Astrology as Political Propaganda: Humanist Responses to the Turkish Threat in Early-Sixteenth-Century Vienna

DARIN HAYTON

EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I SPARED NO EXPENSE or effort to ensure that he would be remembered the way that he wanted to be remembered. Throughout his reign he concentrated on his image, crafting it to suit his political and dynastic goals. He justified his efforts by claiming that, "Whoever prepares no memorial for himself during his lifetime has none after his death, and that same person will be forgotten along with the sound of the bell that tolls his passing. And so the money I spend on my memorial is not lost; rather, to spare expense on my memorial is to suppress my future reputation. For what I do not produce toward my own memorial during my lifetime will not be celebrated after my death by you or anybody else."1

A key aspect of the emperor's memorial was his patronage of and skill in astrology. The image of Maximilian as patron and student of astrology was one of his own making. In his autobiographical writings, Maximilian emphasized his efforts to learn and practice astrology. His personal secretary and adviser, Joseph Grünpeck, who worked on early drafts of the emperor's autobiography and wrote a biography of Maximilian, consistently portrayed the emperor as an avid and gifted student of astrology. In the biography, which he dedicated to Emperor Charles V, Grünpeck recounted Maximilian's enjoyment in reading astronomical and astrological literature, especially Ptolemy.2 Not long after Maximilian died, Johannes Schönor praised the emperor for his efforts in astrology and numbered him among the most important patrons of astrology. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Henry Ranzovius, in his history of great patrons of astrology, singled out Maximilian and labeled him a lover of the art.3

The importance of astrology in Maximilian's self-representation and its place in his political efforts was best summarized in his autobiographical Weisskunig. Because Maximilian had

3 Johannes Schönor, De judiciis nativitatum. Libri tres [Three books on nativities] (Nuremberg, 1545), a4v; Henry Ranzovius, Catalogus. Imperatorum, regulam, ac virorum illustrium, qui artem astrologicam amant, ornant & exercuerunt [A catalog of emperors, kings and illustrious men who have delighted in, promoted and practiced the art of astrology] (Leipzig, 1584), 67.
intended it to be a model for his grandsons, the future emperors Charles V and Ferdinand I, providing them with a guide to what a prince should know and how he should represent himself, Maximilian's *Weisskunig* offers valuable insight into the emperor's political and intellectual priorities. Here Maximilian claimed:

And now after the young Weisskunig had studied diplomacy and negotiations and had learned them sufficiently, as previously mentioned, he then considered how, in the future, it would be necessary for him to recognize the stars and their influences as well as their effects. Otherwise, he might not correctly understand human nature, a topic that seemed to him almost completely absent from the political knowledge. However much zeal he brought to the task, the science of the stars remained impenetrable to him. Therefore, he summoned the most learned doctor of astrology. He very diligently learned this art from the doctor and, in fact, recognized the influence of the heavens and the effects of the stars—whence people receive their disposition and character—and also the arrangement of the planets and the zodiac.

On the one hand, Maximilian suggested that astrology provided practical knowledge for rulers, giving them insight into the nature and motivations of their subjects and enemies. On the other hand, it was useful to appear to be both a patron and a student of the art. In this way, the prince could attract the best astrologers to his court and rely on them for interpretations of celestial phenomena. In both cases, astrology was political.

Astrology had long been associated with imperial power. Indeed, the rise of the Roman Empire was accompanied by the development of astrology as a political tool. Emperors as far back as Augustus had turned to the heavens to bolster the legitimacy of their rule and to demonstrate that they were fulfilling a greater destiny. Augustus skillfully deployed images of Capricorn, his ascendant, as a political tool, issuing coins with various renditions of the symbol. Imperial astrologers also cast horoscopes of political rivals to determine potential threats, who were then quickly eliminated. Although Maximilian probably knew of these illustrious predecessors, he certainly did not have to look far back to find support for his own interest in astrology. His father, Emperor Frederick III, had a lifelong interest in astrology that intensified after he became emperor. The famous fifteenth-century astronomers Georg Peurbach and Regiomontanus had provided astrological services for the emperor. Among his other responsibilities, Regiomontanus cast genitures, or natal horoscopes, for Frederick's wife, Eleanor of Portugal, and son, Maximilian (see Figure 1). Throughout Maximilian's youth, Frederick regularly consulted astrologers to learn what Maximilian's future held for him.

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5Maximilian, Weisskunig, 62.


One reason Maximilian turned to astrology was to demonstrate the legitimacy and, indeed, the necessity of his position as Holy Roman Emperor and leader of the Christian world. Astrology formed the perfect complement to his genealogical and historical projects. The emperor’s efforts to establish his family tree and to recover a lost German past provided evidence that inserted the Habsburgs into a continuous historical tradition—a tradition that culminated in Maximilian’s rule. Through these projects, the Habsburgs gained historical authority and prestige. No matter how impressive these projects were, however, they failed to confer on Maximilian and the Habsburgs the necessity that the emperor sought. Habsburg rule remained a historical contingency. To accomplish his larger plans and to establish the house of Habsburg as the dominant ruling family, Maximilian had to find sharper tools than historical analysis. Astrology supplied those tools.

Astrology provided a framework for understanding both how and why history had unfolded as it had. Astrological analysis showed that history was not simply a sequence of chance events. Instead, each event was fated to occur, and history became the realization of a divine plan. The success of this historical analysis—the evidence that past events had been caused or at least signaled by the motions of the stars and planets—in turn gave the astrological interpretation of the contemporary situation greater legitimacy. By revealing the pattern in history, astrology invested contemporary events with a greater significance precisely because they were seen as part of God’s plan. This gave astrology an immediate and almost palpable role in politics. In the broadest sense, it reinforced Maximilian’s claim to the title of Holy Roman Emperor by showing how he had been destined to become emperor. More immediately, astrology was used to support the emperor’s many specific political struggles. Pro-Habsburg humanists recognized the value of astrological analysis and used it to advance the Habsburg political agenda.

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10 Maximilian’s genealogical and historical projects have received prolonged scholarly attention. Most recently, see Christopher S. Wood, “Maximilian I as Archeologist,” Renaissance Quarterly 58, no. 4 (2005): 1128–74.
The efforts of Sebastian Brant, Johannes Stabius, and Andreas Perlach reflect some of the ways that pro-Habsburg humanists employed astrology and the threat of a Turkish invasion to support Habsburg reforms. Brant used his popular book, Ship of Fools, as a vehicle for Maximilian’s propaganda. Drawing attention to an ominous planetary conjunction, Brant argued that the princes and the German people had to support the emperor’s financial and military reforms or risk destruction and ruin at the hands of a Turkish army. A few years later, Stabius echoed these sentiments when he composed his Prognostication for the Years 1503/04. In this text, printed as a broadsheet and quarto pamphlet, Stabius interpreted the same planetary conjunction to argue once again for Maximilian’s imperial reforms. Perlach’s use of astrology was more sophisticated and technical than that of either Brant or Stabius. Nonetheless, he understood his pamphlets to be pieces of Habsburg propaganda, and, like his colleagues, he used them to generate support for the Habsburg cause.

Sebastian Brant’s “De Corrupto”

When the imperial diet convened at Worms in 1497, Sebastian Brant was hard at work composing a new poem for the second Latin edition of his Ship of Fools. In this poem, entitled “Concerning the Annihilation of Living Things through the Perversion of the Natural Order” (“De corrupto”), Brant combined a prophetic interpretation of the past with an astrological analysis of future events. He then wedded these two traditions when he argued in support of Maximilian’s contemporary political goals. Both astrology and prophecy are clearly represented in the woodcut that illustrated Brant’s poem (see Figure 2). The four shields in the lower portion of the woodcut are decorated with beasts from the Book of Daniel: the winged lion, the bear, the four-headed leopard, and the ten-horned beast. The upper left corner is dominated by a horoscopic chart illustrating the positions of the heavens at nine o’clock on the evening of 2 October 1503, the moment when the three superior planets—Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars—would conjoin in the zodiacal sign of Cancer. The symbol for Cancer decorates the shield at the right of the woodcut and links Brant’s prophetic and astrological analyses. These are the two causes for the anarchy portrayed in the center: the cart is placed before the horses, which are themselves being driven by a fool, and another fool, upside down and with his torso turned around backwards, rides in the cart. The woodcut visually summarized the poem and simultaneously located the source of current affairs in the prophetic past and the astrological future.

The prophecy from the Book of Daniel structured the first half of Brant’s “De corrupto.” Brant recounted human history by associating each of the four major historical empires with the four beasts from Daniel’s dream. The Babylonian empire ended when the winged lion relinquished the Imperium to the Persians. The bear witnessed the transfer of imperial authority from the Persians to Alexander’s Greek empire, which ended with the advent of the four-headed

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11 Maximilian convened the diet at Worms but later moved it to Freiburg. He complained that the princes were resisting his efforts to secure support and hoped that he would have greater influence if the diet were relocated to a city under his control. See Hermann Wieslecker, Maximilian I: Das Reich, Österreich und Europa an der Wende zur Neuzeit, 5 vols. (Munich, 1971–85), 2:271–301.

12 The world turned upside down was a common theme in medieval literature and was frequently associated with the return of the Antichrist. In the late fifteenth century, it became a common tool used by social and religious reformers. See Ernst Roberts Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages (Princeton, 1988), 94–98; R. W. Scribner, For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation (Oxford, 1994), 148–89.
CXLV

De corrupto ordine viuendi
pereuntibus. Inuentio noua. Sebastiani Brant.

Anno dni. 1503.
2. die octobris post
meridiem hora nona
ascendit ad medium
vi. climatis.
leopard at the division of the empire following Alexander’s death. At that time, the Romans had assumed the mantel of authority. Now the last animal, the ten-horned beast, threatened the disintegration of the Roman Empire and the transfer of Imperium from the Holy Roman Emperor. According to Brant’s analysis, the fall and subsequent demise of each empire was brought about by insubordination and disregard for the natural order. At the time of Creation, God had established a natural social order that humans were obligated to respect. Failure to maintain this God-given order had caused the ruin and downfall of each of the previous empires. Brant concluded his historical analysis by repeating his main point: disregard for laws and authority and failure to support the emperor has inevitably led to anarchy and ruin.

At this point, Brant turned his attention to the future and the planetary conjunction that would occur in 1503. He warned that this was a portentous conjunction: “Believe me, O Germans, the future is full of danger and infected by extreme evils. Alas! How greatly I fear that the wicked fates will strike us and take the imperial scepter from us. Behold (I beg you) this figure of the heavens, which you see. The exceedingly savage planets—Saturn, Mars and Jupiter—conjoin in Cancer…. Indeed, the stars and the fierce fates threaten many things for us. But no one believes that such a day is imminent. The time is near: the scepter will be ripped from us and will pass far away.” Constantine had united the Christian and Roman empires when he transferred the seat of the empire from Rome to Constantinople. Charles the Great, a German, had brought the Roman Imperium back to the west, where, through the cooperation of the electors and the emperor, the empire was to stand forever. Now, however, the Turks, who had recently conquered Constantinople, were threatening to bring disaster and ruin to the Germans. Only by aligning behind the emperor could the princes repel the Turkish threat and avert certain ruin.

Astrology stood literally at the center of Brant’s poem and was the core of his analysis. For Brant and his contemporaries, conjunctions of the outer planets always portended dire events on earth. In contrast to Ptolemaic astrology, which emphasized the effects of eclipses, Arabic astrology had developed a rich theory of planetary influence based on the conjunctions of the three outer planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. The fullest expression of this theory was articulated by the ninth-century Arab astrologer Albumasar and summarized by Alcabitius. Although the Arabic originals were inaccessible to Brant and his contemporaries, careful Latin translations had been circulated in manuscripts as early as the twelfth century. By the early fourteenth century, vernacular translations were available, including Arnold of Friburg’s German translation of Alcabitius’s Introductorius ad magisterium judiciorum astrorum. Albumasar’s

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13Ibid., lines 290–304.
14Ibid., lines 305–22.
16There is no tension between Brant’s use of astrology here and his apparent rejection of astrology and false prophets found elsewhere in his Ship of Fools. See, Dieter Wuttke, “Sebastian Brants Verhältnis zu Wunderdeutung und Astrologie,” in Studien zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des Mittelalters, ed. Werner Besch et al. (Berlin, 1974), 272–86.
18Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5318 contains Arnold of Friburg’s translation, which was checked and corrected by Burkhardt Kechh of Salzburg in 1474. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5318, fol. 128v.
Liber introductorii maioris ad scientiam judiciorum astrarum and his Conjunctio magnis, as well as Alcabitius's Introductorius, were printed by the late 1480s and reprinted in the early sixteenth century. Albasar and Alcabitius both asserted that conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter, on the one hand, and Saturn and Mars, on the other, were the most significant celestial events and caused the greatest changes on earth. Albasar had established a hierarchy of conjunctions in which the more infrequent the conjunction was, the greater its effects. He considered in detail the historical relationship between conjunctions of the superior planets and the transfer of rule, as well as the rise and fall of religions. Alcabitius provided a schematic summary of this doctrine, which was imported wholesale into the Latin translations of these works.

Although Albasar's and Alcabitius's texts provided the most sophisticated treatment of conjunctionist astrology, their works existed within a broad corpus of texts and authoritative authors. The Arab astrologers Haly Abenragel, Abubacker, Messiahalah, and Almansor, along with the Greeks Ptolemy and Dorotheus of Sidon all contributed to the larger body of astrological knowledge. By the end of the fifteenth century, Leopold of Austria and Guido Bonatti were able to claim places in the pantheon of astrologers. Together, these authorities offered a broad spectrum of astrological doctrine, which later authors could weave together to suit their immediate needs.

Worked applications of conjunctionist theory further helped to spread the doctrine. Perhaps the most famous of such texts was Pierre d'Ailly's Concordantia astronomie cum theologica and its companion, Concordantia astronomie cum hystorica narratione. D'Ailly had successfully used the Arabic theory of great conjunctions to explain the Great Schism. He then applied it to the contemporary situation, arguing that the church needed to heal its rupture or risk the devastating effects of the next conjunction—effects that would likely include the apocalyptic end of the world. The importance of d'Ailly's texts can hardly be underestimated; he had shown how conjunctionist astrology applied to the Christian context. Moreover, he had carried out most of the difficult calculations and analyses, making the results available to a wider audience. Maximilian's secretary and propagandist Joseph Grünpeck shamelessly plagiarized from d'Ailly's work when he wrote his own astrological tract on "the French Disease." Grünpeck apparently did not read the text very closely and relied instead on the diagrams, whose errors he reproduced in his own work. D'Ailly's texts also enjoyed rather wide circulation, as they were often bound with other astrological tracts, including those by Alcabitius and Albasar.

In the late fifteenth century, another widely read source for conjunctionist astrology was Johannes Lichtenberger's Prognosticatio, a mixture of simple Arabic astrology and medieval

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20For the manuscript tradition and printed editions of Albasar's Conjunctio magnis, see Abū Maṣar. On Historical Astrology, 2:xi–xxx. For Alcabitius's Introductorius, see Alcabitius, Al-Qabisi, 156–98.
22Alcabitius, Liber isagogicus Alchabitii de planetarum conjunctionibus [Alcabitius's introduction to planetary conjunctions] (Venice, 1485), cc8r.
23An excellent example of this eclectic tradition is found in an early-sixteenth-century copy of Alcabitius. Throughout this text, a reader has added marginalia to indicate where Alcabitius's text agrees with or is in tension with Albasar, Haly Abenragel, Leopold of Austria, Abubacker, Ptolemy, and Almansor. The text itself cites Messiahalah and Dorotheus of Sidon. See Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5275, fols. 221r–254r.
24On d'Ailly, see Laura Ackerman Smoller, History, Prophecy, and the Stars (Princeton, 1994).
26For example, d'Ailly's texts were bound between a copy of "Liber de locis stellarum fixarum cum ymaginibus" and Arnold of Friburg's translation of Alcabitius. See Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 3318, fols. 38r–105v.
prophecies. Published in 1488, Lichtenberger's text distilled conjunctionist astrology into its simplest form, which he had plagiarized from Paul of Middelburg. To this conjunctionist astrology, Lichtenberger added excerpts from the medieval Joachim and Methodian prophecies. His work was not systematic, but offered a convenient assortment of various doctrines. Whatever the source, texts on conjunctionist astrology enjoyed considerable authority at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.

When Brant composed his "De corruptu," he probably knew one or more of these textual traditions. Where he had learned astrology remains obscure, but it is clear that, by the time he matriculated at the University of Basel in 1475, he was already familiar with basic astrology, especially as it related to the computus tradition and calendrical calculations. Brant's interpretation of the 1503 conjunction could have come from any of the sources widely available at the end of the fifteenth century. He repeats some of the standard tropes in this literature. Most importantly for Brant's analysis, conjunctions of the outer planets caused significant changes in religions, the destruction of kingdoms, and the transfer of rule. These set pieces were found in the Latin translations of the Arabic texts; they were also the backbone on which d'Ailly and Lichtenberger had built their own texts.

According to Brant, however, the conjunction in 1503 had a few particularly sinister characteristics. First, Mars was suppressed by the malevolent Saturn, a point that was visually reflected in the woodcut by placing Saturn above both Jupiter and Mars. To interpret the significance of this fact, Brant drew on choreography, the astrological practice of associating particular regions of the earth with certain planets and zodiacal signs. Ptolemy had codified the practice in his Tetra-biblos, where he mapped the celestial bodies onto regions of his known world. Choreography became a flexible practice that could be modified to apply to different regions. Arab astrologers associated the planets and signs with cities and countries that were important to them, and later astrologers in Europe further adapted the doctrine for places familiar to them. John of Seville, who translated Albumasar's works, offered two different methods: one that depended on the planet and the sign, and a second that related just the signs to different cities. At the end of the fifteenth century.

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28 Steven vanden Broecke has argued that Pico della Mirandola's famous critique of astrology, which included an attack on conjunctionist astrology, had a considerable impact by the early sixteenth century. Within the Viennese context, the first clear evidence of any direct engagement with Pico's critique does not occur until 1517, when Georg Tannstetter dismissed easily Pico's attack on astrology in his judicium for that year. See Steven vanden Broecke, The Limits of Influence: Pico, Louvain, and the Crisis of Renaissance Astrology (Leiden, 2003). For Tannstetter's comment, see Georg Tannstetter, Judicium Astronomicum Viennense, anni M.DCCCC.XVII. [Astrological judgement for Vienna for AD 1517] (Vienna, 1516), A2v.


30 Although later scholars would claim that the 1484 conjunction signaled Luther's advent, this was not a part of the texts during the fifteenth century. Only in the sixteenth century, after Luther's rise in fame, did people look back and consider Lichtenberger's ambiguous statement about a "little prophet" a reference to Luther. Kurze, Johannes Lichtenberger, 57-58.

31 Johannes Hispalensis, "Tractatus de signis coelestibus eorumque effectibus," Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5463, fol. 155r-v. John of Seville's ambiguity is understandable, as the Arab sources themselves were not clear on which method to employ. For example, Latin translations of Albumasar often included variations in the choreography. See Albumasar, "Liber magnarum conjunctionum," Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 2436, fols. 250v-256r. The editors of the modern editions of Albumasar's On Great Conjunctions have highlighted the ambiguities in the choreographic tradition. See the editors' discussion in Abu Ma'sar, On Historical Astrology, 1:513-19, and the table on 606.
century, the chorographic tradition was in a period of flux. Traditional relationships between the celestial bodies and cities or countries were being remapped. When Brant interpreted the effects of the conjunction in 1503, he found that warlike Mars influenced the similarly fierce Germans. The fact that malevolent Saturn would overpower Mars portended dire events for the Germans. Second, the conjunction took place in Cancer, a variable or mobile sign symbolized by the Crab (see Figure 3). Ptolemy had divided the signs into fixed, mobile, and common, according to the motion of the sun in each one. Cancer and Capricorn were considered mobile or tropical, because the sun reversed its path in these signs. Just as the crab seemed to move contrary to nature, walking irregularly, sideways and backwards, so conjunctions in the sign of Cancer were thought to disrupt the natural order and signal radical changes on earth. Arabic astrologers had added considerable specificity to this general analogy. Albumasar had claimed that Saturn-Jupiter conjunctions in Cancer were favorable to the Turks. More worrisome was Albumasar's assertion that conjunctions of Mars and Saturn in the sign of Cancer indicated the transfer of rule from one place to another and the rise of the

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32In the fifteenth century d'Allig drew attention to the difficulty in determining the correct chorography. In his "De concordantia et disconcordantia astronomorum," he summarized Albumasar's chorography, compared it to those of Guido Bonatti, Alcabitius, and Johannes de Muris before acknowledging that the discrepancies made it difficult to decide which system to use. See the late-fifteenth-century copy: Pierre d'Allig, "De concordantia discordantium astronomorum" [On the agreement and disagreement amongst astronomers], Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5318, fols. 104r–105v. For a contemporary association between Vienna and Mars, see Regionmannus's astrological miscellany in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 10534, fol. 171v. D'Allig's "De concordantia" cited above, dated 1474, claims that Mars rules over Germany. D'Allig, "De concordantia," f. 104r. A contemporary printed example of this association is Joseph Grünpeck, Tractatus de pestilential Scorris sive mala de Franzosis. Originem. Remedicae eiusdem continens [Treatise on the pestilential scourge or French evil, containing its origin and remedies] (Augsburg, 1496), C3r–v.

33See, for example, Ptolemy, Quadripartitum, in Julius Firmicus Maternus, Astronomicon Lib. VIII. per Nicolaum Prucknerum Astrologum nuper ab innumeris mendis vindicati. His accessorum. CLAVDII PTOLEMAEI ÆPITρΕΧΞΑΠΩΝ, quod Quadripartitum vocant, Lib. III [The Astronomicon in eight books, recently purified of innumerable errors by Nicolaus Pruckner. To this is added Claudius Ptolemy's Æπτρεχζαπων, which is called the Quadripartitum, in four books] (Basel, 1533). 11. Arab astrologers adopted this division of signs, see Alcabitius, "Isagoge in astrorum judicium ab Arnoldo de Friburgo in germanicam linquam translat," Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 5318, fol. 108r.
Turks. To Brant, it was clear that the Germans risked losing the imperial title. The Turks, by contrast, would benefit from the unfavorable conjunction of planets and would assume the imperial title. The conclusion was almost inescapable: the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation was on the verge of disaster, and the Turks were poised to capitalize on that situation.

Brant, however, was no simple fatalist. Indeed, to adopt such a stance would have precluded his real goal, which was to persuade the princes and electors to accept Maximilian's authority and to unite behind the emperor in his efforts to raise an army to fight the Turks. For Brant, the conjunction of the superior planets revealed what would occur if the turbulent Germans did not heed his warning. In the final section of his poem, Brant abandoned his pessimism and suggested that there was still hope. He described the pleasant order that Maximilian had introduced into the empire and urged the princes and electors to set aside their bitter internal conflicts and unite behind the emperor. He then addressed the German people. He assured them that by respecting Maximilian's authority, paying their taxes, and maintaining their proper station, they would overcome the sinister effects of the planetary conjunction. Through unconditional support for Maximilian's financial and governmental reforms, "Jupiter will look down on us with a kind face, and our forces will be stronger than Alcathoe." Alcathoe was the legendary citadel at Megara, located just north of the Isthmus of Corinth. It had been impregnable as long as Nissus, its king, retained his lock of purple hair. The king's daughter, however, fell in love with the Cretan king and cut off her father's magical lock. The city immediately fell to an invading Cretan army. Alcathoe had been conquered through treachery and internal strife. Brant did not need to state the obvious message: the German princes and estates were fomenting internal strife and deceit. If they continued, they would cause the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire. If, on the other hand, they united behind Emperor Maximilian I, the empire would retain the Roman Imperium.

There can be little doubt that Maximilian appreciated Brant's efforts. After all, the emperor had seen his earlier reforms unravel at the hands of the German princes and electors, who had co-opted many of his efforts following the previous diet at Worms. Maximilian's financial and military situation had worsened when the French invaded the Italian peninsula, forcing him to commit troops and funds to an attempt to expel them from the peninsula. He had, once again, convened the diet in the hope of securing financial and military support for his campaign against the French and subsequently against the Turks. In such a climate, Brant's pro-imperial propaganda was certainly welcome. Maximilian seems to have begun paying Brant a salary and came to rely on him to direct the Alsatian humanists, though the specific rewards, if any, that the emperor conferred on Brant remain difficult to assess.

This was not the first time Brant had produced political propaganda that supported the emperor's cause. Modeling himself on Virgil, Brant had assumed the role of imperial panegyrist, and in 1492, he began producing a number of broadsheets that interpreted celestial or terres-

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34Albusmar, De magis conjunctibus [On the great conjunctions] (Venice, 1515), C1r, C1v–C2r.
36Ibid., lines 455–82, 505–24.
37Ibid., lines 505–12.
trial prodigies as portents for Maximilian's efforts to establish his authority within the empire. In 1492, Brant composed a broadsheet interpreting a meteorite that had fallen near Ensisheim on 7 November. Maximilian was in Alsace making preparations for an offensive against the French, and on 26 November, he made an excursion to Ensisheim to inspect the meteorite. In his broadsheet, Brant assured Maximilian that it was a sign from God that Maximilian would be successful in his battles against the French. Brant's prediction was vindicated when Maximilian defeated the French at Solins two months later. Brant used the German victory to celebrate his own prediction and produced another broadsheet once again interpreting the Ensisheim meteorite. This time he claimed that Maximilian's victory over the French was just the beginning of his successful campaigns against his enemies. In late 1493, Brant produced a third broadsheet on the Ensisheim meteorite. Because the French were no longer a threat—Maximilian had concluded the Peace of Senlis on 23 May 1493—Brant turned his attention to the Turkish threat, which occupied most of his poetry from this point forward. Once again, the meteorite was a sign from God indicating Maximilian's continued military successes, now against the Turks. Brant also claimed that the meteorite indicated that Maximilian would inherit the imperial crown and scepter. Although Brant referred to cold Saturn and warlike Mars, this broadsheet was largely devoid of astrological content.

In 1495, Brant produced another broadsheet that supported Maximilian's political efforts. This time, he focused on the birth of conjoined twins near Worms. In this work, he employed simple analogic reasoning: the two heads on the single body indicated the unity between Maximilian and the princes, the two heads of the empire. The child was a sign from God to symbolize the cooperation achieved between the German princes and Maximilian in the diet. Through this unity, the empire would be able to confront the Turkish problem. Monstrous births were again central in Brant's propaganda in 1496. A pig with one head and two bodies and a goose with two heads and one body served as the points of departure for his two broadsheets that year. In both cases, Brant focused on the two main political issues: unity within the empire, especially between the German princes and Maximilian, and the war against the Turks. Brant's method for interpreting these prodigies and monsters remained remarkably consistent. He searched for historical parallels and then compared them to his contemporary situation. The historical review established Brant's competence and authority to interpret the new prodigies and to show that the contemporary situation presented unique threats. He then employed simple analogic reasoning to interpret these prodigious events. In each case he concentrated on the two most important issues for Maximilian: unity within the empire and the war against the Turks. Throughout these early works, the key interpretive framework was provided by a prodigious event. Astrology played no role in his analysis.

Brant's production reached a fever pitch in 1497–98. In addition to his "De corrupto," which was appended to the new edition of Ship of Fools, he composed a dedicatory poem for his forthcoming Varia carmina that dealt with the Ottoman threat; edited the revelations of St.

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Methodius, which prophesied that a united Christian army would vanquish the Turks; and wrote "The Power and Terror of the Turks," an adaptation of the Methodian prophecies that identified Maximilian as the only person able to defeat the Turkish armies and ultimately convert the sultan.\(^5\) What distinguished Brant's "De corrupto" from his other work was the central role that astrology played in his effort to convince his audience that Germany needed to unite behind Maximilian in order to have any chance of defeating the Ottoman armies.

Brant was not the first person to use astrology and prophecy to interpret moments of crisis. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, both played important roles in politics and religion. This literature was often disseminated through pamphlets and other ephemeral texts that appealed to a broad audience across various strata of society.\(^6\) Many prophecic and astrological pamphlets were written from the vantage point of some marginalized or neglected group and called for social or political reform. Such protest pamphlets provided a medium for the public expression of opinions that threatened the established authorities. At the same time, they sought legitimacy for those opinions.\(^7\) In contrast to this popular literature, astrological texts produced in princely courts and the rarified circles of the church were written for a narrower audience. These texts were often longer and more complicated, which made them both expensive to produce and inaccessible to most people. Such texts had only limited effectiveness as propaganda.\(^8\) The popularity of Brant's Ship of Fools offered him the chance to adapt the prophetic and astrological aspects of the popular propaganda literature to the emperor's cause.

Brant did not adopt wholesale the prophetic and astrological forms of divination that characterized popular propaganda. He eschewed the subjective forms of divination that were common in the popular texts and instead based his analysis on inductive divination.\(^9\) Subjective divina-


\(^{47}\) For the distinction between inductive and subjective divination, see David Potter, Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius (Cambridge, 1994), 15–17.
tion often depended on a charismatic individual who claimed to have direct, divine inspiration. This form of prognostication was disparaged by more elite and erudite authors. Brant avoided and perhaps would have rejected the validity of subjective divination. By contrast, he employed inductive prognostication, which depended on previous experience and facts drawn from history. The most respected form of inductive divination was astrology, followed by other forms of prophecy that relied on careful historical analysis. Because prophecy and astrology had long enjoyed a close connection to political power, there was little that was innovative in Brant's use of these forms of divination. His contribution came through his efforts to move elite, learned prognostication into more popular literature and to appropriate this literature for the emperor's reforms.

Far from being idiosyncratic, Brant's use of prophecy and astrology to understand the Turkish threat and to advance the Habsburg political agenda became a model for pro-Habsburg humanists around the turn of the sixteenth century. Two important if less well known humanists from early-sixteenth-century Vienna illustrate the success of Brant's program of astrological propaganda. The first is Johannes Stabius, who, in the winter of 1502, composed a verse prognostication to celebrate his crowning as poet laureate. The second example is Andreas Perlach. Among his other activities, Perlach produced astrological pamphlets just before and after the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1529. At different moments and in various ways, both Stabius and Perlach employed astrology to interpret the Ottoman threat and to advance the Habsburg political agenda.

**Johannes Stabius's Prognostication**

Johannes Stabius had long hoped to find a position at Maximilian's court and had cultivated his connections in Vienna as early as the mid 1490s. At that time, he was able to help secure a position for his friend and colleague Conrad Celtis, who was summoned to Vienna in 1497. 

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50 Simon de Phares dismissed subjective prognostication in his *Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues*. Jean-Patrice Boudet has analyzed de Phares's text and has argued that prophecy was not respected at courts and amongst educated astrologers. Although de Phares rejected one form of prophecy—subjective divination and its reliance on an inspired individual—he was a proponent of astrology and other forms of inductive divination. Boudet recognizes, however, that de Phares's rejection of popular prophecy might not have been universal. Gabriella Zarri finds prophets at a number of Italian courts. See Jean-Patrice Boudet, "Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie à la fin du Moyen Âge" [Simon de Phares and the relationship between astrology and prophecy at the end of the middle ages], and Gabriella Zarri, "Les Prophètes de cour dans l'Italie de la Renaissance" [Prophets at court in Renaissance Italy], both in *Les Textes prophétiques et la prophétie en occident (XIe–XVIe siècle)* [Prophetic texts and prophecy in the West (12th–16th centuries)], ed. André Vauchez (Rome, 1990), 327–52, esp. n.39, and 359–85, respectively.

51 For the relationship between prophecy, astrology, and politics in antiquity, see Barton, *Ancient Astrology*; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*. For the failure of learned astrology in the popular literature, see Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento*.

52 See Wutke, "Sebastian Brant und Maximilian I."; Wutke, "Sebastian Brants Verhältnis zu Wunderdeutung und Astrologie." See also, Müller, "Poet, Prophet, Politiker."

Celtis's move to Vienna provided Stabius with an important and influential patron in the city and ultimately enabled Stabius to move from the University of Ingolstadt into the direct service of the imperial court.

As soon as Maximilian had recovered Vienna from Hungarian control in 1490, he set to work rebuilding the university, reestablishing and confirming the masters' rights and privileges, and restoring their salaries. He used the university's restored fame to attract humanists from around the empire. In 1497, he invited Celtis to come to Vienna to establish the university as a center of scholarship and humanist learning. Celtis quickly convinced the emperor to found a new institution at the university, the College of Poets and Mathematicians. The college was to be a higher faculty, analogous to the theology, law, and medical faculties. It would provide an institutional home for many of the scholars Celtis was busily bringing to the university and thereby further increase the university's reputation. Vienna once again became one of the most important universities north of the Alps, renowned both for the introduction of humanism into the curriculum and for the revival of the mathematical subjects, including astrology, mathematics, astronomy, and geography.

In 1502, Stabius was invited to Vienna to assume one of the chairs of mathematics in Celtis's newly formed college. Because the faculty stipends in this new college were paid directly out of the imperial coffers, Maximilian viewed these chairs as extensions of the imperial court and exercised tight control over who was appointed to them. A measure of the emperor's esteem was the fact that Stabius was the first appointee in this college. Stabius had been in Vienna only a few months before he received further imperial favor. In the winter of 1502–03, he was crowned poet laureate. Although Maximilian had given Celtis and his college the right to bestow on its members and graduates the privileges associated with the title poet laureate, the emperor had

1901); Bauch, Die Anfänge des Humanismus in Ingolstadt (Munich, 1901); and Bauch, Die Rezeption des Humanismus in Wien (Breslau, 1903).


In the history of the University of Vienna, Celtis's college is usually considered an institutional expression of Maximilian's efforts to introduce humanism into the curriculum. The tension between humanism and scholasticism is, in fact, the framework within which all histories of the university have been written. Although humanism was important, I have argued elsewhere that it is not the only lens through which to view the university and the activities of its masters. See Darin Hayton, "Astrologers and Astrology in Vienna During the Era of Emperor Maximilian I (1493–1519)," (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004). On the history of Vienna as seen through the history of humanism, see: Rudolf Kink, Geschichte der kaiserlichen Universität zu Wien, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1854), 1:184–236; Aschbach, Wiener Universität, 41–122; Bauch, Rezeption des Humanismus in Wien, 55–170; Karl Großmann, "Die Frühzeit des Humanismus in Wien bis zu Celtis Berufung 1497," Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich 22 (1929): 322–325, esp. 320–34 and 309–23; Grössing, Humanistische Naturwissenschaft; Franz Graf-Stuhlfhofer, Humanismus zwischen Hof und Universität: Georg Tannstetter (Collimitius) und sein wissenschaftliches Umfeld im Wien des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts (Vienna, 1996); Kurt Mühlenber, "Die Gemeinde der Lehrer und Schüler—Alma Mater Rudolphina," in Wien: Geschichte einer Stadt, vol. 1, Von den Anfängen bis zur ersten Wiener Türkenbelagerung (1529), ed. Peter Csendes and Ferdinand Opil (Vienna, 2000), 319–410, esp. 395–98.

Traditionally, scholars have referred to this period as the "second Viennese mathematical school." See Grössing, Humanistische Naturwissenschaft, 145–47.


See Graf-Stuhlfhofer, Humanismus zwischen Hof und Universität, 44–47; Bauch, Rezeption des Humanismus in Wien, 117–56; Aschbach, Wiener Universität, 61–122.
reserved the right to crown the poet laureate.\(^{59}\) Maximilian's poet laureates played key roles in the emperor's larger political efforts, both within the Holy Roman Empire and in Europe more broadly. He not only crowned more laureates than his immediate predecessor and his successors, he frequently brought them from the College of Poets and Mathematicians to the court, where Maximilian expected them to contribute to his larger domestic and foreign propaganda campaigns.\(^{60}\) Stabius no doubt rejoiced at his new prospects. To celebrate his crowning, Stabius composed his Prognostication for the Years 1503/04 by Johannes Stabius, Prophet of Austria and Poet Laureate, a verse prognostication based on the planetary conjunctions in 1503 and 1504 (see Figure 4).

Before coming to Vienna in 1502, Stabius was best known for his practica and judicia, which he had produced while teaching at the University of Ingolstadt.\(^{61}\) He had also written a laudatory poem for the emperor, his "Sapphic prophecy, dedicated to Maximilian, King of the Romans." In 1501, Celtis published Stabius's poem along with his own Ludus Diane, a play that Celtis had written in which the emperor was called on to play the decisive role.\(^{62}\) Stabius had used his Sapphic poem to lament the degeneration of society and to urge Maximilian to ameliorate the situation. Fitting the celebratory nature of both Celtis's performance of the Ludus Diane and its publication, Stabius placed his poem squarely in support of imperial propaganda. He saw Maximilian as intimately connected to the restoration of health and prosperity, which would return when the planets and constellations were once again favorably aligned. Although Stabius had excluded Maximilian from celestial influence when he wrote his practica for 1501, in his "Carmen Saphicum" he elevated Maximilian to a participatory role in realizing celestial influences and improving the general conditions.\(^{63}\) Stabius echoed these sentiments in his Prognostication for the Years 1503/04.

The crowning of a poet laureate was full of pomp and circumstance and culminated with a reading by the poet. When Stabius was crowned, this reading took place in the University of Vienna's main aula and was attended by university officials as well as courtiers and imperial secretaries. It is possible that the emperor himself was in the audience, as he was in Vienna at that time. The Nuremberg printer Johannes Weissenberger, who printed the Prognostication, clearly anticipated a large audience, for he simultaneously produced a broadsheet edition as well as a small quarto pamphlet. The broadsheets would have served as decoration, adorning the walls of the university and perhaps the public squares, while the pamphlets were sold as souvenirs to a wider market. No doubt, both Stabius and Weissenberger hoped to capitalize on the situation—Stabius to broaden his fame and for imperial patronage, Weissenberger to make a profit.

Stabius's goals and the circumstances for which he produced his Prognostication shaped the poem's content and style. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, judicia, practica, and

\(^{59}\) See the founding charter in Aschbach, Wiener Universität, 440–41. There is some disagreement about whether or not Celtis actually crowned Stabius. See Alois Schmid, "Poeta et orator a Caesare laureatus": Die Dichterkrönungen Kaiser Maximilians I., Historisches Jahrbuch 109 (1989): 75; and Bauch, Rezeption des Humanismus in Wien, 151–52.


\(^{61}\) On Stabius's activities at Ingolstadt, see Schöner, Mathematik und Astronomie, esp. 272–84.


\(^{63}\) Johannes Stabius, "Carmen Saphicum: ad Max. Ro. re." [Sapphic Prophecy, dedicated to Maximilian, King of the Romans], in Celtis, Ludus Diane, A5v–A6v.
prognostica were popular genres aimed at a broad literate audience. Consequently, authors adopted a plain style and standard format. The title pages of these short works were frequently illustrated by a woodcut in which the significant celestial events for the coming year were represented by personifications of the planets. Stabius himself had produced a number of these pamphlets. His Prognostication, however, was a different kind of work. Like Brant before him, he modeled himself on Virgil in style and content. Stabius wrote in hexameter verse that required substantial effort on the part of the reader to untangle the syntax and meaning. Moreover, he employed a diverse and sometimes obscure vocabulary and, at the same time, made frequent allusions to the classical epic poets. The product was a complex and opaque work that surely appealed to Stabius's erudite audience.

Despite the formal circumstances that occasioned Stabius's Prognostication, he showed himself to be a man of the times when he wrote it. He adopted formal aspects of the popular practical literature and combined astrology and prophecy to understand past and present social and political events. Stabius began his Prognostication by recounting the important celestial causes: the conjunction of the three outer planets in 1503. This was the same event that had stood at the center of Brant's poem. Stabius wrote, "Icy Saturn is slowly moving out of Cancer, while violent Mars begins to approach it, mixing incongruous influences with the old man [Saturn]." This situation was made worse by Jupiter's participation in the conjunction: "That nature of benign Jupiter does not improve the situation, but rather it tends to have joined with these cohorts [Mars and Saturn] and to increase the destruction of things." Here, Stabius presented the two key types of conjunctions that were thought to cause the greatest destruction. He might have known of these doctrines directly from the Latin translations of Albumasar and Alcabitius, which probably formed part of the curriculum in mathematics and astronomy at the University of Ingolstadt. The conjunctions that would begin in 1503 and continue into 1504, however, promised to be worse than normal, in large part because the two planets would

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64Judicia and praxtica were annual astrological pamphlets that contained predictions for the coming year, including the fortunes of cities, countries, and groups of people, such as businessmen or academics; the likelihood of diseases, war, or famine; propitious times to bloodlet or take medicines; and weather predictions. Practica were the vernacular counterpart to judicia. Prognostica were generally produced in response to a prodigious or unusual event, such as a comet or a planetary conjunction. Hammerstein's claim that these texts do not qualify as pamphlets "since the material was presented without any intention of influencing conviction or stimulating agitation" is problematic. Stabia's poem, which was produced in quarto format as well as a broadsheet, is clearly intended to influence conviction and action. See Hammerstein, "The Battle of the Booklets," 130. Judicia and practica still await a careful analysis. For a start, see Hayton, "Astrologers and Astrology in Vienna," esp. 292–370.

65Stabius had probably adopted a similar tone in his 1499 judicium and definitely did so in his 1501 practica. See Hayton, "Astrologers and Astrology in Vienna," 332–34.

66For Brant's use of Virgil, see Harrison, "Virgil, Sebastian Brant, and Maximilian I."

67In his poem, Stabius borrowed liberally from epic poets such as Virgil, Lucan, and Ovid, as well as from Pliny and Macrobius.


70Ibid., lines 11–13.

71Stabius had studied astronomy, astrology, and mathematics at the University of Ingolstadt before becoming a master there. In this context, it is reasonable to expect that he had studied and perhaps lectured on the more sophisticated texts of Albumasar and Alcabitius. On Stabius's time at Ingolstadt, see Schönert, Mathematik und Astronomie.
actually conjoin three times as they progressed, regressed, and once again progressed through their orbits.  

After describing the motions of the two luminaries and the planets, Stabius repeated that this particular conjunction of the outer planets portended dire consequences, contrasting it to the frequency of regular conjunctions of Saturn with either Jupiter or Mars: "It is, however, difficult to say how often Jupiter and Mars conjoin with Saturn, what sorts of difficulties assail the mortal heart: fear and apprehension and then terror cast down the spirit. Destruction is looming for nations and kingdoms, and mayhem extends everywhere. And if a simple conjunction is capable of such things, a conjunction that is confined to a single degree or face of a sign rarely lasts ten days, what sorts of evils is that stronger conjunction, which raging Cancer endures for seven continuous months, not able to cause or foment on earth." Stabius here refers to the fact that Saturn and Jupiter would first come into conjunction in late August 1503 and, because of their direct and retrograde motions, would finally progress out of conjunction in June 1504. The conjunctions between all three planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, would begin later and end earlier. Stabius also pointed out that both the sun and Mercury would be in unfavorable aspects to the outer planets. This would contribute further to the general harm caused by the conjunctions.

Once he had outlined the causes of destruction, Stabius had only to detail what those effects would be. At this point Stabius began to weave prophetic strains into his Prognostication and revealed his specific political commitments. Unlike Brant, who relied on the Book of Daniel to provide the framework for his prophetic interpretation of history, Stabius drew on the Methodian and Joachim traditions. In the middle of the thirteenth century, those traditions produced millennial speculations that revolved around Emperor Frederick II, casting him as the prophetic Last World Emperor. He died, however, before he could lead an army against the Antichrist and inaugurate the millennium. This did little to quell the speculations; indeed, they seemed to increase over the next two centuries, shifting the focus onto the next Frederick. In 1452, Frederick of Habsburg became Emperor Frederick III, immediately prompting speculation that he was the long-expected Last World Emperor. A year later, the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and seemed to be poised to invade Europe. This situation contributed to an explosion of prophetic literature in the latter half of the fifteenth century, particularly in the Germanies, where the Turkish threat was felt more acutely. Few people were, however, less suited to be the prophetic emperor than Frederick III, and toward the end of his reign, authors began looking for someone else to fulfill the role.

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72 Stabius, Prognosticon, lines 14–21.
73 Ibid., lines 49–58.
74 According to modern calculations, the planets would have the following conjunction patterns: Saturn and Jupiter would conjoin two times between 30 August 1503 and 25 June 1504, for a total of seven months; Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars would conjoin twice between 9 October 1503 and 12 March 1504. See Bryant Tuckerman, Planetary, Lunar, and Solar Positions A.D. 2 to A.D 1649 at Five-Day and Ten-Day Intervals (Philadelphia, 1964), 769–770.
75 Stabius, Prognosticon, lines 59–62.
77 In the late fifteenth century, the most famous attempt to find a different Last World Emperor was the anonymous Tractatus de Turcis, which proposed Mathias Corvinus. The Tractatus de Turcis enjoyed a wide readership in both manuscript and printed editions. A typical, late-fifteenth-century manuscript, annotated in the 1480s and 1490s, is Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. lat. 4224, esp. fols. 348r–364r. A contemporary printed edition is Tractatus quidam de Turcis [A treatise on the Turks] (Nuremberg, 1481).
One of the more important of these fifteenth-century authors was Lichtenberger, who, as early as 1488, in his *Prognostication*, began looking for a more suitable Last World Emperor. The point of departure for Lichtenberger was the Saturn-Jupiter conjunction that occurred in November 1484 and the solar eclipse the following March. These two events, however, played only a supporting role in his predictions. He focused instead on prophetic literature, grounding his interpretation of current and future events in a combination of the Methodian and Joachim prophetic traditions. Both these traditions looked to a Last World Emperor who would come and vanquish the great evil. The older, Methodian prophecies focused on the subsequent advent of the Antichrist and the death of the Last World Emperor before Judgment Day. Lichtenberger combined this with the more optimistic Joachim prophecies that emphasized the prosperous reign of the Last World Emperor. According to Lichtenberger, Maximilian would lead a unified Christian army against the infidels, vanquish the Ottoman threat, and usher in the Golden Age before handing the imperial insignia back to God in Jerusalem.

In many ways, Stabius modeled his *Prognostication* on Lichtenberger's work. However, he linked his astrological-prophetic analysis more closely to the Habsburg political agenda. Stabius chose to reinforce visually the importance of the conjunction of the outer planets with the central woodcut, which illustrated the positions of the planets in the zodiac, with their influential rays streaming toward the earth (see Figure 5). He wedded this astrological approach to a prophetic interpretation of history. His sophistication in combining astrology and prophecy, which Lichtenberger had only loosely joined, was revealed in his attempts to trace terrestrial events back to the planets. Each planet had a set of qualities and characteristics associated with it that caused similar events to occur on earth or affected the personalities and professions of people born under its influence. Stabius drew on these qualities to explain the rise of the Ottoman forces currently threatening the empire and all of Christendom. He was at his best when he described Mars's role in these events: Savage Mars, who calls forth from the deepest Hell the Furies, vengeance, hatred, and wrath, would assail mankind and destroy kings, popes, and paupers alike. Most importantly, Mars would drive a savage army down from the north to attack the borders of Christendom. Stabius relied on the warlike characteristics of Mars to summon

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78 Kurze's studies remain the fundamental work on Lichtenberger. See Kurze, Johannes Lichtenberger; Kurze, "Popular Astrology and Prophecy."

79 Lichtenberger points to these two events in the complete title of his work: *Prognosticatio Ioannis Lichtenbergers, Quam olim scriptis super magna illa Saturni ac luis conjunctione, quae fuit Anno M.CCCC.LXXXVIII. praeterea ad eclipsim Solis anni sequentis videlicet LXXXV.* [Johannes Lichtenberger's prognostication, which he wrote recently about the great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter that occurred in the year 1484 as well as about the eclipse of the sun in the following year, namely 1485] (Heidelberg, 1488).

80 Kurze characterizes Lichtenberger's astrology as simplistic. See Kurze, "Popular Astrology and Prophecy," 184–85. Further, Kurze has argued that Lichtenberger was interested in astrology only in so far as it lent credibility to his prophetic interpretations. See Kurze, Johannes Lichtenberger, 40–43.

81 Reeves characterizes Lichtenberger's position as "Joachist" because of this focus on the *nova reformatio* rather than on the Antichrist. Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy*, 349. This needs to be nuanced in light of Joachim of Fiore's emphasis on antichrists and the Antichrist. See Robert Lerner, "Antichrists and Antichrist in Joachim of Fiore," *Speculum* 60, no. 3 (1985): 553–70.

82 Late fifteenth-century Methodian prophecies also looked to Maximilian as the Last World Emperor. See the 1498 edition: *Opusculum divinarum revelationum sancti Methodii* [A short text of the divine revelations of Saint Methodius] (Basel, 1498).


84 Stabius, *Prognosticon*, lines 76–85.
the evil forces that were going to chastise the church and the Christian people. Invasion by the forces of evil as a prelude to the advent of the Antichrist was a standard theme out of the Methodian and Joachim prophetic traditions. Stabius's educated audience, familiar with both these traditions, would not have missed the allusion. Nonetheless, Stabius drove the point home in the following line: "Everybody knows that the oracles of the ancient prophets have sung." In other words, the prophesied judge of the Christian people had arrived: "Saturn portends it,

85 Some of these prophecies were printed in a modern edition in the late nineteenth century. See Ernst Sack, Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen: Pseudomethodos, Adso und tiburtinische Sibylle (Halle, 1898).
86 Stabius, Prognosticon, line 86.
the Legislator or false law-giver is at hand, created out of those savage northern races, engorged on human flesh, and previously restrained by the Caspian Gates. The image of the Antichrist coming from a "people filled with human flesh" is taken directly from the Methodian prophecies. It is significant that Stabius here saw Saturn as the cause of the Antichrist's advent—contemporary iconography and descriptions of Saturn often portrayed him eating his children.

Stabius borrowed another set-piece from the prophetic literature when he placed the armies of the Antichrist along with the Antichrist himself in the north, shut out by the Caspian Gates. In the Methodian prophecies, Gog and Magog, along with their minions, represented the Antichrist and his armies and were shut up in the north by Alexander: "Who are the people and kingdoms whom Alexander hemmed in the northern lands? Gog and Magog." Alexander's Gates, traditionally located in the Caspian Mountains, had kept these forces of destruction at bay. By the late fifteenth century, as the Ottoman forces marched ever closer to Europe, visual and literary images of the pious emperor before Alexander's Gate had become increasingly common. Brant's edition of the Methodian prophecies, his On the Revelations made by the Angel to Saint Methodius in Prison (De revelatione facta ab angelo beato methodio in carcere detento), included a woodcut showing a pious knight kneeling before the Caspian Gates holding back the forces of Gog and Magog (see Figure 6).

Despite the dire portents, Stabius urged the German people to rise to the challenge and defeat the forces of evil. Germans, as heir to the Roman Imperium, had to remember their honor and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner to overcome the challenges besetting them. Their only hope, Stabius claimed, lay in recognizing the emperor's authority over them and cooperating with his efforts to establish and command an imperial army. Although they would defeat the forces of evil, it promised to be a costly struggle: the recent appearance of comets with hairy tails was a sign that many Germans would suffer death and exile, and that there would be general war, pestilences, and famine. Throughout the closing section of his poem, Stabius returned to the effects of the planets, blaming Mars for not leaving any corner of the world free from human blood and the unfavorable position of the heavens for the famine. Here Stabius brought himself up short, not wanting to reveal everything to his audience: "Now then, it is not fitting to pour forth publicly all the secrets of the heavens into the ears of the masses."

Stabius then turned to address Emperor Maximilian directly. He heaped praise on Maximilian, holding him up as the Last World Emperor from the Methodian and Joachim prophecies. Out of this period of chaos and destruction, Maximilian would usher in a period of peace and prosperity:

However you are our grace and hope and certain prosperity, you who rules the government of the world through the noble laws: Maximilian, father of our country. You yourself should wish to heal the diseased state of affairs and reintroduce peace and tranquility. It follows your eagles (signs of victory):

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87 Ibid., lines 90–100.
88 Sackur, Sibyllinische Texte, 92.
89 Ibid., 74–75.
91 Stabius, Prognosticon, lines 99–112.
92 Ibid., lines 125–40.
93 Ibid., lines 141–46.
94 Ibid., lines 147–48.
concomitant with this is the favorable faith of a saint and the righteous image of piety, and the harmonious nourishment of pure love. And the common authority (clear victory) from your triumph and sacred power will exalt you and your distinguished descendents in glory beyond the highest heavens. Consider that you are present for comforting the afflicted peoples; by your power pleasant Germany will flourish. 95

Such praise was well timed and played directly into Maximilian’s propaganda efforts. The emperor’s standing in the empire had improved little since Brant’s “De corrupto” in 1497. He con-

95Ibid., lines 149-60.
continued to struggle with the German electors and princes to establish his authority and had yet to gain the support of the various estates. During much of 1502, Maximilian had again sought financial support from the German princes so he could travel to Rome to receive the imperial crown and lead an army against the Turks. As usual, Maximilian encountered stiff opposition. He turned to the printing press for assistance and used numerous mandates and pamphlets to generate support for his cause. Stabius saw his poem as playing a role in the emperor's propaganda campaign. According to Stabius, the conjunctions of 1503–04 threatened to set in motion the forces of evil and initiate the events leading up to the millennium. Stabius's prophetic interpretation of history came to fruition in his astrological understanding of the present. The two forms of divination functioned together to provide a necessity for Stabius's conclusion: Maximilian, as the Last World Emperor, commanded and deserved the allegiance and support of his subjects. In fact, only by offering the emperor their allegiance and military and financial support would Germany vanquish the Turkish threat and survive into the golden age. Even if Stabius was ignorant of Maximilian's publishing efforts, the significance of his poem would not have been lost on the emperor or his advisers. In this short prognostication, Stabius had enlisted the necessity inherent in both astrology and prophecy. He had argued that this was a critical moment when the princes, electors, and estates needed to support the emperor in order to avoid the destruction signaled by the conjunction of the outer planets. Maximilian must have appreciated the aid.

Stabius's *Prognostication* was remarkably successful. It cemented his relationship with the emperor and facilitated his move into imperial patronage. Within a few months Maximilian had appointed Stabius to the position of court historian. As court historian, Stabius was responsible for numerous imperial projects, including Maximilian's various genealogical works and the massive *Ehrenpfört* and *Triumphzug*, two of the emperors most famous pieces of political propaganda. In addition, Maximilian looked to Stabius to produce complex paper astrological instruments and celestial maps that could be distributed as gifts to favored princes and allies. Stabius reaped the rewards of Maximilian's patronage, ultimately receiving a title of nobility and an enormous yearly stipend that dwarfed the sums paid to his more famous colleagues, such as the artist Albrecht Dürer and the historian Johannes Cuspinianus.

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**Andreas Perlach's Ephemerides**

The struggles between emperor and princes continued to plague the Habsburgs long after Maximilian's death. In the 1520s, Archduke Ferdinand found himself in a similar predicament, and he, too, turned to local humanists for assistance in generating support. One of Ferdinand's strongest proponents was Andreas Perlach, a professor at the University of Vienna and a familiar figure at the archduke's court.

Andreas Perlach arrived in Vienna in time for the beginning of the autumn term in 1511. Perlach soon began working closely with Georg Tannstetter, professor ordinarius and the most important person in the College of Poets and Mathematicians, and he continued to do so until

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he had secured more important patrons. Following in his mentor's footsteps, Perlach distinguished himself as a gifted scholar and mathematician. More importantly, he used his relationship with Tannstetter to strengthen his ties to the imperial court. Following the emperor's untimely death in 1519, Perlach shifted his focus to Archduke Ferdinand. As a young master at the university, Perlach had largely avoided political themes in his astrological works. During the 1520s, however, he came to understand his role in explicitly political terms and began to incorporate into his texts timely pieces of political propaganda that supported Ferdinand's political agenda in an effort to endear himself to the Habsburg court. The two pamphlets he composed in 1528 and 1530 reveal most clearly Perlach's engagement with contemporary political issues.

Late in 1528, Perlach composed his Ephemeredes for the year 1529, an astrological pamphlet that contained various predictions for 1529. In the dedication to Archduke Ferdinand, brother to Emperor Charles V, Perlach explained that Ferdinand's illustrious advisers had urged him to publish in this year 1529 a richer Ephemeredes, composed more cleverly and with greater effort, both for the glory of Your Majesty and for the University of Vienna, which some time ago Your Majesty began to restore to the students of the liberal arts and to the most famous lecturers of individual faculties. There was nothing unusual about Perlach's praise, particularly in light of the reforms that Ferdinand was trying to introduce at the university, which contributed to a tight relationship between the archduke and the university's students and faculty. Perlach's dedicatory letter suggests that his efforts to climb the social ladder had finally paid dividends. Not only did he no longer have to go through intermediaries to gain access to politically powerful patrons, he now implied that he was part of Ferdinand's extended circle of advisers, or at the very least, that they knew him and recognized his ability. Perlach further claimed that his new ephemeris was more accurate and useful than the ones he had published previously. An important aspect of this usefulness was the introduction of astrological predictions on such topics as diseases and health and war and peace. The broad predictions that Perlach had excluded from his earlier works played a significant role in his Ephemeredes for the year 1529 and reflect the new political and social function that Perlach envisioned for himself. In his Ephemeredes for the year 1529, Perlach located himself and his work within a contemporary political and social crisis: "I decided to attach to these ephemerides a confutation of the prophecy of Johannes Carion, the Brandenburg astrologer, who recently in a published judicium presaged and foretold many threats and tears for Austria,... and so with the opinions of his prophecy destroyed by basic astronomy, I would prefer that he was anything but a true prophet for Austria. I would demonstrate that he had not seen properly the imminent dangers

100In calling his work an ephemerides, Perlach was trying to merge the earlier practica-judicia literature with the almanac or wall calendar literature. For a discussion of his efforts, see Hayton, "Astrologers and Astrology in Vienna," 215–91. Although Hammerstein does not consider astrological texts of this type to be pamphlets, her definition of a pamphlet—influencing conviction or action—applies to this text.
101Andreas Perlach, Ephemeredes Andreae Perlachij Stiri ex Witsheyn, Artium & Philosophiae magistri magnificae Urbis Viennensis collegae, pro Anno domini & Salvatoris nostri Jesu christi M.D.XXIX. [Ephemeredes for the year of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, 1529, by Andreas Perlach from Witschein in Styria, master of the arts and philosophy at the renowned college in the city of Vienna] (Vienna, [1528]), A1v.
102On Ferdinand's reforms at the University of Vienna, see Mühlberger, "Die Gemeinde der Lehrer und Schüler," 395–96; Kink, Geschichte der kaiserlichen Universität zu Wien, 1:252–57.
103On the use of the patrons in the history of science, see Mario Biagioli, Galileo Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism (Chicago, 1994).
for this land, and I would remove the senseless fear inflicted into the hearts of some people on account of this prophecy.” In other words, Perlach's primary goal in publishing his ephemeris was to assuage the fears of the Viennese by showing that Johannes Carion's predictions for the coming year were wrong.

Perlach indicated the general and most powerful astrological causes for 1529, which, following Ptolemy, he claimed were the two eclipses predicted for that year. The first of these, Perlach assured his reader, would be of little concern because it would occur below the horizon and would have little or no effect on Vienna. The second eclipse, however, would be just visible on the western horizon and, together with subsequent interplanetary aspects, would cause a number of terrestrial events important to his reader. Although the eclipse itself caused the events on earth, the character of those events was shaped by the “inherently bad configurations and aspects of unfavorable planets” that followed it. Perlach's long list of aspects included many references to the traditional harbingers of doom, Mars and Saturn. In light of these less than auspicious celestial events, it is not surprising that Perlach's general predictions for 1529 were not too reassuring.

Based on his analysis of these eclipses, Perlach claimed that the Viennese had to fear a range of illnesses—ulcers, hernias, bladder and kidney problems, and gonorrhea, along with pulmonary difficulties, fevers, and general decay. The year would be marked by looting and killings, due to the lengthy time that Mars was in the house of Saturn. The winter, he claimed, would be a time of conflicts, while the spring and summer would be marked by peace and conciliation. Noting the retrograde of Mars, Perlach predicted unfortunate events for the autumn. Perlach displayed remarkable insight and amazing understatement in his analysis of the affairs of war and peace for the coming year. In 1529, autumn began on 13 September. Less than two weeks later, on 26 September, a Turkish army led by Suleiman the Great surrounded Vienna and besieged the city for nearly a month. Despite the negative tone of Perlach's predictions, he concluded on a positive note when he engaged in a long refutation of Johannes Carion's dire predictions for Austria.

Educated in astrology and mathematics, Carion had been working since 1521 or 1522 as court astrologer for the elector Joachim I of Brandenburg. In 1521, he composed a prognostication for Joachim, and since 1524, he had been producing yearly practica, which included general weather and medical predictions. During the 1520s, he also published prognostica in which he interpreted the stars and other celestial events for their implications on the political fortunes of countries. Although Perlach did not identify which of Carion's works he found problematic, his audience must have recognized it as a reference to Carion's popular 1526 Bedeutnuss und Offenbarung. In this little book, Carion outlined the yearly political fortunes

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105 Ibid., M2r.
106 Ibid., M2v.
107 Ibid., M4r.
for the various countries in Europe from 1527 to 1540. He had predicted that a lunar eclipse in 1529 in the zodiacal sign of Taurus would cause suffering and loss throughout Europe. The effects would be extremely widespread, and in particular, the German lands would be beset by massive bloodshed and wars.\textsuperscript{110} Carion singled out what each country would suffer. Austria, he predicted, would “weep and grieve over Hungary,” implying that the Turkish army would conquer Hungary and then invade Austria.\textsuperscript{111} Writing in late 1526, after the disastrous defeat of the Hungarian forces and the death of King Louis II at the Battle of Mohács, Carion’s predictions for Hungary were easy to believe.

Perlach concluded his own work by explaining in detail what was wrong with Carion’s predictions and where Carion had misunderstood the astrology behind them. Perlach would sharpen this charge a few years later, when he accused Carion of practicing unnatural astrology.\textsuperscript{112} For the moment, however, Perlach was more concerned with Carion’s use of Ptolemy and his interpretation of a recent lunar eclipse.

Perlach opened the last chapter of his work, “The most powerful stellar influence in this year threatens adversities for some countries, provinces, and towns,” with a brief account of what different regions could expect in the coming year.\textsuperscript{113} To associate the planets and constellations with particular parts of the earth, Perlach relied on a common sixteenth-century adaptation of standard Ptolemaic theory. Ptolemy had divided the zodiac into four triangles, groups of three related signs. Each group influenced one portion of the world. By the early sixteenth century, astrologers had altered this theory, dividing the zodiac into three quadrangles, groups of four related signs. The criteria for establishing these quadrangles were the Ptolemaic divisions of the zodiac into the solstitial and equinocital signs, the solid signs, and the biciporeal signs.\textsuperscript{114} Although sixteenth-century astrologers used these three quadrangles instead of Ptolemy’s division of the zodiac into four triangles, the theory was analogous. Using this approach, Perlach claimed that, in general, the evils predicted to come from the eclipse would only mildly affect the regions under Scorpio. Perlach then drew on the theory of great conjunctions to predict that the conjunction of the superior planets in Leo would adversely affect lands under that sign.\textsuperscript{115} Perlach assumed that his readers knew which lands were ruled by Scorpio and Leo and saw no need to indicate these relationships. After this brief treatment of impending fortunes, Perlach turned his attention to Carion and his predictions for Austria.

According to Perlach, Carion had based his prediction on two causes: first, the lunar eclipse, which would occur a little more than two months before the end of the year 1529; and second, the celestial horoscope for the entry of the sun into the beginning of Aries.\textsuperscript{116} Perlach concentrated on the problems with Carion’s interpretation of the eclipse. In Ptolemaic theory, eclipses were the principle cause of terrestrial events, and Perlach did not dispute the importance of the

\textsuperscript{110}Johannes Carion, \textit{Bedeutnuss und Offenbarung} (Berlin, 1526), B2v.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., B3r.
\textsuperscript{112}This exchange took place in the preface to Perlach’s 1531 tract on the significance of a recent comet. See Andreas Perlach, \textit{Des Cometen und ander erscheinung in den lüffen / Im XXXI. Jar geschehn bedütung Durch Andreaen Perlach von Witschein / der siberrn freyen / und natürlichen kunst maister / Diser zeyt auff der lüblichen hohen schül zu Wien / in der Astronomy / was die himlischen leiüß würckung / und / jre einfluß betreffen ist / verordenter Läser (n.p., 1531), A4r.
\textsuperscript{113}Perlach, \textit{Ephemerides ... M.D.XXIX.}, M4v.
\textsuperscript{114}The solstitial signs are Cancer and Capricorn. The equinocital are Aries and Libra. The solid signs are Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. The biciporeal are Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces. On the division of signs, see Ptolemy, \textit{Quadripartiti} (Venice, 1519), fols. 15v–16r.
\textsuperscript{115}Perlach, \textit{Ephemerides ... M.D.XXIX.}, M4v.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., M5r.
eclipse for the coming year. Instead, he rejected Carion's interpretation of this phenomenon, the events it would cause, and the timing of those events. Perlach's goal in this was to allay the fears of Austrians—"especially the more simple folk"—by showing that this eclipse portended nothing bad for his Austrian audience.\(^{117}\) Perlach turned his attention first to the 1529 lunar eclipse, and, drawing from the second book of Ptolemy's *Quadripartitum*, he enumerated the errors in Carion's interpretation of this eclipse. In Ptolemaic theory, predictions based on an eclipse must take into account the regions affected, the chronology of the events caused, and the general character of those events.\(^{118}\) These were the very issues that Perlach raised in his critique. "Firstly, on the authority of Ptolemy, who, in the second book of his *Quadripartitum*, details that the most potent causes of all ruin and calamity in terrestrial matters are eclipses, which malefics dominate. But, by contrast, should benefics rule, they are the causes of nothing bad, but of good effects."\(^{119}\) Not only did he point to the authority of Ptolemy, but Perlach also claimed that recent experience confirmed that only eclipses ruled by malefic planets caused unfavorable events. He then cited two recent lunar eclipses, one in 1519 and one in 1526, that had produced no evil effects.\(^{120}\) Nowhere did Perlach mention which planets would rule this eclipse, and the reader was left to infer that the rulers of the 1529 eclipse would be beneficial. Perlach probably recognized that this explanation would not console his readers, and so he hedged his bets and offered the further reassurance that, "Thirdly, even if malefic planets were to dominate this eclipse, it would portend nothing much bad for us who live in Austria and Hungary. For the beginning of the eclipse will barely appear on our horizon, and complete obstruction of the moon will occur, as far as we are concerned, not above but below the horizon. However, Ptolemy made no mention of those eclipses occurring below the earth and likewise of those that would portend little or no evil, but only of those that inhabitants could see."\(^{121}\)

In a similar manner, Perlach dismissed the other two characteristics of Carion's prediction—the regions affected by the eclipse and when those effects would occur. According to Perlach, all astrologers agreed that eclipses do not affect all regions of the earth equally, but only those regions under the influence of the quadrangle in which the eclipse occurs. The impending eclipse would occur in Taurus, "but Austria was thought by the very learned astrologers of our time to be situated under Libra, and Libra is not included in the second quadrangle, where Taurus is found." This eclipse was therefore not a threat to Austria. Likewise, the eclipse threatened nothing bad for Hungary, which was situated under Sagittarius, in the third quadrangle.\(^{122}\) Not only had Carion misunderstood the relationship between an eclipse and the regions affected, he had failed to understand the timing of the effects caused by eclipses. The effects of an eclipse in 1529 would be felt in 1530, not in 1529.\(^{123}\) Clearly, the reader had nothing to fear from this eclipse, at least nothing in 1529; Perlach remained silent about the effects that might occur in 1530. In any event, Carion's predictions were in error in all three of the Ptolemaic methods of prediction—the effects caused, the locations affected, and the chronology of those effects.

Perlach's *Ephemerides for the year 1529* was an ambitious text that located his work at the center of local politics and society. In addition to the general predictions he provided, Perlach

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\(^{117}\) Ibid., M5r.

\(^{118}\) Ptolemy, *Quadripartitum*, fols. 32r–33r. On regions affected, the duration, and the general character, see ibid., 33r–39v.

\(^{119}\) Perlach, *Ephemerides ... M.D.XXIX.*, M5r.

\(^{120}\) Ibid., M5r.

\(^{121}\) Ibid., M5v.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.

\(^{123}\) Ibid.
had set for himself the goal of refuting Johannes Carion’s predictions for the coming year. By the late 1520s, Perlach had become a respected professor at the University of Vienna and a familiar figure in important political circles in the city. In this role, he had an interest in calming the fears of the population. He drew attention to this fact in his preface to Archduke Ferdinand and when he stated that he had included his refutation to calm the unfounded fears of the people. By 1529, the citizens of Vienna were living in constant fear of the Ottoman forces. Predictions such as Carion’s fueled their fears and contributed to the malaise in Vienna. Indeed, Perlach feared that Carion’s predictions were so widely known that he did not need to cite them, making it all the more important that Perlach refute them.124

In his *Ephemerides for the year 1529*, Perlach had concentrated on the local, Viennese context. Two years later, he broadened his scope and assumed an even larger role in Ferdinand’s efforts to generate financial and military support from both the German princes and his own brother, Emperor Charles V. When Perlach published his next pamphlet, *Ephemerides for the year 1531*, he again focused on the most pressing political issue—the Turkish threat in Hungary—interpreting it this time for the local Viennese audience as well as the larger imperial audience. Perlach’s dynamic understanding of his audience was reflected in the text itself. In his earlier works, he had assumed that his reader would bring a substantial body of knowledge to the text and therefore left many points unstated. In this 1531 text, Perlach abandoned this approach and instead concentrated on his conclusions, which were remarkably similar to those he had offered previously. Once again, he concentrated on Carion’s predictions and tried to show how Carion had failed to understand correctly the effects of the eclipses, including when and where those effects would be felt. He then offered the proper interpretations of these eclipses, as well as predictions for the standard topics, including weather, livestock, farming, navigation, wars, and diseases.125

Following the siege of Vienna in the autumn of 1529, the Turkish army retreated back through Hungary toward Constantinople. The failure of this siege owed more to the damp Viennese climate and the long supply lines Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was trying to maintain than to Ferdinand’s military prowess. This fact did not stop Ferdinand from pursuing the Turkish army through Hungary in the hopes of delivering the decisive defeat that would rid his lands of the Turkish threat once and for all. In November 1529, Ferdinand enjoyed considerable success on the battlefields in Hungary and fought all the way to Buda, but by January, bad weather and lack of pay for his troops had brought his campaign to a halt. He was forced to put his plans for complete reconquest of Hungary on hold, though he had not given up that goal. His successes against the Turkish and Hungarian enemies had improved his image amongst his contemporaries, who began to take more seriously his efforts to drum up support for his campaign against the Turks.126

At the same time, Ferdinand and his brother, Emperor Charles V, were trying to secure Ferdinand’s own election as king of the Romans. Ferdinand often stressed to the electors as well as to Charles that his success in repelling the Turkish threat was bound up with a secure

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124He was not wrong in his assumption. At least one reader was particularly concerned with this aspect of his work, underlining the relevant lines in the preface where Perlach attacked Carion. See the Boston Public Library’s copy of *ibid.*, A1v.

125The section “*De effectuum [sic] deliquiorum lumarium qualitate*” is a long list of ills that were caused by the lunar and solar eclipses. Andreas Perlach, *Ephemerides Andreae Perlachii Stirii ex Witschein, Artium & Philosophiae magistri, Mathematicarum disciplinarum studij Viennensis professoris ordinarij, pro Anno domini & Salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi M.D.XXXI. [Ephemerides for the year of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, 1531, by Andreas Perlach from Witschein in Syria, master of arts and philosophy, professor ordinarius of the mathematical subjects at the University of Vienna] (Vienna, 1530), A3v–A4v.

position of power in the empire and the support of both the emperor and the German princes. One clear indication of this would be his election as king of the Romans. In light of his recent successes in Hungary, he was in a better position than ever to argue that, with the necessary support, he would finally be able to reconquer Hungary and expel the Turkish threat. Charles arrived at the diet in Augsburg in June 1530 and asked that the electors recognize Ferdinand as King of the Romans.127 Before the electors had decided whether or not they would elect Ferdinand, he had renewed his campaign against the Turks, led his troops back into Hungary, and successfully reached Buda. Once again, he failed to capture the city, but his military successes further bolstered his image in the empire. They did not, however, remove the fear that a Turkish army would return to besiege Vienna.

Such was the context into which Perlach cast his Ephemeres for the year 1531, which came off the presses in late December 1530.128 In his introduction, Perlach pointed to his own debt to Ferdinand, “who with a certain singular fondness embraces all students of learning, in particular those who apply themselves in astronomical matters, and especially me.”129 Such warm sentiments toward Ferdinand surely encouraged Perlach to interpret the effects of the 1530 solar eclipse in a favorable light: “Besides [what was just mentioned] in this year the Mahumet sect will be afflicted by various calamities from the effects of the solar eclipse.”130 What led Perlach to such a bold claim was the fact that the lord of the solar eclipse, which had been Mars, was also the “significator” of this sect, and Mars was in opposition to the star at the heart of Scorpio.131 This foreshadowed dire consequences for the Mahumet sect, “which acquired its origin from the great conjunction of the outer planets in Scorpio, no doubt not far from the star that is situated at the heart of Scorpio (as the nature of the sign and star indicates).”132 And if that was not convincing enough, Perlach pointed out that the moon, another mark of the Turk, would approach and eclipse the eye of Taurus, “a star that was hostile to this sect.” This would cause the most difficulties for the Turks in the last four months of the coming year.133 After living for years in the shadows of the Turkish threat and having recently endured a prolonged siege, the Viennese audience must have found Perlach’s prediction comforting.

Perlach probably hoped that at least some of his readers, notably the emperor and the German princes, would see that this series of celestial events presented them with an opportunity to vanquish the Turkish threat once and for all. Perlach drove the point home in his analysis of these eclipses, which functioned as a timely piece of propaganda in the contests between Ferdinand and Charles, on the one hand, and Ferdinand and the imperial electors and princes on the other. In a clear reference to Ferdinand’s recent successes against the Turks, Perlach claimed:

A certain person from the family of Emperor Maximilian, who is worthy of perpetual memory, came forward a few years ago. This person has the aforementioned planet Mars in his horoscope, and in the place of the star, under which the Mahumet sect began, which indeed I would consider like a miracle

128 Perlach dated the dedicatory letter ”12 Decembris Anno 1530.” Perlach, Epheremerides ..., M.D.XXXXI., A1r.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., A4r.
131 Perlach employed Ptolemy’s doctrine of prorogation, which was used to determine the length of a person’s life, to estimate the duration of a religion or kingdom. Ptolemy had noted that the theory was analogous, whether applied to a person, a city, or a kingdom. Albumasar had developed this application in his work on great conjunctions. See Ptolemy, Quadrupartiti, III, 10; Albumasar, De magnis coniunctionibus.
132 Perlach, Epheremerides ..., M.D.XXXXI., A4r.
133 Ibid.
and another misfortune for the Turks. He, if God should prolong his life, will use his own resources and those of his allies to root out, overthrow, and drive out this sect from those places, which previously through force and violence it took away from his predecessors. And he will be defender and avenger of all ills that were brought about in former times.\textsuperscript{134}

Here Perlach associated Ferdinand with Maximilian I, who was still remembered fondly by his subjects, even if the electors were more hesitant. Maximilian enjoyed the reputation of having ousted the Hungarian army that his father, Frederick III, had done nothing to defeat. Although he had relied largely on his own resources in that conflict, Maximilian had consistently sought military and monetary support for a campaign against the Turks. Like Maximilian, Ferdinand, too, depended on the financial and military support of the princes in the empire. Perlach reminded the princes of their role in Maximilian's military successes and pointed to their responsibility in vanquishing the Turks. Without their support at this opportune moment, when the stars were aligned for the defeat of the Turkish threat, the imperial forces would be unable to reconquer Hungary, and Europe would continue to live in fear of the next Turkish invasion. Ferdinand could hardly have hoped for a stronger endorsement or a more timely piece of propaganda. Whether it was successful in swaying any of the princes to vote for Ferdinand remains unknown; no doubt the approximately 350,000 gulden that Ferdinand paid to the electors were also influential in his election to King of the Romans in January 1531.\textsuperscript{135}

Ferdinand rewarded Perlach for his effort by appointing him personal physician to the ducal family and increasing his annual stipend. In return, Perlach became the archduke's spokesman in Vienna. A year later, in 1532, he again disputed Carion's astrological predictions. This time, the celestial phenomenon was the recent comet that had terrified Europeans. He also used his position at the university to attract students to the pro-Habsburg camp. His most famous student was Johannes Vogelin, whose work on the 1532 comet was fundamental for Tycho Brahe's own work forty years later.\textsuperscript{136} Vogelin, like Perlach before him, became a proponent for Ferdinand's social and political policies in Vienna.

\section*{Conclusion}

Brant, Stabius, and Perlach were emblematic of a particular approach adopted by many pro-Habsburg humanists. For each of them, astrology provided the framework for interpreting the threat of Turkish invasion and for recasting that threat in terms that supported Habsburg politics. During the reign of Maximilian I, astrology was combined with a prophetic interpretation of the past. Other humanists at the Habsburg court adopted similar techniques. Ulrich Hutten, an important humanist at Maximilian's court who was famous for his autobiographical account of suffering from syphilis, produced a number of short works during the late 1510s in which he chastised the princes and electors for their continued recalcitrance. He often echoed the arguments presented earlier by Brant and Stabius, drawing on both astrology and prophecy. For more than two decades, Georg Tannstetter, Leibarzt to Emperor Maximilian I and later to Archduke Ferdinand, composed yearly astrological pamphlets, often using them to urge the princes and electors to align themselves with the Habsburgs or to make other pro-Habsburg statements. He warned that failure to support Maximilian's efforts would almost certainly bring

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135}Fichtner, \textit{Ferdinand I of Austria}, 88.
destruction and ruin at the hands of the Turkish forces. For these humanists and their like-minded colleagues, astrology offered a way to understand the Turkish threat and a means of turning that threat into a political tool for supporting Habsburg efforts to consolidate power.

Furthermore, Stabius, Perlach, Tannstetter, and Hutten are representatives of a larger circle of humanists at the University of Vienna, and their lives demonstrate how Maximilian and later Ferdinand used that corporate body of experts. In the fifteenth century, Frederick III, Maximilian's father, had begun to look to the university as a pool of experts he could draw on for political purposes. However, Frederick's practices were rather inchoate when compared to those of Maximilian. In addition to the money Maximilian committed to the university, he renewed and extended the masters' rights and privileges. He also founded a new institution at the University of Vienna, the College of Poets and Mathematicians, to attract and fund scholars. Indeed, Maximilian considered the university part of his extended court and relied on the faculty as courtiers, expecting their support in his various endeavors. The faculty offered advice on topics ranging from historical inquiry to genealogy and politics, as well as astrology and theology. Ferdinand further cemented the Habsburg relationship with the university through his wide-ranging reforms in the 1520s—reforms that drew the praise and support of Perlach and Tannstetter, their colleagues, and their students.

Another characteristic of this circle of humanists was their use of ephemeral print. They produced countless cheap pamphlets and broadsheets, often both in Latin and German, that sold by the thousands. They invested these short texts with all the intellectual resources that they put into weightier tomes. The bulk of Perlach's publishing efforts appeared as annual almanacs and ephemerides. Tannstetter, his teacher and mentor, produced annual wall calendars and their companion texts, judicia and practica, for more than twenty years, apparently at the request first of Emperor Maximilian I and later of Archduke Ferdinand. Stabius, too, had produced yearly judicia and practica. After moving to the court, Stabius continued to produce astrological texts that functioned in the emperor's propaganda efforts. These ephemeral astrological texts allowed pro-Habsburg humanists to reach a broad audience. Maximilian and his supporters realized that pamphlets and broadsheets were effective vehicles for the dissemination of political propaganda. They also recognized their importance in combating the competing astrological and prophetic pamphlets that sought to undermine the emperor's authority. It is no surprise, then, to find that these humanists produced cheap texts replete with political and social themes that advanced the Habsburg agenda.

Darin Hayton is Assistant Professor of History at Haverford College. The author is indebted to Howard Louthan who first suggested working on the intellectual world of Emperor Maximilian I. Pamela Smith and Carina Johnson offered helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Jim Bennett, Stephen Johnston, and the audience at the Museum of the History of Science raised a number of insightful questions and issues which helped to refine and improve the article. A special thank you goes to the libraries that generously provided the illustrations for this essay.

137 Shank, “Academic Consulting in Fifteenth-Century Vienna.”
138 Maximilian's use of the printing press has long been recognized. Here, I am pointing to the importance of astrology in his printed propaganda campaigns, especially as it was a tool in pro-Habsburg pamphlets. On Maximilian's use of print, see Diederichs, Kaiser Maximilian I. als politischer Publizist; and Hönig, “Kaiser Maximilian I als politischer Publizist.”