of all these."⁷³ Kriegsmann was aware that he was making a novel claim, perhaps even with no small measure of pride.⁷⁴ Yet the pattern of his argument would have been familiar to many: in fact, alchemical readings of ancient mythology—

the Poetasters and Cynics: Aristippus, Lucian, Cerberus, and Other Dogs," *Accademia* 8 (2006): 23–59, on 28.

⁶⁸ Kriegsmann, *Taant*, 6. "Stamm-Vatter der Phönicië und Egypter."

⁶⁹ Marsilio Ficino and Simon Grynaeus, eds., *Omnia divini Platonis opera* (Basel: In officina Frobeniana, 1546), fol. α3r. "Ab his Aegyptum ad prophetas et sacerdotes se recepit. Decreverat ad Indos Magosque progredi: verum propter Asiae bella a proposito destitit."

⁷⁰ Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, 14. "Praeceptores in hac arte praestantissimos nactus est."

⁷¹ *Epistola*, 14. "Philosophiae Aegyptiacae i. e. chymicae."

⁷² Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 7–17.

⁷³ Kriegsmann, *Epistola*, 18. "Reperient hic, ubi rem probe consideravint, materiam Philosophorum una cum menstruo, vas furnum, pondus, decoctionem, ac quicquid cognitu ipsis necesse est."

⁷⁴ *Epistola*, 14–15.

especially Ovid and Virgil—were common, and many myths were investigated for clues as veiled descriptions of the great work.⁷⁵ With this, Kriegsmann considered he had done enough to overcome Tackius' doubts about the proto-Christian piety and alchemical insight of Plato.

From the Darmstadt Circle to the Pietist Conventicle (1670–1676)

As the 1670s began, a number of decisive events took place in Kriegsmann's life that affected his career, intellectual ambitions and religious convictions, as well as his private life. On March 10, 1670, Kriegsmann dedicated his *Pantosophae sacro-profana ... tabula* to Landgrave Ludwig VI of Hessen-Darmstadt (1630–1678).⁷⁶ Inspired by Athanasius Kircher (1601/02–1680) and his new *Ars magna sciendi* (1669), this short work summarized the combinatorial art of the Franciscan Raymond Lull (1232–1315), an attempt to attain complete knowledge by generating all possible, true statements.⁷⁷ Along with the support of the Landgrave's physician, Tackius, this gesture doubtlessly facilitated Kriegsmann's later transition to the court of Darmstadt, where he served as political advisor from 1674 until 1678. Likely before Easter 1671, Kriegsmann visited Frankfurt am Main, at the time one of the most important centers of the book trade, and was planning to publish a whole range of works. These included a number of devotional titles alongside what would have been Kriegsmann's final work on alchemy,

⁷⁵ Cf. Joachim Telle, "Mythologie und Alchemie: Zum Fortleben der antiken Götter in der frühneuzeitlichen Alchemieliteratur," in *Humanismus und Naturwissenschaften*, ed. Rudolf Schmitz and Fritz Krafft (Boppard: Harald Boldt, 1980), 135–54.

⁷⁶ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Pantosophae sacro-profanae a Raymundo Lullio in artem redacta nunc elimatae ac locupletatae Tabula cum synoptica in eandem introductione* (Speyer: Excudebat Matthaeus Metzger, 1670), dedicatory epistle, fols. A2r–A3v.

⁷⁷ Athanasius Kircher, *Ars magna sciendi, in XII libros digesta* (Amsterdam: Apud Joannem Janssonium à Waesberge, & Viduam Elizei Weyerstraet, 1669). For a brief account of Lull's combinatorial art, see Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress, Europe in the Making (London: Blackwell, 1995), ch. 4. On other appropriations in the seventeenth century, see Thomas Leinkauf, "Der Lullismus," in *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Helmut Holzhey, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, and Vilem Mudroch, vol. 4/1: Das heilige römische Reich deutscher Nation (Basel: Schwabe, 2001), 239–68. Lull also had a reputation as the supposed author of a great number of pseudepigraphic alchemical texts; see Michela Pereira, *The Alchemical Corpus Attributed to Raymond Lull* (London: Warburg Institute, 1989).

which promised to revisit the connection between the great work and the religions of the ancient Orient, but was never published.⁷⁸

It is tempting to assume that this inspired bustle of activity was triggered by Kriegsmann's encounter with Spener and his conventicle in Frankfurt, the nucleus of a highly significant religious movement that would become known as Pietism.⁷⁹ While some scholars trace Pietism back to much earlier in the seventeenth century, most agree that it really took shape as a social movement in the 1670s, when its distinctive organizational form spread—the conventicle, in which small numbers of believers met to discuss matters of the faith and exhort one another to a pious lifestyle. Whether it was on this occasion or during another visit to Frankfurt in the first half of the 1670s, Kriegsmann found himself actively in alignment with the early stirrings of Pietism. After all, already his *Eusebie* (1659) had testified to his proximity to currents within Lutheranism that wanted to extend the Reformation beyond doctrine to everyday life.⁸⁰ Apart from one or more visits to the Frankfurt Pietists, however, Kriegsmann at first had only limited opportunity to participate in the small, devout gatherings that were a hallmark feature of Pietism. Meanwhile he remarried in 1672, as his first wife had died in 1666, and soon afterwards he finally made the transition to Darmstadt, facilitated by almost ten years of intellectual exchange.

In his new surroundings, Kriegsmann managed to finish one of the devotional works announced several years earlier: the *Theopraxia* (1675) outlined Kriegsmann's emphatically Lutheran version of devotional Christianity, appealing to the authority of Paul and Martin Luther (1483–1546). Even critics, he proudly proclaimed in the preface to the second, posthumous edition (1681), would “clearly see that they wholly and precisely coincided with one another,” if they “held the pure Lutheran theory against this practice.”⁸¹ He wanted to address the problem that “popish, Calvinist and enthusiastic etc. practical writers” were widely read among Lutherans—at the

⁷⁸ Fabian, *Kataloge der Frankfurter und Leipziger Buchmessen*, 1671 (Ostern), fol. E2v. “Dissertatio de secreto Philosophorum igne: ubi simul de igne sacro Hebraeorum, Chaldaeorum, Persarum, Arabum, Graecorum, Romanorum: deque igne terræ centrali.”

⁷⁹ In a later letter, dated January 15, 1678, Spener mentioned that Kriegsmann had visited his conventicle personally; see Philipp Jacob Spener, ed., *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit 1666–1686*, eds. Johannes Wallmann, Martin Friedrich, and Markus Matthias (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992 ff.), vol. 3, nr. 114, esp. 557.

⁸⁰ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Eusebie; Von der wahren Gottseligkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: In Verlegung Johann Wilhelm Ammons und Serlins. Getruckt bey Johan Georg Spörlin, 1659).

⁸¹ *Theopraxia Oder Evangelische Übung Des Christenthums: Nach den wahren/ von vielen nicht genug verstandenen Gründen S. Pauli und seines Jüngers Lutheri* (Darmstadt: Gedruckt bey Henning Müllern, 1681), fol. A2v. “die reine Lutherische *Theoriam* gegen diese *Praxin* gehalten/ und klar gesehen/ daß sie gänzlich und genau miteinander übereintreffen.”

expense of Luther's own writings—and subtly influenced them in ways diverging from their actual confession.⁸² The intended audience of the work was, therefore, chiefly among Lutherans, and Kriegsmann asked for a sympathetic hearing on their part while he did not care much about what other confessions might make of it.⁸³ Spener discussed the *Theopraxia* at length, noting that it was heavily indebted to the *Geistliche Schatzkammer der Gläubigen* (1622), devotional writings by Stephan Praetorius that had been compiled by Martin Stadius and prefaced by Johann Arndt.⁸⁴ On the whole, Spener agreed with Kriegsmann's theology but lamented that some passages should have been phrased more carefully so as not to give rise to perfectionism at the expense of salvation through faith and grace alone.

This leads us to what is probably the central aspect of Kriegsmann's theology, present from first to last: the distinction between a state of being saved (*Seligkeit*) and a state of being saved *and* doing good works while leading a truly godly life (*Gottseligkeit*).⁸⁵ The latter state had already been the subject of his first devotional work, *Eusebie; Von der wahren Gottseligkeit*. The term Kriegsmann chose as the title for his first devotional work stemmed from the New Testament and had been translated by Luther as "Gottseligkeit." In Latin it could be rendered as *pietas* or even *praxis pietatis*, a term that frequently appeared in devotional literature throughout the seventeenth century and eventually provided the basis for coining the term "Pietism."⁸⁶ True to Kriegsmann's Lutheran convictions, good works were not a prerequisite for salvation but a consequence thereof. By definition, only the works of someone who had already been saved and born again could be good.

Shortly before the Darmstadt conventicle took shape, Kriegsmann called for the Bible wisdom of the ancient Hebrews to be restored to the republic of letters. Similar in format to the *Epistola* on Plato's chymical gospel, *De bibliosophia Ebraeorum veterum* was addressed to the nobleman and diplomat Johann Eitel Diede zum Fürstenstein (1624–1685) and dated June 16, 1676.⁸⁷ Sharing an interest in alchemy with Kriegsmann and Tackius, Diede

⁸² *Theopraxia*, fol. A2r. "Päbstische/ Calvinische/ Enthusiastische &c. *Scriptores practicos*"

⁸³ *Theopraxia*, fol. A4v.

⁸⁴ Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 2, nr. 118, esp. 542. The letter was addressed to Johann Winckler, dated December 15, 1676.

⁸⁵ Kriegsmann, *Theopraxia*, 16; see also 83–85.

⁸⁶ Johannes Wallmann, "Pietismus," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, vol. 7: P–Q (Basel: Schwabe, 1989), 972–74.

⁸⁷ Kriegsmann, *De bibliosophia*, title page and 24. On Diede's life, see Lupold von Lehsten, *Die hessischen Reichstagsgesandten im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission Darmstadt und der Historischen Kommission für Hessen, 2003), vol. 2, 243–55.

was the third interlocutor in their small circle affiliated with the court of Darmstadt. As early as 1657—while Kriegsmann was still poring over the *Tabula Smaragdina* and the true identity of Hermes Trismegistus—Tackius had already been communicating alchemical recipes to Diede, whom he addressed with deference as his benefactor.⁸⁸ Scholars of Pietism have suggested that these three men formed some kind of occult reading group at the court of Darmstadt.⁸⁹ Together with Kriegsmann's *Epistola* of 1669, *De bibliosophia Ebraeorum veterum* provides crucial support for the conjecture that these three courtiers did indeed exchange their views on alchemy, ancient wisdom and, conceivably, religious dissent over a number of years.⁹⁰

Circumstantial evidence suggests that both Tackius and Diede had a common interest in writers of questionable orthodoxy and were in contact with figures who played, or went on to play, leading roles in radical, dissenting circles. None other than the patriarch of Pietism, Philipp Jakob Spener, had borrowed Tackius' copies of books by the radical spiritualist Christian Hoberg (1607–1675) and Abraham von Franckenberg (1593–1652), a Silesian nobleman and propagator of Jacob Boehme's works.⁹¹ As a graduate student and junior lecturer in Gießen (1675), Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649–1727) served as the intermediary between Tackius and Spener and later went on to become the leading theologian of radical Pietism.⁹² Additionally, Spener also knew Diede as someone well read in the works of Boehme, and Tackius occasionally quoted Boehme in his alchemical works, referring to him as *Philosophus Teutonicus*.⁹³ Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711), the spiritualist dissenter and networker, later remembered Tackius as his

⁸⁸ Universitätsbibliothek Gießen, Cod. 152o, e.g. fol. 6r–v.

⁸⁹ Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 2, nr. 32, 156 (n. 1). Cf. Tietz, *Johann Winckler*, 156–57; Markus Matthias, “‘Preußisches’ Beamtentum mit radikalpietistischer ‘Privatreligion’: Dodo II. von Innhausen und Knyphausen (1641–1698),” in *Der radikale Pietismus: Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Wolfgang Breul, Marcus Meier, and Lothar Vogel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 189–209, on 190.

⁹⁰ Kriegsmann, *Epistola; De bibliosophia*. The latter work seems to be extant in a unique copy at Universitätsbibliothek Marburg only, as the one at Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek Weimar was lost in the fire of 2004.

⁹¹ On Hoberg, see below and Brecht et al., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1, 223–28.

⁹² Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 2, nr. 50, 232; nr. 55, 250; nr. 57, 267. The letters are dated November 13 and 30, and December 28, 1675, respectively. On Petersen's studies in Gießen and his own reading, see Markus Matthias, *Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Eine Biographie bis zur Amtsenthebung Petersens im Jahre 1692* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 38–45 and 104–105. (On 105, n. 58, Matthias mistakenly speaks of Tackius' son, Ludwig Christian, instead of the father.)

⁹³ Letters identified as addressed to Diede can be found in Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 2, nr. 32; vol. 3, nr. 130; vol. 4, nr. 28, 111, and nr. 58, 224. For Tackius' mentions of Boehme, see e.g. Tackius, *Triplex phasis sophicus*, pt. 1, 32; pt. 2, 23.

most inspiring academic teacher.⁹⁴ For his part, Kriegsmann publically presented himself as a Lutheran. Even if his later writings betray a decided antipathy towards orthodox heresy hunters, he was smart enough not to refer to the writings of controversial dissenters and spiritualists.⁹⁵ Yet both Hoburg and Franckenberg fit that description, and they were certainly read and discussed by Kriegsmann's closest interlocutors at the court of Darmstadt. In the later controversy surrounding the conventicle, critics did not fail to accuse participants of spreading spiritualist ideas.⁹⁶ While the lack of written documentation renders it difficult to assess whether they actually did so, it is likely that Kriegsmann would have been familiar with the writings of controversial figures.

Early in 1676, Johann Winckler (1642–1705), one of Spener's protégés, arrived in Darmstadt as newly appointed court preacher. Later in the same year, the death of Tackius on August 30 left Kriegsmann without one of his most important intellectual interlocutors. Due to these two events, the occult reading group of Tackius, Diede and Kriegsmann appears to have given way to a Pietist conventicle: already by October of the same year, there is documentary evidence for the new devotional gatherings led by Winckler, and these may even have started a month or two earlier.⁹⁷ The temporal continuity can thus only be described as striking, and in Kriegsmann there is also a measure of personal continuity. But in reality, Winckler first started an entirely independent conventicle for older students and eventually, perhaps prompted by Kriegsmann, a second one for a less restricted membership: gradually even women were allowed to join, a fact that was sharply criticized by Winckler's superior, Balthasar Mentzer (1614–1679).⁹⁸ Against these and other accusations, Kriegsmann would later prove to be the conventicle's most articulate defender.

⁹⁴ E.g. Friedrich Breckling, *Autobiographie: Ein frühneuzeitliches Ego-Dokument im Spannungsfeld von Spiritualismus, radikalem Pietismus und Theosophie*, ed. Johann Anselm Steiger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 17–18. Breckling's autobiographical statement in his *Catalogus theodidactorum et testium veritatis inter nos* (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart. A 306, 182–91, esp. 183) describes Tackius in even more glowing terms. See also Brigitte Klosterberg, Guido Naschert, and Mirjam-Juliane Pohl, *Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711): Prediger, "Wahrheitszeuge" und Vermittler des Pietismus im niederländischen Exil* (Halle a.d.S.: Verlag der Frankeschen Stiftungen, 2011).

⁹⁵ Kriegsmann, *Symphonesis Christianorum*, 22–24.

⁹⁶ Balthasar Mentzer, *Kurtzes Bedencken/ Von den Einzelen Zusammenkunfften/ Wie dieselbe etlicher Orten wollen behauptet werden/ Beneben auch andern nothwendigen Erinnerungen*, ed. Philipp Ludwig Hanneken (Gießen: Bey Henning Müllern, 1691), e.g. 17–20 and 26. Composed in 1678, this treatise was only published in 1691, when new controversies surround the Pietist movement in Darmstadt and Gießen; cf. Steitz, "Das antipietistische Programm."

⁹⁷ Tietz, *Johann Winckler*, 166–69, esp. 183–87.

⁹⁸ Mentzer, *Kurtzes Bedencken*, 6–7 and 25.

De bibliosophia Ebraeorum veterum provided a final testament to Kriegsmann's continued exchange with Tackius and Diede zum Fürstenstein. Here he argued that the Bible, and particularly the Hebrew Old Testament, should be understood as a repository of all wisdom. This represented Kriegsmann's personal variation on the theme of *prisca sapientia*, a primordial wisdom in which philosophy and theology were not yet separated, though scholars of his day increasingly started to challenge this notion.⁹⁹ This was readily recognizable for his contemporaries: when commenting on Kriegsmann's bold claims, Spener even explicitly used the phrase *prisca sapientia*.¹⁰⁰ Several years before writing *De bibliosophia*, Kriegsmann had already explored another approach to the totality of wisdom in *Pantosophae sacro-profanae ... tabula*. But at this stage, what was still lacking was a component that had long been important for Kriegsmann and only gained in relevance as his ties to Pietism took hold: while Lull's combinatorial art may have been able to produce true statements of theology, it had little to do with practical piety. By referring to ancient wisdom instead of the Lullian art, Kriegsmann was able to integrate complete knowledge and practical piety.

Kriegsmann traced the transmission of wisdom (*translatio sapientiae*) from Adam to Seth, who wrote the famous "sophic columns," and Enoch.¹⁰¹ When the Deluge struck, Noah passed it on, followed by Sem, Melchizedek, Eber and Abraham, who "was the first cultivator of astrology, which he taught to the Egyptians publically, and he also taught them arithmetic."¹⁰² Abraham, Joseph and Moses were responsible for the great flowering of wisdom that took place in Egypt and then spread throughout the pagan world. As the *Epistola* suggested, Plato was perhaps the most important intermediary who brought Egyptian wisdom to Greece. While not spelt out by Kriegsmann, it is important to note that most of these men were represented as especially faithful and pious in the Bible. Enoch was so close to God that he did not see death but was taken straight to heaven (Genesis 5:24). Noah and his descendants were the only survivors of the Deluge that almost eradicated sinful humankind (Genesis 6–9). The apostle Paul, Kriegsmann's favourite commentator on the Old Testament, placed great emphasis on Abraham's simple faith that was credited to him as righteousness before the Mosaic Law even existed (e.g. Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6). In

⁹⁹ For an elaborate study on this issue, see Sicco Lehmann-Brauns, *Weisheit in der Weltgeschichte: Philosophiegeschichte zwischen Barock und Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 3, nr. 12, esp. 66.

¹⁰¹ Kriegsmann, *De bibliosophia*, 11. "Columnae sophicae."

¹⁰² *De bibliosophia*. "Abrahamum primum fuisse cultorem astrologiae, atque hanc docuisse Aegyptios in cathedra publica et docuisse eos etiam arithmeticae."

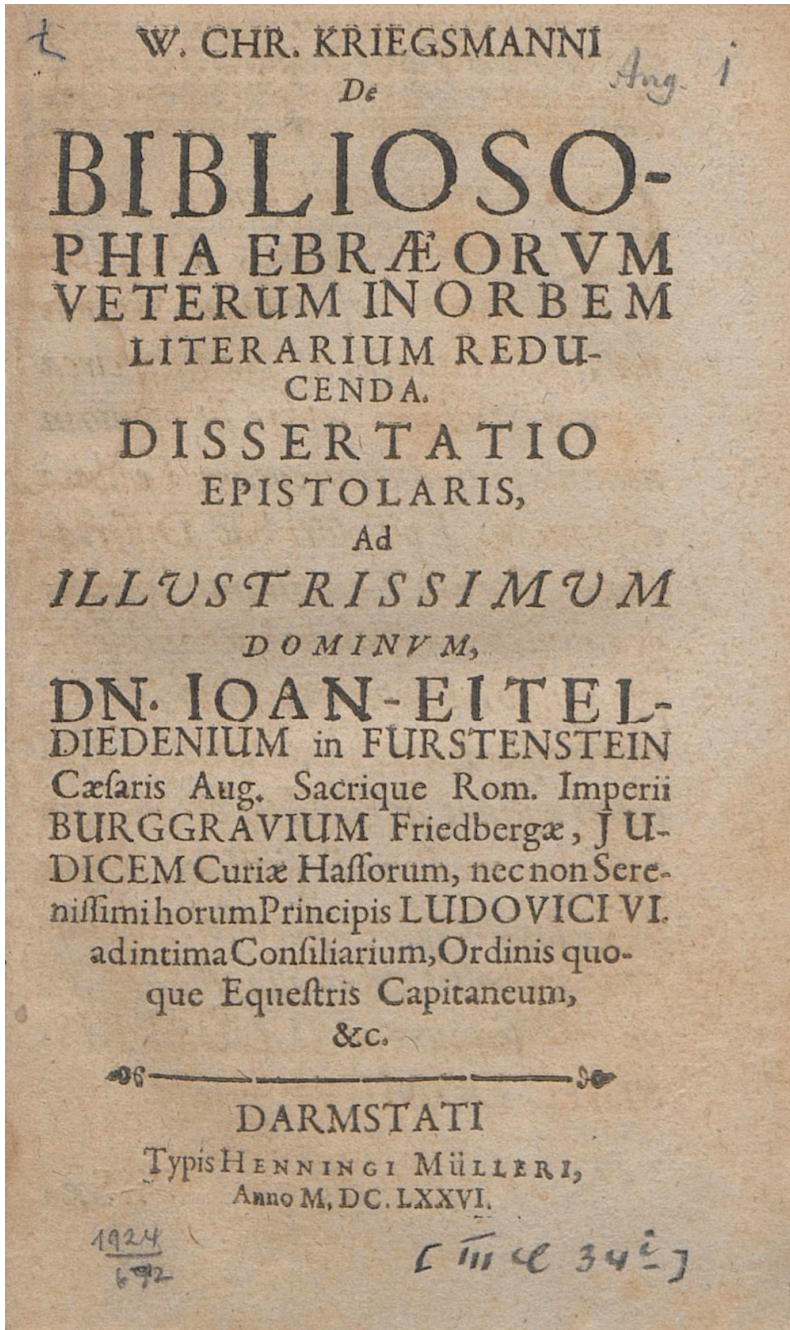


Fig. 3. Kriegsmann, *De bibliosophia*, title page mentioning agenda and addressee.

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the Epistle to the Hebrews, also attributed to Paul in Kriegsmann's time, the significance of Melchizedek as a high priest independent of the Levitic line was expounded (Hebrews 17:1–10). Thus, Kriegsmann constructed a genealogy of God's true, faithful followers that coincided with the genealogy of great philosophers and keepers of knowledge.

However, Kriegsmann believed that in the process of dissemination among the pagans, the original, pristine wisdom was also tainted and distorted. Hence, he argued, it was a mistake to study the ancient monuments of pagan learning; instead, one ought to return to the true source, the Hebrew Bible, and the commentary that the writings of the New Testament provided on it. In doing so, he criticized the learned world of his age that was so fascinated by pagan authors: "For I am certain that whatever good and true the gentile monuments promise out of themselves, all of it is contained in a better and truer manner in Holy Writ."¹⁰³ Kriegsmann was far from alone in making such claims; earlier in the century, the Calvinist theologian Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) provides a prominent example. Kriegsmann explicitly referred to Alsted's *Triumphus Bibliorum Sacrorum* (1625), though not the vast *Encyclopaedia* (1630), which spelt out what the *Triumphus* had merely sketched.¹⁰⁴ Just as Alsted traced all knowledge back to "the scripture of the Old and New Testaments," Kriegsmann aimed to lead "the Bible wisdom of the ancient Hebrews back into the world of learning."¹⁰⁵ This heightened focus on biblical as opposed to pagan sources is striking when held against Kriegsmann's youthful enthusiasm for Hermes Trismegistus. It corresponds to the strong emphasis on the Bible in Pietism, though Kriegsmann still relied on the academic learning that other Pietists tended to criticize: his philological approach remained unchanged through the twenty years that separated his *Tabula Smaragdina* from *De bibliosophia*.

Kriegsmann also systematized the Bible wisdom of the ancient Hebrews. Based on "the fourfold light of intelligence," he distinguished its mental, natural, angelic and divine aspects and coined four terms to describe the different areas of biblical wisdom, each of which was associated with one of the four lights.¹⁰⁶ Corresponding to his Pietist leanings, *theopraxia*—the ancient Hebrew and practical version of what had been perverted into theo-

¹⁰³ *De bibliosophia*, fol. A5v. "Quin certum mihi est, quicquid boni ac veri gentilia monumenta ex se promittunt, id omne longè meliori ac veriori modo Sacris literis contineri."

¹⁰⁴ *De bibliosophia*, 6. On Alsted, see Howard Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588–1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation, and Universal Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Triumphus Bibliorum Sacrorum seu encyclopaedia biblica* (Frankfurt a.M.: Apud Bartholomaeum Schmidt, 1625), title page. "Scriptura V. et N. T." Kriegsmann, *De bibliosophia*, title page. "De bibliosophia Ebraeorum veterum in orbem literarium reducenda."

¹⁰⁶ *De bibliosophia*, 17. "Quadruplex est intelligentiae lumen."

retical *theologia*—was “the true cognition of God and saving faith in Christ, which lead to sincere piety and a sanctified life.” *Logonomia* essentially encompassed philosophy or reason on the one hand and law as well as politics on the other—*logos* and *nomos*. Breaking with the traditional segregation of natural philosophy and the mechanical arts, Kriegsmann also combined “knowledge of nature’s marvels and the secrets of art” in a single term, *physiotechnia*. All of these novel terms abandoned the traditional divide between theory and practice in matters of religion, politics and science. Lastly, *cabbala sancta* allowed for “the reception of angelic light towards the ensuing particular gifts of temporal happiness according to the will of God, the beneficent, liberal giver of presents.”¹⁰⁷ Considering the fact that Kriegsmann also wrote works with titles corresponding to two of these areas, it seems likely that *bibliosophia* as a concept also represented a belated program for all his efforts.¹⁰⁸

There might, at first glance, seem to be a tension between Kriegsmann’s call to return to the *bibliosophia* of the ancient Hebrews and his Lutheran brand of devotional Christianity. But even as *prisca sapientia* had a history, so too did the true faith: based on the notion of *translatio religionis* he shared with Luther, Kriegsmann had argued elsewhere that the true faith, as God revealed it progressively throughout history, had first been among the Jews.¹⁰⁹ Since its state deteriorated over time and led to the theological nitpicking of the Pharisees, Jesus Christ stepped in to found a new church. Through the centuries, however, even the Catholic Church suffered gross errors and impiety that distorted the true faith, which was then restored by Luther and the Reformation.¹¹⁰ This pattern is similar to the one used in accounts of transmission of *prisca sapientia*, or *translatio sapientiae*. Besides the original fervor of the reformers, Kriegsmann also harkened back to the early Christians in *Symphonesis Christianorum* (1677/78), his defense of the Darmstadt conventicle: by listing a number of early Christians mentioned in the

¹⁰⁷ *De bibliosophia*, 19. “Veram Dei agnitionem salvificamque in Christum fidem, quae sinceram pietatem vitaeque sanctimoniam operetur”; “Notitiam mirandorum naturae et artis secretorum”; “Receptionem luminis angelici ad consequenda singularia felicitatis temporariae dona ad nutum Dei, benefici donorum largitoris.”

¹⁰⁸ *Theopraxia*; קבלה oder: die wahre und richtige Cabalah mit Kupfer und Tabellen erläutert (Frankfurt a.M., 1774). In spite of its publication almost one hundred years after Kriegsmann’s death, it seems likely that the latter treatise is authentic, though it may have been adapted and/or translated from the Latin.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. John M. Headley, *Luther’s View of Church History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 240–44.

¹¹⁰ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Gegen-Schrifft Auff das listige Sendschreiben eines so genannten Christiani Conscientiosi an alle Evangel. Universitäten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Zufinden bey Wilhelm Serlin, 1672), 32–36.

New Testament, such as Timothy or Philemon, he encouraged his readers to find the appropriate role model for their profession. In Kriegsmann's own case, that turned out to be a politician famous for the mystical writings attributed to him, Dionysius the Areopagite. He stated that even today it was possible "for a politician [to attain] the perfection of the councillor Dionysius."¹¹¹

If the importance of early Christianity for Pietism has often been noted, the fact that the high regard in which it was held could be, and was in fact, readily combined with the notion of ancient wisdom has gone mostly unnoticed. But there are also antecedents for this amalgamation of ancient wisdom and devotional Christianity within German spiritualism, as the examples of Franckenberg and Hoburg show. And it is important to note that Tackius owned books by both of these authors, making it likely that Kriegsmann was no stranger to their work. Around the same time as he developed his notion of ancient Jewish Bible wisdom, *Via Veterum Sapientum* (1675) by Abraham von Franckenberg was published posthumously.¹¹² Based on a scriptural saying (Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10), it was divided into two parts—*Timor domini* and *Initium sapientiae*—excerpting all the relevant verses in the Bible, accompanied by Franckenberg's trademark marginalia. At the end, however, it featured another part, containing "several testaments and admonitions from the books of the ancient sages," short texts by, among others, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras and Plato, which Franckenberg had translated from the Latin out of Francesco Patrizi's *Nova de universis philosophia* (1591).¹¹³ The pious pagans were thus not out of place in the context of Christian, devotional literature.

¹¹¹ *Symphonesis Christianorum*, 44. "Einem Politico, zur Vollkommenheit des Raths-Herrn Dionysii."

¹¹² Recent papers on Franckenberg include Sibylle Rusterholz, "Abraham von Franckenbergs Verhältnis zu Jacob Böhme: Versuch einer Neubestimmung aufgrund kritischer Sichtung der Textgrundlagen," in *Kulturgeschichte Schlesiens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Garber (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005); Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Abraham von Franckenberg als christlicher Kabbalist," in *Realität als Herausforderung: Literatur in ihren konkreten historischen Kontexten. Festschrift für Wilhelm Kühlmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ralf Bogner, et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 233–48. An indispensable bibliographical guide to genuine and spurious Franckenbergiana is János Bruckner, *Abraham von Franckenberg: A Bibliographical Catalogue with a Short-List of His Library* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988). On his posthumous Amsterdam publisher, see Willem Heijting, "Hendrick Beets (1625?–1708), Publisher to the German Adherents of Jacob Böhme in Amsterdam," *Quaerendo* 3 (1973): 250–80. A revised, Dutch version of this paper can be found in *Profijtelijske boeckskens: Boeckcultuur, geloof en gewin. Historische studies* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 209–42.

¹¹³ Abraham von Franckenberg, *Via veterum sapientum. Das ist: Weg der Alten Weisen* (Amsterdam: Gedrukt by Christoffel Cunradus, Buchdrucker. In verlegung Henrici Betkii, und

Though the title was not specified, it is conceivable that Franckenberg's *Via veterum sapientum* was among the books that Tackius lent to Spener via Petersen. What is certain is that Hoburg's *Theologia Mystica* (1655/56) was among them. On the title page this mystical theology was described in German as the "secret power theology of the ancients."¹¹⁴ Thus, Hoburg presented a hidden theology of the ancients, which he opposed to the powerless, disputatious theology of the Lutheran clergy.¹¹⁵ Around 1700, the Pietists Balthasar Köpke (1646–1711) and Johann Wilhelm Zierold (1669–1731) both remodeled narratives of ancient wisdom—understood by them as the true Christian faith—to counter the accusation made by Friedrich Christian Bücher (1651–1714) that Pietism represented a form of Christianity perverted by pagan mysticism.¹¹⁶ By framing their Pietist accounts of church history in terms of ancient wisdom, Köpke and Zierold were able to present the emphasis on practical piety and devotion—often seen as a dangerous innovation by critics—as the actual core of the one, true faith that extended throughout the ages from the patriarchs to the Pietist conventicles across the Holy Roman Empire. In Kriegsmann's writings of the 1670s, this strategy had already been anticipated.

Kriegsmann's Defense of Pietist Conventicles (1677–1679)

As Winckler's conventicle in Darmstadt was increasingly exposed to sharp criticism by Balthasar Mentzer, Kriegsmann wrote his *Symphonesis Christianorum* to defend the practice of believers meeting in small groups that came to be characteristic of Pietism.¹¹⁷ Based on Matthew 18:15–20, Kriegsmann argued that Jesus Christ had instituted two kinds of gatherings: one was limited to small circles or private congregations (*Privat-Zusammenkunfften*), the other corresponded to conventional church services.¹¹⁸ Christ himself had

Consorten, 1675), 239–58. "Etliche Zeugnisse und Ermahnungen aus den Büchern der Alten Weisen."

¹¹⁴ Christian Hoburg, *Theologia Mystica, Das ist; Verborgene Krafft-Theologie der Alten* (Amsterdam: Gedruckt bey Cornelio de Bruyn ... verkaufft bey Christoffel Luycken, 1655–56), title page. "Geheime Krafft-Theologia der Alten."

¹¹⁵ Martin Schmidt, "Christian Hoburg and Seventeenth-Century Mysticism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967): 51–58; "Christian Hoburgs Begriff der 'Mystischen Theologie'," in *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte: Festschrift für Ernst Benz zum 60. Geburtstag am 17. November 1967*, eds. Gerhard Müller and Winfried Zeller (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 313–26.

¹¹⁶ Lehmann-Brauns, *Weisheit in der Weltgeschichte*, 237–265; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 114–27.

¹¹⁷ Steitz, "Das anti-pietistische Programm," 448–56; Tietz, *Johann Winckler*, 179–270, esp. 200–209.

¹¹⁸ Kriegsmann, *Symphonesis Christianorum*, 5–13 and title page.

thus pioneered the conventicles now rediscovered in Pietism. Spener not only gave the work his blessing but actively made sure that it was printed in Frankfurt.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, Ludwig VI did not approve of the fact that his political advisor publicly took such a controversial position on the issue of Pietist conventicles: he had 800 copies of the first edition bought up and destroyed. But this did not mean that Kriegsmann had fallen out of favor, as his enemies presumed. In close contact with both Kriegsmann and Winckler during the ensuing controversy, Spener was able to testify that Kriegsmann remained in good standing with his lord until the end.¹²⁰ One might take this to imply that, for political reasons, the Landgrave had to ensure that members of his court did not compromise themselves in this manner, even as he may have sympathized with them personally. Apparently, there were no hard feelings on Kriegsmann's part either: the advisor honored his deceased lord through the translation of a Latin poem by Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), the famous Dutch scholar and poet, expressing his heartfelt memory of “the many high and gracious good deeds” he had enjoyed “until his most blessed death.”¹²¹

Unfortunately, the succeeding Landgrave Ludwig VII (1658–1678), who reigned for only four months, dismissed Kriegsmann along with many other courtiers. For the short remainder of his life, Kriegsmann moved to Mannheim and served the Calvinist Elector Palatine Karl Ludwig (1617–1680), thus leaving Lutheran territory. Since the population of the Palatinate had been severely decimated during the Thirty Years' War, the Elector pursued a policy of religious toleration to build it up again—this made it a suitable choice after Kriegsmann's clash with the conservative, Lutheran orthodoxy. The fact that Winckler—having fallen out with his superior, Mentzer—was made pastor to the Lutheran community in Mannheim led Kriegsmann to hope for a new Pietist community.¹²² However, Kriegsmann did not live long enough to see it flourish: he died on September 29, 1679, leaving be-

¹¹⁹ Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 3, nr. 97; nr. 114, esp. 557.

¹²⁰ *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 3, nr. 221, esp. 1049–1050.

¹²¹ Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann, *Todes-Verachtung/ In teutschen Versen/ Nach dem Lateinischen des Welt-berühmbten Danielis Heinsii. Zum Ehren-Gedächtniß Des Durchleuchtigsten Fürsten und Herrn/ Herrn Ludwigs des Sechsten/ Landgraafen zu Hessen/ etc.* (Hanau: Verlegts Carl Scheffer/ Buchhändler ... Druckts Joh. Burckh. Quantz/ in der Aubryschon Officin, 1678), 1. “In tieffster Erwegung Der vielen hohen Gnaden-Wohlthaten/ so von S. Hoch-Fürstl. Durchl. biß in Dero seeligsten Tode genossen/ Dero gewesener Cammer-Rath zu Darmstadt.”

¹²² Tietz, *Johann Winckler*, 223–32, esp. 224.

hind his second wife and the two children of his younger brother, who had died less than a year earlier.¹²³

Conclusion

From a young age until his early death, Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann had been fascinated by the great wisdom of the ancients that, for him, united learning and piety. His philological skills determined how he approached alchemy. By restoring the *Tabula Smaragdina* to its pristine, Phoenician form, he contributed to contemporary debates surrounding Hermes. Moreover, by identifying him as Noah's grandson, Canaan, Kriegsmann proposed a solution to the vexing problem of Hermes' historical existence and chronological placement. Bringing the same philological approach to bear on the characters used by alchemists to represent their substances, Kriegsmann argued that these signs had been instituted by Trismegistus and were far from arbitrary: originally, they had corresponded to the true nature of alchemical substances. In his *Epistola*, addressed to Johann Tackius, Kriegsmann argued that Plato was a great alchemist and had achieved significant theological insights due to his laboratory work, culminating in what he called Plato's chymical gospel.

As Kriegsmann became involved with the nucleus of Lutheran Pietism in Frankfurt, he continued his exchange with Tackius and Johann Eitel Diede zum Fürstenstein, whom he eventually joined at the court of Darmstadt. Diede was the dedicatee of Kriegsmann's conception of ancient wisdom as the *bibliosophia* of the ancient Hebrews. Besides his unconventional understanding of *cabala sancta*, this concept entailed not only a complete grasp of nature and art, philosophy and politics, but also practical, lived piety. Taken together with the *Symphonesis Christianorum*, ancient Jews and early Christians both provided role models for this understanding of religion. Through the ages, they were linked to Luther's reformation and the first Pietists by *translatio religionis*, a process analogous to the peregrinations of *prisca sapientia*. As briefly indicated with reference to Johann Wilhelm Zierold and Balthasar Köpke, Kriegsmann was not the last to defend Pietism with recourse to the devout and knowledgeable ancients.

Contrary to what the heritage of Paracelsus, Arndt and Boehme might seem to imply, Kriegsmann's example serves to show that the connection between alchemy and Pietism ought not to be considered self-evident. Rather, for reasons that could be highly individual, Pietists approached

¹²³ See Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, vol. 5, nr. 7, 33. Tietz mistakenly holds them to have been Wilhelm Christoph's own children; *Johann Winckler*, 190, n. 55.

alchemy from a number of different angles and engaged with it to varying extents. Not least due to his philological approach, Kriegsmann was singular in how he made the link between alchemy and Pietism through ancient wisdom. It was clear to him that all the secrets of alchemy were contained in Hermetic and Platonic writings (specifically, the *Tabula Smaragdina* and Plato's *Critias*), as well as the Hebrew Scriptures. In keeping with the notion of *prisca sapientia*, the authors of these ancient documents—be they pagans or patriarchs—were assumed to have led exemplary lives of piety that Kriegsmann strove to imitate. In all of this, ancient wisdom provided him with the common denominator for alchemy and Pietism.

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