Reforming Sibyls

Change in Religious Belief and the Sibylline Tradition between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Combined Historical Studies

The Warburg Institute
University of London
2018

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Sibylline tradition and the transformation it underwent between the late fifteenth and the end of the sixteenth centuries in the areas most affected by the Reformation. The analysis of both the intellectual debate on the prophetic value of extra-scriptural revelations and the Sibyls' role in beliefs held by broader audiences brings to light a disintegration of the thousand-year long reverence for the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses of pagan origin who were deemed to carry pristine, yet clandestine insight into the divine. Overall, this fragmentation led to a decline in the veneration of the Sibyls and, ultimately, to their disappearance from common knowledge.

As this thesis argues, this process was caused by a change in late medieval devotion, partially resulting from the practice of textual criticism espoused by humanists, which had raised a number of issues concerning the prophecies' authenticity, and partially instigated by the Reformation movement, which aimed at establishing Scripture as a source of unequivocal authority. A pivotal turning point in the reception of the Sibylline legacy was the rediscovery and publication of the actual text of the Sibylline oracles, which had been lost for more than a millenium. The much-hailed availability of this text led several humanists, reformers and other savants to engage with this prophetic lore anew, resulting in a whole array of newly substantiated condemnations and refutations of and apologies for the corpus. In all this fervour of interpretation and analysis, voices sceptical of the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles were never effectively silenced, a fact that gradually caused a decline in the popularity of the Sibyls from the mid sixteenth century on.

By tracing the beliefs, assumptions and convictions held about the Sibyls and their pronouncements between the Middle Ages and the early modern period, this thesis provides a study of the Sibylline tradition and its reception at the time of religious unrest and dogmatic overhaul. It brings to the fore the paradigmatic fluidity and the hermeneutic narrowing of what was conceived to be Christian knowledge of the divine. Thus the thesis is concerned with the issue of how beliefs were transformed, constructed and codified at a particularly critical moment in history.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost I am greatly indebted to my supervisors Guido Giglioni and Alastair Hamilton. Without their tireless support, helpful guidance and open ears I would not have been able to complete the dissertation in the way I did.

I am grateful also to the Warburg Institute. Its unique library and intellectual environment encouraged me to explore new ideas freely and to delve into fields of study that lay beyond my intellectual horizon. Also, I would like to thank the Saxl Fund Trust, whose fees and maintenance bursaries have provided the financial security necessary to conduct this research. With a generous fund the Ivonne Hackenbroch Fund enabled me to go on a research trip which proved crucial for the completion of my thesis. In this respect, I would like to express my gratitude to the Spalding Trust, whose three scholarships were of vital importance in funding my studies, the Royal Historical Society, which provided the financial means to travel abroad to conferences and to undertake another important research trip, and the School of Advanced Study, which granted me with discretionary help in difficult times.

During the course of my doctoral studies, many people and institutions have generously provided their help and expertise. I would like to thank the libraries and their members of staff that permitted me to examine works from their collections, including the British Library, the State Library Berlin, the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel and the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek. I owe thanks to Angus Gowland for the direction his invaluable comments gave me as part of my upgrade, to Dorothea Weltecke for her encouraging interest in the Sibyls and her insightful questions, and to Frank Göse for giving me the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience. My deepest gratitude lies with my friends and family who have accompanied me on this at times rocky journey.

List of Abbreviations

UBAugs – Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg

BL – British Library, London

BSB – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich

CPE – Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Toronto 1974–

CR – *Corpus Reformatorum*, 101 vols, Halle 1834–1959

De civ. Dei – Augustine, *The City of God against Pagans*, ed. and transl. by G. E. McCracken et al., 7 vols, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, 1957–72

DI – Lactantius, *Divinarvm institutionvm lirbi septem*, ed. by E. Heck and A. Wlosok, Biblotheca scriptorvm Graecorvm et Gomanorvm Tevbneriana, Munich, Leipzig, Berlin, New York and Boston 2005–11

GW – Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke

ML – Morgan Library, New York

OO – Desiderius Erasmus, *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, Amsterdam 1969–

PG – J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 161 vols, Paris 1857–1866

PL – J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 217 vols, Paris 1844–1855

Sib. or. – A. Kurfeß, *Sibyllinische Weissagung*, Berlin 1951

UniBGhent – Universiteitsbibliotheek Ghent

VD16 – Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts

VD17 – Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts

WA – Martin Luther, *Werke*, 67 vols, Weimar 1883–1997

Introduction

The aim of my doctoral thesis is to examine the Sibyls and their reception between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. The dissertation focuses on attitudes towards the contested historical and religious meanings of the vast body of Sibylline prophecies. To do so, I focus on two aspects: the first is the question of the authenticity of the prophecies that were believed to be of Sibylline origin; the second is the use to which these were put. As pagan oracles, the Sibylline prophecies lay outside the sanctioned canon of prophetic knowledge emanating from the Judaeo-Christian God, but nevertheless claimed to be divinely inspired revelations. As the conveyors of such, the Sibyls and their prophecies had become controversially disputed by the turn of the fifteenth century. They were celebrated by some as bearers of pristine, yet clandistine truth, and condemned by others as deceivers or soothsayers. While the Reformed Theodor Bibliander (1509–1564) called the Sibyl a 'heavenly prophetess and an ancient Sibyl and a woman of most excellent virtues' (*coelestis prophetissa, et Sibylla prisca, et excellentissima in omni virtute femina*), the Lutheran Caspar Peucer (1525–1602) believed to identify traces of demonic deceipt in their prophecies.[1] In the fifteenth century, Hans Memling (c.1430–1494) portrayed a young lady gracefully as a Sibyl (see fig. 1), whereas less than a hundred years later, François Rabelais (1483/94–1553) had his Panurge mock the Sibyl's grotto as nothing other than her 'arsehole' (*trou*).[2] In contrast to the Sibyls' dignity and authority manifested in the ceiling fresco paintings in the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo (1475–1564), the motif of the Sibyls appears to have enabled Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594) to offer in his collection of songs *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* ('Prophecies of the Sibyls') exceptional chromatic alterations unheard of until the ninteenth century.[3]

By unravelling the diversity of attitudes towards the Sibyls, this dissertation sketches out the multiple meanings attributed to them from the late Middle Ages. It argues for a continuous decline in prophetic authority and its associated significance,

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[1] Theodor Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes, et optimates liberarum atque Imperialium civitatum oratio*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1553, pp. 18–19; Caspar Peucer, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus*, Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1553, fol. 108^{rv}.
[2] François Rabelais, *Le tiers livre*, ed. by M. A. Screech, Geneva 1964, p. 132.
[3] Orlando di Lasso, 'Prophetiae Sibyllarum', in *Orlando di Lasso. Sämtliche Werke. Neue Reihe*, 26
[3] Orlando di Lasso, 'Prophetiae Sibyllarum', in *Orlando di Lasso. Sämtliche Werke. Neue Reihe*, 26 vols, Kassel et al. 1956–1995, XXI; E. Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo. The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by E. Sears, Oxford 2000, pp. 124–48.

until by the early modern period the Sibyls had lost their status as recognised prophets. In order to do so, this study first maps out the belief in the Sibyls as Christian prophets of pagan origin as it stood in the mid fifteenth century and then progresses in loose chronological order to the end of the sixteenth century. It focuses on the areas most affected by the Reformation, that is, primarily Europe north of the Alps. Nonetheless, this is not a study about the Reformation nor a dogmatic debate about the Sibyls. Rather, it presents an investigation into questions of how belief and dogma were constituted, into issues regarding the congruence and interdependence of what people believed and what dominated the intellectual debate, and into the changes in the conception of who the Sibyls had been.[4]

Commonly, the Sibyl was believed to have been an elderly virgin who, upon divine inspiration, foretold in frenzy mainly bale and calamities. Unlike, for example, the Pythia at the Oracle of Delphi, the Sibyl was a wandering prophetess who divined without being asked and without any mediating figure or device.[5] Neither when she lived nor the etymology of the name 'Sibyl' (Greek σιβύλλα, Latin *Sibylla*) is known. Despite the lack of satisfactory evidence, this type of prophecy is assumed to have come to ancienct Greece from the East, probably from Persia.[6] Among the first testimonies we have of the Sibylline cult are the reports on prophetic pronouncements attributed to a Sibyl by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.535–c.475 BC; in Plutarch, *Moralia* 397a, 404e) and the Athenian playwright Aristophanes (c.446–c.386 BC; *Peace* 1095–117).[7] While both of them

[4] A few linguistic clarifications are in order at the beginning of my dissertation. Throughout the thesis, I have standardised the Latin spelling to the classical norm. This includes the different variants of *Sibylla* found in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sources. The only exception is that of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, which, as a proper name, I have kept in its medieval form. By contrast, for all citations from works in the vernacular the original spelling is retained.

[5] For a study into the early modern reception of this figure, see A. Ossa-Richardson, *The Devil's Tabernacle. The Pagan Oracles in Early Modern Thought*, Princeton and Oxford 2013.

[6] Lothar Darnedde gathered four theories of the name's origin. See L. Darnedde, *Deutsche Sibyllen-Weissagung*, diss. Greifswald and Berlin 1933, pp. 10–12. For the thesis that the cult of the Sibyl might have its root in the East, see U. Treu, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. by W. Schneemelcher, 2 vols, Tübingen 1987–89, II, pp. 591–619 (591); J. J. Collins, 'Sibylline Oracles (Second Century B.C.–Seventh Century A.D.). A New Translation and Introduction', in *The Old Testament Pseudoepigrapha*, ed. by J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols, London 1983, I, pp. 317–472 (317).

[7] For modern editions, see Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed. and transl. by F. C. Babbitt et al., Cambridge and London 1927–2004; Aristophanes, 'Peace', in *Aristophanes*, ed. and transl. by J. Henderson, 5 vols, Cambridge and London 1998–2007, II, pp. 418–601.

and Plato (428/27/24/23–348/47 BC), who spoke of the Sibyl as if she were widely known (*Phaidros* 244B), knew only one, the number of known Sibyls soon proliferated. Aristotle (384–322 BC) and his school knew of multiple Sibyls (*Problemata* 954a) and, as the Sibylline tradition grew during the Hellenistic period, Varro (116–27 BC) came to enumerate ten in his *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* ('Antiquities of Human and Divine Things').[8] Although lost, this work has survived in a quotation in the *Divinae institutiones* ('Divine Institutes') by the Church Father Lactantius (c.250–c.325; I.6.8–12). It provides basic information including their name-giving origin to each Sibyl. The existence of a Hebrew and an Egyptian Sibyl is unclear, nor can it be ascertained if there had been a Chaldean Sibyl, as is often claimed, and how she might relate to the Hebrew Sibyl.[9]

By contrast, we know much more about the veneration of the Sibyls in the Roman period. Ovid (43 BC–17/18 AD), for example, explained in his *Metamorphoses* the longevity of the Cumaean Sibyl. After Apollo had granted her a wish, she asked for a life as long as the number of grains in a heap of sand. This wish obtained her a long albeit faltering life, as she had not asked for eternal youth (XIV.132–53).[10] Virgil (70–19 BC) told that the Sibyl had journeyed with Aeneas to the underworld (*Aeneid* 6) and, most famously, foretold the birth of a child, who

[8] On the individual Sibyls, see I. Cervelli, *Questioni sibilline*, Venice 2011. On the different lists of Sibyls, see E. Maass, *De Sibyllarum indicibus*, diss. Greifswald 1879. For a modern edition of the *Problemata*, see Aristotle, *Problems*, transl. and ed. by R. Mayhew, 2 vols, Cambridge and London, 2011.

[9] See Collins, 'Sibylline oracles', p. 318. For a general but detailed survey of the Sibyls in ancient Greece, see J.-D. Gauger, 'Anhang (Einführung; Ausblick; Erläuterungen etc.)', in *Sibyllinische Weissagungen. Griechisch-deutsch. Auf der Grundlage der Ausgabe von A. Kurfeß neu übersetzt*, ed. by J.-D. Gauger, Düsseldorf and Zurich 1998, pp. 331–564 (333–67).

[10] For the Sibyls in Roman literature and culture, see A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford 2011, pp. 207–8, 213–18; A. Deremetz, 'La sibylle dans la tradition épique à Rome. Virgile, Ovide et Silius Italicus', in *La sibylle. Parole et représentation*, ed. by M. Bouquet and F. Morzadec, Rennes 2004, pp. 75–83; H. Berneder, *Magna Mater-Kult und Sibyllen. Kulturtransfer und annalistische Geschichtsfiktion*, Innsbruck 2004; Gauger, 'Anhang', pp. 380–401; D. S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire. A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, Oxford 1990, pp. 109–14; H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. by B. C. McGing, London and New York 1988, pp. 136–51, 190–215; R. Bloch, 'L'origine des Livres Sibyllins à Rome. Méthode de recherches et critique du récit des annalistes anciens', in *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Alten Welt*, ed. by E. C. Welskopf, 2 vols, Berlin 1965, II, pp. 281–92; F. Dornseiff, 'Die sibyllinischen Orakel in der augusteischen Dichtung', in *Römische Literatur der Augusteischen Zeit*, ed. by J. Irmscher and K. Kumaniecki, Berlin 1960, pp. 43–51; A. Kurfeß, 'Horaz und die Sibyllen', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* VIII, 1956, pp. 253–56; A. Kurfeß, 'Juvenal und die Sibylle', *Judaica* X, 1954, pp. 60–63; H. Jeanmaire, *La Sibylle et le retour de l'age d'or*, Paris 1939; H. Diels, *Sibyllinische Blätter*, Berlin 1890.

would usher in a new golden age ('Fourth Eclogue' 4–5).[11] As Karl Prümm showed, this text was essential in securing the Sibyls a long afterlife.[12] Legend has it, it was the Cumaean Sibyl who gave rise to a distinct Sibylline tradition which is often referred to as *libri Sibyllini* ('Sibylline books'). She had offered to the Roman King Tarquinius Priscus (r.616–579 BC) nine prophetic books for sale. Upon his refusal to pay the asking price, the Sibyl burnt six of the books. Under pressure, he eventually agreed to pay for the remaining three (Gellius, *Attic Nights* I.19). Guarded by one of the four main colleges of Roman priests, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, the Sibylline books were consulted in momentous crises and in times of natural catastrophe, when so ordered by the Senate or the Emperor.[13] Unlike their Greek equivalents, these Roman prophecies did not function as a source of vatic knowledge, but rather as a manual for rituals tailored to the defence against natural or epidemic disasters. Of such practice Livy (64/59 BC–17 AD) reported in much detail (*Ab urbe condita* 5.13; 7.27; 10.47).[14] After the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol where the Sibylline books were kept perished by fire in 83 BC, the Senate ordered new Sibylline prophecies to be collected from the outskirts of the Empire in order to restore the Sibylline tradition swiftly. According to the extant testimonies, the Emperors Nero (37–68 AD) on the occasion of the Fire of Rome and Julian (331/32–363) in 363 were the last to consult the Sibyls, before they were finally destroyed in 408 on the orders of the Roman general Stilicho (c.359–408).[15]

[11] For the Sibyl in Virgil, see R. Merkelbach, 'Aeneas in Cumae', *Museum Helveticum* XVIII.2, 1961, pp. 83–99; K. Kerényi, 'Das persische Millennium im "Mahābhārata", bei der Sibylle und Vergil', *Klio* XXIX, 1936, pp. 1–35. For modern editions of Virgil's works, see Virgil, 'Aeneid' and 'Eclogues', in *Virgil*, transl. by H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. and ed. by G. P. Goold, 2 vols, Cambridge and London 1999–2000, I, p. 261–II, pp. 367 and II, pp. 23–96.

[12] See K. Prümm, 'Das Prophetenamt der Sibyllen in kirchlicher Literatur mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Deutung der 4. Ekloge Virigls', *Scholastik* IV, 1929, pp. 55–77, 221–46, 498–533.

[13] On the Sibylline books, see C. Février, 'Le double langage de la sibylle de l'oracle grec au rituel roman', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 17–27; C. Guittard, 'Reflets étrusques sur la sibylle "libri sibyllini" et "libri vegoici"', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 29–42; W. Hoffmann, *Wandel und Herkunft der Sibyllinischen Bücher in Rom*, diss. Leipzig 1933; K. Schulteß, *Die sibyllinischen Bücher in Rom*, Hamburg 1895.

[14] For a modern edition, see Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, in *Livy*, transl. by B. O. Foster, F. G. Moore and A. C. Schlesinger, New York and Cambridge 1919–59, I–XIII.

[15] According to Anselm Weißenhofer, the destruction was ordered by Emperor Theodosius I (347–395) and executed by Stilicho. See A. Weißenhofer, 'Darstellung der Sibyllen in der bildenden Kunst', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vergleichende Kunstforschung* VII, 1955, pp. 45–47 (46).

While the Sibylline cult of pagan antiquity began to decline, the Sibyls soon attracted attention from adherents of the newly emerging religion of Christianity.[16] Starting with *The Shepherd of Hermas*, a Christian text written sometime between the end of the first and the middle of the second centuries, Sibylline references can be found in the writings of almost all major early Christian thinkers, mainly in attempts to appropriate the Sibyls as pagan witnesses to the imminent coming of Christ. This was precisely the approach pursued by Lactantius in his *Divinae institutiones*, the first apologetic treatise to offer a systematic appropriation of the Sibylline oracles as pagan testimonies of Christian monotheism. In this tradition, Eusebius of Caesarea (260/64–339/40) quoted an acrostic poem commonly entitled *Iudicii signum* ('Sign of the Judgement'). On the basis of this Augustine (354–430) asserted that the Erythraean Sibyl, the supposed author of this oracular poem, belonged to his *City of God*, a stance that would secure the Sibyl as well as this particular poem a long afterlife (*De civitate Dei* XVIII.23). Through the mediation of patristic writings, the Sibylline lore became an integral part of the culture of Western Christendom – in Eastern Christianity, the Sibyls appear to be much less favourably received, although the wealth of manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century indicates an intensified interest by that time.[17] No less a figure than Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) considered a Sibyl to have foretold much of Christian truth in his *Summa theologiae* (2-2, q. 2, a. 7).[18] Until the fourteenth century, it was the custom to sing her *Iudicii signum* as part of obsequies, before it was substituted by the medieval requiem sequence *Dies irae* ('Day of wrath'), which was proboabaly penned by the Franciscan Thomas of Celano (d. 1250) – as part of the *Dies irae*, her name is still being heard in church today.[19]

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[16] For the transition of the Sibyls as pagan diviners to Christian prophets, see N. Brocca, *Lattanzio, Agostino e la Sibylla maga. Ricerche sulla fortuna degli* Oracula Sibyllina *nell'Occidente latino*, Roma 2011; A. Momigliano, 'From the Pagan to the Christian Sibyl. Prophecy as History of Religion', in *The Use of Greek and Latin. Historical Essays*, ed. by A. C. Dionisotti, A. Grafton and J. Kraye, London 1988, pp. 3–18; B. Thompson, 'Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles', *The Review of Religion* XVI.3–4, 1952, pp. 115–36; T. Zielinski, *La Sibylle. Trois essais sur la religion antique et le christianisme*, Paris 1924.

[17] See Treu, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', p. 593.

[18] For a modern edition, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. by T. Gilby et al., 61 vols, London and New York 1964–80.

[19] See T. Blisniewski, 'Kaiser Augustus und die Sibylle von Tibur. Ein Bildmotiv des Meisters der Verherrlichung Mariae im Wallraf-Richartz-Museum – Fondation Corboud', *Kölner Museums-Bulletin* III, 2005, pp. 13–26 (24); A. Kurfeß, 'Dies irae', *Historisches Jahrbuch* LXXVII, 1958, pp. 328–38; K. Vellekoop, *Dies ire dies illa. Studien zur Frühgeschichte einer Sequenz. Studies on the Early History of a Sequence*, Bilthoven 1978, p. 101–2. More generally for the development from

The most famous corpus of prophetic writings ascribed to the Sibyls are the so-called Sibylline oracles.[20] More than 4000 Greek verses in epic hexameter comprise a collection of twelve books, of which Books 9 and 10 are lost.[21] Modern scholarship has found that these oracles were mostly produced by pagan, Jewish and Christian authors between 180 BC and 300 AD, a dating which is inferred from the persons and events mentioned in the text.[22] In other words, the oracles are neither purely pagan divinations, nor do they all predate the birth of Jesus. They must rather be treated as a compilation of pagan, Jewish and Christian writings or a Jewish and Christian interpolation of pagan oracles, which was put together as a collection probably in the sixth century.[23] While today this text is a matter of interest for disciplines concerned with classical antiquity, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the focus of this dissertation, the composite nature of the Sibylline oracles was of less concern.[24] Therefore, the Sibylline oracles will be treated here as this

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antiquity to and during the Middle Ages, see J. Haffen, *Contribution a l'étude de la Sibylle médiévale. Étude et édition du ms. B.N., F. Fr. 25 407 fol. 160^{v}–172^{v}. Le livre de sibile*, Paris 1984; W. L. Kinter and J. R. Keller, *The Sibyl. Prophetess of Antiquity and Medieval Fay*, Philadelphia 1967.

[20] For critical editions of the text of the Sibylline oracles, see A. Kurfeß, *Sibyllinische Weissagung*, Berlin 1951; J. Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, Leipzig 1902. For an English translation, see Collins, 'Sibylline oracles'. For a German translation, see Kurfeß, Sibyllinische Weissagung, pp. 24–203; Gauger, *Sibyllinische Weissagungen*, pp. 7–223. For an Italian translation, see M. Monaca, *Oracoli sibillini. Introduzione, traduzione e note*, Rome 2008, pp. 55–238. For other Sibylline sayings, see B. Bischoff, 'Die lateinischen Übersetzungen und Bearbeitungen aus den Oracula Sibyllina', in *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck, S. J.*, Museum Lessianum – Section historique XIII–XIV, 2 vols, Gembloux 1951, I, pp. 121–47. For a judicious review of the recent developments in the scholarship on the Sibylline oracles, see R. Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting. With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Leiden and Boston 2003, pp. 53–60.

[21] Because Book 8 used to be divided into three sections, older scholarship also talks of fourteen books. See U. Treu, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', pp. 591.

[22] For the time of composition, see J. Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina*, Leipzig 1902. On the Jewish *Sibyllina*, see J. J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, Missoula 1974; J. J. Collins, *Seer, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, Leiden 1997; B. W. Badt, *De oraculis Sibyllinis a Iudaeis compositis. Pars I*, diss. Bratislava 1869.

[23] See Momigliano, 'From the Pagan to the Christian Sibyl', pp. 7–12; B. McGinn, '"Teste David cum Sibylla". The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages', in *Women of the Medieval World. Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. by J. Kirshner and S. F. Wemple, Oxford 1985, pp. 7–35 (11).

[24] For further research into the Sibylline oracles, see I. Chirassi Colombo and T. Seppilli (eds), *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari. Mito storia tradizione. Atti del convegno Macerata-Norcia, Settembre 1994*, Pisa and Rome 1999; Potter, *Prophecy and History*; L. Breglia Pulci Doria, *Oracoli sibillini tra rituali e propaganda. Studi su Flegonte di Tralles*, Naples 1983; C. Bonner, 'The Sibyl and Bottle Imps', *Quantulacumque* XXX, 1937, pp. 1–8; P. Corssen, 'Die erythräische Sibylle', *Athenische Mitteilungen* XXXVIII, 1913, pp. 1–22; A. Rzach, 'Analekta zur Kritik und Exegese der Sibyllinischen Orakel', *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* CLVI.3, 1907, pp. 1–58; M. Monteiro, *"As David and the Sibyls say". A Sketch of the Sibyls and the Sibylline Oracles*, Edinburgh and London 1905; E. Fehr, *Studia in oracula Sibyllina. Commentatio academica*, diss. Uppsala 1893; A. Rzach, 'Metrische Studien zu den sibyllinischen Orakeln', *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Philosophisch-historische Classe* CXXVI, 1892, pp. 2–80; F. Delaunay, *Moines et Sibylles dans l'antiquité judéo-*

particular corpus of prophetic texts which was deemed to be authored by the Sibyls. To distinuish them from other prophetic texts ascribed to the Sibyls, the latter will be referred to as Sibylline prophecies.

The first two books of the Sibylline oracles provide a history of the world from the Creation (I.5–35) to the Last Judgement (II.214–237) in close agreement with the biblical narrative. This is structured by a framework of ten generations. In the sixth, the Sibyl who purportedly wrote this book identifies herself as the daughter-in-law of Noah (I.289).[25] The last group of five generations are much more prophetic and eschatological in nature. It culminates in a description of the Day of Judgement, after which the Sibyl who purportedly authored this book concludes with a prayer, asking for mercy upon her own sins (II.339–47).[26] By far the longest and best known book is the third. With its mixture of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Jewish and early Christian material it elicited the most interest among scholars. For its Christian content it was used extensively by Christian writers, although it was possibly written by Jews in Alexandria.[27] Again, the Books 4 to 8 are primarily eschatological, dealing with patterns of history and the movement of humanity towards the destruction of the world.[28] Books 6 to 8 are notably Christian; indeed, in modern scholarship, Book 6 has at times been termed the 'Sibylline Gospel'.[29]

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grecque, Paris 1874; R. Volkmann, *Lectiones Sibyllinae*, Pyrzyce 1861; H. Ewald, 'Abhandlung über die Entstehung Inhalt und Werth der Sibyllischen Bücher', *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* VIII, 1858, pp. 3–112; R. Volkmann, *De oraculis Sibyllinis dissertatio*, diss. Leipzig 1853.

[25] See I. Chirassi Colombo, 'La bru de Noé', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 131–49.

[26] See O. Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2. Studien und Kommentar*, Leiden and Boston 2011; Treu, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', p. 592; H. Dechent, *Über das erste, zweite und elfte Buch der Sibyllinischen Weissagungen*, diss. Jena 1873.

[27] See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline oracles*; A. Momigliano, 'La portata storica dei vaticini sul settimo re nel terzo libro degli oracoli sibillini', in *Forma Futuri. Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino*, Turin 1975, pp. 1077–84; V. Nikiprowetzky, *La troisième Sibylle*, Paris 1970; A. Pincherle, *Gli Oracoli Sibillini giudaici (Orac. Sibyll. ll. III–IV–V). Introduzione, traduzione e note*, Roma 1922; A. Kurfeß, 'Zu den oracula Sibyllina 3,248–254', *Hermes* LXXIII, 1938, pp. 357–60.

[28] See D. Flusser, 'The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel', *Israel Oriental Studies* II, 1972, pp. 148–75; V. Nikiprowetzky, 'Reflexions sur quelque problemes du quatrieme et du cinquieme livre des oracles sibyllins', *Hebrew Union College Annual* XLIII, 1972, pp. 29–76; H. Jeanmaire, 'Le règne de la Femme des derniers jours et la rajeunissement du monde', *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slave* IV, 1936, pp. 297–304.

[29] See Treu, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', p. 592. Since in 1545 only the Books 1 to 8 were discovered, no summary of the following books is given here as they are irrelevant to this study.

All too often the starting point for an enquiry into the Sibylline legacy has been the editorial history of the Sibylline oracles. Claudio Schiano, for example, outlined the different sixteenth-century editions published, since in 1545 Sixt Birck (Xystus Betul(e)ius, 1501–1554) had discovered the previously lost text of the Sibylline oracles and produced their *editio princeps*.[30] The name most associated with the recovery of the Sibylline oracles is however that of Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563). In 1546, he translated the oracles before editing a bilingual version in 1555.[31] Rather than focusing on the Sibyls themselves, scholars tended to have used these two volumes to obtain a deeper understanding of Castellio's thought, as did Ferdinand Buisson in his monumental biography of Castellio.[32] Similarly, on the basis of the apologetic strategies Castellio employed in his editions to defend the prophetic value of the Sibyls, Marco Bracali studied his spiritualist tendencies, and Jean-Michel Roessli explored the philological approach with which Castellio pursued theological aims.[33] As far as the religious significance of the Sibyls in Western Christianity is concerned, however, these studies fall short of showing how the editions of the oracles relate to the broader perception of the Sibyls during the sixteenth century. By embedding the way in which these volumes were presented in the wider intellectual currents and pious practices of the time, this dissertations not only reassesses their scholarly achievements, but also proposes a certain development in the editoral history of the oracles. Thus, it marks the relevance of this publication and discusses its controversial nature. Therefore, this thesis treats the rediscovery and the *editio princeps* of the Sibylline oracles not as a starting but as a turning point in the reception of the Sibyls.

Most recently, the study of the Sibyls' *Nachleben* in European thought and religion has gained some momentum, bringing to light that the Sibylline lore

[30] Sixt Birck (ed.), ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ ΛΟΓΟΙ ΟΚΤΩ. *Sibyllinorum Oraculorum libri octo, multis hucusque seculis abstrusi, nuncque primum in lucem editi*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1545. See C. Schiano, *Il secolo della Sibilla. Momenti della tradizione cinquecentesca degli Oracoli Sibillini*, Bari 2005, pp. 35–71.
[31] Sebastian Castellio (tr.), *Sibyllina oracula de Graeco in Latinum conversa, et in eadem annotationes*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1546; Sebastian Castellio (ed.), ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ ΛΟΓΟΙ ΟΚΤΩ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum Libri viii*., Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1555.
[32] See F. Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion. Sa vie et son œuvre (1515–1563). Étude sur les origines du protestantisme libéral français*, 2 vols, Paris 1892, I, pp. 278–83.
[33] See M. Bracali, *Il filologo ispirato.* Ratio *e* spiritus *in Sebastiano Castellione*, Milan 2001, pp. 131–67; J.-M. Roessli, 'Sébastien Castellion et les *Oracula Sibyllina*. Enjeux philologiques et théologiques', in *Sébastien Castellion. Des Écritures à l'écriture*, ed. by M.-C. Gomez-Géraud, Paris 2013, pp. 223–38.

flourished throughout the Middle Ages. In 2006, Christian Jostmann published his analysis of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*.[34] By examining the manuscript tradition of this thirteenth-century fabrication, Jostmann establishes the Roman Curia of the 1240s as the potential context in which the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* was composed. Even if culminating in an apocalyptic inferno, this text was as much a political prophecy whose composition had been prompted by the alliance forged between Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) and the Byzantine Emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes (c.1193–1254) in the early summer of 1241 and the crisis of the pontificate of Gregory IX (Ugolino di Conti, c.1145–1241). Also in 2006, Anke Holdenried published her analysis of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl'.[35] The study of the intellectual and material conditions of the prophecy's transmission broadens the prevailing political and apocalyptic focus of scholarship, by arguing that it was used as a means for devotion and reflection on the nature of both man and the divine. A similarly influential narrative which thus far has been neglected in scholarship is that of the *ara coeli* legend. Even if it was discussed by a number of medieval thinkers, its full importance to late medieval and early modern audiences emerges only when taking into account the large amount of artworks depicting this story. This methodological hurdle of considering images to unravel changes in beliefs may explain why the legend has remained neglected by intellectual, cultural and historians of religion. The multi-disciplinary approach needed to reconstruct the various meanings of the Sibyls, including the *ara coeli* legend, is what this thesis seeks to contribute. By juxtaposing the wealth of textual traditions and the host of images produced in the late medieval and early modern periods, it brings together Sibylline materials from Western and Central Europe north of the Alps, in order to contextualise existing anlyses of individual texts within the common assumptions held about the Sibyls at the turn of the sixteenth century. Moreover, the analysis of additional references to and comments on the Sibylline tradtion predating the publication of the oracles in 1545 will allow to close the chronological gap between

[34] See C. Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica. *Papsttum und Prophetie im 13. Jahrhundert*, Hanover 2006.

[35] See A. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes. Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Latin Sibylla Tiburtina c.1050–1500*, Aldershot 2006. Also A. Holdenried, 'Christian Moral Decline. A New Context for the *Sibylla Tiburtina* (Ms Escorial &.I.3)', in *People of the Apocalypse. Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. by W. Brandes, F. Schmieder and R. Voß, Berlin 2016, pp. 321–36. For reasons of clarity and differentiation, I will refer to the prophecy named *Sibylla Tiburtina* as 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' throughout this thesis.

the studies focusing on the medieval perception of the Sibyls and those dedicated to humanism and the early modern period.

In doing so, this dissertation challenges two ideas persistent in modern schoarlship. The first pertains to the predominance of late medieval apocalypticism as a conceptial framework through which the Sibyls are predominantly studied. Late medieval apocalypticism as a field of study grew out of Herbert Grundmann's works on medieval vaticinations, which were substantially furthered by Marjorie Reeves, specifically by her extensive work on Joachimism.[36] As a matter of fact, it was the *De prophetia ignota* ('On an Unknown Prophecy') by Joachim of Fiore (c.1135–1202), an interpretation of a Sibylline prophecy found in the papers of a deceased cardinal, that gave Joachim entry to the court of Pope Lucius III (Ubaldo Allucingoli, c.1100–1185).[37] Moreover, the Sibyls' notability in the Middle Ages stemmed from the *Iudicii signum*, which established their authority as apocalyptic prophets in wide parts of western Christianity.[38] Evidence of this popularity are also the new Sibylline prophecies that emerged or were fabricated during the Middle Ages.[39] As Bernard McGinn pioneered the study into late medieval apocalypticism, the Sibyl came to be interpreted as a herald of the apocalypse.[40] Closely linked to this is the idea that she forged the legend of the Last World Emperor, which has most recently been studied by Hannes Möhring.[41] According to this long-standing myth, at the end of times,

[36] See H. Grundmann, *Studien über Joachim von Fiore*, diss. Berlin 1927; M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969; M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London 1976.

[37] See B. McGinn, 'Joachim of Fiore and the Twelfth-Century Papacy', in *Joachim of Fiore and the Influence of Inspiration. Essays in Memory of Marjorie E. Reeves (1905–2003)*, ed. by J. E. Wannenmacher, Farnham 2013, pp. 15–34 (19). For an edition and study of the *De prophetia ignota*, see M. Kaup, De prophetia ignota. *Eine frühe Schrift Joachims von Fiore*, Hanover 1998.

[38] See V. Metelmann, 'Die Erfüllung der Zeiten in Christus. Zur bildnerischen Enzyklopädie des Ulmer Chorgestühls', in *Michel Erhart & Jörg Syrlin d. Ä. Spätgotik in Ulm*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 54–65 (60–61); P. Dronke, 'Medieval Sibyls. Their Character and Their "Auctoritas"', *Studi medievali* XXXVI.3, 1995, pp. 581–615 (597).

[39] See also H. Shields (ed.), Le livre de Sibile *by Philippe de Thaon*, London 1979; B. Smalley, 'A Pseudo-Sibylline Prophecy of the Early Twelfth Century in the "Life" of Altmann of Passau', in *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet*, Poitiers 1996, pp. 655–61; G. Zedler, 'Die Sibyllenweissagung. Eine in Thüringen entstandene Dichtung aus dem Jahre 1361', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* LXI, 1936, pp. 136–66, 274–88.

[40] See B. McGinn, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Aldershot 1994; B. McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, New York 1979. On medieval apocalypticism, see also C. W. Bynum and P. Freedman (eds), *Last Things. Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2000; R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca and London 1992.

[41] H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung*, Stuttgart 2000; H. Möhring, 'Die Weissagungen über einen Kaiser Friedrich am Ende der Zeiten', in *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, ed. by W. Brandes

there would be a Roman emperor who would come to restore peace to the world before going to Jerusalem, where he would put his crown on the Holy Cross. By this act all power would be returned to God, upon which the reign of the Antichrist would begin. One of the people most frequently identified as the Last World Emperor was Charles V (1500–1558).[42] In the so-called *Sibyllenweissagung* ('Prophecy of the Sibyls'), a fourteenth-century German prophecy in verse of purported Sibylline origin, this apocalyptic figure was also named as Frederick.[43] As the study into apocalypticism has extended into the early modern period, Robin B. Barnes has shown its influence on the Reformation, and Jonathan Green has shed light on the presentation of the Sibyl as an apocalyptic prophet in early German printing culture.[44] However, the analysis of the *ara coeli* legend and the many late medieval and early modern comments on the Sibylline tradition call into question the validity of the general consensus that the Sibyl was perceived solely as a herald of the end of times. Instead, the adaptation into other forms of belief and the application of Sibylline oracles to current affairs shows the need for a broader approach to a tradition as widely circulated as that of the Sibyls.

At the same time, the continuity in Sibylline beliefs and the scholarly perception of this legacy which emerges from the approach pursued by this thesis challenges the second long-held consensus in modern scholarship. Until now, the majority of intellectual and art historians have regarded the engagement and fascination with the Sibyls as intrinsically linked to the rise of Renaissance humanism. After Émile Mâle's seminal 1899 study into the modes of representing the Sibyl in series modelled on Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*, the focus has been primarily on

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and F. Schmieder, Berlin 2008, pp. 201–13. For the belief in a Last World Emperor in medieval apocalypticism and beyond, see L. Greisiger, *Messias – Endkaiser – Antichrist. Politische Apokalyptik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung*, Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 89–180; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 293–392; E. Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second 1194–1250*, transl. by E. O. Lorimer, London 1931; F. Kampers, *Vom Werdegange der abendländischen Kaisermystik*, Leipzig and Berlin 1924; F. Kampers, *Die deutsche Kaiseridee in Prophetie und Sage*, Munich 1896.

[42] See M. Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas. The Hapsburg and the Mythic Image of the Emperor*, New Haven and London 1993, pp. 119–30; Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 359–74.

[43] For the role of the Sibyls in this legend, see Möhring, 'Die Weissagungen über einen Kaiser Friedrich', pp. 205–6, 209–10; Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, pp. 217–68. For the *Sibyllenweissagung*, see I. Neske, *Die spätmittelalterliche deutsche Sibyllenweissagung. Untersuchung und Edition*, Göppingen 1985.

[44] See R. B. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis. Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, Stanford 1988; J. Green, *Printing and Prophecy. Prognostication and Media Change 1450–1550*, Ann Arbor 2012. See also W.-E. Peuckert, *Sibylle Weiß*, s.l. 1932. Also M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, Oxford 1992.

questions regarding the numbers of the Sibyls and their individual identification through iconographic devices.[45] The geographical focus on Italy and France meant that the Sibyls were often examined as part of the classical repertoire that was employed in the new movement of Renaissance art. [46] Even the most recent study by Robin Raybould views the rise of the Sibyls and their representation in series as a consequence of humanism and the revival of patristic theology.[47] Again, Jessica L. Malay examined the Sibyl in Renaissance England by focusing on her role as a well-established, albeit ambiguous, female figure of classical antiquity in the political discourse of Elizabethan England. With less of a focus on the theological implications of the Sibylline tradition, she extrapolates gender dynamics in the sixteenth-century debate on the Sibyls, who were regarded as unsetteling and disturbing for contemporaries. The Sibyl was evoked both to mark female authority and to raise suspicion regarding prophecy.[48] As part of humanists' aim to revive

[45] See R. Guerrini, 'Le "Divinae Institutiones" di Lattanzio nelle epigrafi del Rinascimento. Il Collegio del Cambio di Perugia ed il Pavimento del Duomo di Siena (Ermete Trismegisto e Sibille)', *Annuario dell'Istituto Storico Diocesano di Siena* I, 1992–93, pp. 5–50; A. M. Romaldo, '"Corpus Titulorum Senensium". Le "Divinae Institutiones" di Lattanzio e il pavimento del Duomo di Siena', *Annuario dell'Istituto Storico Diocesano di Siena* I, 1992–93, pp. 51–94; É. Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*, diss. Paris 1899.

[46] See F. La Sala, *Della terra, il brillante colore. Parmenide, una* Cappella Sistina *carmelitana con 12 Sibille (1608), le xilografie di Filippo Barbieri (1481) e la domanda antropologica*, Milan 2013; M. Galley, *La Sibylle. De l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris 2010, p. 107–44; J. M. Morales Folguera, *Las Sibilas en el arte de la edad moderna, Europa mediterránea y Nueva España*, Malaga 2007; W. Augustyn, 'Zur Bildüberlieferung der Sibyllen in Italien zwischen 1450 und 1550', in *Zukunftsvoraussagen in der Renaissance*, ed. by K. Bergdolt and W. Ludwig, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 365–435; W. Stumpfe, *Sibyllendarstellung im Italien der frühen Neuzeit. Über die Identität und den Bedeutungsgehalt einer heidnisch-christlichen Figur*, diss. Trier 2005; B. P. Copenhaver, 'Hermes Theologus. The Sienese Mercury and Ficino's Hermetic Demons', in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation. Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, ed. by J. W. O'Malley, T. M. Izbicki and G. Christianson, Leiden, New York and Cologne 1993, pp. 149–82; S. Settis, 'Le Sibille di Cortina', in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, ed. by A. Morrogh et al., 2 vols, Florence 1985, II, pp. 437–64; F. De' Maffei, 'La Sibilla "Tiburtina" e "prophetissa" nel ciclo degli affreschi di Sant'Angelo in Formis', *Monastica* IV, 1984, pp. 9–30; G. Brunetti, 'Le statuette sul tabernacolo del Cambio a Orsanmichele', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XXIV.3, 1980, pp. 283–98; E. Dotson, 'An Augustinian Interpretation of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling', *Art Bulletin* LXI, 1979, pp. 223–56, 405–29; C. de Clercq, 'Quelques séries italienes de Sibylles', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* XLVIII–XLIX, 1978–1979, pp. 105–27; M. Piccat, 'La Raffigurazione delle Sibille nel Saluzzese e nelle zone circostanti', *Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo* LXXVII, 1977, pp. 19–46; L. Freund, *Studien zur Bildgeschichte der Sybillen in der neueren Kunst*, diss. Hamburg 1936; J. Destrée, 'La Sibylle Agrippa. Fragment de tapisserie française XV^{e}-XVI^{e} siècle', *Annales de la Société Royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* XXXV, 1930, pp. 131–39; A. Rossi, 'Le Sibille nelle arti figurative italiane', *L'arte* XVIII, 1915, pp. 209–85, 427–58; F. Romani, 'Le principali figurazioni della Sibilla di Cuma nell'arte cristiana', in *Poesia pagana e arte cristiana*, ed. by F. Romani, Rome 1902, pp. 43–70; X. Barbier de Montault, 'Iconographie des Sibylles', *Revue de l'Art Chrétien* XVII, 1874, pp. 1–162.

[47] See R. Raybould, *The Sibyl Series of the Fifteenth Century*, Leiden 2016.

[48] See J. L. Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance. Shakespeare's Sibyls*, New York and London 2010.

ancient knowledge, the Sibyls were also of interest to those pursuing Cabalist ideas, or studying the Hermetic corpus or other currents of occultism that coincided with the rise of humanism.[49] In Anthony Grafton's study of the Hermetic Corpus he concedes that 'the Sibylline question seemed far more vital to contemporaries than the Hermetic question.'[50] In his later account of the Hermetic Corpus losing relevance in the sixteenth century, however, the Sibyl was cited merely as a witness to a similar contemporaneous decline, leaving the history of the Sibyls in the early modern period yet to be written.[51]

Building on this research, this thesis therefore presents an analysis of the Sibylline tradition from the mid fifteenth to the late sixteenth century as the time in which the Sibyl(s), that is, the Sibyls as a group of prophetic women as well as specific individual Sibyls and their associated narratives, lost their relevance and significance for contemporary beliefs and theology. In order to analyse this complex process of reassessing, reinterpreting and reformulating patterns of belief, it must be acknowledged that neither the religious nor any other meaning of prophecies can be assumed to be fixed. Rather, the meaning of a prophecy both in its content and significance is contextual, that is, fluid, unstable and subject to its respective interpretations and utilisations.[52] Beyond prophecy, historians have become increasingly aware of the multiplicity of possible readings and appropriations of any given text or image.[53] And so, although not a work of *Begriffsgeschichte*, this study aims to examine the *Nachleben* of the Sibyl as an undertaking that is primarily guided by the intention to unravel the identification, use and attribution of the term 'Sibyl' or 'Sibylline'.

[49] See F. A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London 1964, pp. 42–42, 364, 386, 399–401, 427–29; A. Grafton, 'Higher Criticism Ancient and Modern. The Lamentable Deaths of Hermes and the Sibyls', in Dionisotti, Grafton and Kraye, *The Use of Greek and Latin*, pp. 155–70 (165–69).
[50] A. Grafton, 'Protestant versus Prophet. Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institutes* XLVI, 1983, pp. 78–92 (88).
[51] See A. Grafton, *Defenders of the Text. The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800*, Cambridge and London 1991, pp. 174–77.
[52] For similar ideas in most recent scholarship, see E. L. Risden, K. Moranski and S. Yandel, 'Introduction: Prophecy as political discourse', in *Prophetic Margins. The Medieval Vatic Impulse and Social Stability*, ed. by E. L. Risden, K. Moranski and S. Yandel, New York et al. 2004, pp. 1–12.
[53] See C. Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del Cinquecento*, Turin 1976; A. Grafton and L. Jardine, 'Studied for Action. How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *Past and Present* CXXIX, 1990, pp. 3–51; W. Sherman, *Used Books. Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, Philadelphia 2008; D. Sabean, *Power in the Bood. Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 1984.

The fluidity and ambiguity of these materials present complex and, at times, contradictory narratives which allow for an examination of the Sibyls' *Nachleben* in its entirety, that is, any attitudes towards them and the changes in them with respect to aspects of belief, doctrine, gender, culture and society. In order to trace the views on the nature of the Sibylline tradition and its development regarding questions of authenticity and authority at the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern period, it is imperative to include all materials that purport to be Sibylline in name. This wealth of source types includes both textual testimonies, that is, the Sibylline prophecies themselves, dogmatic works and cheap prints, and material objects, that is, interiors of sacred spaces, architecture and other forms of figurative representation.

This multi-disciplinary approach allows us to capture the role of the Sibyl(s) in contemporary belief and doctrine. While for the analysis of doctrinal questions textual sources remain, of course, key to understanding the Sibyl(s), it is via the transformation in pictorial and literary representations that we can observe and detect the immediate import the Sibyl(s) had to different fifteenth- and sixteenth-century audiences. Given the widespread illiteracy at the time, most people experienced religion not in terms of abstract doctrine, but rather in the practical realities of ritual and custom.[54] Since this study aims to analyse this religious experience alongside the formulation of doctrines, any manifestation of Sibylline beliefs and imaginations in art and literature, both sacred and secular, ought to be acknowledged as illustrative of changes in piety. Even if this source material falls short of providing us with the breadth and depth that the term 'belief' suggests, it allows us to discern (dis-)continuities in religious attitudes as expressed by a group of people that was somewhat articulate in financial, social and intellectual terms. This approach of incorporating pictorial evidence into the history of 'popular culture' was masterfully championed by Bob Scribner.[55] Most recently, Bridget Heal has followed in his footsteps

[54] See C. S. Dixon, 'Introduction. Narratives of the German Reformation', in *The German Reformation. The Essential Readings*, ed. by C. S. Dixon, Oxford 1999, pp. 1–32 (27). For a useful discussion of the concept of piety as a way to analyse religious practices and belief, see H. Molitor, 'Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit als historisch-methodisches Problem', in *Festgabe für Ernst Walter Zeeden zum 60. Geburtstag am 14. Mai 1976*, ed. by H. Rabe, H. Molitor and H.-C. Rublack, Münster 1976, pp. 1–20.

[55] See R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk. Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, Cambridge 1981; R. W. Scribner, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)*, ed. by L. Roper, Leiden 2001.

by rewriting a history of Marian belief in early modern Germany. Thanks to the consideration of material sources, she was able to penetrate deep into the fabric of belief, devotional practice and doctrine, which led her to re-conceptualise the history of Marian devotion in great and finely-nuanced detail.[56] To avoid any misconceptions, Heal reminds us of the case put forth by Michael Baxandall, who has compellingly argued for an awareness of the interpretative framework for any piece of art according to the period concerned.[57] As much as these artistic manifestations reflect a number of Sibylline beliefs held by the patron, the artist and the audience, we must acknowledge the difficulties in determining the impact of these images on their viewers and the duration of their attraction on the beholders. While they express certain aspects of faith in the moment of their composition, devotional objects and images remained in the everyday life of many churchgoers for decades to come. Their mere presence in the imaginative repertoire at the time must however not be mistaken for a prolonged reverence. Yet with respect to the oft-raised question concerning the extent to which sources present a form of downward mediation, as discussed by Peter Burke, we have to consider the purpose for which specific sources were originally produced and how that might limit our historical enquiry into beliefs.[58] Despite this array of pitfalls that the incorporation of visual and other artistic sources seem to bear, consideration of them is nevertheless instrumental in furthering our understanding of religion in different times and places, as this study demonstrates.

As the first appearance of the Sibylline oracles in print in 1545 marked a pivotal turning point in their reception, this study falls into three chapters, which correspond to three different moments in the history of the Sibyl(s). The first chapter deals with the period prior to the publication of 1545 and is concerned with four aspects. First, it is crucial to understand the existing interpretations and textual foundations of the Sibylline tradition as they stood at the turn of the fifteenth century. Since originally the major channel through which one could obtain some knowledge of the Sibyls was a fairly limited number of quotations scattered in patristic writings, early editions of the Church Fathers printed from 1465 onwards will be examined here, including those of Lactantius, Augustine and Eusebius. The inclusion of other

[56] See B. Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany. Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500–1648*, Cambridge 2007.
[57] See M. Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven and London 1980, pp. 143–63.
[58] See P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Aldershot 1994, pp. 65–87.

Sibylline texts without an ancient pedigree reveals however that in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century image of the Sibyls, these medieval fabrications played a role as important as those texts ratified by patristic authority. The interest in the Sibyls stood not only in clear continuity with the Church Fathers, but indeed, of all Sibylline texts regardless of their origin. All these Sibylline texts had blended to become what I call Sibylline lore, that is, a composite body of different textual traditions ranging from the oracles to medieval concoctions, whose origins and ages had become indiscernible and seemingly irrelevant to contemporaries. Therefore, it is not sufficient to examine the reception of the Sibylline oracles, but all other Sibylline materials should be included in order to draw a comprehensive account of why the Sibyl(s) lost their importance. Second, the analysis of the medieval *ara coeli* legend demonstrates that the Sibylline tradition cannot and must not be limited to apocalyptic concerns or understood as being causally linked to the rise of humanism. Rather, the legend, according to which the Tiburtine Sibyl had revealed a Marian vision to Emperor Augustus, had grown immensely popular with all echelons of medieval society and eventually penetrated into the late medieval Marian cult. While accumulating prophetic authority, the legend had obtained new semantics. Despite the apocryphal nature of the Sibyl(s) and, in particular, the dubious origins of this story, a host of commissions from lay fraternities and other pious devotees testifies to the importance that it gathered at the same time as the lay movements of the *devotio moderna*.[59] The third section is dedicated to what is often claimed to be the most influential treatise on the Sibylline tradition, the *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Augustini et Hieronymi* ('Disagreements of the Holy Teachers Augustine and Jerome') by Filippo Barbieri (Philippus Siculus, 1426–1487).[60] By tracing its various different sources and the authorities it drew on, I will demonstrate how the Sibylline tradition had been absorbed into western Christendom and how it was popularised. The material analysed once again highlights the composite nature of Sibylline lore with its many meanings for different late medieval audiences. Confronted with this wide readership and the great devotion held for the Sibyl(s), the representatives of the Reformation Churches were by no means able to defy the consideration of so

[59] For essential studies of the *devotio moderna*, see J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The* Devotio moderna *and the World of the Late Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2008; S. Krauss, *Die* Devotio moderna *in Deventer. Anatomie eines Zentrums der Reformbewegung*, Berlin 2007; R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Leiden 1968.
[60] Filippo Barbieri, *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Hieronymi et Augustini Sibyllarum et prophetarum de Christo vaticinia*, Rome: Giovanni Filippo de Lignamine, 1481.

popular a tradition and had to become somehow involved with this type of prophetic foreknowledge, however reluctantly. On the basis of a number of theological responses to Sibylline lore, the fourth and final section of this chapter will argue for an apparent shift from the initial relegation of the Sibyls to the realm of fiction to a more favourable reception by such theologians as Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) and Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563).

The second chapter will dwell on the rediscovery of the Sibylline oracles and the ways in which they were published. At first, their publication by Johannes Oporinus (1507–1568), the head of one of the most daring publishing houses at the time, and Birck must be reckoned as a ground-breaking achievement in the history of humanist scholarship.[61] Yet, it was the Latin translation of Castellio, the later champion of religious tolerance, and, in particular, the way in which he framed this operation, that gained new ground in the appropriation of the Sibylline revelations for a Christian worldview. By reconciling the pagan and Christian sphere through the Sibyls, Castellio was keen to present and make available a divine revelation whose message of universal salvation and redemption could provide the foundation for a less confessionally biased theology. This aim, which was expressed in the rich paratextual material accompanying the edition, was then transferred into the first bilingual edition of 1555. In the very same year, a collection of early Christian sources, which included the Sibylline oracles, left the presses of Heinrich Petri (1508–1575), also based in Basel. These four editions express the urgency with which the potentially divine revelations were handled.

As a result of the 1545 publication and its subsequent editions, an increasing number of scholars and theologians engaged with the Sibylline oracles as well as with other Sibylline material. When the text that previously could only be a subject for speculations became available, a host of reactions appeared, ranging from the wholehearted appropriation into theology by Castellio to the outright condemnation of any such doing by John Calvin (1509–1564), from a manipulation of patristic thought to a widening of the covenant of Noah. The way in which earlier views were

[61] In his article which argues for a new era of scepticism starting in the early 1540s, Manfred Welti describes Oporinus as ‘einer der drei verlegerischen Helden der Umwälzung von 1543’. M. E. Welti, ‘Das Zwischenspiel zwischen Humanismus und Konfessionalismus’, *Historische Zeitschrift* CCIL, 1989, pp. 19–52 (27).

revisited and changed is therefore the subject of the third chapter. Since the debate about the value of Sibylline prophecies was one very much shaped by denominational boundaries, the different positions advocated by each confessional faith will be studied separately in order to draw clearer connections within. First, however, I will discuss the radical appropriation of Sibylline knowledge by unorthodox or more liberal theologians, which often was the reason or the trigger factor for the rejection by others. This is especially true for Castellio, who in his annotations to the Bible embraced the oracles like any biblical book. As I will show in the second section of this chapter, it was this treatment as divine revelations that led Calvin and his followers to deny the Sibylline legacy any significance in contemporary theology. Because the rationale and approach taken by Bibliander does not align with the other representatives of the Zurich Church, but resembles that pursued by Castellio and Guillaume Postel (1510–1581), he will be considered among the more liberal theologians in the first section of this chapter. This is also because he inspired the moderate approach taken by the Zurich Church, as will be discussed in the third section. It was only after his departure from the *Schola Tigurina* that the stark opposition against any incorporation of Sibylline testimonies could win over mainstream theology there. The fourth section is dedicated to the Lutheran approach to Sibylline lore. In an attempt to prevent the Sibylline oracles from exerting any influence on their theology, Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans alike employed historical arguments. By including the Sibyls in the Noachian heritage, they were viewed as a type of Hebrew prophet whose prophecies had been outdated. Underpinning all these different argumentative strategies put forward by Protestant theologians is a concern to uphold the principle of *sola scriptura* and the struggle to define how to identify, delineate and delimit divine revelation. By contrast, the Catholics pursued a much greater interest in including the Sibylline oracles as veritable testimonies into the body of divine knowledge. They even went so far as to manipulate Pauline and patristic authority, in order for the Sibylline oracles to meet the criteria for sacred scripture as set out during the Council of Trent.

At the end of the sixteenth century the Sibyl(s) seem to have passed their zenith. The final section of the third chapter will explore the mounting sense of scepticism that ultimately brought about this decline in popularity. This particular moment in the history of the early modern reception of the Sibylline prophecies can be found

encapsulated in yet two other editions of the oracles, that by Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1540–1617), published in 1569, and that by Opsopoeus, which was posthumously published in 1599.[62] While the former challenged the age and therefore the inspiration of the Sibylline oracles, the latter presented the first systematic attempt to demonstrate the spurious origins of the Sibylline oracles on philological grounds. These two editions fuelled the process through which the Sibyl(s) lost their authority as Christian prophets of pagan origin and became of interest only from an antiquarian point of view. Because of this expulsion from the sacred, this change in perception marks the end of this study.

By mapping out the continuities and changes in the beliefs and dogmas held about the Sibyl(s) from the mid fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries, I seek to broaden our understanding of how faith was conceived and configured in the century surrounding the Reformation period. Of central importance in this regard is the question of authority. Was the authenticity or the lack of it enough to overthrow beliefs that had persisted for more than a thousand years? How were decisions about the foundations of dogma made? What authorities were eroded in the time studied here, and what authorities were established? Also, I propose some doctrinal continuity and change in belief patterns which due to the temporal scope of traditional Reformation historiography has been neglected; by doing so, I seek to bridge the gap between the study of cultural and intellectual currents that pertain to the late Middle Ages, humanism and the Reformation. Even more, this analysis transcends the restricting limits of national identities and language barriers that Reformation historiography tends to superimpose or even views as essential in the development of the Reformation.[63] Instead, it considers areas defined by common religious belief and intellectual cohesion. Gender is another aspect which, although attracting increasing scholarly attention, needs to be treated cautiously with regard to the beliefs and doctrines formulated about the Sibyl(s). It is important to recognise that there is a gender dimension intrinsically linked with the reception of the Sibyl(s) as female prophets in regard

[62] Johann Jakob Grynaeus (ed.), *Monumenta Sanctorum Patrum orthodoxographa*, Basel: Heinrich Henricpetri, 1569; Johannes Opsopoeus (ed.), ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΙ*, hoc est, Sibyllina oracula ex veteribus codicibus aucta, renovata et notis illustrata cum interpretatione latina Sebastiani Castelionis et indice*, Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1599.

[63] See *Luther und die Deutschen. Begleitband zur Nationalen Sonderausstellung auf der Wartbug. 4. Mai–5. November 2017*, Petersberg 2017; C. Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, Oxford 2010; B. Scribner, R. Porter and M. Teich (eds), *The Reformation in National Context*, Cambridge 1994.

both to the otherwise almost exclusively male revelatory tradition and to a male dominated church. Yet, for the majority of the material examined in this dissertation, there is a striking absence of the gender dimension, which does not necessarily reflect the historical absence of such dynamics, but rather a limitation imposed by the analytical tools available and the type of evidence employed here. With all these considerations and caveats in mind, this study is understood as no more than a first attempt at drafting the development of the Sibyl(s) as a prophetic authority.

The *Nachleben* of the Sibyl(s) prior to the publication of their oracles in 1545

This chapter examines the *Nachleben* of the Sibyl(s) in central and western Europe from the late fifteenth century to the publication of the Sibylline oracles in 1545 by following four steps. First, I will take into consideration the textual foundation of Sibylline lore as it was known in the decades around the year 1500. By tracing the manuscript and print production of both patristic and medieval sources containing information about Sibylline prophecies of any kind, it will become apparent that both traditions had merged into one homogeneous notion of the Sibyls, their prophetic office and legacy. This development, however, was viewed with some reservations especially from scholars belonging to humanistically trained circles. Second, it is crucial to understand the extent to which the reverence for the Sibyl was engrained in the culture of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe. In order to do so, I will analyse the continuity and persistence of one particular medieval legend, that of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Emperor Augustus, and its inclusion in the realm of sacred history. In this regard, special attention will be paid to the theological implications of the contemporary Marian cult of the late Middle Ages. In unfolding this complex cluster of beliefs which surrounded the Sibylline lore and which originated from the great esteem she was held in by some of the laity, we need to rely primarily on the many pictorial representations of the Sibyls, for their analysis lays bare developments otherwise undetectable in the scarce written documentation of this specific legend that survives. Third, it is worth asking who the Sibyls had come to be for late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century audiences: How many were there? What were their origins? And what were their prophecies? Finally, after having examined primarily thinkers loyal to the Roman Church, light will be shed on the debate about the revelatory value that different Reformation movements assigned to the Sibylline prophecies. As Luther and Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), to mention only the most representative figures, had challenged the authority of doctrinal teachings and the value of Scripture, the existing Sibylline texts posed a number of taxing questions, such as whether or not the Sibyls could be accepted as Christian prophets of pagan origin, albeit uncanonical ones, and what implications this might have.

The humanist quest for written remains and their meaning: the hermeneutics of classical antiquity, patristic sources and medieval authorities

In order to understand how any given intellectual and cultural current is received in different historical periods and by different audiences and readerships, it is of vital importance to examine the source material on which this particular cultural heritage is built. This is all the more important in the case of the Sibylline tradition, for only a few snippets of the Sibyls' predictions were extant after the destruction of the so-called *libri Sibyllini* in 408 AD. As a large part of this material was available only scattered through the writings of the Church Father, the primary medium of transmission was patristic theology. In addition to these remains, new Sibylline narratives had emerged during the Middle Ages. Particularly influential were the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* and the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl', which as *ex eventu* prophecies purported to be of Sibylline origin, both claiming the authorship of a famous Sibyl. Indeed, while much scholarly attention has been devoted to identifying the origins of each allegedly Sibylline text, including the obscure origins of the Sibylline oracles themselves, the very same questions of authorship and authenticity were much harder to ascertain for the majority of sixteenth-century audiences. For this reason, the following chapter distinguishes not so much between ancient, patristic and medieval traditions and layers of transmission, but between texts that were rather neglected by Christian posterity and what can be described as different kinds of 'Christian Sibyl', that is, bodies of text that were generally believed to be genuinely of Sibylline origin and were treated as such. This group includes mainly patristic and medieval texts. In the second part of this chapter, I will scrutinise the various Sibylline references that were deeply rooted in the ancient tradition and, therefore, had little import in Christendom. By doing so, this section argues that the scholarly interest in the Sibylline tradition prior to the publication of the oracles in 1545 did not depend so much on the diffusion of humanistic trends favouring the study of ancient material, but on the persistence of motifs that were characteristic of medieval theology and its bipartite concept of revelation derived from patristic theology.

The 'Christian Sibyl': textual foundation and engagement

The chief channel through which the Sibylline lore had entered the Christian realm and would continue to exert influence on it was patristic theology. Most authoritative since the late Middle Ages were Lactantius and Augustine, who continued to be consulted for various issues relating to Sibylline texts and the understanding of the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses.[64] Especially for Lactantius it is important to recognise that the Lactantius known to the medieval and early modern periods differs substantially from the one presented in modern contemporary scholarship. Unlike Augustine, Lactantius remained largely unknown to medieval Europe until in the fourteenth century his theology was rediscovered and underwent a great renaissance.[65] After manuscripts of his work began to proliferate due to this revived interest, in 1465 the printing pioneers Konrad Sweinheim (d. c.1475) and Arnold Pannartz (d. c.1478) printed Lactantius's *Opera omnia* (GW M16541), including his *Divinae institutiones* and his *De ira Dei* ('On the Wrath of God'), the two works through which Christian theology had appropriated the Sibylline oracles. They were subsequently reissued in the early printing centre of Italy, Venice, and soon after began to appear also in the Northern European publishing houses of Cologne, Antwerp and Basel.[66] Yet, despite the popularity of Lactantius as the *Christianus Cicero* among theologians of humanist standing and the crucial role of the *Divinae institutiones* for the long-

[64] According to Mischa Hooker, it was however in the work of Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.210) that the Sibyls were fully assimilated into the canon of Christian sources. As will be discussed later, Clement's legacy would prove influential in the wake of the Council of Trent. As for Lactantius and Augustine, Hooker cautions to overestimate the degree of appropriation of the Sibyl in late antiquity, suggesting a shift in the reception of patristic theology, including the incorporation of Sibylline texts, since the sixth century. See M. A. Hooker, *The Use of Sibyls and Sibylline Oracles in Early Christian Writers*, diss. Calgary 2007.

[65] See D. Rutherford, 'The Manuscripts of Lactantius and His Early Renaissance Readers', *Studia Patristica* LXX, 2017, pp. 155–70 (157, 160, 164, 169).

[66] After the edition of 1465 and that of 1468 (GW M16542), several printers in Venice reissued this edition. As early as in 1476 were Lactantius's *Opera* printed north of the Alps in Rostock (GW M16546). All these prints were accompanied by the Latin translation of the Greek passages in Lactantius, authored by Marcus Musurus (c.1470–1517), and a short biography of Lactantius, extracted from Jerome (347–420). In 1543, even a French translation by the unknown Rene Fumé was printed in Paris by Galliot du Pré (d.1560). For the role of Lactantius's prints in the early printing endeavours in Italy, see M. D. Feld, 'Sweynheym and Pannartz, Cardinal Bessarion, Neoplatonism. Renaissance Humanism and Two Early Printers' Choice of Texts', *Harvard Library Bulletin* XXX.3 (1982), pp. 282–335 (284–87); M. D. Feld, 'The Sibyls of Subiaco. Sweynheym and Pannartz and the *editio princeps* of Lactantius', in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, I, pp. 301–16 (305–7); M. D. Feld, 'The First Roman Printers and the Idioms of Humanism', *Harvard Library Bulletin* XXXVI.1, 1988, pp. 1–91. For further information, see also E. Hall, *Sweynheym and Pannartz and the Origins of Printing in Italy. German Technology and Italian Humanism in Renaissance Rome*, McMinnville 1991.

lasting legacy of the Sibyls, no commentary was written until 1563 – aside from the few annotations to the *De opificio Dei* ('On the Workmanship of God') written by Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), in which he did not concern himself with the Sibylline sayings.[67]

Lactantius had not only been one of the first Christian apologists to quote the Sibylline corpus extensively, but until Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) translated and edited the Hermetic corpus in 1463, he provided an unprecedented and unrepeated conciliatory attempt to coalesce the literary and vatic traditions of the pagan world with Christian faith. It was Lactantius's description of the Sibylline oracles as 'divine testimonies' (*divina testimonia*; I.6.1) on which later theologians such as Barbieri would base their claim that the Sibyls had been divinely inspired.[68] For Lactantius, the Sibyls together with Hermes Trismegistus, whom he considered to be almost 'like a god' (*simile divino*; I.6.1), were of decisive importance to his apology of Christianity, for they allowed him to prove beliefs held by Christians on the ground of prophetic sayings that the pagans themselves had held in great esteem.[69] Right at the beginning of his tract, Lactantius demonstrated by four quotations from the Sibylline oracles (VIII.377; fr. 1.7, 15–16; fr. 3.3–5) that the Sibyls had indeed known of the monotheistic nature and supremacy of the Christian God as the Creator and Constructor of the world (I.6.15–16).[70] Lactantius illustrated the appreciation of the

[67] Lactantius, 'De opificio Dei', in Desiderius Erasmus, *Vidua Christiana*, Basel: Hieronymus Froben and Johannes Herwagen, 1529, pp. 211–318. Under the title *Adnotatiunculae aliquot in L. Coelii Lactantii De opificio Dei librum* ('Some little annotations on Lactantius's "De opificio Dei"'), these annotations were incorporated also into other editions of Lactantius's works, for example, to that by the Cologne printer Peter Quentell (d.1546) in 1544 (sig b*vj^{rv}). According to Erasmus, Lactantius was commonly praised for the clear speech with which he was defending Christianity. The term *Cicero Christianus* had previously been coined by Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533). See Erasmus, *Novum instrumentum omne*, Basel: Johann Froben, sig. α3^{v}; Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *De studio divinae atque humanae philosophiae*, Strasbourg: Johan Knobloch, 1507, sig. fiij^{r}. For the 1563 edition, see Lactantius, *Opera, quae quidem extant, omnia*, ed. by Emanuel and Sixt Birck, Basel: Heinrich Henricpetri, 1563.

[68] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols [8^{v}–10^{v}].

[69] This argument led Lactantius to devaluate the first of his three groups of sources, the biblical 'prophets' (*propheta*; I.4.1), whom he refrained from employing exhaustively, as they were not regarded with authority by those he aimed to persuade (I.5.1). On the other hand, the group of 'poets and philosophers' (*poetae ac philosophi*; I.5.2), whose 'testimonials often used against us' (*testes, quibus contra nos uti solent*; I.5.2), were by their nature all the more worth considering, for Lactantius believed God's truth to shine through in such pagan texts. For a comprehensive overview of the research on Lactantius's use of the Sibylline oracles, see J. Walter, *Pagane Texte und Wertvorstellungen bei Lactanz*, Göttingen 2006, pp. 172–74.

[70] In general, the number of Sibylline references in the *Divinae institutiones* appears relatively high compared to the 92 citations taken from the Bible, only nineteen of which are from the New Testament. The numbers used here follow P. Monat, *Lactance et la Bible. Une propédeutique latine à la lecture de la Bible dans l'Occident constantien*, 2 vols, Paris 1982, I, p. 20, while lower numbers were

Sibyls in the pagan cultures of Rome and Greece, on the other hand, by a quotation in which a catalogue of ten Sibyls with their origin and basic information was taken from Varro's lost work *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* (DI I.6.8–12). An unchallengeable authority until the sixteenth century, this list argued for the term 'Sibyl' (Σίβυλλα/*Sibylla*) to derive from a compound of the Aeolic words for 'gods' (σιούς) and 'council' (βουλήν) rather than their Greek equivalents θεούς and βουλίαν (I.6.7). The most significant piece of information concerned the ten Sibyls themselves: their names were listed and their origins and deeds described according to various pagan writers, with the Erythraean Sibyl as the *prima inter pares* (I.6.8–14). This catalogue also contained the founding myth of the Roman state secret, the *libri Sibyllini*. Legend has it that the Cumaean Sibyl had offered nine prophetic books to the Roman king Tarquinius Priscus. As he remained unwilling to pay the asked price, she burned twice three books. Only when three books were left, he changed his mind and purchased the prophetic books, which thereafter were kept in the Capitol as the state secrets of Rome (I.6.13).[71]

Printed almost as early as Lactantius's *Opera*, Augustine's *De civitate Dei* ('City of God'; GW 2874) was accessible in print from 1467. Only one year after the edition by Sweinheim and Pannartz, the Strasbourg-based Johannes Mentelin

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suggested by M. D. Feld, 'The Sibyls of Subiaco', p. 317. Even more surprisingly, Lactantius did not quote the Holy Scriptures in their original languages, but cited a Latin translation, a fate also shared by other Greek thinkers, both pagan and Christian. According to Feld, this linguistic differentiation marked divinations, such as the Sibylline prophecies and the Orphic corpus, as supernatural and divinely inspired, as opposed to writings shaped by sceptical disillusions and human reason, as which the Bible was considered. See Feld, 'The Sibyls of Subiaco', p. 306. While Walter has recently stated that this does not suggest a normative precedence of the Sibylline oracles over the Bible, Lactantius did give priority to certain eschatological accounts of the Sibylline oracles over those in the Bible as, for example, when stating that the damned and the saved will be exposed to fire (VII.21.6–7). See also Walter, *Pagane Texte bei Lactanz*, pp. 186–88. As in his *Divinae institutitones* Lactantius set out to unveil that pagan wisdom was connected to Christianity and thus to present the Christian religion as cleansed from Jewish traditions. The Bible had to step back, without however being undermined in its overall importance. Nonetheless, the Sibylline oracles were often prioritised as repositories of theological evidence. On the one hand, common Christian doctrines were derived from the Sibyls, as they confirmed, for example, that God had created man after His effigy (II.10.4, 11.18). On the other hand, scriptural quotations appeared at all times in tandem with these texts purporting to be rooted in the pagan tradition, as declared by Lactantius (I.5.1–2). See Feld, 'The Sibyls of Subiaco', p. 306. As for the Sibylline prophecies, the account of Jesus's life until his resurrection is corroborated by an overwhelming and specific amount of material, which is drawn from their testimonies (IV.15–19), just as Lactantius did in his *De ira Dei* with respect to the Flood (23.4). Considering that no other vatic evidence is cited, the Sibyls seem to embody the only pagan authority capable of giving testimony on such a tangible issue as Christology. By tying up Sibylline and scriptural evidence so tightly, Lactantius left no doubt as to the primacy of the Sibyl among the pagan oracles and their being on a par with the Evangelists, alongside whom the Sibyls were quoted.

[71] In his *De mortibus persecutorum*, Lactantius had still described the veneration of the *Sibyllini libri* by the Roman Emperor Maxentius (c.278–312) (44.8).

(c.1410–1478) published the *De civitate Dei* (GW 2883) in a version that incorporated the medieval commentaries, on Books 1 to 10 by the English Dominican Nicholas Trevet (c.1258–c.1335) and, on Books 11 to 22, by his Dominican brother Thomas Waleys (fl.1318–1349).[72] Having been expanded by further remarks penned by Jacopo Passavanti (d.1357) and the florilegium by Franciscus de Mayronis (c.1285–c.1328) in the 1489 monumental edition (GW 2887) by Johannes Amerbach (c.1440–1513), nevertheless, the corpus of annotations had altogether little to add as far as the Sibyl was concerned.[73] Rather interesting for the perception of the Sibyls is the commentary by Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540), which, written in 1522, was to become part of Erasmus's new edition of the *De civitate Dei*, the most widely disseminated version of Augustine's work in the sixteenth century; Vives's commentary will be discussed below in 'A brief excursion: Juan Luis Vives's approach to the Sibyls'.[74]

Augustine had admitted the Sibyl, whether the Erythraean or the Cumaean, to his City of God (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23).[75] This was, however, not so much for the vast

[72] See A. S. Q. Visser, 'Augustine in Renaissance Humanism', in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. by K. Pollmann, 3 vols, Oxford 2013, I, pp. 68–73 (71–72).

[73] The only comment on the Sibyls is Jerome's notion that it is imperative for poetry to convey some truth. Despite his general condemnation of the Sibyls, as is evident in his letter to Paulinus of Nola (c.354–431) (PL 22.545), this passage here was used to endorse Augustine's Messianic reading of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue'. The eclogue was deemed to have provided divinatory insight in the coming of not any salvific figure, but Christ, precisely because Virgil had adopted the sayings of the Sibyl for his composition (*De civ. Dei* X.27). See Augustine, *Libri*, ed. by Johannes Amerbach, Basel: Johannes Amerbach, 1489, sigs $r6^{r}$–$r7^{r}$ ($r7^{r}$): 'Et ideo tam Hieronymus quam Augustinus verum dicunt: dicit enim Hieronymus verum quia poeta Virgilius loquens ut poeta, poetice composuit de filio Pollionis praedicti unde ille filius fuit persona adumbrata, id est ficta poetice per quem tamen repraesentabatur persona Christi. Ita quod ista fabula fuit de filio Pollionis conficta, sed veritas fabulae fuit de Christo. Nam poetae per fabulas semper veritatem aliquam exprimere intendebant.'

[74] Juan Luis Vives, *En habes optime lector absolutissimi doctoris Aurelii Augustini, opus absolutissimum, de Civitate Dei*, Basel: Johann Froben, 1522; Augustine, *Omnium Operum*, ed. by Desiderius Erasmus, 10 vols, Basel: Johann Froben, 1528–29, V. Prior to these two editions, Adam Petri (1454–1527) had published another edition in 1515. See Augustine, *Ad Marcellianum: De civitate Dei*, ed. by Adam Petri, Basel: Adam Petri, 1515. For further information on the different editions and their characteristic features, see Pollmann, *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, I, pp. 255–60; A. S. Q. Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation. The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620*, Oxford 2011, pp. 13–27, 141–45.

[75] The very same notion can also be found in Augustine's letter no. CXXXVII.12, where the quotation from Virgil (Eclogue IV.13–14) is used to highlight undeniably salvific traces. The ps.-Augustinian *Contra Iudaeos, paganos et Arianos* (PL XLII.1126) differs only in that it demonstrates foreknowledge of Christ by means of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', yet without its Sibylline origin, the key point in the *De civitate Dei*. However, later in his work, Augustine derived incontestable criticism in the Sibylline belief from an even greater authority than any pagan figure, namely Paul. In his *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* ('Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans'; 3.3–5), he denied any theological value of the Sibyls' utterances. In response to the question of whether the Gospel came to the Jews alone or to all nations regardless of preceding merits, Augustine acknowledged that Paul believed that there had been prophets among the gentiles (cf. Acts 17:28). Neverthe-

amount of knowledge of Christ's life she had revealed, which was one of the main arguments put forward by Lactantius. Rather, Augustine was convinced that one of the most important contributions by the Sibyl was that she had inveighed against false worship in an acrostic poem, which he gave in a Latin translation (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23). Although Augustine criticised the poor quality of the Latin and the lack of meter, he praised the poem's formal sophistication and elaborated on the complex structure of the acrostic. Not only did the poem consist of 27 verses, that is, three cubed, but as an acrostic the initial letters of the words formed Ἰησοῦς Χρειστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸσ Σωτήρ ('Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour'), the initial letters of which again added up to the words ἰχθύς ('fish'), a mystical symbol of Christ since early Christianity.[76] The acrostic itself narrated the approaching Last Judgement at the end of times, less a redemptive event than an apocalyptic inferno, whose imagery heavily relied on the Book of Revelation. To judge both the faithful and infidel, an eternal and sublime king would descend from heaven once the people had begun casting away the idols and their riches from a world uncultivated and overgrown by thornbushes. Where the earth had opened up a vast abyss of hell, everyone would be brought to face the lord's judgement, while a trumpet would blare from heaven for the anguish. With all deeds and secrets disclosed, the gracious God would grant the saints eternal light, that is paradise, and for the sinful he would burn a flame. The judgement would be accompanied by a number of eschatological calamities. The light of both the sun and the moon would die, setting an end to the round dance of the stars, and a great fire would burn the lands, with the flattened mountains made plain, the sea with its waves having halted, and the heavens, pouring down rivers of fire and brimstone. Similar to the stance that the Sibyl as a prophet had revealed divine knowledge of Christ's coming to Virgil (X.27), it is most interesting that despite

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less, for Augustine, this is necessarily transcended by the risk of being seduced into believing spurious Christian writings composed by pagans. Therefore, they ought to be barred from theological studies. For the reception of Virgil in Augustine's thought, see S. MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry. Vergil in the Mind of Augustine*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1998, pp. 21–31.

[76] Both the acrostic and the quotation of Lactantius feature also in the *Contra Iudaeos, paganos et Arianos* (PL XLII. 1126–27). Furthermore, a Greek version of the acrostic, most probably the original of this composition, is provided in Eusebius's *Vita Constantini* (V.18–19). Notably, the version provided here is six lines longer, the initials of which form the word σταυρός ('cross'). This would render part of the sophisticated structure praised here obsolete. While in 1495 Aldus Manutius (1449–1515) printed the Greek original of the famed Sibylline acrostic, a Latin translation of the entire *Vita Constantini* was not available until 1549 when Froben brought out a Latin translation penned by Musculus. See Aldus Manutius (ed.), *Theocriti Eclogae triginta. Genus Theocriti et de inventione bucolicorum*, Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1495, sigs EE.εεv^{v}–vi^{r}; Eusebius, 'De vita Constantini', transl. by Wolfgang Musculus, in Eusebius et al., *Ecclesiasticae historiae autores*, ed. by Wolfgang Musculus, Basel: Johann Froben, 1549, pp. 160–231 (226–30).

having dedicated the majority of his account to the acrostic, Augustine cast doubts on the Sibyl's genuine authorship of this piece.[77] Strikingly, this did not affect her status as a prophet, but only cautioned the reader regarding the acrostic itself.

In the patristic tradition, which in regard to the Sibyls provided the foundation for later scholastic theology, God was assumed to have revealed Himself in a two-way system: Israel had received divine revelations via the prophets who had been canonised in the Tanakh, and the gentiles were given the Sibylline oracles, which they, however, falsely regarded as pagan divinations.[78] In addition, during the Middle Ages new prophecies purportedly of Sibylline origin appeared. Although they lacked clear indications of both an ancient age and any records sustaining such claims, they maintained their appeal up to the late fifteenth century. Arguably, the most popular Sibylline prophecy of medieval origin was the so-called *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*.[79] As is typical with texts based on predictions *ex eventu*, this work, too, is eponymous.[80] Allegedly revealed to the Greeks after the fall of Troy, we now know that it was written in the first half of the thirteenth century. It was greatly concerned with the conflict between the Latin and Greek Churches, which, being the major conflict of world history, was sketched out in three books.[81] The first deals with the continuous conflict between the Greeks and the Romans as it evolved from the Trojan War to the Fourth Crusade. The second book examines more closely the Church herself. It offers a prediction of her history from the incarnation of Christ to the End of the World with a particular focus on the life of Christ and the militant fight against Islam and all other peoples of non-Christian confessions. The third book covers the thirteenth-century conflict surrounding the Kingdom of Sicily under the Hohenstaufen dynasty and, more specifically, Emperor Frederick II. Its concluding section,

[77] Regarding the claim that the Sibylline oracles were a Christian forgery, see also Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XVIII.46.
[78] This is basically what Henk Jan de Jonge described as the patristic-scholastic tradition of the Sibyls. See H. J. de Jonge, 'The Sibyl in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, or Ficino, Castellio and "The Ancient Theology"', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* LXXVIII, 2016, pp. 7–21 (19).
[79] In addition to the version identified by Oswald Holder-Egger, Christian Jostmann distinguishes three other variants of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*. See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 498–527; O. Holder-Egger, 'Italienische Prophetieen des 13. Jahrhunderts. I.', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* XV, 1889, pp. 141–78 (161–65). For the other two articles by Holder-Egger, see 'Italienische Prophetieen des 13. Jahrhunderts. II.', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* XXX, 1905, pp. 321–86; 'Italienische Prophetieen des 13. Jahrhunderts. III.', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* XXXIII, 1908, pp. 95–187.
[80] See Holder-Egger, 'Italienische Prophetieen des 13. Jahrhunderts I', pp. 155, 173.
[81] See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 338–40.

finally provides a vision of the apocalypse proper, with much emphasis being placed on the signs preceding the end of the world and the Last Jugdement.[82]

Although the political dimension of this prophecy was rendered null and void when Frederick II died, the interest in it did not cease, but instead shifted onto its apocalyptic and Christological content.[83] Nor is there evidence that the nullification of this one dimension of the prophecy resulted in any scepticism regarding its alleged classical origin. The fact that the prophecy remained unfulfilled did not prevent its dissemination or further use. With 72 extant manuscripts produced between the mid thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, its popularity remained unchallenged.[84] Although the reference to the Trojan War is the only textual identification linking the author of *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* to the ancient *Sibylla Erythraea* recounted by Lactantius (DI I.6.14), this medieval contamination was by the fourteenth century inextricably absorbed by its ancient pedigree, so much so that, at the arrival of the printing press, the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* was reproduced, too. Up to the 1540s, there were three editions published:[85] Printed in 1508 in Siena, the first even contained a commentary composed by the unidentified Spaniard Ludovicus de Tovar.[86] In 1516 the text was printed as part of a collection of *apocalyptica*.[87] In another volume of prophetic texts dating from 1522, the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* was printed alongside visions by Mechthild of Magdeburg (c.1207–1282) and

[82] See B. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, pp. 125; Holder-Egger, 'Italienische Prophetieen des 13. Jahrhunderts I', p. 173.
[83] If we consider that Arnald de Villanova (c.1240–1311) quoted this text in around 1300, Jostmann's thesis that there was little interest in this prophecy after 1250 until the Venetian historians and later humanists took interest in it, has to be critically revised. For the reception of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* immediately following its composition, see Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 66–68. See Arnaldus de Villanova, *Tractatus de tempore adventus Antichristi. Ipsius et aliorum scripta cooeva*, ed. by J. Perarnau, Barcelona 2014, pp. 220–21. For Arnaldus de Villanova's view on the Sibyl as an extra-biblical, yet divinely inspired prophetic figure of the same significance as the Scriptural canon, see M. Gerwing, *Vom Ende der Zeit. Der Traktat des Arnald von Villanova über die Ankunft des Antichrist in der akademischen Auseinandersetzung zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Münster 1996, pp. 152–55.
[84] See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 377–491.
[85] See ibid., pp. 489–91.
[86] Ludovicus de Tovar, *Divina revelatio Erythree Sibylle cum commentariis Ludovici de Tovar Hispani in qua a bello Troiano usque addiem iudicii futura predixit*, Siena: Simon Nardi, 1508.
[87] 'Prophetia Sibyllae heritee extracta de libro qui dicit Nasilographi id est imperialis scriptura', in *Expositio magni prophetae Joachim*, ed. by anonymous, Venice: Lazzaro Soardi, 1516, fols 52^{v}–54^{v}. In an undated volume, the text was reprinted in Latin types instead of Gothics script. See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 490–91.

others.[88] Its likely editor, Antonio de Fantis (c.1460/70–1533), stated through the title given to the Erythraean Sibyl's *vaticinium* that it presented a 'testimony of the orthodox faith' (*in orthodoxae fidei testimonium*).[89] In a complementary catalogue of testimonies purportedly originating from Jewish and pagan sources, Barbieri gave a letter with some similarity. After the conquest of Troy the Erythraean Sibyl revealed her vision and addressed it to the Greeks.[90]

Of similar importance to medieval audiences was the Latin 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl'.[91] This eschatological narrative, of which at least four versions are known today, purports to be the record of a dream interpretation by the Tiburtine Sibyl. According to the most frequently preserved version, she was summoned to Rome before the Emperor Trajan (53–117) to interpret a dream that 100 senators had in the very same night. On the Aventine Hill, she explained that the nine suns seen in the dream represented nine generations, in the course of which mankind would steadily decline. In the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl', much emphasis is placed on the fourth generation, during which Christ would be born just to halt the decline temporarily. In the ninth generation the decline is accelerated and finally results in the Last Judgement. The graphic description of the apocalypse concludes with the acrostic *Iudicii signum*, also found in Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (XVIII.23).[92] The text of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' is of Greek origin and later entered the realm of Western Christendom as it was translated, at the latest, during the reign of Otto III (996–1002). The large number of 112 known extant manuscripts testifies to its great popularity since it was first codified in 1047.[93] Yet, the fact that there are no prints of this text and that during the sixteenth century only one manuscript was produced

[88] 'Preclarum Erithraeae Sibyllae vaticinium', in *Preclarum Erithree Sibille Vaticinium Danais ipsam consulentibus datum ab Excidio Troiano usque ad seculi consumationem*, ed. by Antonio de Fantis, Venice: Giacomo Penzio, 1522, fols X^{r}–[XVIII^{r}].

[89] Relying the distinction between pagan philosophers and prophets as two groups that according to Lactantius had testified to the divine, de Fantis ruled out that the writings of gentile philosophers were devoid of the glory of God and the bliss of the Heavenly Jerusalem. See Antonio de Fantis, '[dedicatory letter]', in *Preclarum Erithree Sibille* (1522), sigs [A i^{r}]–A ii^{r}.

[90] Barbieri, '[Varia Judeorum et Gentilium de Christo testimonia]', in Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols [25^{r}–32^{r}] ([28^{r}]). In the edition by Köbel, all texts from Barbieri's edition are adopted unchanged. Köbel added a second letter from Pontius Pilate to Emperor Tiberius as a ninth testimony. See Barbieri, 'Varia Judaeorum et gentilium de Christo testimonia', in Köbel, *Quattuor opuscula* ([c.1516]), fols Ai^{r}–Biv^{r} (Bij^{rv}).

[91] For a printed edition of the text, see E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, Adso und die tiburtinische Sibylle*, Halle 1898, pp. 177–87.

[92] For a more detailed summary of the Prophecy, see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes*, pp. xix–xxi.

[93] See ibid., pp. xvii, 85–87.

after at least nineteen were made a century earlier suggests that the interest in the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' was ebbing away for reasons that remain largely unclear.[94] It might be speculated that this decline had to do with the surge of the *ara coeli* legend, which, as it acquired popularity, advanced to become the main narrative associated with the Tiburtine Sibyl.

By the sixteenth century, these two layers of the Sibylline tradition, that is, the patristic and the medieval, appear to have merged into one corpus of different Sibylline narratives and sources, to the extent that the origins of later compositions were obscured and the tradition regarded as uniform. For instance, when discussing the different approaches towards the question regarding divine testimonies outside the scriptural canon as taken by Augustine and Jerome, Barbieri in his comparative treatise *Discordantiae* of 1481 provided a justification for his siding with Augustine that was steeped in scholastic and humanist ideas, both of which lacked a clear distinction of medieval and patristic sources. Barbieri's use of authorities ranged from the humanists Petrarch (1304–1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) over pagan thinkers like Cicero (106–43 BC) and Plato, all of whom were presented to have believed in the divine inspiration of poets, to Pope Gregory I (the Great, c.540–604), who in the preface to his *Moralia in Iob* (II.5) expressed the belief that Jesus's coming had been prophetically announced to both gentiles and Jews, and the *Summa theologiae* (2-2, q. 2, a. 7) by Thomas Aquinas.[95] Overall, in Barbieri's treatment, while the turn to patristic authorities was indicative of their importance in relation to the interest in the Sibylline legacy, medieval theology remained as important and was in no way substituted by patristic thought. We can observe a clear continuity in theological considerations of the Sibyls' legacy from the eleventh to the late fifteenth century. Here Barbieri's tract is particularly significant, for it provided the platform

[94] See ibid., pp. 91–92.

[95] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols 5^{v}–6^{r}; Köbel, 'Discordantiae' ([c.1516]), fol. 4^{rv}. Both Barbieri's and Köbel's edition are referenced here because Köbel had amended Barbieri's original composition in only a few, but intriguing instances. Barbieri also cited the fifth-century *De coelesti hierarchia* (IX) by ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, the Book of Job (19:25), and *Chronicon* (XCVIII) by Sigebert of Gembloux (c.1030–1112), an account of Constantine's mother Helena (c.250–c.330) as the founding figure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, all of whom supported the view that the gentiles had not been excluded from God's revelation. Barbieri erroneously called Constantine's mother 'Hirene'. See Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol. 6^{rv}; Köbel, 'Discordantiae' ([c.1516]), fol. 4^{rv}. For modern editions, see Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita, 'De coelesti hierarchia', in *Corpus Dionysiacum*, ed. by B. R. Suchla, G. Heil and A. M. Ritter, 2 vols, Berlin and New York 1990–91, II, pp. 1–59; Sigebert of Gembloux, 'Chronica', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Hanover 1844, pp. 300–74; Gregory I, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. by M. Adriaen, 3 vols, Turnhout 1979–85.

to discuss patristic and medieval theology on a par. The scholastic theologians and medieval mystics under discussion here did not just serve to support Barbieri's argument resulting from the comparison between Augustine's and Jerome's views, but were used to unify patristic, theological and humanist motifs. Barbieri did not even refrain from employing legends like that of the True Cross or that of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus, in order to support the use of non-Christian prophetic traditions.[96]

Prior to Barbieri, other humanists had also referred to these medieval forgeries, as if the Sibylline tradition were one homogeneous, linear tradition from classical antiquity. Firmly believing in the authenticity of all these prophecies, even Petrarch mentioned the Tiburtine Sibyl to demonstrate the abundance of information in Sibylline sayings. He went so far as to praise the Sibyls as exceeding even the purity of the Gospels (*De otio religioso* I.9.2). Unlike Petrarch, Barbieri also included the account of the end of times including the Last Judgement, a passage whose depiction of the apocalypse with four beasts praising God, sounding trumpets, and a raging dragon conformed greatly with the Book of Revelation (1:10; 4:1, 6–7, 5:6–8, 14; 7:11–12; 8:13; 12:4–13:11; 14:3; 16:13; 19:4) and Daniel (7). This drastic imagery was a factor that explains the inclusion of a substantially reworked version of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* into the *Onus Ecclesiae* by Berthold Pürstinger (1465–1543), the Catholic bishop of Chiemsee.[97] In this tract, which, though critical of the Reformation, admonished the Church to reform herself, it served to emphasise the transitional period from one age to another, whilst engaging in controversies with Protestant reformers.[98] Most importantly for the persistence of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, Pürstinger affirmed the identification of the author of this prophecy with

[96] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol. 21[r]. For the Legend of the True Cross, see B. Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood. The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, transl. by L. Preedy, Leiden 2004.
[97] Compiled in 1519, the *Onus Ecclesiae* was published as late as 1524 by the Landshut printer Johannes Weyssenburger (d.1531). The second edition, printed in 1531 by the Augsburg printer Alexander Weissenhorn (d.1549), took a stronger stance favouring the Roman Church in more convinced terms than before and dealt in more detail with the Ottoman threat. See J. Schmuck, *Die Prophetie* Onus Ecclesiae *des Bischofs Berthold Pürstinger. Religiöse Kritik der Zustände in Kirche und Welt aus den ersten Jahren der Reformationszeit*, Vienna 1973, pp. 1–8. The *Onus Ecclesiae* has a second monograph dedicated to it. See H. Werner, *Die Flugschrift* Onus Ecclesiae *(1519)*, Gießen 1901. For discussion of Pürstinger's thought more generally, see G. Marx, *Glaube, Werke und Sakramente im Dienste der Rechtfertigung in den Schriften von Berthold Pürstinger, Bischof von Chiemsee*, Leipzig 1982.
[98] For the Joachimite influences underpinning this work, see A. Holdenried, '"De Oraculis Gentilium" (1673) and the "Sibilla Erithea Babilonica". Pseudo-Joachimite Prophecy in a New Intellectual Context', in Wannenmacher, *Joachim of Fiore and the Influence of Inspiration*, pp. 253–81 (257–60).

her classical counterpart, the Erythraean Sibyl in Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.14).[99] Up until the first quarter of the sixteenth century, therefore, Sibylline texts with medieval origin such as the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* enrichened the patristic tradition. There was, in other words, a lack of distinction between those medieval forged traditions and those accounted for by Lactantius.

This complex textual situation was not always readily accepted, but at times led to hostile rejection. One of the fiercest opponents to this rather convoluted tradition was Erasmus. In his ground-breaking instruction in Christian eloquence, his *Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi* ('Ecclesiastes or on the Art of Preaching', 1535), he asserted that too little of the oracles was extant for them to be employed meaningfully. Also, the high number of fabrications of later origin within the Sibylline corpus prohibited any engagement with the text:

> And what are the Sibyl's leaves or those little verses, for the most part a fabrication, compared to the irrefutable authority of the prophets, the apostles, and all of canonical Scripture?[100]

This remark stands at the end of a list contrasting pagan prophets divining through 'madness' (*insania*) with those prophesying 'inspired by the Heaven-sent Holy Spirit' (*coelitus emissum Spiritum Sanctum*). This belief in a divine inspiration of the Sibyl had been one of the first to be refuted by Erasmus in his *Paean divae Mariae atque de incarnatione verbi* ('A Paean to St Mary and on the Incarnation of the Word' OO I.7.360–61; CWE 85.281). In addition, these conclusive reflections are remarkable, in that Erasmus called into doubt the authenticity and, therefore, the reliability of the Sibylline utterances, without even distinguishing between those passages that most of his contemporaries saw as being sanctified by their employment by the Church Fathers Lactantius and Augustine, and those who were more dubious because they lacked any such patristic validation. This further substantiates the conclusion that by the sixteenth century the various narratives of the

[99] Berthold Pürstinger, *Onus Ecclesiae*, Landshut: Johannes Weyssenburger, 1524, sig. [Z vj^{v}]: 'Et si omnes decem Sibyllae de Deo et Christo ac de gentibus vaticando plurima praedixerint specialiter tamen Sibylla Erithrea in suo Bazilographo, id est, imperiali scriptura (quae habetur Venetiis in Bibliotheca scilicet Georgii) inter alia de Christiana religione et de septem ecclesiae statibus in Babylone varia conscripsit: Nam postquam futuros eventus a tempore Priami de excidio Troiano usque ad perfectionem Romani imperii pronunciavit incepit de adventu Christi usque ad finem mundi praeclara multa manifestare.'

[100] Erasmus, *Ecclesiastes* (OO V.5.74; CWE 68.796): 'Tum quid Sibyllae folia aut versiculi magna ex parte conficti ad irrefutabilem autoritatem prophetarum, apostolorum ac totius Scripturae Canonicae?'

rich Sibylline tradition with its different origins and authors had become indistinguishably transformed into a uniform body of knowledge. For this reason, Erasmus explicitly denied any import for Christianity and implicitly questioned the scholastic thesis that the Sibyls had fulfilled the historical role of informing the gentiles about Christ.

By and large, Sibylline lore at the beginning of the sixteenth century had become a composite product of elements from patristic appropriations, scholastic explanations and what purported to be Sibylline sayings, which had finally coalesced together, the whole historical evolution being sanctified by some degree of popularity, the air of age and the identification with their ancient counterparts. In effect, the proliferation and acceptance of spurious texts, it seems, was favoured by the limited amount of knowledge about the Sibyls' legacy and the fact that, due to the loss of the Sibylline oracles, the authenticity of the passages extant in patristic writings and medieval adaptations could not be validated by means of comparative readings. Only a few scholars were alerted to the possibility that the material was spurious. And yet, this fact rarely prevented humanistically trained audiences of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries from employing Sibylline knowledge for their own theological and edifying purposes. There is a clear continuity in thought from the patristic appropriation to works of the early sixteenth century. Equally important for the division of different approaches to the Sibylline legacy is the willingness in the Middle Ages to expand the Sibylline tradition by adding elements of uncertain, often medieval origin. Thus, the Sibylline lore had been enriched during the Middle Ages and at the turn of the sixteenth century continued to maintain its shape.

The roots of the Sibylline tradition in classical antiquity

In addition to the Sibylline texts whose inclusion into patristic theology had ratified the Sibyls as prophetesses inspired by God and capable of predicting Christ's coming, there remained numerous allusions to one or multiple Sibyls and their divinations among the vast literature surviving from antiquity. The widespread use of

Sibylline imagery in the literature of ancient Rome would prove a rich and powerful repository upon which later writers would draw. The classical author who above all stood out to later Christian thinkers was Virgil. Not only did medieval authors aspire to assimilate his literary form such as the centos, but also his work was seen as in line with Christ's teachings. Virgil owed this fame largely to his 'Fourth Eclogue', by virtue of which he was elevated to a prophetic figure as early as in the third century.[101] What attracted Christian authors to this poem was not just the birth of an unnamed child, which occasioned its composition, but the prospect that it would usher in a new golden age. Whilst among pagans the 'Fourth Eclogue' was read as a promise of a new leader, the matter most discussed among Christians was whether or not Virgil had knowingly prophesied about Christ. Although predating the birth of Jesus, this bucolic poem could possibly herald Christ even though Virgil was a pagan. For Lactantius, Virgil was an unwitting prophet, the hierophant of an inspiration of which he was unaware. This notion remained strong throughout the Middle Ages up to Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), who in his *Divina commedia* characterised Virgil as a prophet wandering at night, not profiting from the light of the candle he was carrying behind his back (*Purgatorio* 22.67–69).[102] Yet, for Constantine (the Great, c.272–337), the first Christian emperor, Virgil as a true prophet was prescient of Christ's coming, but deliberately disguised his insights of the Christian truth behind a veil of allegory, in order to comply with the pagan conventions of his time.[103] Regardless of these differences, Virgil was generally regarded as a prophet throughout the Middle Ages.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, this situation changed. As can be exemplified by the works of Antonio Mancinelli (1452–1505) and Jodocus Badius (1462–1535), the 'Fourth Eclogue' was no longer a vehicle for conveying a prophecy, but a secular piece of poetry, delivered to entertain and flatter Virgil's patron. Even if David S. Wilson-Okamura argues that this change in attitude was due to Virgil's Epicurean

[101] For the Christian reception, see D. Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, transl. by E. F. M. Benecke, London 1908, pp. 97–102; P. Courcelle, 'Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième Éclogue', *Revue des études anciennes* LIX, 1957, pp. 294–319.
[102] For a modern edition, see Dante Alighieri, *Divina commedia*, ed. by G. Fallani and S. Zennaro, Rome 2006.
[103] See M. Geymonat, 'Un falso cristiano della seconda metà del IV secolo (sui tempi e le motivazioni della "Oratio Constantini ad sanctorum coetum")', *Aevum antiquum* n.s. I, 2001, pp. 349–66; D. S. Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 70–71.

convictions, the sect least favoured by Christians, there is another element to it.[104] It is no longer Virgil himself who is the prophet here, but the Cumaean Sibyl, whom he acknowledged as his inspiration ('Fourth Eclogue' 4).[105] With the increased popularity and familiarity with Sibylline lore in the late fifteenth century, the authorship of the prophecy presented in the 'Fourth Eclogue' was once again ascribed to the Sibyl. Pictorial evidence for this shift can be found in the German block book *Oracula Sibyllina*, possibly dating from the early 1470s. This typological cycle juxtaposed each Sibyl with short passages from the Old and New Testament and scenes of Christ's life, which progress in a chronological manner.[106] These were embedded in woodcut illuminations. At first, the opening scene might bewilder the reader (see fig. 2).[107] It shows a Sibyl revealing a Marian apparition in the sky with striking similarities to that in the *ara coeli* legend, discussed below. The legend is however depicted in the second woodcut. In the first depiction, the person addressed by the Sibyl appears to be a commoner or peasant. A comparison with contemporary depictions of Saturn, however, suggests that this person might indeed be the ancient god and planet. Apart from the characteristic sickle held by the figure, his hat resembles that of the Saturn depicted in the famous fifteenth-century prints of the planets and their children by the Florentine artist Baccio Baldini (c.1436–1487). Altogether, his beard and the gestures as if he had been awakened from a deep sleep recall representations of him as an old resting peasant, in keeping with ideas revived by Italian humanists.[108] With this awakening of Saturn and the presentation of a baby boy by a maiden and a Sibyl as the intercessor or narrator, this set of figures appears to be a visual representation of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue'. In the chronological progression underpinning the Sibyl cycle in this block book, it appears to be only too fitting that the arrival of the Messiah was to stand at the beginning of the description of Christ's life, characterised as the event instigating a new golden age. Most

[104] See ibid., p. 72.
[105] For a discussion of whether or not Virgil had access and thus insight into the Sibylline oracles as they have come down to us, see A. Kurfeß, 'Vergils vierte Ekloge und die Oracula Sibyllina', *Historisches Jahrbuch* LXXIII, 1954, pp. 120–27.
[106] See P. Bergquist, 'The Poems of Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum" and Their Sources', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXXII.3, 1979, pp. 516–38 (524–527).
[107] See P. Heitz (ed.), *Oracula Sibyllina (Weissagungen der zwölf Sibyllen). Nach dem einzigen, in der Stiftsbibliothek von St. Gallen aufbewahrten Exemplare*, Strasbourg 1903, fol. A^{r}.
[108] See R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, London 1964, pp. 207, 210–12, plates 39 and 56.

importantly, it is not Virgil here who is presented as the prophet of this famous and, as it seems, recognisable story, but the Cumaean Sibyl.[109]

One of the most influential works in shaping the early modern understanding of the Sibylline legacy with respect to its ancient roots was Erasmus's *Adagia*. A collection of Latin proverbs and sayings, the *Adagia* grant insight into how Erasmus presented the Sibyls, as he furnished every proverb with a sophisticated commentary.[110] By providing additional information, he created a work of reference that determined the image of the Sibyls for a long time to come. Remarkably Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) reported that he was using the *Adagia* just as the 'Sibylline books' had been used in ancient Rome (Ep. 435, OE III.272–76 [273]; CWE 3.328–33 [329]). Safely kept on the Capitoline Hill, the *libri Sibyllini* were consulted by the priests of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* in momentous crises, only if ordered by the Senate or the Emperor. This particular branch of the Sibylline tradition remained firmly grounded in pagan cults. So, for example, the authoritative miscellany written by the Italian humanist Alessandro Alessandri (1461–1523) in 1522 related the Sibyls only to the Roman state oracle of the *libri Sibyllini*, which he considered neutral with respect to Christianity.[111] Erasmus himself belittled the validity of any information gathered from the Sibylline oracles even within the pagan context, when elucidating the nullity of names (OO V.4.373–4; CWE 68.616–7). As will become apparent, the Sibylline books were generally referred to without any bearing on Christianity

[109] Also, when employed in political or other contexts, the 'Fourth Eclogue' was now primarily seen as a sophisticated version of the prophecy of the Cumaean Sibyl, as, for example, in the epigrams by Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523), which welcomed the Concordat of Bologna (1516). See 'Epistola Italiae Ulricho Hutteno equite Germano autore. Responsio Maximiliani Augusti Helio Eobano Hesso autore. Hutteni de eadem re epigrammata aliquot', in *The Poetic Works of Helius Eobanus Hessus*, ed. by H. Vredeveld, 3 vols, Tempe, Boston and Leiden 2004–2012, III, pp. 412–15.

[110] Published first in 1500 as *Adagiorum chiliades*, Erasmus expanded the *Adagia* throughout his life until the initial number of 820 entries grew to the stately number of 4151. Because for the purpose of this study the general influence that this work exercised on scholars and thinkers is relevant, rather than the exact date when each edition was published, I will refer to the *Adagia* as edited in Erasmus's *Opera Omnia*. On the *Adagia*, see M. Mann Phillips, *The* Adages *of Erasmus. A Study with Translations*, Cambridge 1964; T. Payr, 'Einleitung', in Erasmus, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. by W. Welzig, 8 vols, Darmstadt 1968–80, VII, pp. XI–XXXIII.

[111] Alessandro Alessandri, *Genialium dierum libri sex*, Cologne: Eucharius Cervicornus, 1539, pp. 143–44. The other standard humanist collection to consult for matters regarding classical antiquity was the *Lectionum antiquarum libri* by Caelius Rhodiginus (1469–1525), published in its entirety posthumously in 1542. Unlike Alessandri, Rhodiginus drew also on Augustine as the only Christian reference. See Caelius Rhodiginus, *Lectionum antiquarum libri XXX*, Basel: Johann Froben, 1542, pp. 271, 302, 516, 649, 838.

Erasmus certainly allowed no room for Christian interpretations of the Sibylline oracles. While previously he had conceded some degree of Christian truth to the Sibylline legacy by placing it within the context of Marian devotion, as will be shown in the context of the *ara coeli* legend, later he was keen to avoid any association between the Sibyls and Christianity. All explanatory texts of proverbs touching upon the Sibyls confined them to classical antiquity with its oracular tradition and recognised the reverence held for the Sibyls' prophetic abilities within this context. Therefore, when able to provide further evidence based on more reliable sources, be they ancient, patristic or contemporary, Erasmus accounted for the pagan origins of Sibylline utterances, as in the instance of *Utrem mergis vento plenum* ('You are trying to sink a bladder full of air'; OO II.5.254; CWE 35.20) and *Flet victus, victor interiit* ('The loser weeps, the winner's dead'; OO II.4.37; CWE 33.303–4). Following the accounts of Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI. 321) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIV.104, 132–153), Erasmus also accounted for the longevity of the Sibyl (OO II.7.70–2; CWE 35.470–71).[112] Legend has it that, after falling in love with a Sibyl, Apollo promised her to do anything she wanted. The Sibyl asked to have a life that would last as many years as the grains of sand contained in a heap of sand she had picked up. However, since she had not asked for eternal youth, her bodily strength soon faded and she lived a desolate life as an elderly woman prophesying in frenzy. The only condition was that she had to leave her native island of Erythrea. Thus she came to Cumae. According to Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, this is where Aeneas sought out the Cumaean Sibyl who he hoped would enable him to meet his deceased father Anchises. With her guidance, Aeneas descended into the underworld.[113] This narrative was later adopted, for example, by Christine de Pizan (1364–c.1430), who in her dream allegory *Livre du Chemin de long estude* ('The Book of the Path of Long Study') had the Cumaean Sibyl guide the narrator through a fictitious journey through the history of the known world.[114] The nature of this descent, however, was of greatest concern for sixteenth-century thinkers, and only occasionally was it likened to the Harrowing of

[112] Erasmus mentioned the Sibyl's longevity also in his *De contemptu mundi* (OO V.1.54).
[113] For a general account of the Sibyl in the *Aeneid*, see R. J. Quiter, *Aeneas und die Sibylle. Die rituellen Motive im sechsten Buch der Aeneis*, Königstein 1984.
[114] See F. Pomel, 'La sibylle, guide et double de Christine dans l'autre monde des lettres "Le chemin de longue étude" de Christine de Pizan', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 227–39. For a modern edition, see Christine de Pizan, *Livre du Chemin de long estude*, ed. by R. Büschel, Geneva 1974.

Hell.[115] Nonetheless, it was the sop with which the Sibyl silenced the three-headed Cerberus guarding the gates to Tartarus (Virgil, *Aeneid* VI.419) that became proverbial.[116]

In addition to the purported cessation of the well-revered classical tradition of the Sibylline divinations, the *Adagia* also conveyed a sense of repudiation of any claims that the Sibylline legacy could have on contemporary Christianity. Erasmus was clearly sceptical about alleged proofs, like when he referred to the common belief of a Sibyl's cave near Naples (OO II.8.325–26; CWE 36:613–14).[117] He also helped discredit any idea of Sibylline wisdom by describing these kinds of utterance as unintelligible and obscure. Just as he would later in his *De recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* ('The Correct Pronunciation of Latin and Greek') compare illegible writing to the Sibylline leaves (OO I.4.37; CWE 26.395), he introduced the proverb *Praeter Sibyllam leget nemo* ('Illegible to anyone but the Sibyl', II.7.118; CPE 35: 524–5) to denote cases of impenetrable discourse. What is remarkable is not the adage itself, but Erasmus's comments on it. To support it, Erasmus evoked his idol Jerome's hostile attitude towards the Sibylline utterances by quoting a passage taken from the *Pseudolus* (23–26, 29–30) by Plautus (c.254–184 BC).[118] Here, Jerome had mocked the style of Jovinian (d. c.405) as confused and obscure like that of a woman. Again, in a letter to Paulinus of Nola, Jerome had discounted the Christian reading of the 'Fourth Eclogue', which, he assumed, Virgil had based on Sibylline sayings, as 'puerile' (*puerilia*), for the latter had not known about Christ (PL 22.545). In siding with Jerome and his dismissal of Sibylline testimonies, Erasmus distanced himself from the general trend that was sympathetic to the accounts of Augustine and Lactantius, who both had endorsed the Sibylline legacy, as he had done in his *Ecclesiastes* (OO V.5.74; CWE 68.796), discussed above. For

[115] Driven by his humanist agenda, Eobanus was daring enough to present such a sensitive theme in a Virgilian style, full of pagan allusions and heroic imagery. See Eobanus, 'Victoria Christi ab inferis', in Vredeveld, *The Poetic Works of Eobanus*, III, p. 474. For the early modern reception of this episode, see Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, pp. 157–63.
[116] Erasmus, *Moriae encomium* (OO IV.3.163); Eobanus, 'Heroidum Christianarum epistolae', in Vredeveld, *The Poetic Works of Eobanus*, II, p. 136; Eobanus, 'Oratio, sive praelectio', in Vredeveld, *The Poetic Works of Eobanus*, III, p. 92.
[117] Relying on a letter to Paschasius Berselius (fl.1501–1535) dating from 7 January 1518, in which Erasmus alluded to what could be the cave of the Sibyl, Peter Bietenholz talks of the possibility that Erasmus made a journey there together with his pupil Alexander Stuart (c.1493–1513) during his stay in Rome in 1509. See Ep. 756 (OO III.191–3 [192]; CPE 5.268–70 [269]).
[118] For a modern edition of Pseudolus, see Plautus, 'Pseudolus', in Plautus, *Comedies*, ed. and transl. by W. de Melo, 5 vols, Cambridge and London 2011–13, IV, pp. 223–387.

him, the Sibylline tradition had ceased to exist with the end of the classical world, of which it had been an integral part. And so it happens that the rather technical term used in the *Adagia*, the 'leave of the Sibyl' (*folium Sibyllae*; OO II.2.220; CWE 32.122), carries with it a sense of vanity or unreliability attached to this kind of divination. By addressing the type of divination embodied by the Sibyl through the medium on which the prophetic utterances were deemed to have been written, that is, palm leaves, Erasmus resorted to an ancient Latin term he claimed had been coined by Varro and Virgil (*Aeneid* 3.443–7; 6.74–5).[119] Even if this term offered a seemingly neutral nomenclature that leaves out critical questions regarding the source of divination, authenticity or any other contested elements of this rich and hotly debated lore, Erasmus's solution implied a certain degree of transitoriness and ambiguity unbefitting for prophecies. In view of his *Ecclesiastes*, these deprecatory comments can be regarded as a sign of the scathing verdict yet to come. Sibylline lore was nothing but a part of a long lost, albeit exemplary, culture.

An even stronger stance was taken by François Rabelais (1483/94–1553) in the *Tiers Livre* of his pentalogy *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* ('The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel') of 1546. In the Sibyl of Panzoust, a satirised figure linking up the Sibyl in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer, whose prophets testify to the fallibility of prophecy rather than the certainity of their outcome, Rabelais exposed the instability and manipulability of the written word. His complete disdain for Sibylline lore culminates in an obscene parody of Virgil's account of the Cumaean Sibyl revealing her prophecy to Aeneas. In the version of the *Tiers Livre* (17), no doubt is left of what Rabelais thought about the Sibyl as her prognostication ends in her revealing her 'arsehole' (*trou*), which, Panurge jokes, is the Sibyl's grotto, an allusion to the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl visited by Aeneas.[120]

How conflicting the opinions were on this subject especially with respect to the classical tradition of the Sibylline lore, is demonstrated by Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479–1552) and his take on the Sibylline tradition. In the second dialogue of his

[119] Here Erasmus referred to Varro, a reference derived from a commentary on the *Aeneid* by the late fourth-century and early fifth-century grammarian Maurus Servius. See OO II.2.22–1; CWE 32.122 n. 2.

[120] Rabelais, *Le tiers livre* (1964), p. 132. See also J. Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes*, Toronto, Buffalo and London 2015, pp. 164–66; Malay, *Prophecy in the Renaissance*, p. 92. For a close reading of the text, see F. M. Weinberg, 'Written on the Leaves. Rabelais and the Sibylline Tradition', *Renaissance Quarterly* XLIII, 1990, pp. 709–30.

Historiae poetarum tam Graecorum quam Latinorum dialogi decem ('Ten Dialogues on the History of both Greek and Latin Poets'), the Italian mythographer introduced a discussion between him and an interlocutor called Piso. In front of a probably imagined fresco depicting Moses and his sister Miriam and other figures in the background, Giraldi and Piso examined poetry as a form of divination or prophecy.[121] In a lengthy account of poets and diviners starting from Moses, the inventor of poetry and the prophetic founder par excellence, Giraldi reconciled the classical tradition from ancient Greece with the Bible. In regard to the critical attitude towards the ancient cult of the Sibyl, Giraldi's position resembles that of Rabelais. By means of a detailed synopsis of classical literature, he set out to explore the historical veracity of the Sibyls, one of whom he identified as Noah's daughter-in-law, a common association at the time.[122] And yet, Giraldi abandoned this attempt to disentangle the different accounts of each Sibyl listed in Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*, concluding that 'they all [the classical writers] mixed up information and failed to report with candour' (*omnes enim miscuisse, nec sincere narrasse videmus*).[123] In contrast to Erasmus's conviction that all ancient sources testified to the true core of the Sibylline legacy, Giraldi regarded this era as a time of corruption in which classical poets, that is, pagans, muddled the Sibylline legacy, which, in his opinion, remained a true Christian revelation of God. This is the fundamental difference between both accounts discussed before. For Giraldi recognised that the Sibyls were representatives of prophetic poetry. The authorities on whom he based his view were: Augustine, Lactantius and Prosper of Aquitaine (c.390–c.455; probably in his *De praedicatione et promissione Dei* III.6). They were the ones who had rediscovered and revived the Sibylline legacy. For him, they were individual women with a name, who had been infused by divine will and made capable of knowing the gods' advice and presaging the future.[124]

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[121] Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Historiae poetarum tam Graecorum quam Latinorum dialogi decem*, Basel: Michael Isengrin, 1545, pp. 128. For Giraldi's interest in iconological and archaeological evidence, see K. A. E. Enenkel, 'The Making of 16th-Century Mythography. Giraldi's "Syntagma de Musis" (1507, 1511 and 1539), "De Deis Gentium Historia" (ca. 1500–1548) and Julien de Havrech's "De Cognominibus Deorum Gentilium" (1541)', *Humanistica Lovaniensia. Journal of Neo-Latin Studies* LI, 2002, pp. 9–53 (23–25).
[122] Giraldi, *Historia poetarum* (1545), pp. 234–60.
[123] Ibid., p. 253. See also Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo*, p. 133.
[124] Giraldi, *Historia poetarum* (1545), p. 255: 'nuncupatae sunt foeminae quae divino afflantur numine, deorumque quodammodo consciae sunt consilii, et futura praesentiunt'.

Erasmus and Giraldi are two thinkers of particular significance here as their awareness of the composite nature of an allegedly homogeneous Sibylline tradition proposed ways of overcoming this uncertainty. In the tradition of Jerome, Erasmus was much more critical of it and therefore relied on pagan sources in determining who the Sibyls had been. By doing so, he complied with the tradition of critical antiquarianism initiated by Lorenzo Valla (c.1407–1457) with his ground-breaking work on the Donation of Constantine.[125] Unlike Erasmus, Giraldi aligned his thoughts to the Church Fathers Augustine and Lactantius. Following their dualist notion of revelation, the pagan tradition was inevitably viewed as a time of misunderstanding that had distorted the Sibylline tradition, for the pagans were unable to comprehend the significance of what the Sibyls had prophesied. By and large, it remains clear that the question of who the Sibyls were and what implications they had, remained a matter of manipulation and construction, and as such very much dependent on personal interests rather than compliance with the dogmas of Christian religion.

The *ara coeli* legend: a medieval prophecy in early modern Europe. Late medieval conceptions and developments of the Sibylline lore

When examining the Sibyl(s) and their prophecies in the late Middle Ages, we are stepping into largely unexplored territory. No comprehensive study has taken up the daunting task to analyse the material which is scattered throughout the centuries and among divines of all kinds. Regrettably, the lack of scholarly insight has at times been mistaken for a paucity of Sibylline references and thus interpreted as an alleged lack of interest in this tradition.[126] More generally, scholars tend to identify two principal ways of looking at the Sibylline tradition in the fifteenth and early sixteenth

[125] Valla wrote his *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione declamatio* between 1439 and 1440. The text circulated in manuscript form and was published for the first time in 1506 in Strasbourg by the printer Johann Grüninger (c.1455–c.1533). See G. Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla e la polemica sulla donazione di Costantino*, Rome 1985, pp. 189–90; W. Setz, *Lorenzo Vallas Schrift gegen die Konstantinische Schenkung.* De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*. Zur Interpretation und Wirkungsgeschichte*, Tübingen 1975.
[126] See Raybould, *The Sibyl Series*, pp. 32–43.

centuries. The first is rooted in an art historical approach fashioned by Émile Mâle in his seminal dissertation on the representation of the Sibyls. According to this approach, there is a certain propensity among historians working on this subject to explain the growing interest in the Sibyls by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century scholars and artists alike as depending in large part on the humanist movement.[127] The Sibyls promised humanists a body of Christian revelations that bridged the religious divide with classical antiquity.[128] Rather than simply being the gentile equivalents of the biblical prophets, the Sibyls were considered to have paved the way for a universal Church, as is most famously expressed in their depictions by Michelangelo in his Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes.[129] As has most recently been argued by Raybould, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a surge in artistic representations of Sibyl cycles, which, following the enumeration of ten Sibyls in Lactantius (DI I.6.8–12), lent themselves to the humanist interest in antiquity and patristic theology.[130] However, the definitive studies by Christian Jostmann and Anke Holdenried, to name only the most important, have challenged this view. Both have been able to detect a vivid interest in the Sibyls as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and argue that because of the *Sibilla Eritha Babilonica* and the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' this revival of Sibylline reverence in the Renaissance was not unprecedented.[131] With the advent of humanism, however, these two prophecies are understood to have yielded to the much more fashionable ancient traditions of the Sibyls that went back to Augustine, Lactantius and other Church Fathers. It was the humanists' promise to provide authentic utterances by means of the new textual criticism, which had already debunked the *Donatio Constantini*, that now altered the ways in which the Sibyls were perceived.[132] A feature commonly attributed to the Sibyls in

[127] See Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*; Dotson, 'An Augustinian Interpretation of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling'; Stumpfe, *Sibyllendarstellung im Italien der frühen Neuzeit*; B. Bünsche, *Das Goschhof-Retabel in Schleswig. Ein Werk des Hans Brüggemann*, Kiel 2005; W. Olszaniec, 'The Latin Inscriptions in Sandro Boticelli's and Filippo Lippi's Five Sibyls', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch/Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature* XIV, 2012, pp. 233–40.
[128] See S. Settis, 'Sibilla Agripa', *Études de Lettres. Revue de la faculté des lettres de l'Université de Lausanne* CCVIII.4, 1985, pp. 89–124; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*.
[129] See Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo*, pp. 124–48.
[130] See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*.
[131] See also N. Brocca, 'La tradizione della Sibilla Tiburtina e l'acrostico della Sibilla Eritrea tra Oriente ed Occidente, tardantichità e Medioevo. Una "collezione" profetica?' in *L'Antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales. Textes et représentations, VI^e-XIV^e siècle*, ed. by S. Gioanni and B. Grévon, Rome 2008, pp. 225–60.
[132] See Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla*.

both historiographical approaches is the apocalypse and the view that the Sibyls came to function primarily as heralds of the imminent end of the world.[133]

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that the popularity of the Sibyls in the fifteenth and sixteenth cenutries is not as much a product of a humanist revival of and re-engagement with the classical heritage. Nor can it be exclusively attributed to the apocalyptic bias often ascribed to the Sibyls and their prophecies. Rather, I will argue that the sixteenth-century reverence for the Sibyls and their acceptance as prophets stood in clear continuity to the medieval proliferations of this lore. A case in point is the legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus, a narrative that is commonly understood to paint the Sibyl of Tibur as a prophet who had revealed the Christian message of salvation to the pagans. The *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* and the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' aside, this story was the one of the five Sibylline traditions that Robin Raybould ascertained to have flourished and enjoyed great popularity during the Middle Ages.[134] An overwhelmingly large amount of artworks from France, the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire testifies to the central role that this narrative, the so-called *ara coeli* legend, played in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[135] By analysing this visual culture and the devotional literature, which are two bodies of sources thus far neglected in the study of the Sibyls' role in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century belief, I will illustrate the persistence of certain Sibylline beliefs. In an attempt to capture the common understanding of the Sibylline lore, the analytical emphasis will be placed on those texts and objects that the majority of the population can be assumed to have been exposed to, that is, popular devotional writings, the interiors of parish churches and other devotionalia, rather than on the great amount of manuscript illuminations, which, especially from an art historical point of view, have received some attention.[136] But first, I will show how

[133] See, for example, Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy*; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*; Green, *Printing and Prophecy*.
[134] In addition to the three traditions mentioned above, Raybould includes in his list of five the so-called *Sibyllenweissagung*, a fifteenth-century prophecy in German verse studied by Ingeborg Neske, and the acrostic poem *Iudicii signum*. See Neske, *Die Sibyllenweissagung*; Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 34–38. Apart from the name of the Sibyl, this legend is at its outset distinct from the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' with her dream interpretation of nine suns or generations of mankind. For a summary of the prophecy, see Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes*, pp. xix–xxii.
[135] For a compilation of pictorial representations of the *ara coeli* legend in France, see Galley, *La Sibylle*, pp. 86–106.
[136] Here it might be worth pointing out that, although the Sibyls were omnipresent in the apocalyptic printing products of the period between 1450 and 1550, early printed works left the legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus largely unnoticed. See Green, *Prophecy and Printing*.

the myth of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus persisted into and flourished in the sixteenth century. My analysis of the complex ramifications of this particular narrative for late medieval spirituality will then lead me to propose that the focus on the Sibyl as a figure relevant primarily in apocalyptic matters be broadened to meanings it might have obtained even if only temporarily. I will do this by discussing meanings that were newly ascribed to the *ara coeli* legend. This will allow me to bring to the fore a stark discrepancy between the more learned engagement with the Sibyl, as discussed above, and contemporary belief patterns as manifested in the way in which the Sibyls were depicted from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century in different devotional genres. While this section offers a detailed analysis of only one specific legend, in the following section, I will examine more general attitudes towards Sibylline lore as they were held by the theological orthodoxy. With this approach the chapter argues for a prolonged fascination with the *ara coeli* legend and its semantic adaptability as an example for the complexity of the Sibylline heritage, with its competing intellectual approaches and interpretations in the first half of the sixteenth century.

After having been granted access to Augustine's City of God (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23) and being hailed by Lactantius as divine testimony from the pagan sphere that would convince pagans of the Christian truths (DI I.6.1), the Sibyls entered early Christian thought. It was via this channel that the understanding of the Sibyls and their prophecies was shaped during the early Middle Ages. In his *Etymologiae* (VIII.8) Isidore of Seville (c.560–636) had cited a highly compressed form of Varro's introductory enumeration and description of the Sibyls provided by Lactantius (DI I.6.8–12).[137] With the addition of some supplementary information, Isidore considered the Sibyls to be a generic group of female prophets who had foretold the pagans about Christ.[138] In quoting a rather formulaic account, at times with additional extracts from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (XVIII.23), works such as the *De universo* (XV.3) by Hrabanus Maurus (c.780–856) and the *Liber floridus* (dated 1090–1120) by the canon Lambert of St Omer perpetuated the Sibyls'

[137] For a modern edition of the *Etymologiae*, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, Paris 1983–.
[138] To the list provided by Lactantius, Isidore of Seville added some supplementary information, such as the Delphic Sibyl having been born in the temple in Delphi and being active before the Trojan War, or Phemonoe as an additional name for the Samian Sibyl. Raybould believes that this information was derived from some other source, possibly Varro if his *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* had not already been lost. See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, p. 33.

memory.[139] The latter source, in particular, was flawed with corruptions or alternative readings, such as the name *India* for the Cimmerian Sibyl. These rather standardised accounts are evidence of a receding interest in the patristic attempts to validate their understanding of the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses. Short and generic as these accounts were, they seem more a sign of each author's erudition, which stood divorced from any contemporary veneration of the Lactantian ten Sibyls. In fact, it can be observed that by the twelfth century the Sibylline tradition had narrowed down to possibly four Sibyls, the Erythraean, the Tiburtine, the Cumaean and the Samian, whose legacy had advanced to become an integral part of medieval culture and theology.[140] Much of the medieval imagination of the Sibyls was based on the first two. Testament to their great significance for medieval thought is, for example, how they were incorporated in historiographical works of the period.[141] More relevant for broader audiences might have been the liturgical use of the apocalyptic acrostic, which had been transmitted from Augustine (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23) via Quodvultdeus (d. c.450) and his treatise *Contra Iudaeos, Paganos et Arianos* ('Against Jews, Pagans and Arians'; PL XLII.1126) into the eighth-century

[139] For the *Liber floridus*, see UniBGhent MS 92. For an English translation of the *De universo*, see Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo. The Peculiar Properties of Words and Their Mystical Significance*, transl. by P. Throop, 2 vols, Charlotte 2009.

[140] See McGinn, '"Teste David cum Sibylla"', p. 24. Émile Mâle stated that the Erythraean Sibyl was the only Sibyl that was depicted individually until the late Middle Ages, a thesis which in light of recent research can be rejected. See É. Mâle, *The Gothic Image. Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, transl. by D. Nussey, London 1969, pp. 336–38. In the case of the Samian Sibyl, who appeared, for example, on a fourteenth-century altarpiece composed for a nunnery nearby Warburg in Westphalia and now held in the Gemäldegalerie Berlin (Cat. Nr. 1844), it might well be that the Sibyl in question actually represents the Erythraean Sibyl, the author of the acrostic. The attribution of the geographical identifier of Samos might originate from the *Description of Greece* by Pausanias (c.110–c.180), who reports that the Erythraean Sibyl had spent there a great part of her life (X.12.1–7). In a separate entry that is different from the one dealing with the Lactantian list of Sibyls, this attribution of a new name for the Erythraean Sibyl was also included in the tenth-century Byzantine encyclopaedia *Suidas*. Besides the Tiburtine Sibyl, the Samian Sibyl was also the only Sibyl that Gervase of Tilbury specifically accounted for (*Otia imperialia* I.20; II.7), even if only to indicate Samos as the shared birthplace of her and Pythagoras (c.570–c.495). See A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, 5 vols, Leipzig 1928–38, IV, p. 353. For a modern edition of the *Description of Greece*, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, in *Pausanias*, ed. and transl. by W. H. S. Jones, 5 vols, London Cambridge 1918–35.

[141] Holdenried studied the role that the Sibyls played in medieval historical thought through a case study of the *Chronica maiora* by Matthew Paris (d.1259). There appears to be a line of historiographical enquiry into Sibylline testimonies possibly from the ninth century including Otto of Freising (c.1114–1158) in his *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, and the sixteenth-century historian Johannes Nauclerus (c.1425–1510). See Holdenried, *The Sibyls and Her Scribes*, pp. 76–78, 147–165. For a modern edition of these works, see Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. by H. R. Luard, 7 vols, London 1872–83; Otto of Freising, *Chronik oder Geschichte der zwei Staaten*, ed. by W. Lammers, transl. by A. Schmidt, Darmstadt 1990.

homily *Vos inquam* ('I tell you') by Paul the Deacon (c.720–799).[142] At the same time Peter Abelard's (1079–1142) praising of her prophetic gifts as exceeding those of her biblical counterparts may be seen as a rather extraordinary statement, and yet it is historically significant (PL 178:246–7).[143] A little later, Thomas Aquinas, too, argued that the Sibyls were commonly reckoned among those pagans who had foretold Christian truths (*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 14, a. 11, ad 5; *Summa theologiae* 2-2, q. 2, a. 7).[144]

It was in this sympathetic atmosphere that a host of new developments took place. Predating the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, but postdating the composition of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl', the *ara coeli* legend was codified during the twelfth century.[145] Although some historians have traced its origins back to the chronicler John Malalas (c.491–c.578) or even to the second century AD, the version that was to become one of the chief Sibylline traditions during the Middle Ages was first recorded in the *Mirabilia urbis Romae* (11) during the 1140s.[146] Legend has it

[142] Dronke laid the foundation for future research into the exact use of Sibylline sayings in liturgy. There are some fifty liturgical manuscripts dating from as early as the ninth century, which attest to a melody to which the acrostic was sung. Although its exact performance is obscured by the lack of documentation, Dronke holds that in the widespread Christmas Lesson and in the medieval liturgical play *Ordo prophetarum* ('The Play of the Prophets'), too, Nebuchadnezzar's words were immediately followed by this acrostic poem of the Sibyl. See Dronke, 'Medieval Sibyls', pp. 589–590; P. Dronke, *Hermes and the Sibyls. Continuations and Creations. Inaugural Lecture delivered 9 March 1990*, Cambridge 1990, p. 11–12. See also Holdenried, *The Sibyls and Her Scribes*, pp. 62, 119–26. D. Bevington (ed.), *Medieval Drama*, Indianapolis and Cambridge 2012, pp. 178–201; F. Massip, 'La sibylle tiburtine dans les mystères de la Nativité et de l'Épiphanie', *Révue des langues romanes* CXVII.1, 2013, pp. 49–78. For a modern edition of the sermon by Quodvultdeus, see Quodvultdeus, *Sermo IV. Contra Iudaeos, paganos et Arianos*, Turnhout 2010.

[143] See also Abelard's *Introductio ad theologiam* (PL 178.1030–32) and his *Theologia Christiana* (PL 178.1162–64).

[144] For a modern edition of the *Quaestiones*, see Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, Rome 1972–76.

[145] The *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* was composed around the mid thirteenth century, while the earliest surviving manuscript of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' dates from 1047. See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 1, 63; Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes*, p. xvii.

[146] McGinn also knows of an eighth-century chronicle, which, however, he does not name. According to the version by John Malalas, the Pythia, who, presumably for her prophetic office, was earlier in this work described as a Sibyl, was approached by Augustus and asked who was to succeed him as Emperor. Upon her pronouncement that a Hebrew child was requesting her to leave the house and so should Augustus himself, he decided to set up an altar on the Capitol bearing the inscription that that was the altar of the first born God (X.5; PG 97.357). See McGinn, '"Teste David cum Sibylla"', p. 21. For a modern editions, see John Malalas, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. by I. Thurn, Berlin 2012; 'Mirabilia urbis Romae', in Cesare D´Onofrio, *Visitiamo Roma mille anni fa. La città dei Mirabilia*, Roma 1988, pp. 46–100. Again, Burke even suggests that the basis of this legend was laid as early as in 121 AD. In the *De vita Caesarum* ('The Lives of the Caesars') by the Roman biographer Suetonius (69–122 AD), Augustus is reported to have struggled altogether with being honoured by his people in a temple and with the title of Lord. For a modern edition of *De vita Caesarum*, see Suetonius, 'De vita Caesarum', in *Suetonius*, transl. by J. C. Rolfe, rev. by D. W. Hurley, 2 vols, Cambridge and London 1997–98, I–II, pp. 365. Another episode with striking similarities is that of a halo of light

that when asked by the Roman people to be subject to veneration as a God, Emperor Augustus had refused this, for he preferred to seek counsel from the Tiburtine Sibyl first.[147] After three days of consideration, she revealed a celestial vision of the Virgin standing over an altar with the Christ child, the Son of God, in her arms. At the same time, the Sibyl was reciting the acrostic poem passed down by Augustine. This incident was believed to have happened in close proximity to, if not on the day of, the birth of Christ. Strangely at odds with early Christian apologists, whose accounts lack any mention of the Tiburtine Sibyl revealing the birth of the Messiah to Augustus, the strong association with Christmas and the reciting of the acrostic poem seem the only elements connecting these two otherwise disparate lines of tradition. Although initially merely a founding myth of a Roman church, the Basilica of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, medieval historians soon began to include it in their chronicles, either to exemplify Augustus's eminence, as Gervase of Tilbury (c.1150–1228) did in his *Otia Imperialia* ('Recreation for an Emperor'; II.16), or to underline the universality of the Christian message and to elevate Rome as the place chosen by God to reveal Himself through a pagan prophet, as in the *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum* (I.1) by Martin of Troppau (d. 1278).[148] Even the highest ecclesiastical ranks took a fancy to this story. In his second sermon for Christmas (PL 217.457), no less an authority than Pope Innocent III (Lotario dei Conti di Segni, 1160/61–1216) reminded his listeners that, at the manifestation of the Sibyl, Augustus had seen the Virgin in heaven bearing her Son.[149]

Soon, the story of Augustus and the Sibyl became hugely popular throughout all echelons of society. Its most important vehicles of dissemination appear to have been two devotional works. First, the *ara coeli* legend was included in the *Legenda aurea* ('Golden legend') by Jacobus da Varagine (c.1230–1298), the most popular literary

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appearing in the sky lightening the tomb of Caesar's daughter Julia, as Augustus returned to Rome after Caesar's death. See P. Burke, 'Augustus and Christianity in Myth and Legend', *New England Classical Journal* XXXII, 2005, pp. 213–220 (213–15). Furthermore, Raybould hypothesises that the narrative might also have been borrowed from the sixth-century Byzantine historian Eustathius of Epiphania and was certainly the source for the *Suidas*. See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, p. 37.

[147] This link to Rome and the summoning of the Sibyl is one of the few parallels to the otherwise distinctly different 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl'.

[148] For a modern edition of the works by Gervase of Tilbury and Martin of Troppau, see Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia. Recreation for an Emperor*, ed. and transl. by S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford 2002; Martin of Troppau, *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, ed. by D. von der Brincken, 1981 (see http://www.mgh.de/ext/epub/mt/index.htm).

[149] See B. McGinn, '"Teste David cum Sibylla"', p. 21.

work of the high Middle Ages, composed between 1251 and 1260.[150] In this hagiographical compendium, the story fell into the category of annunciations of Christ's birth that were granted by corporeal beings, that is 'stones' (*lapides*), for it was by means of the sun that the apparition was granted.[151] Second, it was incorporated into the early fourteenth-century *Speculum humanae salvationis* ('Mirror of Human Salvation'), a typological cycle, in which it was cited as a prefiguration of the birth of Christ alongside the blossoming of Aaron's Rod (Num 17:8) and Abraham's dream of God promising him an offspring (Gen 20).[152] With this combination of both apocryphal and biblical insights into the coming of Christ, the *Speculum humanae salvationis* presented the Christian message of salvation and redemption as universal and as revealed by testimony of Christ's coming also outside of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.[153] The inclusion of the legend in these works meant that, far from being monolinear, the transmission branched off in various directions, a proliferation facilitated by the fact that the texts were being constantly rewritten, extended and translated into different vernaculars.[154] Evidence of this is, for example, a German codex from the library of the Benedictine abbey of Kremsmünster in modern-day Austria, in which the acrostic was not being recited. By contrast, it recounts a Sibylline vision in which a virgin had given birth to the 'Lord Jesus Christ' (*Herr Jesus Christ*) in Bethlehem.[155] Furthermore, the myth entered other edifying genres, as evident in the German block book mentioned above or the exemplar of a *Bible historiale* owned by the Solothurn family vom Staal. Here, the story is narrated closely following the *Speculum*, yet in its illuminations the

[150] See R. Rhein, *Die Legenda aurea des Jacobus de Voragine. Die Entfaltung von Heiligkeit in* Historia *und* Doctrina, Cologne 1995, pp. 1, 8.
[151] Jacobus de Varagine, *Legenda aurea. Vulgo historia Lombardica dicta*, ed. by J. G. Th. Grässe, Wrocław 1890, pp. 43–44.
[152] See E. Breitenbach, Speculum humanae salvationis. *Eine typengeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Strasbourg 1930, pp. 127–29.
[153] For a comprehensive overview of modern scholarship on the *Speculum salvationis humanae* and a discussion of its authorship and date, see M. Niesner, *Das* Speculum humanae salvationis *der Stiftsbibliothek Kremsmünster. Edition der mittelhochdeutschen Versübersetzung und Studien zum Verhältnis von Bild und Text*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna 1995, pp. 2–25.
[154] Obviously, translations inevitably lead to an interpretation and thus corruption of the text, as is shown, for example, by a Dutch translation. See L. M. F. Daniëls, *De Spieghel der Menschliker behoudenesse. De middelnederlandse vertaling van het* Speculum humanae salvationis, Tielt 1949, pp. 48–49.
[155] See Niesner, *Das* Speculum humanae salvationis *der Stiftsbibliothek Kremsmünster*, pp. 55–56, 164–69, 196 image 8d.

Tiburtine Sibyl was omitted.[156] Nonetheless, it appears safe to say that this particular story of the Tiburtine Sibyl, however freely it was replicated, remained firmly rooted in the imagery of the late Middle Ages. While initially a local Roman myth, it had become a narrative known throughout Europe, thus indicating the power of the Sibyls as Christian prophets of pagan origin.

Indeed, representations of this apocryphal legend not only continued to remain highly popular, but they even grew so fashionable that they began to feature in text corpora of a more sacred nature.[157] In addition to the *Bible historiale* owned by the Solothurn family vom Staal, which was still intended for private devotional practices and individual edification, the chief associate of Maître François (1480–1498) and the Master of Philippe of Guelders (1495–1510) included one such representation in a psalter produced in the 1490s to illuminate one of the advent hymns.[158] These representations were by no means rare. In the Breviary of Isabella I of Castile (1451–1504), dating from about 1497, we find a cycle of twelve Sibyls in exactly the same place.[159] Again, in two psalters, produced for the Tegernsee Abbey by the workshop of Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480–1538), the former dating from about 1514–1515 and the latter from about 1516–1517, the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus adorned the reading from Isaiah intended for Christmas, the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, Epiphany and the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as if to demonstrate that the miraculous birth of Christ from the Virgin had been attested to also by pagan prophets.[160]

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[156] See L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Pietät und Prestige im Spätmittelalter. Die Bilder in der Historienbibel der Solothurner Familie vom Staal*, Basel 2008, pp. 314–16.The block book is reproduced in facsimile. See Heitz, *Oracula Sibyllina*, p. 30–fol. A^{r}.

[157] For examples of early illuminations, see B. Cardon, *Manuscripts of the* Speculum humanae salvationis *in the Southern Netherlands (c.1410–c.1470). A Contribution to the Study of the 15th Century Book Illumination and of the Function and Meaning of Historical Symbolism*, Leuven 1996, pp. 176–77, 194, 214–15; H. Appuhn (ed.), *Heilsspiegel. Die Bilder des mittelalterlichen Erbauungsbuches Speculum humanae salvationis*, Dortmund 1981, p. 23; ML, MS M.140 fol. 11^{r} and ML, MS M.766 fol. 30^{r}. For illuminations of Books of Hours, see ML, MS M.271 fol. 113^{r} and ML, MS M.286 fol. 26^{r}.

[158] ML, MS M.934, fol. 211^{r}; Saurma-Jeltsch, *Pietät und Prestige im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 314–16. Furthermore, other examplars of the *Bible historiale* feature the Queen of Sheba as a Sibyl. See, for example, M. Andersson-Schmitt, *Die Lübecker Historienbibel. Die niederdeutsche Version der nordniederländischen Historienbibel*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna 1995, p. 95.

[159] BL, MS 18851, fol. 8^{v}.

[160] BSB, MS Clm 19201, fol. 179^{v}; MS Clm 19202, fol. 207^{v}.

So engrained in the culture of the time was this myth that it even figured in several altarpieces and other devotional objects for liturgical service.[161] Whereas the group of recipients of the manuscript illuminations above can be described as fairly limited, these altarpieces are of crucial importance in understanding the attitude of the broader population towards Sibylline lore. Although not exclusively commissioned by lay people from less well-off backgrounds, it is the exposure to such imagery that shaped contemporaries' beliefs. In general terms, it is apparent that these altarpieces did not only follow the literary accounts of the *Golden Legend* and the *Speculum humanae salvationis* very closely, as did the fragmented altarpiece by Conrad Witz (c.1400–c.1446), but also that they anchored the legend closely within the context of Christmas.[162] A well-known example of such an altarpiece is the

[161] The first instance of an altarpiece displaying Sibylline references is a fourteenth-century panel mentioned above. Unfortunately it appears to be cut. Framed by scenes like that of the annunciation and the nativity, the crowned Virgin with her child is shown as Solomon's throne in accordance with the *Speculum humanae salvationis*. She is flanked by a number of male saints and personifications of virtues. On the left there is the Cumaean Sibyl with Virgil and on the other side Abū Maʿshar (787–886) and the Samian Sibyl, each with banderoles displaying prophetic sayings. See also W. Vöge, *Jörg Syrlin der Ältere und seine Bildwerke*, 2 vols, Berlin 1950, II, pp. 109–10; B. McGinn, 'Joachim and Sibyl. An Early Work of Joachim of Fiore from Ms. 322 of the Biblioteca Antoniana in Padua', *Cîteaux* XXIV, 1973, pp. 97–138 (119). For the amalgamation of astrology, especially of Abū Maʿshar and his *Introductorium maius in astronomiam* ('A little introduction into astronomy'), and the Sibylline tradition, see L. A. Smoller, 'Teste Albumasare cum Sibylla. Astrology and the Sibyls in Medieval Europe', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* XLI, 2010, pp. 76–89 (76–79, 84–87); L. A. Smoller, 'Astrology and the Sibyls. John of Legnano's "De adventu Christi" and the Natural Theology of the Later Middle Ages', *Science in Context* XX.3, 2007, pp. 432–36; Green, *Printing and Prophecy*, pp. 33–40. For a modern edition, see Abū Maʿshar, *Introductorium maius in astronomiam*, ed. R. Lemay, 9 vols, Naples 1995–1996.

[162] Another oft-cited representation of Augustus meeting the Tiburtine Sibyl is the Bordesholm altarpiece by Hans Brüggemann (c.1480–c.1540). Recent scholarship has cast doubts on this identification. The crowned turban, the unusual dress and the standing position of the male figure contradict contemporary representations of this scene. What is more, the Virgin with the child as the focus point of this narrative would not have been visible throughout the year when the retable was closed. The central focus of the retable's composition seems therefore to be Christ who, represented as the world's judge, is towering over the altarpiece. As a result, the two figures are now identified as King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who was commonly believed to have been a Sibyl. Furthermore, the fact that this set of figures somewhat resembles the *ara coeli* legend should not be surprising, given that in the so-called Goschhof altarpiece, ascribed to Brüggemann, these two narratives are conflated, too – the retable was commissioned for the chapel of the Ahlefeldt family in the church dedicated to Mary in Halderslev, which also is situated in the sixteenth-century duchy of Schleswig. For the most comprehensive discussion of the Bordesholm altarpiece and the Goschhof altarpiece, see respectively J. F. Richter, *Hans Brüggemann*, Berlin 2011, pp. 26–31; J. F. Richter, '91 Retabel mit einer symbolischen Darstellung der Sibyllen-Prophezeiung an König Salomon, sog. Goschhof-Retabel', in *Corpus der mittelalterlichen Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei in Schleswig-Holstein*, ed. by U. Albrecht, 3 vols, Kiel 2016, III, pp. 237–43. In fact, on the basis of their Levantine garments, Bünsche identifies the middle figures in the Goschhof retable as non-Christians and, for the book as a prophetic attribute carried by the female figure, a Sibylline narrative. Yet, on the false premise of identifying the columned figures in the Bordesholm altarpiece as the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus, Bünsche assumes the same identification for the figures here, thus disregarding the absence of the Marian apparition as the crucial iconographical identifier. The element complementing these two figures is, however, the tree between them, the focal point of the entire retable. Even if read as the

Bladelin altarpiece by Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464) with its iconographically rich representation (see fig. 3). Beyond the cultural centres of Brabant and Basel, examples of this tradition can be found in more peripheral lands with less creative stimuli and of less artistic sophistication, as, for example, in the so-called *Weihnachts-* or *Sibyllenteppich* ('Christmas or Sibylline rug'), made in the St Mary and Bartholomew abbey of Benedictine nuns in Lüne in about 1502, and another *Sibyllenteppich* ('Sibylline rug'), made by the Augustinian female canons in Heiningen in 1517.[163] Both carpets, so scholars have concluded, were used to adorn each nunnery's church during Christmas.[164] As well as the textual references established by the manuscript illuminations mentioned above, the liturgical context referring to the representations of the *ara coeli* legend implied a strong emphasis on the soteriological expectations raised by the birth of the promised messiah. The eschatological dimension of this legend, previously surfacing in the recital of the acrostic poem during the apparition as accounted for in some of textual records, disappeared in the visual representation. In contrast to the dominating apocalyptic concern of other major Sibylline traditions of that time, that is, the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, the 'Prophecy of the Tirbutine Sibyl' and the acrostic *Iudicii signum*, the meaning attributed to the *ara coeli* legend had shifted towards the first coming of Christ and its revelation to the pagan world.

Tree of Jesse with its typical flowering in Jesus, the presence of a Sibyl and an orientally dressed man allows us to interpret these motifs as the Holy Wood and the figures as the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. This thesis can be further substantiated by the turban worn by the male figure, a headwear not conventionally used for Augustus. Furthermore, this identification would complete the salvific aspect of the retable, insofar as the genealogy and conception of Christ the Redeemer is supplemented by the wood of the Cross which, as a remnant from paradise, will bear the sacrifice to redeem humankind. Finally, it is worth pointing out that my enquiry into the medieval *fortuna* of the Sibyl seems to disprove Bünsche's thesis that the legend of Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl presupposed a remarkable degree of scholarly erudition. By contrast, this particular narrative appears to have been well-known, regardless of the level of education of any given audience. For Bünsche's argument, see Bünsche, *Das Goschhof-Retabel*, pp. 196–225. These two narratives – Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl, and Solomon – appear also in combination, for example, in a Netherlandish retable dating from 1510–1530, which incorporated existing representations of the narratives on both shutters. See N. Gliesmann, *Geschnitzte kleinformatige Retabel aus Antwerpener, Brüsseler und Mechelener Produktion des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts. Herstellung, Form, Funktion, Studien zur internationalen Architektur- und Kunstgeschichte*, Petersberg 2011, pp. 266–67.

[163] For another Sibylline images used in a rug, see Galley, *La Sibylle*, p. 92.

[164] See E. Michael, *Die Inschriften des Lüneburger St. Michaelisklosters und des Klosters Lüne*, Wiesbaden 1984, pp. 136–44; F. Eisermann, 'Die Inschriften auf den Textilien des Augustinier-Chorfrauenstifts Heiningen', *Nachrichten der Akadmie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse* VI, 1996, pp. 225–85 (266–68). For a more detailed analysis, see K. U. Mersch, *Soziale Dimensionen visueller Kommunikation in hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Frauenkommunitäten. Stifte, Chorfrauenstifte und Klöster im Vergleich*, Göttingen 2012, pp. 304–14.

In addition to this shift from an eschatology to a soteriology, a second new way of representing the legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus was established in the late fifteenth century. With the introduction of a new iconographic device enriching the depiction of the *ara coeli* legend, Mary emerged as the focal point of this legend. Ever since, conventional representations of the Marian apparition as revealed by the Tiburtine Sibyl had called to mind both literary and visual descriptions of the Woman of the Apocalpyse from the Book of Revelation (12: 1–6): surrounded by beaming rays of the sun as if clothed with them, she had appeared in the sky, holding the child, at times even crowned. All these motifs could indeed be read as alluding to either narrative. In fact, identifications of the Woman of the Apocalypse with Mary had emerged around the thirteenth century, even though competing identifications of her as the final Church or of the twelve stars in her crown (Rev 12:1) being the twelve tribes of Israel continued to circulate at the same time.[165] An additional crescent moon at her feet, modelled after the Book of Revelation (12:1), had provided the iconographic element with distinguishing representations of the Woman of the Apocalypse and the Tiburtine Sibyl's revelation of Mary. Since the mid fifteenth century, however, the crescent moon soon began to be also included in representations of Marian figures in the tradition of the encounter of the Tiburtine Sibyl with Augustus. The earliest known example is a full-figure wood sculpture, possibly by Marquard Hasse (fl. 1426–1445/6), at the bottom left of which the Sibyl reveals the apparition to Augustus.[166] In this form, representations of the *ara coeli* legend were disseminated from the late fifteenth-century Marian cult in Rostock into the city's hinterland, as can be exemplified by the Mecklenburg churches in the villages of Rosenow, Cölpin, Klein Helle and Lindow.[167] Probably by way of the Hanseatic trade on the Baltic Sea, this iconographic pattern even reached the shores of Scandinavia in Falsterbo.[168] The latest example being installed in liturgical space

[165] N. and A. O'Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse. The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia*, Oxford 2015, pp. 115, 122.
[166] For Hasse's work, see J. von Bonsdorff, 'Der Revaler Meister Marquard Hasse – eine personenhistorische und stilkritische Umwertung', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* LVI, 1987, pp. 96–113. For examples of this iconography in manuscript illuminations, see ML MS M.1078 fol. 120^{v}; ML MS H.5 fol. 14^{v}; ML MS S.1 fol. 16^{r}.
[167] See J. Trinkert, *Flügelaltäre in Mecklenburg zwischen 1480 und 1540*, Petersberg 2014, pp. 130, 274–75, 305–6, 327–28.
[168] Kathrin Wagner shows how this type of sculpture quickly gained popularity in the West of the Baltic Sea, especially in the region of Mecklenburg, with fifteenth-century exemplars in Rostock, Rosenow and Falsterbo. See K. Wagner, *Rosa Mystica. Rostocker Rosenkranzretabel des Spätmittelalters*, Berlin 2014, pp. 3, 23–30.

is that of the Church of the Teutonic Order in Siersdorf, which Heinrich Neu dates between 1551 and 1554.[169]

This conflation of two previously separate narratives by way of their visual representation was accompanied by a parallel transformation of the *ara coeli* legend into a story supporting the flourishing cult centred on the Virgin. As evident in all the examples of this new iconography, its compository focus was no longer the *ara coeli* legend, but Mary. While in the line associating the legend with Christmas the Sibyl had been an almost equally central figure reminding her beholders of the universality of the Christian message, now she and Augustus appear to be one of many elements glorifying the Virgin. So, for instance, in the Falsterbo altarpiece as an example representative of the Rostock Marian cult, Mary is framed by episodes from the Bible exalting different aspects of her holiness (see fig. 4): In the upper left corner there is a representation of the burning bush (Ex 3:1–4:17), an allusion to Mary's intactness; in the upper right corner there is Ezekiel (Ezk 44:2–3) pointing at the closed gate, commonly read as the incarnation; and in the lower right corner, there is Gideon kneeling with the golden Fleece in front of him (Jdg 6:11–22) as a sign of Mary's conception via the Holy Spirit.[170] By complementing these biblical prophecies about Mary with the apocryphal story of the *ara coeli*, it appears that the stigma of Mary and her exceptionality lacking comprehensive scriptural evidence, both in the New and the Old Testament, was alleviated by using the Sibylline tradition as textual evidence.[171] The narrative of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus was particularly apt as it clearly referred to Mary as the virgin bearing the Son of God, while incorporating biblical imagery from the Book of Revelation.[172] In light of

[169] See H. Neu, *Der Lettnerbogen in der ehemaligen Kirche des Deutschen Ordens in Siersdorf*, Beuel [1965], p. [2].
[170] For the altarpiece, see L. Dufberg, *Falsterbo kyrka S:ta Gertrud*, Falsterbo 1994, pp. 7–8.
[171] See M. Rubin, *Mother of God. A History of the Virgin Mary*, New Haven 2009, pp. 3–8.
[172] Also in the rich manuscript culture of the time, the focus shifted to Mary who, as the *mediatrix*, interceded between the divine and the human. For instance, in the Furtmeyr Bible (BSB Cgm 8010a), whose illuminations were completed by Berthold Furtmeyr (fl.1465–1501) between 1465 and 1470, the volume containing a German translation of parts of the Old Testament opens with a richly embellished cycle of twelve Sibyls, on the one side, and, on the other, with an image of Mary nursing the Christ child, flanked by Emperor Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl. Their scrolls testify to the divine birth from a virgin. See BSB, MS Cgm 8010a, fols 1^{v}–2^{r}; E. Otto, 'Kat.-Nr. 11 and 12', in *Berthold Furtmeyr. Meisterwerke der Buchmalerei und die Regensburger Kunst in Spätgotik und Renaissance*, ed. by C. Wagner and K. Unger, Regensburg 2010, p. 329, image 4,5; B. Hernad, 'Die Furtmeyr Bibel Cgm 8010a (Tafeln 4–41)', in Wagner and Unger, *Berthold Furtmeyr*, pp. 327–28 (327). Yet another example of a Sibyl cycle included by Furtmeyr as an illustrative device in a Bible can be found in the Augsburg Old Testament from 1470 (UBAugs B Cod. 1.3.2°III, fol. 2^{v}). Here, the twelve Sibyls were depicted on a frame, in which the Virgin is presented as the bearer of the Son of

the Sibylline tradition as a composite, but strongly convergent complex of narratives, it is moreover worth noting that Lactantius, too, knew of the Sibyls prophesying that Christ would be born from a virgin (DI IV.13.21).

The semantic shift in the pictorial representations of the Tiburtine Sibyl, in which the emphasis moved from the revelation to the pagans to the celebration of Mary's glory, finds a parallel in contemporary sacred poetry. In the 1500s or early 1510s, new Sibylline sayings appeared in a Venetian print of Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, a text which, as I have already pointed out, can be considered to be one of the most influential early modern works dealing with the Sibyls, and which was also published around 1516 north of the Alps, in both a Latin and a German version.[173] This set of twelve six-verse poems in dactylic hexameter, each of which was ascribed to one Sibyl, bore clear humanistic traits, insofar as it almost followed the footsteps of Virgil and his 'Fourth Eclogue'. With their allusive and partly even obscure style, none of the poems seem related to one another, nor is any chronological or otherwise narrative progression evident.[174] Rather, they present alleged divinations that glorify the Virgin birth of Christ as found in the visual representations.[175] Describing her as a woman of particular beauty (*facie praesignis*) and as the queen of the world (*regina*[*e*] *mundi*), all of the poems mention a virgin who would give birth to the Son

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God and Woman of the Apocalypse. See W. Neiser, 'Kat.-Nr. 25', in Wagner and Unger, *Berthold Furtmeyr*, p. 339, image 42. Likewise, cycles of twelve Sibyls were used to glorify Mary. In the *Salzburg Missale*, illuminated by Furtmeyr around 1481–1482, such a series adorns the liturgical cycle for the Feast of the Annunciation with a full page illumination of the Annunciation scene, framed by architectual motifs which support twelve Sibyls, each with their prophecy displayed on a scroll. See BSB MS Clm 15709, fol. 32^{v}; B. Hernad, 'Das Salzburger Missale Clm 15708–15712', in Wagner and Unger, *Berthold Furtmeyr*, pp. 367–70. In addition to the visual arts, the Sibyls became to be associated with the annunciation also in literary works, as in the *Rapresentatzione dell'Annunziazione di Nostra Donna* by Feo Belcari (1410–1484), performed in Florence in 1471 and possibly in 1454. See See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 125–26; G. Galetti, *Le rappresentatzioni di Feo Belcari ed altre di lui poesie*, Florence 1833, pp. 23–47.

[173] Because of this Marian praise, the authorship can be assumed to be contemporary to the appearance of the print and, for its stylistic features, the poems possibly are rooted in the milieu of Italian humanists, as stated by Bergquist. Yet, Bergquist's hypothesis that the author of the poems was acquainted with a manuscript of the Sibylline oracles, and that this manuscript had later been purchased from Venice, the printing place of the poems, appears rather unlikely considering what the subject of the poems is. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 528–30.

[174] Bergquist observes that even the symbolic attributes depicted in the woodcuts appear unrelated to the newly inserted oracles. They seem, however, to echo the earlier prophecies in the original work by Barbieri, which would mean that the little poem of the Samian Sibyl was incorrectly placed since it derives from that of the Libyan Sibyl. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 523, 528.

[175] Malay claims that these are nativity prophecies. To confine them to the birth of Christ, however, ignores the strong focus on Mary and other aspects of Christ presented in the poems. See Malay, *Prophecy in the Renaissance*, p. 52.

of God (*dei natus*).[176] In identifying Christ's two natures (*humano simul ac divino semine gnatus*), the poems highlight the crucial role of Mary as the intercessor between the divine and the human realm, who provided the material conditions for God to send His Son.[177] The first coming of Christ is further emphasised by the utterances telling of the circumstances of Christ's birth: the annunciation by an angel (*nunciet angelus almae matri*), the conception in Nazareth (*concipiet quae naçareis in finibus*), the birth in Bethlehem (*quem sub carne deum bethlemica rura videbunt*) and the adoration of the Magi, who came led by a star (*et eoo lucebit sidus ab orbe mirificum: sua dona magi cum laude ferentis obicient puero: myrrham: aurum: thura sabaea*).[178] While Christ was characterised as a just ruler (*aequus erit cunctis*) who would please men by the peace he would bring (*cum pace placebit*), His incarnation and birth from Mary were the events which are given more emphasis.[179] Another example of this glorification of Mary are the 1514 *Heroidum Christianarum epistolae* ('Letters of Christian Heroines') by Helius Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540).[180] In this collection of fictitious letters by Christian heroes, which emulates Ovid's *Heroides*, the reference to this Sibylline legend was clearly intended to praise Mary. In the letter that Eobanus imagined Emmanuel, the son of God, wrote to Mary, the Sibyl's presentation of a divine revelation marks the important role of Mary in overthrowing the pagan cult and sanctioning the ultimate victory of Christianity.[181] Erasmus, too, mentioned the Sibyls first in the context of Marian devotion:

[176] Barbieri, *Quattuor hic compressa opuscula* (s.a.), sigs Bii^{v}, [Biv^{v}], [Div^{v}].
[177] Ibid., sig. D^{v}.
[178] Ibid., sigs [Biv^{v}], [Civ^{v}], Dii^{v}.
[179] Ibid., sigs Bii^{v}, Cii^{v}.
[180] Having completed the letters in 1513, Eobanus initially struggled to get this work printed. Helius Eobanus Hessus, *Heroidum Christianarum Epistolae*, Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, [1514]. See H. Vredeveld, 'Introduction', in *The Poetic Works of Eobanus*, II, pp. 103–6.
[181] Eobanus, 'Heroidum Christianarum epistolae', II, pp. 168–69: 'Quamvis ille etiam nostrum monstrante Sybilla/Numen adorabit, se tamen ante feret./Saecula nascentur mecum, non qualia fama est/Falciferum nato deseruisse senem,/Sed quae cum superis mortalia nomina iungant/Et superas faciant sponte patere domos.' Although Augustus maintained his polytheistic beliefs, this is not to say that Eobanus considered the Sibyls as prophets who generally were not heard. In the fictitious letter from Catherine of Alexandria (c.287–c.305) to Christ, he had her read the Hebrew prophets as well as the Sibylline oracles and the Orphic Hymns, 'all [of which] are 'filled with the light of your face' (*Omnia sunt vultus lumine plena tui*). This is also confirmed by the letter ascribed to Monica (c.331/2–387) to her son Augustine. See Helius Eobanus Hessus, 'Heroidum Christianarum liber', in *The Poetic Works of Eobanus*, II, pp. 126–630 (192–93, 252–53).

> O Virgin, the writings of Apollo's Sibyl, which were rashly entrusted to fallen leaves, clearly sing that you would be the mother of the eternal king.[182]

While this hymn was clearly in line with the medieval tradition of appropriating the Tiburtine Sibyl for equally fulsome praises of Mary as presented by Erasmus, there is a distinct difference to the more conventional accounts of the *ara coeli* legend. For Erasmus did not specify that it was the Tiburtine Sibyl who had spoken of Mary. Rather, it was an unnamed Sibyl who had prophesied upon the inspiration of Apollo, not the Christian God. Despite the Marian adoration expressed in this ode, Erasmus confined the Sibylline tradition to its original oracular tradition of ancient Greece with Apollo as the source of inspiration like in the case of the Pythia in Delphi. Yet, in a progression from the pagan sphere, characterised also by an allusion to Virgil, to the time of the Old Testament, he placed the Sibylline revelation in a continuous chain of prophecies of Mary's greatness. It is this clear link between the Sibylline lore and Mary that allowed the Sibyl to enter the poetic culture of the time.

Once the Sibylline lore had become associated with forms of Marian devotion at the turn of the sixteenth century, a host of new meanings was attributed to the legend of Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus. This is evidenced by yet another combination of motifs that, confined to the regions of the Lower Rhine and Brabant, appeared simultaneously with the theme of the crescent moon. One of the earliest examples of this development can be found in a Book of Hours, copied and possibly also illuminated by the Flemish Nicolas Spierinc (fl.1455–1499) in 1486 (see fig. 5).[183] Here the *ara coeli* legend is depicted in a traditional fashion, although the narrative is spread over one page, with the Virgin enclosed within an initial and the Tiburtine Sibyl and the kneeling Augustus being placed in the lower right corner. Among the more conventional attributes identifying the Virgin there is also the crescent moon. On the opposite page, however, we find a haloed male who is seated, writing on a scroll and holding a chalice, all attributes that identify him as the author of the Book of Revelation, John the Evangelist, as was commonly believed at that time.[184] More

[182] Desiderius Erasmus, *Paean divae Mariae atque de incarnatione verbi* (OO I.7.357–77 [361]): 'Regis aeterni fore te parentem/Deliae cantant liquido Sybillae/Scripta, membranis temere caducis/Credita, virgo.'
[183] BL Harley MS 2943, fols 17^{v}–18^{r}.
[184] For the different possibilities of looking at John as the author of the fourth Gospel and the Book of Revelation, see I. Boxall, 'The Figure of John of Patmos in Pre-1700 Interpretation of Revelation', in

specifically, the banderole above him suggests that he is depicted as John of Patmos noting down the apparition as found in the Vulgate: *mulier amicta sole et luna sub pedibus eius apocalipse* ('A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. Apocalypse', Rev 12:1).[185] Furthermore, as in the Book of Revelation (10:8–11), an angel is accompanying him, a compository device mirroring the pair of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus. This biblical passage and the apocryphal legend are visually connected in the apparition of the Virgin as the Woman of the Apocalypse, to whom both the angel and the Sibyl point.

This particular imagery figured in a number of Marian altarpieces which from the late fifteenth century a vast number of local brotherhoods dedicated to the Virgin from the regions of the Lower Rhine and Brabant sponsored by prebends and other acts of patronage.[186] Manifestations of the religious enthusiasm and initiative similar to the contemporary late medieval movement of the *devotio moderna*, these brotherhoods had since the late fifteenth century played a crucial role in promoting the growing cult centred on the Virgin.[187] Of such origin is also the oldest example of altarpieces showcasing the Tiburtine Sibyl and John of Patmos as witnesses of the Marian vision. In a retable produced by Adriaen van Wesel (c.1417–c.1490) in 1475–77 for the Brotherhood of Our Lady in s-Hertogenbusch, the two sets of figures are displayed in two panels of wood carvings, both focusing on a central Marian figure.[188] A second unique example of this iconography can be found on the shutters from the high altar in St Nicolai in Kalkar, which Jan Joest (1462/5–1529) was commissioned to paint by the Kalkar 'Brotherhood of the Dear Lady' (*Liebfrauenbruderschaft*).[189] Here, on the panel depicting the Nativity scene, the two narratives are displayed, but with two celestial apparations, one for each revelation as it were.[190] The two most elaborate altarpieces with this programme were created by

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The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters. Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography, ed. by I. Boxall and R. Tresley, Lanham 2016, pp. 65–84.

[185] BL Harley MS 2943, fols 17^{v}–18^{r}.

[186] For a stylistic contextualisation, see B. Rommé, *Henrick Douwerman und die niederrheinische Bildschnitzkunst an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 100–22.

[187] See Rommé, *Henrick Douwerman*, pp. 31–36.

[188] See W. Halsema-Kubes, 'Der Altar Adriaen van Wesels aus 's-Hertogenbosch. Rekonstruktion und kunstgeschichtliche Bedeutung', in *Flügelaltäre des späten Mittelalters*, ed. by H. Krohm and E. Oellermann, Berlin 1992, pp. 144–56.

[189] See U. Wolff-Thomson, *Jan Joest von Kalkar. Ein niederländischer Maler um 1500*, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 118–20, 134–53.

[190] See M. J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, 14 vols, Leiden 1967–1976, IXa, pp. 11–13, 51, plate 6. As Wolff-Thomson rightly observed, the ass present in the Nativity scene is turned away

Henrick Douwerman (c.1480–1543/44): the Seven Sorrows Retable (see fig. 6) and the Marian altarpiece in the Xanten Cathedral (see fig. 7 and 8). The first, funded by a variety of individuals and small local groups, was produced between 1518 and 1521 for the St Nicolai Church in Kalkar; the second was created for the Xanten Cathedral and dates to about 1535, though this attribution cannot be verified by archival material.[191] Topping both retables, the Marian figure with the said attributes is flanked by the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus on the left side and John of Patmos and the accompanying angel on the right side.[192]

In these altarpieces, Mary is glorified as the ever-lasting *mediatrix* in the soteriological narrative and according the eschatological expectations of Christianity. By interceding between God and mankind, the Virgin initiated man's redemption before defeating evil at the end of times. This underpinning notion comes to the fore when considering the intricate woodcarvings of the predellas. It shows a thicket of the Tree of Jesse, in which the biblical forefather of the House of David is resting.[193] The roots and branches of his Tree entwine around the entire altarpiece, providing the support for Mary and the two accompanying pairs. All three iconographic devices – the Tree of Jesse, John of Patmos and the *ara coeli* legend – converge to form a programme that is unitary in its claim to glorify the Virgin as the eternal *mediatrix*.[194] Initially a pictorial visualisation of Christ's royal lineage from Jesse (Mt 1:1–14), the Tree of Jesse had lost its strict genealogical function soon after the

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from the child, which traditionally represents pagan peoples being inattentive to the birth of Christ. It is instead drawing the beholder's attention to the representation of the *ara coeli* legend, which, although Augustus began to venerate the apparition, did not lead other pagans to accept Christ. See Wolff-Thomson, *Jan Joest von Kalkar*, p. 167.

[191] See B. Rommé, '13 Relief Christus als Zwölfjähriger im Tempel', in *Gegen den Strom. Meisterwerke niederrheinischer Skulpturen in Zeiten der Reformation 1500–1550*, Berlin 1997, pp. 169–78 (174–76); Rommé, *Henrick Douwerman*, pp. 29, 45–49, 216–31.

[192] Although initially composed as an open retable, shutters were installed soon after its completion, most likely in the years 1546/47. See Rommé, *Henrick Douwerman*, pp. 62–63.

[193] In the predellas of both altarpieces, Jesse is accompanied by four figures. Rommé identifies the male figure holding a sceptre on the outermost left as King Solomon, while the lyre player on the right would represent King David. Jan Provost (1462/5–1529) used this unique combination of figures, including the Virgin and the Sibyls for a composition on a retable that he composed in c.1524 for the Bruges cathedral of St. Donatian. Probably during a stay in Kalkar he got to know this set of figures, all of which were visible for commoners throughout the year. Insofar as two Sibyls revealed Mary's celestial emergence as Queen of Heaven to the biblical kings Solomon and David and another Sibyl showed her prophecy to the beholder, Provost adopted the figures to coin a unique narrative composition. See Rommé, '13 Relief', p. 174; Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, IX.b, pp. 88–89, 116, 182–83.

[194] The combination the Tree of Jesse is not unprecedented. In the Chuch St Mercurialis of the Pyrenean town of Vielle-Louron, there is a representation of what seemsto be the *ara coeli* legend in a mural showing the Tree of Jesse. See Galley, *La Sibylle*, p. 92.

Cistercian Bernhard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) had popularised the identification of this motif as Mary, the earthly mother of Christ.[195] The dedications of these two retables to Mary and to her Seven Sorrows accentuate the identification. The theme of the Tree is concerned not so much with Christ Himself as with Mary, who is the embodiment of the lineage by which the beginning of the prophecy of Christ and, thus, the salvific history of humankind is marked.[196] In this way, Mary could be anchored within the Old Testament as the vehicle of God's will to inaugurate the new age. The beginning of this very time of the New Covenant is represented, peculiar as it may seem, by the *ara coeli* legend. At the centre of the celestial revelations by the Tiburtine Sibyl was the Virgin giving birth to the Messiah, which was the actualisation of the prophecy of the Old Testament. Yet, by evoking this image, the universal validity of the teleological understanding of time and its concluding redemption appears to be further confirmed by a prophet outside of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Additionally, this apparition stood at the end of times, in the apocalypse represented by John of Patmos. Again, upon the return of Christ in the Last Judgement, it is Mary who would stand by humankind as its intercessor. In this manner, the significant role of Mary in the soteriological narrative and in the eschatological expectation of Christianity is elevated and glorified. With the Virgin at their centre, these altarpieces offer a synchronic image of God's bond with man as enabled by Mary. It is she, the *mediatrix*, who in all three instances – the beginning of time, the fulfillment of the prophecy and the end of time – interceded for humankind. She was granted this role, for through her grace she had faciliated the salvation of mankind.

Although these two altarpieces and other devotional objects with the same iconographic programme were produced in clear temporal and spatial confines – that is, 1470–1535 in the Lower Rhine region and Brabant – this brief analysis reveals how limited our current understanding of the Sibyls and their role in sixteenth-century thought is.[197] Seen as a witness, the Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend stood at the

[195] See A. Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, Oxford and London 1934, pp. 1–8; G. Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 8 vols, Gütersloh 1966–1990, VI.2, pp. 157–62.
[196] On the motif of the Tree of Jesse in relation to Marian veneration, see M.-P. Gelin, '*Stirps Jesse in capite ecclesiae*. Iconographic and Liturgical Readings of the Tree of Jesse in Stained-Glass Windows', in *The Tree. Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, ed. by P. Salonius and A. Worm, Turnhout 2014, pp. 13–33 (25–27).
[197] Beyond the geographical limits, there is evidence that by way of personal contact of Joos van Cleve (c.1485–1540/1) this kind of iconographic representation influenced the lost so-called *Altar der*

crucial moment when the salvific history was instigated. It is she who provided testimony that with Mary giving birth to the Messiah, the prophecies of the Old Testament announcing the coming of a messiah had been fulfilled. In doing so, the Tiburtine Sibyl is not only on a par with John, but also has taken the place conventionally reserved for the Evangelists, the ones canonised to testify to the life of Christ. Moreover, the Sibyls' divine inspiration, often a matter of debate and doubt, is asserted as the Tiburtine Sibyl, unlike her counterpart John of Patmos, who for his prophecy depended on the angel's assistance, did not rely on an intermediary. This is also evidence that several traditions of non-classical Sibyls were at the time as popular – if not more – as the ones recovered by various humanist programmes, like the fashion of representing the Sibyls in series modelled after Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.8–12). Any attempt to dismiss one or the other lineage has proven insufficient in capturing the complexity of this variegated tradition.[198] The non-classical iconographic tradition, with its more soteriological concerns, reveals the high degree of adaptability and receptiveness of the Sibylline legacy. This aspect has previously been neglected due to the fixation both on the Sibyls' role as heralds of the apocalypse, and on the disregard of expressions of belief from less theologically trained groups.[199] Similarly, no visual nor written references to the Tiburtine or any other Sibyl suggest that they functioned only as complementary prophets indicating the universality of the Christian message, as implied in studies of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* and the sixteenth-century editorial history of the oracles.[200] For not only was the Sibyl readily appropriated for different new beliefs, but also, by depicting the Tiburtine Sibyl on a par with or even as being superior to John the Evangelist, her status as a prophet was significantly enhanced.

Stockholmfahrer ('Altarpiece of the travellers to Stockholm'), formerly in the St Mary's Church in Lübeck. See '26* Trinitätsretabel (sog. Altar der Stockholmerfahrer)' in Albrecht, *Corpus der mittelalalterlichen Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei in Schleswig-Holstein*, II, pp. 564–72.

[198] The emphasis on a return to the classical Sibyls ignores the fact that Barbieri in his influential treatise on the Sibyls in the patristic tradition presented the Tiburtine Sibyl not in the way Lactantius had done, but as the Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend. See Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol [21^{r}].

[199] See Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*; Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes*; Green, *Printing and Prophecy*. Furthermore, in the aforementioned Bruges altarpiece by the Master of the Holy Blood, for example, this iconographic programme paired with two Sibyls and other biblical figures corroborates the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The narrative of the Tiburtine Sibyl had expansively grown into a doctrinally rich and diverse lore. See Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, IX.2, 96–97, 118, 197–99.

[200] See J. Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods. The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, transl. by B. Sessions, New York 1953, pp. 16, 28, 126, 128, 133–4, 146; Bergquist, 'The Poems of Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 522–23; Schiano, *Il secolo della Sibilla*, pp. 19–34.

This flourishing of the Sibylline lore with its new associations of meanings is also evident in the last example to be discussed here. The combination of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus with John of Patmos can be viewed as favouring the association of Mary with the Woman of the Apocalypse, an emphasis on her humanity and genealogical aspects that, once they were combined, had the power to exalt Mary and to evoke contested beliefs such as the Immaculate Conception.[201] Proclus (d.446/7), Archbishop of Constantinople, seems to have been the first to put forward the idea that the Virgin's own conception had not been tainted by the sin of *concupiscentia*, the Original Sin. This thesis became the subject of heated debates among medieval scholars, although – or rather because – the scriptural evidence was thin. This belief rested in fact on apocryphal sources, such as the Protoevangelium of James.[202] After the Immaculist argument had prevailed in the Council of Basel and the feast of Mary's Conception had begun to be celebrated officially during the Council, in 1480 Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere, 1414–1484) approved and established the office for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the *Officium conceptionis virginis Mariae* by Bernadino de' Busti (1450–1513).[203] Because of the Council's conflict with Rome, however, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception did not become canonically binding, until it gained full ecclesiastical acceptance in 1854. At the core of this belief stood the idea advanced by the Franciscan Duns Scotus (c.1266–1308) that after the soul of Mary had been sanctified in view of her becoming the mother of Christ, it had been united to her body at the very moment of the body's generation, thus preserving her from the Original Sin.[204] As part of a glorification of Mary, this belief seems to have been visually codified in a triptych by the Master of the Holy Blood (fl. in the first quarter of the sixteenth century), held in the Church of St James in Bruges, which relied heavily on Sibylline imagery and

[201] On the complex ways to visualise contested beliefs in an increasingly tense denominational landscape, see B. Heal, 'Images of the Virgin Mary and Marian Devotion in Protestant Nuremberg', in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. by H. Parish and W. G. Naphy, Manchester 2002, pp. 25–46 (35).
[202] See N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity*, Leiden 2003, pp. 56–57, 137; M. Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, [New York] 1957, pp. 5–11. For a more in-depth study of the medieval debate on the Immaculate Conception, see R. Gay-Canton, *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique. Réceptions de la controverse médiévale autour de l'Immaculée Conception en pays germaniques*, Turnhout 2011.
[203] Bernadino de' Busti, *Officium et Missa Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, Milan: Leonhard Pachel, 1493.
[204] See Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconograpyh of the Immaculate Conception*, pp. 5–11; Gay-Canton, *Entre dévotion et théologique scolastique*, pp. 80–86.

alleged prophecies (see fig. 9).[205] Its devotional images on the shutters and the central panel combine a number of iconographical elements characteristic of the Immaculate Conception, which represented this very doctrine.[206] Crucial in identifying this doctrine was the beaming light radiating from the Virgin on the central panel, which resembled the representations of the celestial apparitions to the Tiburtine Sibyl on the left shutter and to John of Patmos on the right shutter, each with their own apparition.[207] In addition, the Virgin is depicted holding the Christ Child in her arms. While the allusion to the Woman of the Apocalypse is established in the wing panel showing John of Patmos, the Virgin on the centrepiece seems likewise to be an apparition framed by clouds on either side as well as by angels, who carry the *arma Christi*.[208] Against this background of a celestial epiphany, Mary's humanity is accentuated by her youthful complexion as a maiden. Furthermore, she is accompanied by her parents Joachim and Anne, shown on either side of her. To them, Mary is connected as the flowering end of the Tree of Jesse rooted in King Solomon.[209] Solomon holds a scroll which, besides identifying his persona, bears the words *Tota pulchra es amica* ('Thou art all fair, my love'; Song of Songs 4:7). These words with which the Bride is addressed in the Song of Songs had by the sixteenth century come to support the belief that Mary was born without sin.[210] After Ambrose (c.340–397) in his *De virginitate* ('On Virginity'; PL 16.279–316) equated the Bride with the Virgin, the same words were sung on the Second Vesper on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.[211] To contemporary spectators, who were familiar with the here omitted continuation of the above hymn *Vestimentum tuum candidum quasi nix, et facies tua sicut sol* ('her face did shine as the sun, and her raiment was white as the light'; similar to Mt 17:3; 28:3), the plain white

[205] See Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, IX.2, pp. 96–97, 118, 197–99.
[206] Before Counter-Reformation theologians and artists adopted the motif of the Virgin standing on a crescent moon as a symbol of the victory over evil, a wealth of different visual devices represented the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. See Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconograpyh of the Immaculate Conception*, p. 25; L. Hodne, *The Virginity of the Virgin. A Study of Marian Iconography*, Rome 2012, p. 43.
[207] See S. Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 46–58.
[208] For Mary and the depiction of angels, see Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 305–6. Other than in its compositional ideal, Ambrose Benson (c.1495/1500–1550) had the Virgin represented as crowned. After a period of decline at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the crown came to denote the Immaculate Conception as a sign of her glories. See Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconograpyh of the Immaculate Conception*, pp. 28–30.
[209] See Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception*, pp. 12–20.
[210] See ibid., pp. 39–46.
[211] See F. E. Consolino, '*Veni huc a Libano*. La sposa del Cantico dei Cantici come modello per le Vergini negli scritti esortatori di Ambrogio', *Athenaeum* LXXII, 1984, pp. 399–415 (400, 410–11).

dress of Mary not only represented her maidenhood and virginity, but her immaculacy, as did the iconographically highly charged radiant light.[212] Above the Virgin's head, there is the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descending onto her as a sign of the sanctifying grace received from God.[213]

Given the representation of two friars on the right panel next to John of Patmos and another friar on the outside of the right shutter, the altarpiece appears to have been commissioned by a Franciscan order, most probably the convent in Bruges.[214] More generally, it is worth noting that since shortly after the death of Duns Scotus, the Minor Brothers had become one of the strongest proponents of the Immaculate Conception. They also fostered a special relationship with the Sibylline lore. So, for example, the Roman church of the Franciscans was indeed the Basilica of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli mentioned above.[215] In addition to the left shutter dedicated to this story, two Sibyls prominently feature in a group of five at the bottom half of the central panel. The one on the left, almost illegible, reads *tenebit illum in gremio virgo* ('The virgin will hold him in her womb'), the one on the right, *Gremium virginis salus populi* ('The womb of the virgin is the salvation of the people'). Relying on the influential treatise *Discordantiae* by Barbieri, the sayings can be attributed to the Libyan Sibyl and to the Persian Sibyl respectively. On the right of the central figure identified as Jesse, the progenitor of David and Christ, Isaiah can be identified by his

[212] See Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception*, pp. 46–58.
[213] Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconograpyh of the Immaculate Conception*, p. 46. For other contemporaneous images of the Immaculate Conception following the same iconographic model, see G. von der Osten, 'Niederdeutsche Bildwerke in amerikanischem Besitz', *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* IV, 1965, pp. 101–8 (105, 107). The central panel of this retable seems to have considerably influenced the composition of the so-called *Deipara* by Benson, as did Provost's panel displaying the Marian apparition and Sibyls, discussed above. Framed by angels, the Virgin hovers over a group of five prophets. Through the scrolls held by each figure, de Clercq identified the females as the *Sibylla Persica* and the *Cumana* and the males as Isaiah and Balaam. Any pictorial references to Mary's lineage are omitted, giving way to a powerful image of her as the Queen of Heaven. See C. de Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles I', *Jaarboek van het koniklijk museum voor schone Kunsten Antwerpen* 1979, pp. 7–65 (50–52).
[214] According to de Clercq, Benson painted his *Deipara Virgo* for the Franciscan Chapel of Rockox in Antwerp. See Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles I', pp. 50–52.
[215] Furthermore, in his *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Jesu redemptoris nostris* ('On the Conformity of the Life of the Blessed Francis and that of the Lord Jesus, Our Saviour'), however much this text was contested later on, Bartholomew of Rinonica (c.1338–c.1401) maintained that Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226) had been prophetically announced by the Erythraean Sibyl. Afterwards Bartholomew went on to quote the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* extensively. See Bartholomew of Rinonica, *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Jesu redemptoris nostris*, in *Analecta Franciscana sive chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam fratrum minorum*, 9 vols, Florence 1885–1927, IV, pp. 1–632 (43–44). For the Franciscan influence on the consolidation of the doctrine of the Immaculate conception, see M. Lamy, *L'Immaculée conception. Étapes et enjeux d'une controverse au Moyen Âge (XII^e–XV^e siècles)*, Paris 2000, pp. 399–408.

scroll reading *Egredietur virga* (Is 11:1) and the right person as Balaam with his scroll reading *Orietur stella de Iacob* (Num 24:17). Here it is worth noting that Balaam, a biblical, yet pagan prophet, is being associated with the Sibyls. In combination with the Sibyl another strand of prophetic revelation in the pagan realm is evoked, both outside and inside the Scriptures. Moreover, the *Offenbarung Der Sibillen Weissagungen* ('Revelations of the Sibyls' Divinations') by Jakob Köbel (c.1462–1533), a German adaptation of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* appears to establish or, possibly, reinforce an association with Sibylline lore in the contemporary literary culture, in fact, the only one discernible until then. In its rendition of the sayings attributed to the *Sibylla Chymeria*, parallels are drawn between the description of the Virgin that 'she is beautiful in her face' (*Sie ist hübsth im angesicht*) and the praise of the bride in the Song of Songs 'Thou art all fair, love; there is no spot in thee' (*Maria was gantz hübsth im vnd kein mackel was in ir*; Song of Songs 4:7).[216]

Apart from this biblical reference, at the turn of the sixteenth century, there are hardly any theological writings endorsing or even accounting for the prolonged fascination with the *ara coeli* legend, let alone the development of the pictorial tradition and its theological implications examined above. There is even dissent among scholars about the veracity of the *ara coeli* legend itself. In his *Querela pacis* ('The Complaint of Peace'), Erasmus did utilise this story in order to praise Augustus's eminence and his humility in declaring his will to subordinate his individual future under the commonwealth.[217] Giraldi, for his part, contested this acceptance in his *Historiae poetarum*. In the second dialogue of this work, the *ara coeli* legend was presented as, possibly, a 'fictitious invention' (*commentitia*), for it had not been corroborated by any reliable authority, that is, neither Lactantius nor Augustine nor Prosper of Aquitaine.[218] Giraldi even went so far as to accuse those theologians con-

[216] [Jakob Köbel], *Offenbarung der Sibillen Weissagungen/Mit viel Andern Prophecien künftiger ding*, Oppenheim: [Jakob Köbel], 1516, sig. B v^{r}. In the Latin original, Mary is described as 'beautiful' (*pulchra*), which seems to have prompted the comparison. See Filippo Barbieri, *Opusculum de vaticiniis Sibillarum*, Oppenheim: Jakob Köbel, 1514, sig. b ij^{r}.

[217] Desiderius Erasmus, *Querela pacis* (OO IV.2.96): 'Quis unquam aut latius imperavit aut splendidius Octavio Augusto? At is cupiebat etiam deponere imperium, si quem vidisset reipublicae magis salutarem Principem. […] Hos animos reipublicae praestiterunt homines impii, quod ad Christi religionem attinet'; I. Kähler, *Der Bordesholmer Altar – Zeichen in einer Krise. Ein Kunstwerk zwischen kirchlicher Tradition und humanistischer Gedankenwelt am Ausgang des Mittelalters*, Neumünster 1981, pp. 86–87.

[218] Giraldi, *Historiae poetarum* (1545), p. 255.

flating Lactantius's account with medieval traditions of being an 'irritable kind' (*irritabile genus*).[219]

Regardless, it is safe to say that the inclusion of Sibylline testimonies in the cultural and intellectual processes leading to the glorification of the Virgin and the corroboration of the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception attests to the high degree of adaptability and receptiveness of the *ara coeli* legend at the turn of the sixteenth century. Even more importantly, they exemplify that it was not a humanist interest or the revival of the Lactantian notion of ten or, as will be discussed below, a Christianised twelve Sibyls that dominated the contemporary reception of this lore.[220] Rather, the complexity of the Sibylline tradition and its reception in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries consists in the concurrence of various legends and traditions. While it is certainly true that with a renewed interest in classical antiquity promoted by fourteentth- and fifteenth-century humanists, a new fashion of representing the Sibyls was forged on the basis of Lactantius, this did not lead to a decline in popularity of the *ara coeli* legend. Indeed, visual representations of Sibyls in churches north of the Alps continued to focus on medieval traditions such as the *ara coeli* legend with a few exceptions, for example, in the cathedral in Aarhus, the Ulm Minster and the St Michael monastery in Lüne. As will be discussed in the following chapters, new ideas about the Sibyls would traverse Europe much more quickly in the contemporary scholarly debates as well as in prints. What appears to have facilitated the transformation of the legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus, however, was that the story was not a fixed text in the sense of a self-contained narrative with little variety, but a medieval adaptation of a greater ancient narrative which had been absorbed into the sacred realm of contemporary liturgy and the visual repertoire; as a result, it had been dramatically transformed during the Middle Ages. While in Lactantius's list the Tiburtine Sibyl was only one of the ten Sibyls originally recorded by Varro, in the fifteenth century, she was presented as a mouthpiece of God on a par with John of Patmos. Ingrained in contemporary forms

[219] Ibid. The most influential piece of work to do so was Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, which after its first publication in 1481 enjoyed two centuries of intense reception, as will be discussed below. For the incorporation of the *ara coeli* legend, see Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol. [21^{r}].
[220] Nor can the dominance of the *Sibyllenweissagung*, another popular tradition, affirmed by Winifred Frey be maintained. See W. Frey, 'Sibylla Led Astray. Sibyls in Medieval Literature', in *Demons. Mediators between This World and the Other. Essays on Demonic Beings from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. by Petzoldt, Frankfurt 1998, pp. 51–64 (57).

of devotion, the legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl lent herself to all sorts of historical accretions that on the surface seem unrelated to the origin of the legend, in particular Marian beliefs, the popularity of which had gathered momentum in the course of the fifteenth century. By transforming the *ara coeli* legend into a supportive device of the then strong Marian devotion and ascribing additional new meanings, this particular Sibylline tradition had advanced to become an integral part of contemporary belief. This, however, was not on account of its apocalyptic imagery, but its receptiveness to other theological interpretations. This active manipulation of Sibylline knowledge enabled a persistence of the Sibylline tradition in a variety of beliefs.

Humanists and the Sibyls at the eve of the Reformation

After having looked at the ways in which different branches of and intellectual currents within the Sibylline tradition conceptualised its prophetic promise, and the persistence of the *ara coeli* legend into the sixteenth century, it is crucial to understand who the Sibyl(s) were for sixteenth-century audiences. A unique source offering these insights is Filippo Barbieri's *Discordantiae* or, to remind us of its longer form, *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Augustini et Hieronymi*. On account of the original views set out in this work, it has been claimed to be of vital importance for the pre-modern reception of the Sibyls.[221] It was however not the novelty of stances that render it so important for the history of the Sibyls, but, as I will argue, it was the unique combination of pagan philosophy and literature with patristic and scholastic theology that enabled the *Discordantiae* to shape unmistakably the pre-modern idea of who the Sibyls were. By reconciling medieval forms of veneration and humanist trends, Barbieri facilitated a shift from a rather variegated and composite body of stories and legends to a nearly monolithic understanding of the Sibyls' identity and their prophecies. It is this standardising and

[221] See, for example, Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*, pp. 30–35; D. Estivill, 'Profeti e Sibille nell'Oratorio del Gonfalone a Roma', *Arte cristiana* LXXXI, 1993, pp. 357–66 (361–63).

unifying aspect and the concise presentation of it, not the claimed originality and innovation, that makes this work so important. Moreover, the subsequent editors of this text managed to align the treatise to the changing religious and intellectual landscape. As a result, the *Discordantiae* itself must be understood as a constantly changing entity that was adjusted to the needs of its audiences, as it was reissued, translated and reworked in publications produced over more than two centuries. Therefore, the analysis of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* and its dependent works enables an understanding of how many Sibyls fifteenth- and sixteenth-century audiences envisaged, under which appellations and who these Sibyls were thought to thave been, and how this fused understanding was sustained and prolonged.

Originally composed in fifteenth-century Italy, it was in the German-speaking lands of the sixteenth century that the *Discordantiae* received its greatest attention. In fact, as argued by Jonathan Green, the emergence of the printing press and, in particular, of popular prints went hand in hand with the contemporary apocalyptic angst prominent especially in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire. Beginning with the earliest extant printing product from Johannes Gutenberg's (1394/99–1468) press, the so-called *Fragment vom Weltgericht*, a vast body of prophetic texts not only of Sibylline, but of all sorts flowed onto the early printing market, the vast majority heralding the approaching end of the world.[222] Initially, in 1481, the Dominican friar Barbieri had a compendium of four miscellaneous treatises, the *Discordantiae*, published by the Rome-based printer Giovanni Filippo de Lignamine (c.1428–post 1495).[223] The *Discordantiae* was mainly concerned with the Sibylline lore, the prophetic value of which was discussed on the basis of arguments made by the Church Fathers Augustine and Jerome.[224] One of the first books to be illustrated by woodcuts, each depiction of one of the twelve Sibyls was juxtaposed with a biblical prophet or King Solomon. In addition to the description of their appearance, Barbieri ascribed to each Sibyl one short oracular saying, which, as Peter Bergquist has shown, derived from the fifteenth-century German block book, mentioned

[222] For an extensive list of prophetic prints, see Green, *Printing and Prophecy*, pp. 155–203.
[223] For this dissertation, I will refer to the edition GW 3386. See Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481).
[224] In addition to the Sibylline legacy, Barbieri was also interested in the prophetic Cento attributed to the Proba. See S. Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet. The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba*, Leiden and Boston 2015, pp. 23–25. For earlier pictorial cycles of Sibyls, see Heitz, *Oracula Sibyllina*; C. de Clercq, 'Les Sibylles dans des livres des XVe et XVIe siècles en Allemagne et en France', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* LIV, 1979, pp. 98–119.

above.[225] This incunabulum depicted twelve scenes from Christ's life, for each of which there were typological juxtapositions from the Old and New Testament and a Sibylline saying commented. Originally, the *Discordantiae* was dedicated to Pope Sixtus IV and was later issued by a number of Italian presses, each edition with minor amendments.[226] The most considerable transformtion occurred in an edition from the Venetian press of Bernadino Benali (1458–1543). In rearranging the majority of the textual material, not least to accommodate the newly inserted legend of the Cumaean Sibyl and Tarquinus as narrated in the *Attic Nights* (I.19) by Aulus Gellius (c.120–p.180), Benali expanded Barbieri's book, the new title of which, *Quattuor opuscula*, indicated precisely this enrichment.[227] Moreover, it now contained an as yet unpublished set of twelve Latin poems, each of which was ascribed to a specific Sibyl, as if purporting to be her oracle.[228]

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[225] All but one of the twelve prophecies are identical, insignificant variants aside. The prophecy presumably incorrectly attributed to the *Sibylla Hellespontica* found in the 1481 version of Barbieri's work, is corrected in the 1488 edition from Naples and appears henceforth in accordance with the block book. See Bergquist, 'The Poems of Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 523–7. In a format identical to that of the Sibyls Christ, John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary and Plato are depicted, too. See Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols 11^{r}–24^{v}. The edition GW 3385 did not contain woodcuts, but handmade illustrations of the first four Sibyls only; the later leaves are missing. See Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), sigs $b6^{r}$–$b7^{v}$.

[226] For the dedication, see Giovanni Filippo de Lignamine, 'Ad Sixtum IIII Pontificem Maximum praefatio' in Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols 1^{v}–2^{v}. The second edition, now entitled *Tractatus solemnis et utilis*, appeared in the Roman printing presses of Georgius Herolt (Georgius theutonicus, unidentified) and Sixtus Riessinger (c.1440/45–p.1505) in about 1482 (GW 3387). The previous rather dull woodcuts were now much more sophisticated. Barbieri's *Discordantiae* was also part of his collection *De animorum immortalite*, printed by Francesco del Tuppo (c.1443–p.1498) in Naples in about 1490 (GW 3388). By means of a hand-written mark of ownership of the copy in the Huntington Library, Bergquist is able to specify the publication date as 1488. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', p. 527.

[227] Neither of the print's copies consulted by me in the British Library and the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence contain the third treatise, the *Varia testimonia*, even though the index of the booklet indicates it. Given that in later editions each of this treatise as well as the *Centones Probae Falconiae* start with a new counting of the pages, there is the possibility that coincidentally both editions do not contain the *Varia testimona*, for whatever reason it may be, but that, nonetheless, this treatise was initially intended to form part of this book. As for the evidence yet available, the *Varia* seems not to have been incorporated here.

[228] Filippo Barbieri, *Quattuor hic compressa opuscula*, ed. by Bernadino Benali, Venice: Bernadino Benali, s.a. For its newly added poems, this edition was certainly published after the Naples edition posthumously printed in 1488, but predates the edition by Köbel, which incorporated the poems and further refined the woodcuts. In the GW (3 Sp.402a) it is dated after 1500. Furthermore, in Benali's edition, the woodcuts of the *Sibylla Libica* and the *Sibylla Delphica* were initially swapped. This resulted in the caption of the *Sibylla Libica* being printed as the *Delphica*, a mistake later corrected by covering it with a snippet glued onto the page. See Barbieri, *Quattuor opuscula* (s.a.), fol. B iii^{r}. This mistake was not repeated by later editions. Furthermore, in this edition, the Sibyls as depicted in the woodcut illustrations carry for the first time banderoles, a typical iconographical attribute of prophets. All these display the beginning of the sayings attributed to each respective Sibyl by Barbieri. Benali also changed the basic descriptions of the Sibyls offered by Barbieri. While those of the *Sibylla Libica*, *Sibylla Hellespontica* and the *Sibylla Tiburtina* are altered very little often simply by small addi-

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Barbieri's *Discordantiae* appeared north of the Alps. Its distribution there was initiated by Köbel, a printer based in the German town of Oppenheim.[229] By adopting the Venetian edition printed by Benali and reintroducing Barbieri's part left out by other editions, Köbel combined all earlier variants of this textual tradition and had it published both as a whole and separately.[230] By far the most influential tract was that exclusively focused on the Sibyls, the *Opusculum de vaticiniis Sibillarum* ('Small Tract on the Sibyls' Divinations'). This was not least because Köbel also brought out a German translation of the *Opusculum de vaticiniis Sibillarum*, the *Offenbarung der Sibillen Weissagungen* ('The Revelations of the Sibyls' Prophecies').[231] Apart from reusing the woodcuts, the *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen* ('Prophecies of the Twelve Sibyls') was transformed almost beyond recognition. Comprehensive as Köbel's Latin reissue of the *Discordantiae* was, the vernacular version was tailored towards contemporary devotional practices, as evident in the Marian exaltation, and its less encyclopaedic, more edifying character. While the previous Latin pamphlet with its heavy references to scholastic and patristic sources required from its readers a certain degree of education, these new translations were much more accessible for wider audiences. In contrast to the scholastic and humanist reasoning expounded in Barbieri's work, Köbel juxtaposed each of the sayings ascribed to the Sibyls respectively with a compilation of comparative readings from the Scriptures.[232] As well as reasserting the Lactantian idea that the Sibyls' prophetic worth exceeded that of their biblical coun-

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tions from Lactantius, in Benali's edition, the *Sibylla Persica* for example is known to have predicted Christ feeding the thousand with five bread and two fish.

[229] The printing of Barbieri's work was not the first instance of Köbel's concern with the Sibylline tradition. Still in Heidelberg, Köbel had authored a booklet on the Sibyls and their predictions, his *Sibyllen Weissagung*, which was published in 1492 by Heinrich Knoblochtzer (c.1445–d. p.1501), presumably in Heidelberg, (GW M16375) and by the Ulm-based printer Johann Schäffler (fl.1482–1505) (GW M16377). Different from the GW, Josef Benzing names Knoblochtzer as the author of this tract, which Köbel published to finance his legal studies in Heidelberg. See J. Benzing, *Jakob Köbel zu Oppenheim 1494–1533. Bibliographie seiner Drucke und Schriften mit 23 Abbildungen*, Wiesbaden 1962, p. 8.

[230] Jakob Köbel, *Quattuor hic compressa opuscula*, Oppenheim: Jakob Köbel, [c.1516]. (GW 3 Sp.402b; VD16 P 2454) According to the GW and Josef Benzing's 1962 bibliography of Köbel's prints, there are no later issues of the German translation nor Barbieri's edition. See Benzing, *Jakob Köbel zu Oppenheim*, pp. 13–84.

[231] [Jakob Köbel], *Offenbarung der Sibillen Weissagung*, Oppenheim: Jakob Köbel, 1516. (VD16 ZV 11992) In light of this edition being dated from 1516, although omitting its editor and printer, Köbel's *Quattuor opuscula* can be assumed to have been published at about the same time.

[232] For example, the prediction of the Persian Sibyl that Christ will be born by a virgin to bring salvation to humankind, is referenced to Christ's victory over evil in Genesis, the virgin birth of Christ in Isaiah and Jesus's redemptive role in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and John's Gospel. The chapter on the Persian Sibyl is then concluded with yet another quotation from Hosea. See [Köbel], *Offenbarung* (1516), fol. I^{rv}.

terparts, as stated in his epilogue, Köbel was able to suggest the same source of divine inspiration for the Sibyls and the Jewish prophets, that is, the Holy Spirit: 'Behold the Sibyl, for the Holy Spirit has touched [her] so perceptibly and [she] speaks with him with her mouth openly, in line with the Holy Scriptures.'[233] Instead of providing translations of the poems first included in the Venetian edition, Köbel offered German adaptations of Barbieri's shorter oracular sayings in a version different from the one penned by Georg Alt (c.1450–1510) for the *Nuremberg Chronicle* by Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514).[234] Given that Köbel is known to have written vernacular works himself, it is not unlikey that he himself authored this adaptation as well as the entire translation of this volume.[235]

Finally, from 1531 Frankfurt-based printer Christian Egenolff began circulating a new version of this work.[236] An abridged reissue of Köbel's *Offenbarung der Sibillen Weissagungen*, it omitted a substantial part of the passages concerning the Virgin or an exaltation of her.[237] As if dispensable, the Vulgate translations in the margins of the biblical passages quoted in German in the main text were left out, too, as were further references to ecclesiastical authorities. Arguably, the highly regarded Sibylline utterances were thereby conditioned to meet the newly hermeneutic standards of the arising Reformation. The testimonies of the Sibyls could be shown to be in

[233] [Köbel], *Offenbarung* (1516), fol. XI^{r}: 'Do merck vff diese Sibilla/Den der heilig geist So merklich gerurt vnd mit dem mundt offentlich auß gesprochen hat/gleichformigk mit der heyligen gescrifft lautende.' See [Köbel], *Offenbarung* (1516), fol. XXII^{r}.

[234] Hartmann Schedel, *Liber chronicarum*, Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1493, fols XXXV^{v}, LVI^{v}, LXIIII^{v}, LXIX^{v}, LXXVIII^{v} and XCIII^{v}. Because the page numbers of the Latin original and German translation are the same, only one reference is given. In regard to Schedel's occupation with the Sibyls, it is interesting to note that in his private library he held one of the copies of Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*, printed by Schweynheym and Pannartz. See *Welten des Wissens. Die Bibliothek und die Weltchronik des Nürnberger Arztes Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514)*, Munich 2014, pp. 99–101. For a critical survey on the scholarship on the Chronicle's translation, see J. Green, 'Text, Culture, and Print-Media in Early Modern Translation. Notes on the "Nuremberg Chronicle" (1493)', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* XXXIII, 2008, pp. 114–32.

[235] See R. Hergenhahn, 'Jakob Köbel zu Oppenheim 1494–1533. Stadtschreiber, Feldmesser, Visierer, Schriftsteller, Verleger, Druckherr', *Oppenheimer Hefte* XI, 1995, pp. 2–71 (3–7, 13). It is interesting to note that in his German adaptation of the *Vita Hildegardis*, Köbel identified Hildegard of Bingen as 'a true Sibyl' (*ein ware Sibilla*), a widespread belief at that time. J. Köbel, 'Die Legende von der seligen Jungfrauen Sankt Hildegard', in *Die Legend des heyligen hertzogen sant Růprechts*, ed. by J. Köbel, Oppenheim: Jakob Köbel, 1524, fol. 15–40; Dronke, 'Sibylla – Hildegardis', pp. 116.

[236] According to Josef Benzing, Egenolff probably purchased the woodcuts from Köbel just before setting up his new printing press in Frankfurt. See Benzing, *Jakob Köbel zu Oppenheim*, p. 10.

[237] In the account of the *Sibylla Hellespontica*, for example, the scriptural evidence for the virgin birth of Christ and his conception as metaphorically expressed in the prophets of the Old Testaments is deleted. See [Köbel], *Offenbarung* (1516); Christian Egenolff (ed.), *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen/Vil wunderbarer Zůkunfft/Von anfang biß zů end der Welt besagende. Der Küniginn von Saba/künig Salomon gethane Propheceien*, Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1531, fols IX^{r}; C iij^{v}.

agreement with the authority of the scriptures if they were associated with biblical passages, as was the case with Egenolff's work. Moreover, by relying on the German translation of the Bible alone as well as by removing the emphasis on Mary prevalent in Köbel's edition, new Reformation belief patterns had been embraced.[238] Owing to significant changes and adaptations in the intellectual landscape of the time, this edition of the *Discordantiae* was printed multiple times well into the seventeenth century, with the last known example issued in 1676.[239]

As a theological tract that during its extraordinary longevity was gradually harnessed and employed by lesser educated audiences, this textual tradition exercised a considerable influence on the way in which the Sibyls were perceived.[240] Its main achievement was to reframe the Sibylline utterances so as to appropriate them for a Christian audience. Since Lactantius had identified a specific number of Sibyls (DI I.6.8–12), subsequent scholars appear to have been less concerned with determining an exact quantity rather than augmenting the legends of particular Sibyls, even by way of forgery.[241] As for the numbers, Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* VIII.8) perpetuated the survival of ten Sibyls throughout the Middle Ages. In his *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Schedel first gave the number as ten, but then scattered twelve Sibyls

[238] In fact, it is worth pointing out that in the 150 years this edition appeared, it was reissued mainly if not exclusively in areas with strong sympathies for the Reformation. In addition to Frankfurt, places where it was printed include Nuremberg, Magdeburg, Leipzig and Hamburg. Altered to comply with the ideals of the Reformation, the Sibyl could endure as a prophetic figure of the apocalyptic concerns of the laity of that time.

[239] Another undated edition seems to be even more recent, probably dating from 1700 (VD17 3:652783H). As such or in some form altered, Egenolff's *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen* were published several times during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1532 (VD16 Z 942); Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1534 (VD16 Z 943); Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1535 (VD16 Z 944); Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1537 (VD16 Z 945); s.l.: s.n. (VD16 Z 946); [Strasbourg: Jakob Fröhlich, 1550] (VD16 Z 947); Frankfurt: Martin Lechler, Sigismund Feyerabend and Simon Hüter, 1565 (VD 16 Z948); Nuremberg: Valentin Fuhrmann, [c.1575] (VD16 Z 949); Leipzig: Zacharias Bärwald, 1594 (VD16 Z 950); Hamburg: Hermann Möller, 1600 (VD16 Z 951); Magdeburg: Johann Francke, [1620] (VD17 3:306523C); Erfurt: Tobias Fritzsche, 1637 (VD17 23:296526C); Nuremberg: Michael and Johann Friedrich Endter, 1676 (VD17 7:665622X). See W.-E. Peuckert, 'Sibylle', in *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. by E. Hoffmann-Krayer, 10 vols, Berlin 1927–42, VII, cols 1655–1659 (1655).

[240] Mâle was the first to state the great significance of Barbieri's work. See Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*, pp. 30–35; E. Mâle, *L'art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge en France. Étude sur l'iconographie du Moyen Âge et sur ses sources d'inspiration*, Paris 1908, pp. 277–78. While the thesis that this work was particularly innovative has been challenged, Bergquist shows ways in which it popularised the Sibylline tradition and Esther Dotson argues for Michelangelo having been inspired by Barbieri in his creation of the Sistine Chapel fresco paintings. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', p. 523; Dotson, 'Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling', pp. 405–29. See also Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo*.

[241] For the varying numbers in contemporary manuscript illuminations, see also de Clercq, 'Les Sibylles dans des livres'.

throughout his work.[242] For her prophetic ability, Schedel also identified the biblical figure of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1–13) as a potential thirteenth Sibyl.[243] Even a fourteenth, 'a certain very religious Sibyl' (*Sibilla quadam valde religiosa*/*ein gar geistliche Sibilla*), whose name Schedel was unable to recall, is listed and indeed also a fifteenth, a certain 'Berithrea', probably a corruption of the Erythraean Sibyl.[244] Like many early modern and medieval writers, Alt's vernacular translation of Schedel's chronicle held that the term Sibyl was not restricted to the classical Sibyls delineated by Lactantius, but served as a broad term to refer to female prophets of any geographical or temporal origin: 'All women who prophesy or pronounce future things are commonly called by the Greek name "Sibyl"'.[245] For Alt, what Lactantius had passed down was only the number of female prophets known to him at a certain

[242] Schedel, *Liber chonicarum* (1493), fols XXXV^{rv}, LVI^{v}, LXIIII^{v}, LXIX^{v}, LXXVIII^{v} and XCIII^{v}. In his *Supplementum chronicarum* printed first in Venice in 1483, Giacomo Filippo Foresti (1434–1520) had dedicated the chapters 57, 58, 62 and 103 to in total seven Sibyls.

[243] Schedel, *Liber chonicarum* (1493), fols XLVI/XXXXVI^{v}. Written evidence for the notion that the Queen of Sheba was identified as a Sibyl, can be traced back to as far as the ninth-century *Chronicon breve* by the ninth-century monk George Hamartolos, where the name of the Egyptian queen, Saba, is translated into Greek as Σιβύλλα ('Sibyl'; PG 110.251–52). From the twelfth century onwards, this association was also known in Western Christendom. The *Sibyllenweissagung* patently testifies to the acceptance of this lore, in fact, the vivid and widespread fascination with it. In addition to the reiteration of the legend of the True Cross as narrated in the *Golden Legend*, this fourteenth-century vernacular poem tells of the encounter of the Queen of Sheba with Solomon in a way similar to their biblical encounter (1 Kings 10:1–13). Furthermore, it contains various prophecies. In Köbel's *Offenbarung*, the Queen of Sheba's proper name is purported to have been Nichaula. The chapter dedicated to her in the *Offenbarung* appeared even as a separate booklet, entitled *Sybilla. Die dreyzehend Sybilla. Ein küngin von Sabba*. See Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, pp. 303–11; [Köbel], *Offenbarung Der Sibillen Weissagungen* (1516), fols XVII^{r}–XXII^{r}; [Jakob Köbel], *Sibylla. Die dreyzehend Sybilla. Ein küngin von Sabba*, Augsburg: Johannes Schönsperger, s.a.; W. Meyer, 'Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus', in *Abhandlungen der königlich bayerischen Akamdemie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* XVI.2, 1882, pp. 103–66 (123–28); Neske, *Die Sibyllenweissagung*; Dronke, 'Medieval Sibyls', pp. 596–613; Dronke, 'Sibylla – Hildegardis', pp. 113–14; Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood*, p. 333–49. For the connection of the Sibyl with the Queen of Sheba and her potential origin in Ethiopia, see also E. McGrath, 'Jacob Jordaens and Moses's Ethiopian Wife', *Journal of the Warburg and the Courtauld Institutes* LXX, 2007, pp. 247–85 (247–69); A. Hetzel, *La Reine de Saba. Des traditions au mythe littéraire*, Paris 2012, pp. 194–204. For a modern edition of George Hamartolos's *Chronicon*, see George Hamartolos, *Chronicon*, ed. by C. de Boer, 2 vols, Stuttgart 1978.

[244] Both Sibyls are reported to have prophesied the Virgin birth of Christ, his divine and human natures and other aspects common for sayings then attributed to the Sibyls. See Schedel, *Liber chonicarum* (1493), fol. XXXV^{v}.

[245] See ibid., fol. XXXV^{v}: 'Alle die frawen die weyssagen.oder künftige ding verkünden werden gemainikglich nach kriechyschen gezüng Sibille genant.' Schedel's Latin original closely follows Lactantius on the definition and the list of Sibyls, offering an abridged version of the *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.8–12). The stance taken in the German version goes back to as early as the fourteenth century as evidenced by Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (XXI.1–2). However, Boccaccio's likening of the Erythraean Sibyl's pronouncements with a gospel as a result from her inspiration from the Holy Spirit Itself is not reiterated here (XXI.7), although the work was widely available not only in its original, but also in a German translation that was repeatedly printed since 1474. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Von etlichen frowen*, transl. by Heinrich Steinhöwel, Ulm: Johann Zainer the Elder, 1474, fols 26^{v}–27^{r}. For a modern edition, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, transl. and ed. by V. Brown, Cambridge and London, 2001.

point in time. In fact, at the turn of the sixteenth century, the Sibylline myth was very much alive, with new Sibyls emerging in narratives that were often orally transmitted and localised and regionally bound, as in the case of the so-called Sibylle von der Teck in modern-day Baden-Württemberg or the Apennine Sibyl in Italy, who in the Tannhäuser legend had taken on the role of Venus.[246]

Barbieri identified twelve Sibyls, the number that his work was to popularise. Unlike the Lactantian ten, a number with less symbolic value within Christianity, the number twelve mirrored, for example, the twelve apostles and the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament, a comparison only too suitable. The parallelism of twelve Sibyls and twelve prophets allowed for an associative completion of Christian soteriology according to the bipartite model of divine revelation. The Jewish world of the Old Testament was by means of the Sibylline oracles complemented by the contemporary ancient world of people outside the revelation of the Old covenant, both of which were to be combined in a soteriological unity as expressed in the prophecies of Jesus Christ and the redemption that he would bring to the world. When this notion implicit in the numerical mirroring developed and established itself is however unclear. Contrary to the claim that Barbieri's work had been innovative in this regard, as influentially postulated by Mâle, a number of duodecimal sets predated that of Barbieri, in the case of the fifth-century *Chronicon paschale* (108) by more than a thousand years.[247] Likewise, Peter Bergquist has argued that the relationship of the *Discordantiae* to the German block book mentioned above was stronger than the oft-quoted dependency of Barbieri's work on a Sibyl series in a lost fresco painting from one of the Roman palazzi belonging to the renowned Cardinal Giordano Orsini (d.1438), which, being produced in the 1420s, was supposedly the first ap-

[246] See McGinn, '"Teste David cum Sibylla"', p. 22. For the Sibylle von der Teck, see R. Götz, *Die Sibylle von der Teck. Die Sage und ihre Wurzeln im Sibyllenmythos*, Kirchheim unter Teck 1999. For the Apennine Sibyl, see F. Neri, 'Le tradizioni italiane della Sibilla', *Studi Medievali* IV, 1912–1913, pp. 213–30; L. Paolucci, *La Sibilla Appenninica*, Florence 1967. For other Sibyls with medieval or early modern origin, see Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 61–68.

[247] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols 11^{r}–22^{r}. The influence of Barbieri's booklet, in particular with respect to the number of Sibyls, has been highly contested ever since Mâle proposed in his dissertation that Barbieri was responsible for establishing twelve instead of ten Sibyls. See Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*, pp. 30–35; Mâle, *L'art religieux*, pp. 275–77. As for the numbers, Barbieri's dependence on earlier sources, hypothetically stated by Mâle, is confirmed by Maurice Hélin. See M. Hélin, 'Un texte inédit sur l'iconographie des Sibylles', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* XV, 1936, pp. 349–66 (351–52).

pearance of twelve Sibyls in Renaissance art.[248] In this regard, the positioning of these two newly inserted Sibyls is also interesting for, by appearing at the very end of Varro's list, each between classical Sibyls, they blended in perfectly and do not appear all too prominently or disruptive. At the same time, it is remarkable that before displaying each of his twelve Sibyls in a woodcut depiction, Barbieri quoted the list of ten Sibyls found in Lactantius. Without any explanation, two competing numbers of Sibyls coexisted in one work.[249]

In light of this and the broad definition of the Sibyl as a female prophet of any kind, as provided in the German translation of Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle*, it becomes apparent that the quest for the 'true' number of Sibyls in the time leading up to the sixteenth century is redundant. Rather, the simultaneous existence of varying numbers of Sibyls did not exclude themselves, nor did they present a problem for contemporaries. While Wolfger Stumpfe elucidates a numerical inconsistency in the contemporary Italian representation, a matter that might well have been dictated not by ideals, but by practical or compositional needs, a maximum of either ten or twelve Sibyls typically appeared in contemporary works of literature or art, as argued also by Raybould.[250] The clear, yet implicit soteriological message conveyed by twelve Sibyls render the number more suitable for devotional contexts, while the number ten puts emphasis more on the ancient origin of their lore, and therefore features more frequently in works of erudition than in those of theological relevance; needless to say, the ten Sibyls do not appear with any other names than those given in Lactantius. Nonetheless, the Queen of Sheba seems in all instances to be set apart from either of the 'canonical' number of Sibyls.[251]

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[248] Stumpfe too questions the overall importance of the Orsini fresco, but seems unaware of Bergquist's findings. Again, Raybould reinforces a dependence on the Orsini cycle. Most striking is however his preference for pragmatic reasons as decisive in the expansion of the number of Sibyls from ten to twelve, a thesis that in light of the number's later pervasiveness seems rather unlikely. See Stumpfe, *Sibyllendarstellung im Italien der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 35–36; Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 81–82, 122–48. Apart from the Brussels manuscript MSS3553-67, held at the Bibliothèque royale, Lothar Freund discusses the Orsini frescos in some depth, as does Raybould who provides a synopsis of existing manuscripts. See Freund, *Bildgeschichte der Sybillen*, pp. 21–4; Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 94–96, 165–224.

[249] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fols 9^{r}–10^{r}, 11^{r}–22^{r}.

[250] See Stumpfe, *Sibyllendarstellung im Italien der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 30–32, 36–37; Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 149–61.

[251] Schedel, *Liber chronicarum* (1493), fol. XLVI/XXXXVI^{v}; [Köbel], *Offenbarung Der Sibillen Weissagungen* (1516), fols E^{r}–Evi^{r}; Egenolff, *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen* (1531), fols Eij^{r}–Fiij^{v}.

A question closely intertwined with that of the number of Sibyls, is that of their names. In the Lactantian list, the ten Sibyls are listed each with indications of their geographical origin. Instead of the few proper names extant, the afterlife of which proved much less stable, these geographical references were later used synonymously as their names: *Persica*, *Libyca*, *Delphica*, *Cimmerica*, *Erythraea*, *Samia*, *Cumana* with the proper names of Amalthea, Herophile or Demophile, *Hellespontica*, *Phrygica*, *Tiburtina* with the proper name of Albunea (DI I.6.8–12). By the sixteenth century some confusion had emerged about the *Sibylla Cimmerica*. In Barbieri's 1481 edition she was called *Emeria*, Köbel named her *Cimica* and in the *Bibliotheca sancta* of 1575 she was identified as the *Sibylla Cumaea* by whom Virgil was inspired for his 'Fourth Eclogue'.[252]

As for Barbieri's work and the other duodecimal sets, a Christianising tendency, as evident in the potential numerical mirroring of the twelve minor prophets or disciples, is also suggested by the names given to the two new Sibyls. Following the Lactantian pattern of designating geographical areas, potentially the respective region of origin, to each Sibyl, the names of the two new Sibyls expanded the reach of the Sibylline tradition to Central Europe, while shifting the focus away from the ancient world. To this end, the first new Sibyl received the name *Sibylla Europaea*, despite several other Sibyls originating from Europe, too. After the Fall of Constantinople to the Muslim Ottoman Empire in 1453 and the intensified fight for the so-called *Reconquista* in Spain culminating in the conquest of Granada in 1492, the term 'Europe' had become synonymous with *Christianitas* and the Latin Christendom. If used, it was with the particular purpose of contrasting it to lands inhabited by non-Christians like Muslims.[253] Thus the geographical focus not only shifted ever so slightly away from the eastern Mediterranean towards more northern regions of the

[252] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol. 14^{r}; Köbel, 'Opusculum de vaticiniis Sibillarum' in Köbel, *Quattuor opuscula* ([c.1516]), sigs. ai^{r}–dv^{v} (bij^{v}); Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca sancta*, Frankfurt: Nikolaus Bassée, 1566, p. 118–19.

[253] See A. Höfert, '"Europe" and "Religion" in the Framework of Sixteenth-Century Relations between Christian Powers and the Ottoman Empire', in *Reflections on Europe. Defining a Political Order in Time and Space*, ed. by H.-Å. Persson and B. Stråth, Bern 2007, pp. 211–30; D. Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea*, Edinburgh 1968, pp. 56–61.

continent, but a religio-cultural element relating the Sibylline lore to western Christendom was added.[254]

The name of the second newcomer, *Sibylla Agrippa*, still remains a bit of a mystery in scholarship. Because in some material we find the name *Aegypta* substituting for *Agrippa*, Mâle has argued for a corruption of the Egyptian origin initially ascribed to this Sibyl.[255] However, viewing such corruption the other way round, as suggested by Salvatore Settis, seems more plausible.[256] The use of the term *Agrippa* not just predates the reference to Egypt, but, more importantly, Elizabeth McGrath stresses the assumed connection of the Sibylline legacy with the German city of Cologne. Indeed, this association would affirm the general trend to expand the Sibyls' realm to more Northern regions, no less the Holy Roman Empire as the nominal successor of the Roman Empire. In similar instances, the contemporary Latin name of Cologne, *Agrippa Colonia*, had been exploited, as by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486–1535).[257] Furthermore, the connection to Cologne is particularly interesting in light of the local cathedral being the legendary resting place of the Three Magi, who were conventionally regarded as personifications of the three known pagan continents, precisely those peoples to whom the Sibyls had spoken.[258] So strong was the association of the Sibyls with the Three Magi, that Postel in his 1553 *De originibus seu de incognita aut inconsyderata historia* ('On origins or the unknown and unconsidered history') opined that the Magi were led to Christ's birthplace by the Sibylline predictions.[259] Previously, the Augsburg Reformation theologian Musculus in his 1544 Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew considered it possible that the Sibyls had informed the Magi about the birthplace of Christ.[260]

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[254] In contrast to the argument of Salvatore Settis, the term *Europea* is not a corruption of *Herophila*, one of the Lactantian names for the *Sibylla Cumana*. In fact, neither Hélin, who purportedly made this claim, nor in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* can any such claim be found. See Hélin, 'Un texte inédit', p. 352. Nonetheless, my argument loosely follows Settis' notion of the new Sibylline names denoting geographical attributions. See Settis, 'Sibilla Agripa', pp. 97–98.

[255] Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artifices repraesentaverint*, p. 34; Mâle, *L'art religieux*, pp. 275–76.

[256] See Settis, 'Sibilla Agripa', pp. 95–98.

[257] See McGrath, 'Jacob Jordaens and Moses's Ethiopian Wife', pp. 267–69; Settis, 'Sibilla Agripa', pp. 101–105. Elizabeth McGrath also refers to Schedel's chronicle where the terms are given as synonyms. Schedel, *Liber chronicarum* (1493), fol. XC^{v}.

[258] See Blisniewski, 'Kaiser Augustus und die Sibylle von Tibur', p. 22.

[259] See Guillaume Postel, *De originibus seu de varia et potissimum orbi Latino ad hanc diem incognita aut inconsyderata historia*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1553, p. 74.

[260] Wolfgang Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii tribus tomis digesti, quibus non solum singula quaeque exponuntur, sed etiam quid singulis Marci et Lucae differentibus locis, notandum sit, diligenter expenditur*, Basel: Johannes Herwagen, 1544, p. 11: 'Possibile est, prophetiam

Following this attribution, the name *Agrippa* allowed the Sibylline tradition to shift geographically to the north. Thus, it is safe to say that by means of the redirected geographical reference, the names of both new Sibyls accommodated the cultural space contemporaries found themselves in as opposed to the classical focus on the eastern Mediterranean. The pagan Sibylline lore was moved away from the Mediterranean as the centre of classical culture and towards the new seat of western Christendom, western and central Europe. The Sibyls were no longer part of pagan antiquity, but of the Christian heritage of the classical era.

In addition to these two newcomers, the incorporation of the *ara coeli* legend as the main narrative of the Tiburtine Sibyl anchored the Sibylline lore in yet another way in the area of Latin Christendom. Instead of resuming Lactantius's account of her as a goddess venerated at the banks of the Aniene (DI I.6.12), a tributary of the Tiber, Barbieri gave preference to the *ara coeli* legend (see fig. 10), as did other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writings, including the *Nuremberg chronicle*.[261] In this manner, the Roman Empire and its centre Rome, which since the Fall of Constantinople and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire had become the uncontested head of Latin Christianity, was ascertained to be the main audience of the Sibyls and her divinations. It was in Rome that God had chosen to reveal himself through a pagan prophet. Whilst complying with this notion, it is remarkable that this particular augmentation of Sibylline lore, for which there was no ancient evidence to prove their authenticity, pervaded Sibyl cycles, which had emerged as a new distinctly Renaissance format of representing the Sibyls, as Raybould argues.[262] Not only do the representation of the *ara coeli* legend and the new iconographic programme examined above attenuate this thesis, but also this inclusion of a medieval fabrication into the patristic context of Lactantius's list challenges the postulated return to the classical Sibyls further. The legend of the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus as a

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Bileam, de qua Num. 24, Orientalibus fuisse cognitam, aut alia illis fuisse vaticinia de Christo, qualia Sibyllarum circumferentur. Neque enim Iudaeis duntaxat data sunt vaticinia de futuro Christo, sed etiam gentibus.'

[261] Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), fol. 21^{r}; Schedel, *Liber chronicarum* (1493), fol. XCIII^{v}. This appears to be one of the practices of fusing the patristic tradition with unfounded medieval legends like that of the *ara coeli* that Giraldi criticised theologians for in his *Historia poetarum*. Most probably, this critic is addressed especially at Barbieri, whose *Discordantiae* was widely circulated in Italy at the time that Giraldi composed his work. See Giraldi, *Historia poetarum*, p. 255; J. N. Grant, 'Introduction', in Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Modern Poets*, ed. and transl. by J. N. Grant, Cambridge and London 2011, pp. vii–xxxv (xii–xiii).

[262] See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*.

narrative with its reference to one of the highpoints of classical antiquity appears to have been all too attractive for Barbieri, who with his *Discordantiae* provided a blend of patristic, medieval and humanistic knoweldge illustrative of what the Sibylline tradition had become by the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The conflicted relation of Reformation theologians to the ancient heritage of the Sibyls

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Sibyls – specifically the Tiburtine Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend – were deeply revered as Christian prophetesses in a variety of different contexts, including salvation history, eschatological expectation and the late medieval cult of Mary. In contrast to this kind of devotion, largely made up of audiences that, for a variety of reasons, were less interested in the subtle arguments of theological expertise, stood the stark rejection of humanists who resisted the idea of legitimising Sibylline lore. Reformation theologians, in turn, were less concerned with conceptualising the Sibylline belief patterns of their contemporaries. When in 1520 Adam Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541) reviewed the scriptural canon, firstly from a Reformation point of view, his approach to follow the canon established by Jerome ruled out any sort of recognition of the Sibylline tradition. For this new movement, the Sibylline legacy was of so little significance that they were not even mentioned among the apocrypha, to which Karlstadt conceded the same authoritaty as the Church Fathers.[263] Although Karlstadt's Anabaptist sympathies were soon to let him fall out of his fellow reformers' favour, this approach remained the norm among nearly all orthodox Protestant movements.[264] Indeed, the scattered accounts of Sibylline testimonies make it nearly impossible to draw a conclusive picture of the theological consideration and lead us to ask whether or not the representatives of the Reformation had been able to make sense of the Sibyls.

[263] Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, *Welche bucher Biblisch seint*, Wittenberg: [Melchior Lotter, the Younger], 1520.
[264] A. Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse. The Reception of the Second Book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Oxford 1999, pp. 70–73.

Yet, since the late 1520s, Reformation theologians began to engage with questions surrounding the Sibylline tradition to an increasing degree, for the central issues of the Reformation theology were greatly related to the early modern revival of the Sibylline prophecies. By their very nature, the Sibyls' utterances posed such questions as to who had access to salvation and in what ways this was granted. Even after Karlstadt's verdict, the issue of any type of divine revelation outside the conventional canon of the Scripture was compelling. Potentially, it offered invaluable insights, yet the authenticity of these texts had to be established beyond doubt in order to justify such a use. This set of questions was all the more urgent, especially when we consider that the leading figures of the Reformation were reformulating the meaning of and importance attributed to the name and function of what they called 'prophets'. In Zurich, the former chapter of the Großmünster was even given with the name of *Prophezei*, an office henceforth devoted to the interpretation and translation of the Bible.[265]

In effect, a certain level of uncertainty as to how one should deal with what was purported to be Sibylline knowledge was prevalent among early Reformation theologians. There is a palpable tension between the lack of knowledge about the Sibyls, which hindered further investigations from a theological perspective, and the appropriation by Church Fathers in the dual model of revelation. After all, the authenticity of any of the written remains was not guaranteed, nor was clear who the Sibyls themselves had been, a fact that cast doubt on whatever material was circulating at that time. However, the risk with simply condemning the Sibylline prophecies as counterfeit oracles, irrelevant for the contemporary theological debate, was that possible revelations could be neglected and the voice of God unheard. As the oracles were rediscovered, many of these issues were addressed and the conditions for the debate changed completely. It should also be said that the Reformation theologians who had previously been dealing with this kind of prophetic tradition had failed to reach a unanimous conclusion on the matter, not to mention an agreement with forms of lay reverence for the Sibyl. Nonetheless, there is a difference between the approaches taken by the Lutheran and the Zwinglian camps. In the latter, there is also a chronological shift noticeable both in the degree

[265] For the differing use of the word *propheta* in the senses of Reformed preachers, see D. Timmerman, *Heinrich Bullinger on Prophecy and the Prophetic Office (1523–1538)*, Göttingen 2015.

to which Reformation theologians concerned themselves with the Sibyls, and in the conclusions they reached. The further we move into the sixteenth century, the more Zwingli and his likes seem willing to take the Sibylline accounts into consideration and to adopt a positive attitude towards the Sibylline corpus.

The Upper German regions and Swiss cantons

The stance taken by Zwingli in the 1520s is characterised by a clear distinction between the *libri Sibyllini* understood as the corpus of Roman oracles and the *Sibyllina oracula* considered as a repository of prophecies potentially announcing the coming of Christ. In his commentary on the book of Genesis, *Farrago annotationum in Genesim* ('A Miscellany of Annotations on the Genesis'), Zwingli condemned the Roman tradition of the Sibylline books. As an example of a fraudulent type of pagan divinatory practice, Zwingli likened this kind of literature to the fictitious Egyptian mystical practices associated with the ancient Egypt. He looked at both traditions as deceptive forms of soothsaying. Interestingly, he also described the human desire to know the future as a manifestation of 'greed' (*avaricia*) and 'self-interest' (*philautia*), two sins that had later affected Jewish and Christian priests, including some of the popes.[266] Even though in his *De vera et falsa religione commentarius* ('Commentary on the True and False Religion'), published in 1525, Zwingli had granted ancient philosophers some level of authority, as the divinity displayed in God's creation enabled them to sense God, here he denied that the Sibyls, as part of

[266] Huldrych Zwingli, *Farrago annotationum in Genesim, per Leonem Iudae et Casparem Megandrum exceptarum*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1527, pp. 459–460: 'Sacerdotes plures fuerunt apud Aegyptios, et plura habuerunt mysteria. Antequam autem scriptura esset, notas quasdam habuerunt, et dederunt responsa populo, et oracula in rebus dubiis. Erant docti et experti multarum rerum, et tamen quasi ex diis darent responsa, fingebant, ut maiores et celebriores essent apud populum. Sic apud Romanos collegium fuit pontificum, qui habuerunt libros Sibyllinos, Ephimerides, Annales, Dialesque. Deinde responsis adhibuerunt sacrificia, ut metus esset religionis apud populum, et authoritas maior, quasi ex diis essent responsa. Porro et Aegyptii et Romani sacerdotes cupiditate excaecati, omnia adfectibus viciarunt. Sic postea Iudaeorum sacerdotes avaricia, invidia, vana gloria viciati sunt. Sic demum Christianorum pontifices et sacerdotes, cum verbi coelestis promi deberent esse, condi rerum omnium facti sunt. Quae omnia debet humana miseria Philautiae.'

the vatic tradition of Roman antiquity, could have foreshadowed any knowledge of Christ, dismissing them like any other sort of pagan prediction or augury.[267]

However strong his disapproval of the *libri Sibyllini* may have been, Zwingli did reluctantly accept the bipartite model of divine revelation.[268] In the 1527 refutation of the principles of Anabaptist faith, his *In Catabaptistarum strophas elenchus* ('Refutation of the Stunts of the Anabaptists'), he extended the ability to prophesy to the Sibyls by acknowledging that they had revealed the coming of Christ to the gentiles.[269] Above all, however, stood the idea that Israel was the nation chosen by God. And yet, as God had enabled gentiles to partake in the prospect of salvation by means of His recognition, Zwingli established his Protestant understanding of God's sovereign grace:

> I do not want to waste my time with the Sibylline poems, whether they originated from the Sibyls themselves or were imposed on them. This nation [i.e., Israel], which was the nation of God, loved Him so much that every good that God wanted to donate to humankind, He gave or promised to it through this nation as if this were His priest. This nation to which the promises were made is therefore special, although God also predicted certain truths through the Sibylline prophetesses of the gentiles, so that we were able to recognise the freedom of His will and the authority of His predestination.[270]

Despite the apparent unease with the alleged authorship of the Sibylline prophecies, Zwingli cited the 'Sibylline poems' (*Sibyllina carmina*) in order to support the doctrines about God's free will.[271] Despite the awareness, almost anxiety concerning the question of textual authenticity that he shared with many contemporaries, above all Erasmus, Zwingli took the risks to address the controversial matter of the

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[267] See M. Sallmann, *Zwischen Gott und Mensch. Huldrych Zwinglis theologischer Denkweg im* De vera et falsa religione commentarius *(1525)*, Tübingen 1999, pp. 94–96; R. Pfister, *Die Seligkeit ausgewählter Heiden bei Zwingli. Eine Untersuchung zu seiner Theologie*, Zurich 1952, pp. 20–22.
[268] For the influence of Lactantius, on Zwingli's theology, see F. Büsser, 'Zwingli und Laktanz. (Beobachtungen bei der Lektüre von Zwinglis "De providentia Dei"', in *Wurzeln der Reformation in Zürich. Zum 500. Geburtstag des Reformators Huldrych Zwingli*, ed. by F. Büsser, Leiden 1985, pp. 72–93.
[269] See W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford 1986, pp. 199–206.
[270] Huldrych Zwingli, *In Catabaptistarum strophas elenchus*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1527, p. 145: 'Nihil enim Sibyllina moror carmina, sive enim apud eas nata sint, sive eis obtrusa: haec tamen gens, quae populus dei erat, in hoc erat, ut quicquid boni donare humano generi vellet, per hanc veluti sacerdotem aut daret aut promitteret. Praecipua igitur est, cuius promissiones sunt, etiamsi quaedam per Sibyllas vatidicas ex Gentibus feminas, quo libertatem voluntatis suae ac electionis agnosceremus authoritatem, praedixit.'
[271] See also Stephens, *Theology of Zwingli*, pp. 100, 124–25.

Sibylline oracles, although he did so by confirming that his theological views were still premised on the truth of the Holy Scripture.[272]

These two works dating from 1527 are indicative of the type of divisions affecting theologians sympathetic to Zwinglian ideas, while they were dealing with the Sibylline legacy in the early sixteenth century. On the one hand, there were the Sibylline books seen as the institutional Roman oracle, which Zwingli equated with the commonly deprecated Egyptian rituals. In like manner, in his 1530 commentary on Daniel, *In Danielem prophetam libri duo* ('Two books on the Prophet Daniel'), Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531), a prominent forefighter of the Reformation in Basel, pointed out that the Romans had gathered from the Sibyls the information about the beginning of a new golden age.[273] Although this announcement was meant to determine the time of Christ's birth, that is, the time of the vast dominance of the Roman Empire, Oecolampadius ascribed no importance to the Sibyls from a Christian point of view and used them only as a chronological marker to subdivide the various epochs of Roman antiquity. He clearly assumed that their oracles, that is, the *Sibyllini libri*, seemed not to have borne any momentous implications for contemporary Christians.

On the other hand, this view soon yielded to the generally more prevalent opinion within the Reformed camp that the Sibyls had spoken to the gentiles in the same way in which the canonical prophets of the Bible had revealed God's coming to the nation of Israel. In his 'Commentary on Matthew's Most Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, Our Lord' (*In sacrosanctum Iesu Christi Domini nostri Evangelium secundum Matthaeum commentariorum libri*), published in 1542, Bullinger observed that, while the Jews had learned of Bethlehem as Christ's birthplace from the biblical prophet of Micah, Romans had equally their means of acquiring such or similar information, namely the Sibylline books.[274] This account follows remarkably closely the *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* ('Annotations to the New Testament') by Erasmus, whom Christine Christ-von Wedel identifies as Bullinger's most important

[272] See ibid., pp. 51–52.
[273] Johannes Oecolampadius, *In Danielem prophetam libri duo, omnigena et abstrusiore cum Hebraeorum tum Graecorum scriptorum doctrina referti*, Basel: Thomas Wolf, 1530, fol. 29^{v}.
[274] Heinrich Bullinger, *In sacrosanctum Iesu Christi Domini nostri Evangelium secundum Matthaeum commentariorum libri*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1542, fol. 17^{v}: 'Ut enim Romani habebant aruspicum collegia et sacerdotes, qui rogati ex libris responderent Sibyllinis, ita Iudaei ex divina ordinatione, Malachia dicente, labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam et legem requirent ex ore eius.'

exegetical teacher after the Church Fathers; indeed, in the preface to this commentary, Bullinger himself claimed to have used the *Annotationes*.[275] Here, whilst commenting on the episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17:1–8), Erasmus compared the prophetic office in the Old Testament with the Roman practice of consulting the Sibylline books, as Oecolampadius did.[276] Unlike Erasmus and Oecolampadius, though, who were cautious not to attribute significance for Christianity to the pagan tradition of the Sibylline legacy, Bullinger did not rule out the possibility that the oracular culture of Rome could be somehow relevant for the current theological debate, for a contextualised reading of this passage shows that Bullinger considered the Roman *libri Sibyllini* to contain reliable Christian truths. Potentially, they could have revealed the birth place of Christ to Herod, as alluded to in Bullinger's commentary.

Generally, Protestant exegetical accounts of the of the 1530s and 1540s are shaped by the idea of a duality of divinatory knowledge. In his 'Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles' (*In Acta Apostolorum commentariorum libri*), published in 1533, for example, Bullinger expanded on the significance of the textual testimonies that had been handed down by the Sibyls. He insisted that a better understanding of the Sibylline prophecies could enable the Church to overcome its reliance on the scholastic methods of acquiring knowledge. With the rationale of recovering knowledge of the Christian mysteries in mind, he called for a thorough study of the sources that had witnessed the coming of Christ by collecting testimonies outside the Scripture, a notion deeply rooted in his humanistic sensibility. For instance, when looking at the biblical story of Paul in Athens, Bullinger believed that he had obtained further evidence that in the Sibylline prophecies God had revealed Himself to the pagans, thus providing further insights conducive to a better understanding of the Scriptures.[277] Relying on some extant testimonies from Eusebius duly quoted in his Commentary, Bullinger concluded:

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[275] See C. Christ-von Wedel, 'Zum Einfluss von Erasmus von Rotterdam auf Heinrich Bullinger' in *Heinrich Bullinger. Life – Thought – Influence. Zurich, Aug. 25–29, 2004. International Congress Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575)*, ed. by E. Campi and P. Opitz, 2 vols, Zurich 2007, II, pp. 407–424 (410–11); H. Bullinger, 'Praefatio', in *In Evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1542), sigs aaa 2^{r}–[7 aaa^{v}] (aaa 6^{v}).

[276] See Erasmus, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (OO VI.5.254).

[277] Heinrich Bullinger, *In Acta Apostolorum commentariorum libri VI.*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1533, fol. 23^{rv}.

> If we now gather all that we have learned from this noble and erudite speech [the Sibyl's], we then can see that we have been taught only that there is one God and that only this God is to be worshipped, and worshipped through spiritual means, that is, by faith and repentance. These means He has announced by sending His son to the earth.[278]

By accepting the account of Paul and his positive consideration of the Sibylline sayings, Bullinger, like Zwingli, used this kind of pagan testimony as a way of validating the Protestant reinterpretation of Christian doctrines. The Sibyl, too, emphasised the importance of worshipping by spiritual means, a distinction form the Roman Catholic practice, so crucial to Reformation theology and its ideas concerning the right way of worshipping.

Although the available information was limited to fragments quoted by a handful of Church Fathers, Bullinger did not hesitate to incorporate the oracles as genuine revelations of God, not least because his early theological works were significantly influenced by the patristic theologians.[279] In an attempt to combat the old faith, which he believed to have degenerated into pagan superstition over the centuries, Bullinger placed his *De origine erroris*, published in 1528, in the tradition of Lactantius, whose major work, the *Divinae institutiones*, not only was pervaded by the idea that the Sibyls had been Christian prophets of pagan origin, but also acted as its chief channel of dissemination in Renaissance thought.[280] Bullinger presented them here in precisely this light, although the evidence that the Sibyls upheld a monotheistic view of the divine was derived from the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* ('Exhortation to the Greeks'), which at the time was univocally attributed to the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr (100–165), who was then deemed to be one of the

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[278] Bullinger, *In Acta Apostolorum* (1533), fol. 221^{v}: 'Iam si summam rerum colligamus quae nobili et erudita hac oratione didicimus, iam nihil aliud videmus praeceptum, quam unum esse deum, hunc vero solum esse colendum, colendum autem rebus spiritualibus, hoc est, fide et resipiscentia, quae ille misso filio orbi annuntiarit.'

[279] On the question of how influential the Fathers were on Bullinger's theology, see S.-P. Bergjan, 'Bullinger und die griechischen Kirchenväter in der konfessionellen Auseinandersetzung' and A. Schindler, 'Bullinger und die lateinischen Kirchenväter', in *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit*, ed. by E. Campi, Zurich 2004, pp. 133–60, 161–77.

[280] Heinrich Bullinger, 'Praefatio', in Heinrich Bullinger, *De origine erroris libri duo*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1539, fols 1^{r}–3^{r} (2^{v}). After being published in 1528 by the Basel printer Thomas Wolf (fl.1502–1532), *De origine erroris* was re-issued and revised several times during Bullinger's life. It underwent first major changes and enlargements in the second edition published in 1539. All passages referred to here appeared in this edition. For the importance of Lactantius's influence on Bullinger, especially in his early works, see W. Rordorf, 'Laktanz als Vorbild des jungen Bullinger', in *Bullinger-Tagung 1975. Vorträge, gehalten aus Anlass von Heinrich Bullingers 400. Todestag*, ed. by U. Gäbler and E. Zsindely, Zurich 1977, pp. 33–42 (33–35).

fiercest and oldest advocates of the Sibyls.[281] In doing so, Bullinger granted a certain level of authority to the testimony of the Sibyls, for they could be seen as helpful in restoring the truth of Christianity and helping to interpret the Bible.

Bullinger was not the only one to value the Sibylline prophecies as potentially divine revelations. In his *In sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes* ('Expositions on the Four Gospels'), published in 1536, the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer (1491–1551) revisited the idea that God had revealed Himself following to the Jewish nation and to the gentiles. When commenting on Jesus preaching about the descendants of Abraham (John 8:30–47), he emphasised the crucial role played by scriptural witnesses in strengthening individual belief. In the same way as he described the evolution of Jewish history since the first Covenant of God with Abraham, he concluded that, along with the Jews, God had revealed Himself to the gentiles.[282] In the *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* mentioned above, Musculus employed an argument similar to the one used by Bullinger.[283] He believed that the Three Magi had learned about the arrival of the Messiah from a pagan prophet (Mt 2:2). Musculus did not dare specify, however, whether they had acquired their information from Balaam, who, despite being a pagan diviner, had become part of the scriptural canon, or whether that knowledge came from the Sibylline oracles.[284] Compared to his contemporaries, Musculus most remarkably deemed the Sibyls to have spoken also to people outside the classical world of ancient Greece and Rome, their original world. Furthermore, the fact that they possibly had spoken to the Magi hints at their ability to read the stars, in this case the Star of Bethlehem.[285] Musculus did not consider the latter hypothesis all too

[281] Bullinger, *De origine erroris* (1539), fol. 33^{v}. That, in fact, Justin Martyr is most unlikely the author of the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* is discussed in C. Riedweg (ed.), *Ps.-Justin (Markell von Ankyra?)* Ad Graecos de vera religione *(bisher "Cohortatio ad Graecos")*, 2 vols, Basel 1994, I, pp. 167–82.
[282] Martin Bucer, *In sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes*, Basel: Johannes the Elder Herwagen, 1536, p. 706.
[283] Many of Musculus's contemporaries were of the opinion that he was among the greatest exegetes of his time. See J. J. Ballor, *Covenant, Causality, and Law. A Study in the Theology of Wolfgang Musculus*, Göttingen 2012, pp. 34–38.
[284] Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), p. 11. More generally on the star of Bethlehem and Balaam, see T. Nicklas, 'Balaam and the Star of the Magi', in *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophets Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, ed. by G. H. van Kooten and J. van Ruiten, Leiden and Boston 2008, pp. 233–46.
[285] For the visual representation of the presumed origins and roots of the various Sibyls in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art, especially the 'orientalising' tendency, see McGrath, 'Jacob Jordaens and Moses's Ethiopian Wife', pp. 267–69. For the Sibyl as an astrologer having read the stars to divine the future to the Magi, see Smoller, 'Teste Albumasare cum Sibylla', pp. 76–79, 84–87; Smoller, 'Astrology and the Sibyls', pp. 432–36; Green, *Printing and Prophecy*, pp. 33–40.

implausible, for he drew an *a fortiori* argument in support of the importance of God's word from the existence of and knowledge derived from the Sibylline oracles.[286] He also referred to the *Eclogue of Theodulus*, a pseudo-Virgilian poem dating from the Carolingian period which had become a popular school text during the Middle Ages.[287] Again, the *Coniecturae de ultimis temporibus, ac de fine mundi, ex sacris literis* ('Conjectures about the Last Times and the End of the World on the Basis of the Holy Scripture') by Andreas Osiander (1496/8–1552) provides an example in which the idea of dual revelation had entered a learned apocalyptic treatise.[288] In the manner typical for this revelatory model, the Sibyls were juxtaposed to the biblical prophets to mark Osiander's distinction between the secular power of the Roman Empire as in the Book of Daniel (7) and the spiritual leadership claimed by the popes, as interpreted in the Book of Revelation (13; 17).[289]

In other words, a group of established and influential theologians of Reformed faith, such as Bullinger, Bucer and Musculus, as well as the Lutheran Osiander, did not disparage the Sibylline utterances. On the contrary, they defended and justified the existence of two parallel traditions through which God had announced Himself to humankind: the one documented in the Bible, already established and uncontested, and the one bequeathed in the Sibylline oracles. In presenting the Sibyls as having

[286] Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), p. 82: 'Reperias, qui multum dent fidei vaticiniis Sibyllarum, Theoduli ac similium, ut quae in illis scripta legunt, diligenter observant, et cursum temporum, quibus singula vel in speciem compleantur, notent, et ex praeteritis de futuris adhuc irremissam expectationem concipiunt.'

[287] Written as an imaginary contest between Pseustis ('Falsehood'), the representative of pagan culture, and Alithea ('Truth'), the standard-bearer of Christianity, the poem presented the dilemma concerning the relationship between Graeco-Roman mythology and the stories from the Hebrew Old Testament. Because of its very nature, both stylistically and in content, the dialogue became associated with the kind of prophetic literature in which the tradition of pagan antiquity was seen as a foreshadowing of Christian truths. On the Eclogue of Theodulos, see R. P. H. Green, 'The Genesis of a Medieval Textbook. The Models and Sources of the "Ecloga Theoduli"', *Viator* XIII, 1982, pp. 49–106; K. Goehl and J. Wintjes, *Die ecloga des Theodulus*, Baden-Baden 2012.

[288] Since 1524 Osiander had been preoccupied with apocalyptic matters. In his *Coniuncturae*, published in 1544, he had extended his analysis of the biblical apocalypse with extra-biblical material from the rich visionary culture circulating at the time. Although critically received, the treatise can be reckoned as having been swiftly disseminated with some interest, given that two reissues were published in the year of the work's first publication as well as its translation into German and English. The German translation entitled *Vermůtung von den letzten Zeiten vnd dem Ende der welt aus der heiligen Schrifft gezogen* was penned by Osiander himself and was printed in 1545 by the Nuremberg printer Petreius, followed in 1548 by the George Joyce's English translation, *The Conjectures of the Ende of the Worlde*, which was printed in London by Richard Jugge (d.1577). See M. Hein, 'Einleitung', in Andreas Osiander, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by G. Müller and G. Seebaß, 10 vols, Gütersloh 1975–97, VIII, pp. 150–57 (150–51, 153, 156–57).

[289] Andreas Osiander, 'Coniecturae de ultimis temporibus ac de fine mundi (1544)/Vermutung von der letzten Zeiten und dem Ende der Welt', in *Gesamtausgabe*, VIII, pp. 158–271 (226–27).

led the Magi to Bethlehem, Musculus endorsed this model by defending the possibility of a direct exertion of influence. As Zwingli had done before, Osiander and Bucer proposed to corroborate existing doctrines or readings of Scriptures not by invoking what the Sibyls had written, but by simply assuming that they were Christian prophetesses. This was sufficient to prove, among others, the doctrine of God's free will. Probably because only a limited number of written remains were extant, this however had no implications for the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, which it technically undermined.

But what, one wonders, is the reason that caused this shift in attitude towards the Sibylline tradition? Why were Reformation theologians gradually more willing to take Sibylline knowledge or their veneration among the lay into consideration, as apparent in these biblical commentaries? Looking at other contemporary currents, it is striking to note how during the 1530s, when this favourable attitude appeared in the theological debate, the *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen* was so successful that within less than a decade it was printed five times, in 1531, 1532, 1534, 1535 and 1537. To infer that there was a direct influence might be too much of a speculation. Yet, rather than invoking a mere coincidence, it is safe to say that since Egenolff's tract was printed in Frankfurt, the place of the renowned book fair, it probably was well distributed in the Northern Swiss cantons and Southern Germany. As a result, the text certainly came to the attention of the theologians mentioned above. So, although we do not have textual evidence that may support the thesis that the theological debate was somehow influenced by this very booklet, it cannot be ruled out that the strong popularity enjoyed by the Sibyls among the local population led theologians also to consider these sources.

In 1545, the same year in which the Sibylline oracles appeared in print, Bullinger had his *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß der dieneren der kilchen zů Zürych* ('Orthodox Confession for the Ministers of the Church of Zurich') published in Zurich, accompanied by a Latin version that was released simultaneously.[290] In this treatise,

[290] Heinrich Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß der dieneren der kilchen zů Zürych/was sy uß Gottes wort/mit der heyligen allgemeinen Christlichen Kilchen gloubind vnd leerind/in sonderheit aber von dem Nachtmal vnsers herren Jesu Christi*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1545; Heinrich Bullinger, *Orthodoxa Tigurinae ecclesiae ministrorum Confessio, illorum et fidem et doctrinam, quam cum Catholica sanctorum ecclesia communem habent, continens, in primis autem de coena domini nostri Iesu Christi*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1545.

the Sibyls were employed as one of many means by which Bullinger rebutted Luther's condemnation of Zwingli as a pagan. The origin of Luther's attack is to be found in Zwingli's *Expositio christianae fidei* ('Exposition of Christian Faith'), dating from 1531. According to this text, God had granted His grace not only to the non-Jewish figures mentioned in the Bible, such as Abraham, Melchizedek and Naaman, but also to other pagans, like Socrates, Aristides and the second king of Rome, Numa Pompilius, whereby they had been accepted into the heavenly paradise.[291] In response, Luther in his 1544 *Kurtz bekentnis vom heiligen Sacrament* ('A Short Confession of the Holy Sacrament') charged Zwingli with being not just a heretic, but a veritable pagan.[292] In order to rehabilitate Zwingli, Bullinger then composed the *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß*.[293] In the first part, Bullinger countered Zwingli's alleged paganism by following two lines of argument. Firstly, he stated that Zwingli was right to extol the virtues of Aristides, the ancient Athenian statesman, for he had led a life as impeccable as anyone of the Christian martyrs; Zwingli was also right to defend Numa and Socrates, for, in spite of their polytheistic beliefs, they had identified God's main attributes, a notion that Zwingli had borrowed from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* and Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*. Secondly, Bullinger held that this position neither challenged the genuine Protestant idea of *sola gratia*, nor did it indicate that Zwingli regarded the figures mentioned above as necessarily to be saved.[294] In his vindication of Zwingli's views, Bullinger went so far as to agree with him that God excluded no faithful from the New Covenant, an argument that, in Bullinger's opinion, had already been advanced by St Paul and John Chrysostom (c.349–407). It is by referring to Zwingli's account of the Sibyls as evidence of a rather inclusive understanding of God's revelation that

[291] Huldrych Zwingli, *Christianae fidei praedicatae brevis et clara expositio*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1536, fols 26^{v}–27^{v}. See also Pfister, *Die Seligkeit ausgewählter Heiden*.
[292] Martin Luther, *Kurtz bekentnis vom heiligen Sacrament*, Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1544, sigs a iij^{v}–a iv^{v}. Unlike Zwingli and most reformers, Luther did not have a humanistic education, but was trained as an Occamist in a typical scholastic environment. Consequently, he was more greatly exercised by any intermingling of Christian faith with ancient philosophy, culminating in this confrontation with Zwingli. See W. Mostert, 'Luthers Verhältnis zur theologischen und philosophischen Überlieferung', in *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526–1546. Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag*, ed. by H. Junghans, 2 vols, Berlin 1983, I, pp. 347–68.
[293] W. F. Dankbaar, 'Das Zürcher Bekenntnis (1545) und seine niederländische Übersetzung (1645)', in *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag*, ed. by U. Gäbler and E. Herkenrath, 2 vols, Zurich 1975, I, pp. 85–108 (86, 89).
[294] Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fols 16^{r}–19^{v}. See also Stephens, *Theology of Zwingli*, pp. 123–27.

Bullinger supported this point.[295] Nevertheless, Bullinger showed himself well aware that some interpreters like Erasmus deemed the Sibyls' prophecies to be forgeries. However, he firmly rejected such hypotheses on the basis that their predictions had been fulfilled, a crucial part of the definition of prophets given by Moses (Dt 18:15–22). Moreover, the fact that the Sibyls were supposed to operate at the time of the Apostles and the Church Fathers, an age that the reformers held in high esteem, helped Bullinger to bolster their authenticity. Overall, this line of argument strongly resembles the view that he expressed in his 1533 Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. In his *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß*, however, the Sibyls' importance was further illustrated by referring to the *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, which he had already used in *De origine erroris*. In addition to suggesting that philosophy including the Sibylline utterances should be read in preparation for understanding Christianity, the author of the *Cohortatio* had also advocated the important role of the Sibyls in unfolding the mystery of revelation (37.1–38.2).[296]

A similar view was held by Rudolf Gwalther (1519–1586), who published the complete works of Zwingli in 1545. In the preface to this edition, he considered the Sibylline prophecies as belonging to the tradition of the Hermetic corpus. In doing so, and arguing extensively with Augustine, he transformed the Sibyls from forerunners of true religious piety that could be used to justify Reformed doctrine into a source of genuine prophetic knowledge. This interpretation supported Zwingli's thesis that God could not have denied the gentiles the benefit of revelation and salvation.[297] The argumentation bears traits of *De perenni philosophia* by Agostino Steuco (1497–1548), the then Head of the Vatican Library and fierce opponent of the Reformation, who had argued for one sole inspirational driving force beyond the different characteristics of Christianity and ancient philosophy.[298] Both authors theorized the concept of an original unity of theology and philosophy, which

[295] In order to prove this, Bullinger referred to the Sibyls of each known continent; America is not taken into account. See Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 20^{v}.
[296] Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 21^{rv}. For the original text, see Riedweg, *Ad Graecos de vera religione*, II, pp. 579–82.
[297] Huldrych Zwingli, *Opera, partim quidem ab ipso Latine conscripta, partim vero e vernaculo sermone in Latinum translata: omnia novissime recognita, et multis adiectis*, ed. by Rudolf Gwalther, 4 vols, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1545, I, sigs ε 4^{r}–ζ^{r}. See C. Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus: The Intermingling of Hermetic Piety and Christian Thought*, Turnhout 2011, pp. 245–48.
[298] Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia libri X. Opus immensa non solum eruditione ac pietate refertum, sed omnium quoque tam veterum quam recentiorum philosophorum*, Lyon: Sebastian Gryphius, 1540.

allowed non-Christian thinkers to expand their understanding of Christian religion. As a result, the Sibyls, despite their non-biblical origins, were legitimised as divine authorities. Bullinger's and Gwalther's accounts of the Sibyls, however, were shaped by personal agendas rather than by what Zwingli had expressed in both the *Farrago* and the *Elenchus* of 1527. Yet they helped to rehabilitate Zwingli and secure him a sound aftermath.[299] They brought to the fore the main assumptions behind Zwingli's position on the pagans, which overlapped with his attempt to acknowledge the presence of the truth in nature as expressed in his *Farrago*. At the same time, however, they left no trace of Zwingli's divided view, although no reassessment of this position by Zwingli himself is manifest in written form.

The overall cautiousness with which Upper German theologians approached the predictions of the Sibyls is also evident in the terms they used to refer to them, or rather in the terms they did not use. Only in Bullinger's Latin version of his *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* can one find the term 'oracles' (*oracula*) and 'prophets' (*prophetae*) employed to describe the Sibyls and their pronouncements.[300] Until then, such expressions seem to have been deliberately avoided. Zwingli and the theologians who were close to his position usually preferred to call the Sibyls by their name or terming the Sibylline predictions 'songs' (*carmina*)[301], 'divinations' (*vaticinia*)[302] or 'writings' (*gschrifften*)[303]; even Gwalther, when rendering the Latin word *propheta* in his German translation of the 1545 confession, chose the German word for 'messenger' (*kundtschafften*) rather than its more obvious German equivalent of *Prophetin*. Reformation theologians were not interested in specifying which tradition they were referring to, that is, whether the *oracula* or the *libri*. All these lexical choices hint at a degree of uncertaintiy concerning the exact nature of the Sibylline tradition, and can be taken as evidence of the composite, indiscernable lore it had become by the early sixteenth century. The lack of extensive textual remains prevented them from reaching more concrete conclusions about the relation between the Sibyls and the coming of Christ. The only tradition that was well

[299] See also Dankbaar, 'Das Zürcher Bekenntnis', p. 89.
[300] Bullinger, *Orthodoxa confessio* (1545), fol. 19^{rv}.
[301] Zwingli, *In Catabaptistarum* (1527), p. 145.
[302] Bucer, *In sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes* (1536), p. 706; Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), pp. 11, 82.
[303] Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 21^{v}. See also Osiander, *Gesamtausgabe*, pp. 228–29; Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 21^{v}; Bullinger, *Orthodoxa confessio* (1545), fol. 19^{r}; Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), p. 11.

evidenced by classical sources and therefore allowed a clear identification was that of the 'books' (*libri/bücher*).[304] It appears that this nomenclature was used as a means of clearly accentuating the importance of the corpus with respect to a pagan audience as well as to refer to the pagan reading of this branch of the tradition of Sibylline lore, rather than to imply the later Christian interest. In turn, the word 'oracle', the technical term since the publication of the Sibylline oracles, was only used by Bullinger in 1545, the year of the publication of the oracles.[305] This acute awareness of the place that the Sibyls occupied in the classical tradition also relates to the fact that the theologians I have discussed above did not rely on the medieval ramifications of the Sibylline lore. Likewise, they did not believe that the Sibylline utterances were counterfied or interpolated. By and large, the historical veracity of the Sibylline tradition was key in the engagement with them and, more specifically, the acceptance of a bipartite model of divine revelation.

The fierce rejection of the Sibylline lore by Luther and his followers

When comparing the attitudes towards the Sibylline legacy of the representatives of the Swiss-Reformed movement to those of its German-Lutheran counterpart, the differing positions on divinations more generally are striking. While Luther himself vehemently opposed any kind of prophesying other than the biblical prophets, his right-hand man Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) held a more favourable opinion about the divinatory lore of pagan antiquity and, in particular, of astrology. According to Melanchthon, astrology could function as an intellectual safeguard, for a certain level of influence upon human life could be attributed to the stars.[306] This

[304] Zwingli, *Farrago annotationum in Genesim* (1527), p. 459; Oecolampadius, *In Danielem libri* (1530), fol. 29^{v}; Bullinger, *In Acta Apostolorum* (1533), fol. 23^{r}; Bullinger, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1542), fol. 17^{v}; Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 21^{v}.
[305] Bullinger, *Orthodoxa confessio* (1545), fol. 19^{v}; Bullinger, *Warhaffte Bekanntnuß* (1545), fol. 21^{r}.
[306] This long-term dissent has been well documented in Aby Warburg's seminal work *Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten* (Heidelberg 1920, pp. 11–12, 16.) For a more recent study, see C. Brosseder, *Im Bann der Sterne. Caspar Peucer, Philipp Melanchthon und andere Wittenberger Astrologen*, Berlin 2004, pp. 257–71. While in his foreword to the apocalyptic writing *Die weissagunge* by Johannes Lichtenberger (c.1426–1503) Luther rejected all kinds of prophetic practice that relied on special devices or techniques, for the reason that he considered them to be driven by the devil, he nevertheless admitted that God could sometimes use natural phenomena to warn his faithful. See Johannes Lichtenberger, *Die weissagunge deudsch/zugericht mit vleys. Sampt einer nutzlichen vorrede vnd vnterricht D. Martini Luthers,* Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1527, sigs A i^{v}–A ij^{r} (A i^{v}, A ij^{r}). For Luther's relationship with divination, see also Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, pp. 36–53.

stance is in stark contrast to Luther's condemnation of all attempts to acquire knowledge of the future: 'The violation of the first commandment … Those who aim their work and life at certain days, signs from heaven, and notions of fortune-tellers.'[307] It is therefore not surprising that Luther dismissed also the Sibylline divinations as pointless. In an interpretation of Psalm 119, which he attached to a consolatory letter to the citizens of Miltenberg, published in 1525, he mockeed the Sibyls saying that his own predictions were more plausible than the oracles of Apollo and what he called 'Sibylline leaves' (*folia Sibyllina*), a term probably lent from Erasmus.[308] So little concerned was Luther with the Sibyls that he did not even elaborate on the motives behind his dismissal, neither here nor in any other of his writings.[309] For him, true prophecies were bound to derive directly from the Holy Spirit and, as clearly argued in his *Das Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sey* ('That Jesus Christ Was Born A Jew'), never conceived outside the Jewish nation.[310] In this sense, the biblical prophets were a legitimate manifestation of natural, that is, divinely grounded, divination, whereas the Sibylline oracles were discredited as yet another proof of the vanity of all pagan wisdom.

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[307] Martin Luther, *Die zehen gepot gottes. mit einer kurtzen außlegung jrer erfullung vnd vbertretung*, Nuremberg: Jobst Gutknecht, 1518, sig. A ij^{v}: 'Die vbertretung des ersten gebots … Wer sein werck vnn leben/nach erwelten tagen/hymels zeychen/vnd der weyßsagern duncken richtet.'

[308] Martin Luther, 'Omnibus amicis Christi Miltembergae', in Martin Luther, *Epistolarum farrago, pietatis et eruditionis plena*, Hagenau: Johann Setzer, 1525, sigs D^{v}–Eiij^{v} (Eiij^{v}): 'Atque haec mea sit Prophetia, quam omnibus Apollineis oraculis, foliisque Sibyllinis certiorem fore vobis plane persuasum sit. Deus illorum misereatur.' For the thesis that Luther devised a theology that broke with the contemporaneous ideas of Hermeticism and similar notions relating to the pagan legacy. See F. Stengel, 'Reformation, Renaissance und Hermetismus.Kontexte und Schnitttstellen der frühen reformatorischen Bewegung', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte/Archive for Reformation History* CIV, 2013, pp. 35–81.

[309] In his seminal work, Robin B. Barnes reiterates John M. Headley's understanding that in his 1521 *De abroganda missa sententia* or, in German, *Vom miszbrauch der Messen* ('On the Malpractice of Mass'; WA VIII:475–76; 561–62), Luther saw in Frederick III of Saxony (the Wise, 1463–1525) the fulfilment of the Sibylline prediction concerning the last Emperor. In light of the dismissal of the their pronouncement as shown here, and the fact that in the passage referred to by Headley no explicit mention of the Sibylline oracles can be found, the role the Sibyls played for Luther must be questioned. Furthermore, since Möhring has shown how the ancient myths of both the Final Emperor and the Sibyls conflated in the fourteenth century, it seems more likely that Luther reached this conclusion without directly entrusting any authority to the Sibyls. See Martin Luther, *De abroganda missa sententia*, Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter, 1522, sigs Lii^{r}–Liii^{3}; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, p. 47; J. M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History*, New Haven and London 1963, p. 232; Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, pp. 58–67, 75–82, 92–97, 253. Likewise, Malay's passing note on the Sibyl, Luther and his study of prophetic texts are mistakable and ought not be read as an interest on Luther's side in the Sibyls as veritable prophets. See Malay, *Prophecy in the Renaissance*, p. 49.

[310] Martin Luther, *Das Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sey*, Wittenberg: [Lukas Cranach and Christian Döring], 1523, fol. Aiij^{r}: 'Denn es ist ye kein Patriarch/keyn Apostel/keyn Prophet/auß den heyden/darzů auch gar wenig rechter Christen erhaben/Vnd ob gleich das Euangelion aller welt ist kundt gethan/so hat er doch keinem volck die heiligen schrifft/das ist/das gesetz vnd die Propheten befolhen/den den Juden/wie Paulus sagt Roma.iij. vnd Pslam.cxlvij.'

While disagreeing on the matter of astrology, Luther and Melanchthon were both sceptical about the Sibyls being equal to the biblical prophets. A tendency to shift away from extra-biblical narratives and beliefs is manifest in both authors, and this made the persistence of the Sibyls as a prophet-like figure within Lutheran theology impossible. In his preface to the third volume of Luther's *Opera omnia*, which was dedicated to Albert of Prussia (1490–1568), Melanchthon contrasted the books of the prophets and the apostles in the Bible, seen as the unequivocal foundation of the Church's doctrine, to writings 'similar to those of the Sibyl's leaves' (*Sibyllae foliis similia*).[311] In this manner, by pitting any kind of Sibylline divinations against the sources of veritable faith, he presented the Sibylline utterances as epitomising the cause of the past corruption in the Church. Melanchthon dismissed the revelatory meaning of the Sibylline prophecies and dissuaded possible pious readers from following an approach similar to the one championed by the theologians with Reformed leaning.

This position strongly resembles, if not coincides with, the notion put forward in the *Chronicon Carionis*, a chronicle that, even before being adopted by Melanchthon, occupied a central place in the Protestant universal historiography of the sixteenth century.[312] The first printed edition of 1532 was written by Johannes Carion (Näglis, 1499–1537), who although he was a sympathizer of Reformation ideas, at the time of composition was working as court astrologer to the starkly Catholic Brandenburg elector Joachim I (Nestor, 1499–1535).[313] The *Chronicon* originally appeared in the vernacular, but as early as five years after its publication it was translated into Latin by the Lübeck pedagogue and superintendent Hermann

[311] Philipp Melanchthon, 'Praefatio', in *Tomus tertius omnium operum reverendi viri, Domini Martini Lutheri*, ed. by Philipp Melanchthon, Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1549, sigs)(ij^{r}–)(v^{v} ()(ij^{r}–)(iij^{r}): 'Vociferantur, solos fontes legendos esse, scilicet Prophetica et Apostolica scripta, quia et universam doctrinam Ecclesiae continent, et non sunt ambigua, aut Sibyllae foliis similia.'

[312] While the extent to which Melanchthon amended the first version of the *Chronica* after reading the initial manuscript in 1531 is uncertain, Bauer, based on Melanchthon's letters to Joachim Camerarius (the Elder, 1500–1574) and Antonius Corvinus (1501–1553), argues that it was Melanchthon who structured the material collected by Carion according to the Four Monarchies in Daniel 2. See B. Bauer, 'Die Chronica Carionis von 1532, Melanchthons und Peucers Bearbeitung und ihre Wirkungsgeschichte', in *Himmelszeichen und Erdenwege. Johannes Carion (1499–1537) und Sebastian Hornmold (1500–1581) in ihrer Zeit*, ed. by Elke Osterloh, Ubstadt-Weiher 1999, pp. 203–46 (204–5). For a biographical sketch, see S. Benning, 'Johannes Carion aus Bietigheim. Eine biographische Skizze', in Osterloh, *Himmelszeichen und Erdenwege*, pp. 193–202.

[313] Johannes Carion, *Chronica*, Wittenberg: Georg Rhau, 1532.

Bonnus (1504–1548), probably for his Latin lessons.[314] In the section specifically dedicated to the Sibyls, the term 'sibyl' described a total of eight 'female prophets or diviners' (*ein Prophetin odder weissagerin/vates aut prophetissa*), who 'at the time of the holy fathers' (*zur heiligen Vetter zeiten*/*sanctorum patrum temporibus*) preached the right belief they had gathered from the latter.[315] Unlike the Upper German theologians, who held that there existed two independent lines of divine revelation represented by the Sibyls and the biblical prophets, here Carion did not regard the Sibyls as diviners in the sense that they prophesied upon divine inspiration, but rather as conveyors of the covenant between God and the biblical patriarchs. This novel stance allowed historians to recognise the importance of the beliefs concerning the Sibyls, granted by the Church Fathers and later generations, as reported by Carion, while conceiving them as a form of knowledge rather than a divinely revealed prophecy.[316] As a result, the significance of these pagan prophetesses for contemporary theology was substantially reduced. Carion was convinced that the tradition known to Lactantius was genuinely ancient and therefore not counterfeited by Christians. Lastly, Carion identified the devil as the driving force behind the oracular culture of pagan antiquity with its most famous oracles in Delphi. For him, however, the Sibyls did not originate from this pagan oracular tradition, but, as members of the Jewish people that lived in accordance to God's law, they had blended into pagan culture and were then perceived as representative of that culture. By providing this historical account, Carion was able to demystify the

[314] Hermann Bonnus (tr.), *Chronica Ioannis Carionis conversa ex Germanico in Latinum*, Schwäbisch Hall: Peter Brubach, 1537; see Melanchthon to Sigismund of Brandenburg, in CR XI.531–38 (531); Bauer, 'Chronica Carionis von 1532', p. 212. Another token of the great interest in this work even before Melanchthon's 1558 edition is the fact that it underwent seven editions in the years 1532 and 1533 alone. According to Frank Prietz, this and other numbers established by Uwe Neddermeyer are however far too low, given that Carion's work alone was published in 78 editions. See U. Neddermeyer, '"Was hat man von solchen confusionibus […] recht und vollkömmlich berichten können?" Der Zusammenbruch des einheitlichen europäischen Geschichtsbildes nach der Reformation', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* LXXVI, 194, pp. 77–109 (82); F. Prietz, 'Geschichte und Reformation. Die deutsche Chronica des Johannes Carion als Erziehungsbuch und Fürstenspiegel', in *Universitas. Die mittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Universität im Schnittpunkt wissenschaftlicher Disziplinen. Georg Wieland zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by O. Auge and C. Dietl, Tübingen Basel 2007, pp. 153–65 (157).

[315] Carion, *Chronica* (1532), fol. 26^{v}; Bonnus, *Chronica Carionis* (1537), fol. 45^{r}.

[316] Contrary to what Asaph Ben-Tov stated, it was not Melanchthon who first exposed these transformative ideas in his 1558 version of the *Chronicon Carionis*, but Carion. It was he who first presented the Sibyls as conveyors of 'the doctrine of the Fathers' (*der heiligen Vetter lar*/*doctrina patrum*). Carion, *Chronica* (1532), fol. 26^{v}; Bonnus, *Chronica Carionis* (1537), fol. 45^{r}; see A. Ben-Tov, 'Eine späthumanistische Konfessionalisierung der Antike. Die Griechen in der protestantischen *historia universalis'*, in *Antikes erzählen. Narrative Transformationen von Antike in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by A. Heinze, A. Schirmeister and J. Weitbrecht, Berlin and Boston 2013, pp. 117–42 (126, 135–36).

Sibyls and their legacy. Whilst justifying the respectability within paganism and patristic thought, the authority of the Bible was upheld and contemporary audiences were cautioned against the Sibylline legacy.

From what has been discussed so far, a clear distinction emerges in the attitude with which Lutheran and Reformed theologians approached the Sibylline oracles in the first half of the sixteenth century. Unlike Malay, I would conclude that both Luther, Melanchthon and Carion were not simply reluctant to consider the Sibylline oracles as potential vatic sources of divine insights.[317] Luther displayed an almost hostile reaction to such an idea, whereas Carion proposed a historical argument whereby the Sibyl could be seen as a diviner who had extended Noah's covenant into pagan mythology. In Upper German circles, as we have seen, the idea of a bipartite model of divine revelation was prevalent. Only a small minority denied the Sibylline heritage to have any import for Christianity. At most, they had pointed out that there were two different Sibylline traditions, the *libri Sibyllini* and what I would refer to as Sibylline prophecies, but what the reformers termed *oracula*. Otherwise, the approach pursued by the Reformed camp was characterised by a much more nuanced evolution and an increased interest in the matter. Crucially, the dominant idea of a dual revelation was related to the doctrinal question of divine salvation and the scope of its extension. As the Sibylline oracles were deemed to have alerted the pagans about the imminent coming of Christ, the pagans – so the argument went – had been granted the opportunity to gain insights into the divine and, possibly, some extent of salvation, an idea which undermined the conception of the one elected people of Israel, but testified to God's free will. It is however striking to note how little attention had been devoted to the question concerning the authenticity of the Sibylline corpus. Likewise, no attempt was made in any theological writing to clarify who the Sibyls were, let alone which Sibyl was referred to in particular. Although the Protestant debate concerning the Sibyls was embedded in a renaissance of patristic and early Christian theology, the series of qualifications made by Lactantius and Augustine regarding the different Sibylline traditions were disregarded. By contrast, the Sibyls, who in the meantime even among lay people had grown to twelve,

[317] See Malay, *Prophecy in the Renaissance*, p. 51.

sometimes even thirteen, were referred to in the singular as a *nomen generale*.[318] And yet, despite the variety of the responses, there seems to have been a consensus directed at refining the theological understanding of these prophetic pronouncements. Whereas Bullinger and Gwalther explicitly pointed out traces of Hermetic philosophy regarding the ways in which the Sibyls had foreshadowed elements of Christian revelation, generally speaking, theologians tacitly complied with the thesis that the Sibyls, inspired by God, had acted as carriers of natural divination, the only type of prophesying that could be justified within the realm of theology.[319] This does not mean that the superiority of the biblical prophets was somehow disputed. In fact, in the decades leading up to 1545, the Sibyls were not used as a source to obtain further understanding of Christ at all. While the question of their authenticity was either left unsolved or unaddressed, they were nevertheless employed as a tool to justify a number of Reformed doctrine, such as God's free will. Despite claims to the contrary, this is evidence that, in the general effort to strengthen the intellectual core of Protestant theology, the Sibyls served to provide additional historical evidence and therefore to widen the scope of biblical exegesis. Once purged of their 'oracular' connotations, which were deemed too close to pagan polytheism and naturalism, Sibylline divinations could thus be used by Protestant theologians as a repository of extra-biblical information about the nature of divine revelation.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Sibylline tradition had become a complex body of stories and knowledge held by different groups, at different levels in society and in different geographical areas. The foundation for the Christian interest in the Sibylline prophecies had been laid by the Church Fathers. Among them, Lactantius and Augustine had been perceived as the most authoritative. Their acceptance

[318] For the different numbers of Sibyls, see most prominently the anonymous tract *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen.*

[319] At the turn of the fifteenth century, the Sibyls were associated with both artificial and natural divination. In addition to the more traditional concept of Sibylline pronouncement as prophetic frenzy, the view that she also read the stars in order to foretell future events gained support. See Green, *Printing and Prophecy*, p. 22.

of the Sibyls as Christian prophets, albeit of pagan origin, and their consequent appropriation for apologetic and, more broadly, theological purposes resulted in the idea of divine revelation as a bipartite source of knowledge: the Jews had learnt about the coming of a messiah through the canonical prophets of the Tanakh and the gentiles had done so through the Sibyls. As this notion entered early Christian and scholastic thought, new pseudonymous *ex eventu* prophecies emerged. A text, for which no pre-medieval origins have been identified to this point, is the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*. This thirteenth-century prophecy with heavy references on contemporary political events describes the ever-lasting battle between the Romans and the Greeks, which ultimately would end in an apocalyptic inferno. This is also the teleological end point of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl', an alleged dream interpretation in which the decline of humankind is foretold over the succession of nine generations. In the version known to Western Christendom, it was first codified in 1047, after it had circulated in the Greek-speaking world for some time. Of similar origin was the *ara coeli* legend. In its Latin tradition, it combined soteriological elements with the otherwise predominantly apocalyptic imagery of the Sibylline tradition. These three influential medieval *pseudepigrapha* had by the beginning of the sixteenth century merged with the patristic and scholastic traditions, to the extent that a clear distinction of the texts' origins was impossible for contemporaries to accomplish. This was also reflected by the individual personas that had been assigned to them. Not only had the number of ten Sibyls with antique pedigree as found in patristic sources been complemented by two new diviners, but this classical canon had also been pervaded by figures and ideas of medieval origin, moulding these originally distinct traditions into one indistinguishable lore. By doing so, the geographical and cultural reference was shifted towards Western Christendom and, more specifically, the (Holy) Roman Empire.

It was indeed there that the Sibylline tradition came to flourish from the mid fourteenth century. A wealth of representations of Sibyl(s) in manuscript illuminations and, even more so, church interiors including devotional objects and altarpieces leaves no doubt about the unbroken interest in the Sibylline lore until at least the 1550s. Here it is important to stress that it was not due to the new impulses from the intellectual movement of humanism and its artistic expressions that the Sibylline tradition thrived throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. As I

have argued, medieval legends such as the *ara coeli* legend are evidence of a reverence for the Sibyl(s) in western and central Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Especially significant was the influence coming from the strong Marian devotion of the late fifteenth century. From being a prophet who up to that point had represented the universality of the Christian message and an imminent apocalyptic expectation, the Tiburtine Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend became a supporting device meant to bolster the weak scriptural foundation of the Virgin's cult. In this function, the Sibyl came to figure mainly in commissions of lay and local groups that tended to be less theologically conversant. In this regard it is highly remarkable that while the Sibyl was of major importance as a pictorial and prophetic motif designed to enhance glorifications of Mary, a considerable number of contemporary thinkers rejected the Sibylline lore. The crux of the matter was the indiscernible nature of the rather convoluted tradition with its different layers of transmission and origins. This also means that the early modern period did not present a unified approach to this tradition. Erasmus, for example, highlighted the traces that the Sibyls had left in antique culture, whilst Giraldi regarded antiquity as the time of corruption and derivation of the Sibylline prophecies that finally Augustine, Lactantius and Prosper of Aquitaine were able to restore. Accordingly, the response by the reformers was varied in their dealings with this lore, ranging from Luther's stark rejection to various levels of moderate appreciation in the Reformed camp. In line with the bipartite model of revelation, Musculus and Bullinger went so far as to be willing to incorporate allusions to the Sibyls into their exegetical and apologetic works.

By way of a caveat about drawing conclusions concerning the question of popular belief as they were reflected in contemporary devotionalia, we should keep in mind that the vast majority of representations of the *ara coeli* legend as well as any other Sibylline story originated from territories that remained loyal to the Roman Church. And yet, the long-lasting editorial history of the *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagung* with its Protestant printers is only one example of compelling evidence that this myth remained no less popular in areas with sympathies for the Reformation. Additionally, in the secular context of the Goslar city hall, a series of Sibyls and Emperors dating from about 1507 attests to the continued reverence held for the Sibyls in a city that

introduced the Protestant faith in 1531.[320] Embellishing the so-called *Huldigungssaal* ('Obeisance hall'), this cycle culminates in what can undoubtedly be identified as the *ara coeli* legend: the Tiburtine Sibyl points to an exaltation of the Virgin, while on Mary's left Augustus, who bears traits of the then Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), is the only emperor depicted as kneeling. With banderoles displaying prophetic sayings, the Sibyls were clearly marked as Christian prophets. At the same time, by pairing each of them with an emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the author of this cycle alluded to the Sibyls' role as the oracle of the Roman state. And so it happens that this hall, where the council of the Imperial free city of Goslar was held, not only puts emphasis on the idea of the *sacrum imperium* which enjoys especial protection from the Virgin, but also endorses the idea of the Holy Roman Empire as the legitimate successor of the Roman Empire. This notion of *translatio imperii* is furthermore complemented by the claim of the *translatio studii*, as underlined in the representation of esteemed thinkers on the ceiling. Being used as a device to glorify the Empire, the Sibyls appear to have survived in Protestant territory. It was not their role as Christian prophets which was central to this composition, but rather the continuity of the Roman Empire which they represented.

It is precisely this lack of devotional or reverential qualities that seems to have been of decisive importance in representations of Sibyls in Protestant sacred space. As long as Sibyls featured as decorative elements in objects not directly linked to worship, their presence seems to have been less problematic to contemporaries. In the case of Ulm and its Minster, for which an iconoclastic cleansing was issued by the city council on 19 June 1531, there is evidence that the famous choir stalls by Jörg Syrlin (the Elder, c.1425–1491), which displayed 10 Sibyls, were specifically excluded from the whitewashing of the church.[321] A late nineteenth-century transcription of a council's reports reads: 'The images on the choir stalls remain' (*Die Bilder auf dem Chor sollen bleiben*).[322] An explanation as to why that was the case, is however lacking. Notably, in Memmingen, the choir stalls, which feature Sibylline imagery, are largely intact, suggesting that they too were spared by the

[320] See C. Magin, *Die Inschriften der Stadt Goslar*, Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 58–69.
[321] See G. Litz, *Die reformatorische Bilderfrage in den schwäbischen Reichsstädten*, Tübingen 2007, p. 116. For the choir stalls, see D. Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl und Jörg Syrlin der Ältere. Untersuchungen zu Architektur und Bildwerk*, Berlin 1999.
[322] Keidel, 'Ulmische Reformationsakten von 1531 und 1532', *Württembergische Vierteljahreshefte für Landesgeschichte* N.F. IV, 1895, pp. 255–342 (277).

iconoclasts.[323] Sibylline imagery appears to be of little concern here, probably for the reason laid out. On the other hand, exactly what impact the refurbishment of Protestant churches had on the imagery of authoritatively condemned traditions, remains unclear. So do question such as if, when and on whose initiative Sibylline imagery was removed and how that coincided with a change in piety. Although not directly linked to worship either, other aspects come into play in the case of the survival of a late fifteenth-century stained glass window in the cathedral of Halberstadt displaying the *ara coeli* legend as part of a Marian cycle and the wood carvings on the rood screen to the Chapel dedicated to the Little Office of our Lady in the Lübeck St Mary's Church, dating from about 1520.[324] In both cities, the Reformation was adopted, in 1591 and in 1530 respectively. Especially in Lübeck, so little changed in the churches with regard to the strong Marian cult that a continued Marian devotion has to be assumed. What is particularly interesting for us is that the *ara coeli* legend and the Sibyls had been absorbed into this cult.[325] Another contributing factor for the survival of this form of reverence in Halberstadt might lie in the fact that the cathedral chapter in that city remained bi-confessional until 1648. Even if the prolonged Marian devotion was important in Northern Europe, for smaller churches with less funds available especially in the duchy of Mecklenburg, as has to be assumed for that in Falsterbo, Cölpin and Rosenow, the expenditure for a refurbishment with new altarpieces might have been beyond their financial capability and so they remained in situ.[326] Continuing to use these retables, so Bridget Heal has argued, also helped to ease the transition from the old faith to the new.[327]

On a more general level, this analysis leaves us with an apparent discrepancy between the artistic expressions of belief and the argument of dogma. Devotional practices and reverence for the Sibyls continued long after Lutherans and some

[323] Created in 1501–1508 under the direction of Hans Dapratzhauser (fl.1501–8), the Memmingen choir stalls show on their reliefs Memmingen burghers, saints and scenes from the Old Testament, with references to pagan prophecy. See Litz, *Die reformatorische Bilderfrage*, p. 148.
[324] According to Eva Fitz's detailed study, there are no records about any changes done during the medieval or early moden era and so this Marian window is the only one in the cathedral that is extant without having been changed. See E. Fitz, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien im Halberstädter Dom*, Berlin 2003, pp. 225, 306. See also H. Fuhrmann, *Die Inschriften des Doms zu Halberstadt*, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 112–13. For Lübeck, see Albrecht, *Corpus der mittelalterlichen Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei in Schleswig-Holstein*, II, pp. 525–27.
[325] See Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 80, 83, 305.
[326] See E. Wolgast, 'Die Reformation im Herzogtum Mecklenburg und das Schicksal der Kirchenausstattung', in *Die bewahrende Kraft des Luthertums. Mittelalterliche Kunstwerke in evangelischen Kirchen*, ed. by J. M. Fritz, Regensburg 1997, pp. 54–70 (64–66).
[327] See Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 146–47.

humanists had dismissed this acceptance of the Sibyls because it was considered to be untenable from an intellectual point of view. Nonetheless, as it stands, we cannot expect a direct correlation between theological precept and popular belief with its localised devotional practices. Especially at the beginning of the Reformation when its different movements were yet to distinguish and position themselves against one another as denominations with a clear set of doctrines, different confessions coexisted, and so the meanings attributed to specific devotional acts were fluid. This is particularly true for the Marian devotion, into which the *ara coeli* legend had been incorporated, even if not exclusively. With the considerable turmoil caused by the multitude of preachers and contemporaneous religious movements, neither of which had the same degree of ecclesiastical authority as the pre-Reformation Church, nor political support at the level of Imperial power, an even stronger fragmentation of belief and worship seems to have shaped Central Europe. There was no authoritative voice of the Church to halt such a development. Popular belief as it materialised in the devotional objects studied here and the doctrine set out by an intellectual elite on the basis of theory and scholarship rather than customary practice of reverence and worship stood against each other without the strong mediation of ecclesiastical authorities in the form of local clergy, whose influence had been weakened by the upheaval of the Reformation. The hugely popular and therefore widely disseminated *Chronicon Carionis* is one of the few indications that a mediation between these two realms took place. It was, however, a mediation dictated by the source material examined here, and which remains an artificial distinction. As a textbook used for instruction into Latin and history, it safe to say that it exerted a considerable influence on sixteenth-century thought in Protestant regions, even before Melanchthon in 1558 would base his own historical work on this very book. To what extent this work with its wide circulation enabled if not affected a dissemination of a lay scepticism towards the Sibyls remains unclear. What would irreversibly alter the way in which the Sibyls were perceived both within the intellectual elite and among wider audiences during the sixteenth century did not therefore depend on new devotional practices or argumentative innovation, but rather on the rediscovery of the Sibylline oracles, the lack of which had facilitated these multifaceted and conflicted perceptions of the Sibylline lore.

The unearthing of the Sibylline oracles after a millennium in oblivion

When in 1545 the Sibylline oracles were printed and thus made available for the first time in more than a millenium, the flourishing lore of the Sibyls had already come under attack by humanists like Erasmus and Protestant reformers like Luther. For circles around the Reformed theologian Bullinger, the recovery of this textual corpus, which they considered divinely inspired, promised new insights into the divine. This stark discrepancy in what the Sibylline oracles were and could bring to theological debates of the sixteenth century shaped the way in which they were presented by their editors Sixt Birck and Sebastian Castellio. Much of the texts framing the Sibylline oracles was concerned with the question of how to provide sufficient evidence to prove the text's authenticity and veracity. Inevitably, this meant also that none of the medieval ramifications of the Sibylline legacy, whether it was the text *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* or the *ara coeli* legend, were sought to be endorsed. Nor was there any attempt made to ascribe the authorship of the eight discovered books to any specific Sibyl. Rather, the volumes published were concerned with providing the text with a philologically and historically informed apparatus. By and large, these efforts led to a focused debate on the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles, the patristic approach towards this corpus and, implicitly, how relevant this corpus was for contemporary theology.

The first publication of the Sibylline oracles

The sixteenth-century renaissance of the Sibylline oracles emerged from what at first would seem to be a fortunate accident. While searching for material on Lactantius among some books recently purchased from Venice, Birck, the Augsburg librarian and head of the local Protestant grammar school St Anna, found a Greek manuscript,

which he believed to contain eight books of the otherwise lost Sibylline oracles.[328] After collating these newly unearthed texts with the extant excerpts scattered throughout Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* and *De ira Dei*, Birck sent his emended and annotated edition of the oracles to Johannes Oporinus, who was eager to print them as one of the first works to leave his recently established printing press.[329] This gave Oporinus the opportunity both to prove his printing expertise in Greek, having previously taught this language at the University of Basel, and to advertise his work as a printer specifically interested in promoting humanistic endeavours that aimed at religious reconciliation.[330] Thus, after being lost to oblivion for more than a millennium, in March 1545, the ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ appeared in print.[331] For the first time since late antiquity, the greater part of the Sibylline oracles were brought to light, readily available to be scrutinised for their textual validity, to be appropriated for theological consideration, and to be adapted for all sorts of prophetic use.

In the dedicatory letter to his edition of the Sibylline oracles, Birck expressed his enthusiasm for this corpus. This is particularly striking if we place his position

[328] This collection of recently purchased books can easily be identified as the Greek manuscripts that, with the help of Musculus, Birck's former student, the municipal library of Augsburg had bought in 1543/44 in Venice. Since its establishment in 1537, Birck had been the librarian there. For further information, see H. Zäh, 'Wolfgang Musculus und der Ankauf griechischer Handschriften für die Augsburger Stadtbibliothek 1543/44', in *Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) und die oberdeutsche Reformation*, ed. by R. Dellsperger, R. Freudenberger and W. Weber, Berlin 1997, pp. 226–35; R. Schmidbauer, *Die Augsburger Stadtbibliothekare durch vier Jahrhunderte*, Augsburg 1963, pp. 18–19; Schiano, *Il secolo della Sibilla*, p. 20. Roessli believes to know that in Venice they were purchased from Antoine Éparque (1491–1571); Roessli, 'Sébastien Castellion et les *Oracula Sibyllina*', p. 227. For a discussion of how Birck edited and divided the books of the Sibylline oracles, see Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline oracles*, pp. 7–8. Aside from a few recent studies about his biblical plays, for which Birck had come to achieve some fame, Birck has received only scant scholarly attention. See Sixt Birck, *Sämtliche Dramen*, ed. by M. Brauneck, 3 vols, Berlin and New York 1969–80. In this respect, the most informative biographical account of his life remains the biographical sketch prefixed by his son Emanuel (fl.1560s), a priest at Sulzburg, to their edition of Lactantius's *Opera*. See Emanuel Birck, 'Vita Xysti Betuleii', in Lactantius, *Opera* (1563), sigs $b4^{r}$–$b5^{v}$. For St Anna as the institutional centre of the Reformation movement in Augsburg, see Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 120–22.

[329] Previously, Oporinus had published Birck's edition of and commentary on some works by Cicero. See Sixt Birck (ed.), *In M. Tulii Ciceronis libros De officiis, De amicitia De senectute. Commentaria*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1544. Oporinus provided a justification for the way in which the annotations had been made and how they would help the reader. See Johannes Oporinus, 'Lectori typographus', in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ (1545), p. 103. For the annotations and additional material from Lactantius, see p. 104 and sigs $O2^{r}$–$P2^{v}$. For the beginnings of Oporinus's printing press, see the only monograph – in fact, a biography – on Oporinus's achievements M. Steinmann, *Johannes Oporinus. Ein Basler Buchdrucker um die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Basel and Stuttgart 1967, pp. 20–37.

[330] See Steinmann, *Oporinus*, pp. 65–69.

[331] Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ (1545).

against the background of theological alarm sounded by his fellow Lutherans and the cautious scholarly responses from humanists.[332] Not only did Birck consider the unearthing of the Sibyls' prophecies after they had been buried from time immemorial to be a sign of divine providence; he was also astonished that a puzzling amount of knowledge about Christ was attested to by the Sibylline text.[333] While alluding to extant fragments from Lactantius and from Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', Birck regarded Augustine as the first authority on this matter. In the spirit of syncretic appropriation, he considered the Sibyls to be to the gentiles what the prophets in the Bible were to the Jews. In ways that remind us of the bipartite model of revelation as well as of the attempts to use the oracles for Reformed theology, Birck concluded:

> Therefore, I do think that God, the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe, wanted to show His eternal will and the whole sequence of prophecies, which were especially related to the salvation of human beings, through one same prophetic will, to the Israelites via the prophets and to the gentiles via the Sibyls.[334]

Here, no doubts are expressed about the role the Sibyls had played in the universal plan of salvation. For Birck, God had issued one unified inspiration from which both the Sibyls and the biblical prophecies had conceived their prophecies. This stance is echoed also in a six-verse poem composed by Birck himself that follows the dedicatory letter.[335] More than being the 'manifestation of God's will' (δῖα θεοῦ βουλὴ μεγάλου), the intelligible nature of the Sibyls' oracles was facilitated by the reason of the λόγος itself.[336] In saying that the Jews, when they were granted divine revelations, had as little knowledge of the divine as the Sibyls, since they had prophesied prior to when they had received the law, Birck countered potential adversaries. The reason was that, for him, God's revelations were universal. This prevented any differentiation between the Sibylline oracles and the Jewish prophets, who by the sixteenth century were firmly established as canonical sources of the

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[332] Birck dedicated the work to the brothers Ambrosius (1492–1564), a Reformed thinker, and Thomas Blarer von Giersberg (p.1492–1567), the then burgomaster or Reichsvogt of Constance. See Sixt Birck, 'Epistola nuncupatoria', in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ (1545), pp. 3–8 (3).
[333] Birck, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1545), pp. 4–5.
[334] Ibid.: 'Sic prorsus sentio Deum totius universitatis opificem et administratorem aeternam suam voluntatem et totam illam fatorum seriem, praesertim ad salutem mortalium spectantem, sicut Israëlitis per Prophetas, ita gentibus per Sibyllas ostendere voluisse, per idem numen fatidicum.'
[335] See also Birck, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1545), p. 7; Birck, 'In Sibyllas', in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΟΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ (1545), p. 8.
[336] Birck, 'In Sibyllas' (1545): 'Εν γὰρ πνεῦμα θεοῦ χρησμοῖς στήθεσσι Σιβυλλῶν,/Καὶ τὸ προφητείας, ἧς λόγος οὐρανόθεν.'

divine.[337] By quoting a number of passages from their prophecies, Birck even emphasised the extent to which they paralleled the Sibylline oracles. Yet, seemingly aware of his potentially heterodox views about the Sibyls, Birck eagerly maintained the superiority of the biblical prophets by attributing them an uncomparable degree of *maiestas*, a term vague enough to obscure the different natures of the two prophetic groups.[338]

At the end of Birck's volume, we find an untitled series of poems dealing with the Sibyls, which can easily be identified as those firstly published in the 1505 Venetian edition of Barbieri's *Discordantiae*.[339] Unlike the other supplementary texts in this edition, these poems had been added by the printer, Oporinus, as indicated by his introductory words. They do not seem to have any specific explanatory function, nor were they necessary given the nature of this edition. Although it is not all too unlikely that Oporinus knew these poems from the 1505 version of Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, it is interesting to note that Oporinus omitted any mention of their origin and simply declared to have received them from Gilbert Cousin (1506–1572), with whom he engaged in a lively correspondence.[340]

Without the intention to put the Sibyls on a par with the biblical prophets, Birck clearly recommended that, since they were now available, the Sibylline oracles ought not to be disregarded in the contemporary theological debate. He laid out that the manuscript discovery warranted the authenticity and veracity of the Sibylline corpus, so much so that he did not confront previous objections and criticisms. Indeed, this edition was framed as an opportunity to revisit the patristic promise of reconciling pagan oracles and Christian prophecy. It was during the search for material on Lactantius – the Church Father famed for integrating pagan thought and, above all,

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[337] Ibid.: 'Ως περ χ'έβραίοις ἀνόμοις προλὲγουσι προφῆται,/Εθνεσιν ὡς προλέγει δόγμα Σιβύλλα θεοῦ.'

[338] Birck, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1545), p. 6: 'Non vendico illis Propheticam maiestatem, quam veneramur in Hebraeorum prophetis, Esaia, Hieremia et aliis.' See Schiano, *Il secolo della Sibilla*, p. 23.

[339] Filippo Barbieri, 'Sibyllarum de Christo vaticinia', in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΟΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ (1545), sigs P3^{r}–P4^{v}.

[340] Based on Oporinus's remarks that Cousin had extracted the duodecimal set of poems from 'a very old book' (*ex vetustissimo codice descripta*), Bergquist convincingly argues that Cousin had obtained the poems from the 1505 Venetian edition. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', p. 529; Johannes Oporinus, 'Typographus ad eundem', in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΟΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ (1545), sig. P3^{r}. See A. Burckhardt, *Johannes Basilius Herold. Kaiser und Reich im protestantischen Schrifttum des Basler Buchdrucks um die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Basel and Stuttgart 1967, p. 131.

the Sibylline oracles into his theology – that Birck discovered the Sibylline oracles. Augustine was mentioned and the reader, furthermore, reminded that in Eusebius's *Vita Constantini*, one could also find the famous acrostic of the Erythraean Sibyl as reported by Constantine's *Oratio ad sanctum coetum*. Slightly more obscure, but still in line with this element of patristic thought is the reference to an unidentified short verse quoted by the church historian Sozomen (Salminius Hermias, c.400–c.450) in his *Ecclesiastical History* (II.1).[341] With this clear intellectual referencing, this edition was characterised by clarity and conciseness. It simply contained the recently discovered text and Birck's annotations. Apart from the poetic paraphrase originally published in a Venetian edition of Barbieri's *Discordantiae*, Birck and Oporinus refrained from including additional material in support of the Sibyls. Neither Oporinus nor Birck seem to have considered it necessary to include such material to defend the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles and thus to justify the appearance of their edition. This changed with the publication of Castellio's Latin translation of the Sibylline oracles in 1546.

The 1546 Latin translation by Sebastian Castellio

Only one year after the Sibylline prophecies appeared in print, Oporinus published their Latin translation by Castellio.[342] Compared to Birck's edition, this volume amounted to a compendium on the nature of the Sibylline oracles. In addition to their

[341] Manutius, *Theocriti Eclogae triginta* (1495), sigs EE.εε5^{v}–6^{r}; Birck, 'Ioanno Oporino' (1545), p. 105. For a modern edition, see Sozomen, *Histoire ecclésiastique. Livres I-IX. Texte grec de l'édition*, transl. by A.-J. Festugière and B. Grillet, ed. by G. Sabbah, 4 vols, Paris 1983–2008. It should be pointed out, however, that Birck's edition was also used to demonstrate the pervasive influence of this kind of pagan divination, as witnessed, for instance, by the case of Nonnus's epic paraphrase of St John's Gospel, written between the fourth and fifth centuries. See Sixt Birck, 'Ad pium lectorem' in Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ (1545), sig. P3^{r}. On Emperor Constantine's interest in the Sibyls, see P. Ciholas, *The Omphalos and the Cross. Pagans and Christians in Search of a Divine Center*, Macon 2003, pp. 163–65.

[342] Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546). When exactly Castellio began to work on this translation is unknown. On 23 August 1546, he sent a copy to Georg Cassander (1513–1566) and Cornelius Valerius (1512–1578). Previously, in a letter addressed to Celio Secondo Curione (1503–1569), Castellio had stated on 22 March 1546 that he had finished the translation for some time. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Letter to Georg Cassander and Cornelius Gwalther', in *Illustrum et clarorum virum epistolae selectiores*, ed. by anonymous, Leiden: Lodewijk and Isaac Elzevir, 1617, p. 49; Sebastian Castellio, 'Letter to Celio Secondo Curione', in *Olympiae Fulviae moratae, foemina doctissimae, ac plane divina opera omnia*, ed. by Celio Secondo Curione, Basel: Pietro Perna, 1580, pp. 317–18.

translation, the volume contains a set of more comprehensive annotations, including those composed by Castellio himself and that consisting of a synopsis of ancient authorities, a seemingly inconspicuous quotation from the Pentateuch, and Castellio's dedicatory letter prefacing the translation, which reads like a short treatise in defence of the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles and their import. For his part, Oporinus added an extract form Vives's commentary on Virgil's *Bucolics*.

The French-born Castellio came to work for the Basel printer Oporinus in the spring of 1545, after theological disagreements with Calvin had made his position as head of the Genevan Collège de Rive untenable.[343] Castellio's dedicatory letter opens with a clear-cut distinction between true and false prophets, which he had adopted from no less a figure than the forefather of prophecy, Moses. Here it is significant to note that, instead of using the word 'prophet' (*propheta*), which bears clear Christian references to either the biblical prophets or Reformation preachers, Castellio employed the less charged Latin term *vates* ('diviner') to refer to other forms of diviners.[344] According to this hermeneutic principle borrowed from Moses, true prophets were those who both worshipped the true God and whose predictions had been fulfilled.[345] As the Sibyl met both criteria, Castellio concluded that the fact that she was a true diviner could no longer be questioned: 'To doubt that she [the Sibyl] is truly a diviner is by no means possible.'[346] To defend this idea, Castellio set out to convince two groups of critics: those who, due to the Sibyls' sole aim to attract the gentiles and persuade doubting Christians, considered the Sibylline oracles to be too open to be genuine, and those who did not deny the genuine character of the oracles, but thought them superfluous given the availability of the Jewish prophets.[347] In his response, Castellio admonished the sceptics by saying that their arguments questioned God's free will and the way in which He had decided to reveal Himself, for in the prophetic books of Hosea, Isaiah and Daniel, He had revealed Himself to

[343] See Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion*, I, p. 240; H. R. Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio 1515–1563. Humanist und Verteidiger der religiösen Toleranz im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Göttingen 1997, p. 48.
[344] Interestingly, in the very same year that his translation of the Sibylline oracles was published, Castellio had his translation of the Pentateuch printed by Oporinus and the treatise on Moses's statesmanship, the *Mosis institutio reipublicae* by Flavius Josephus. Sebastian Castellio (ed.), *Moses Latinus*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1546; Josephus, Flavius, *Mosis institutio reipublicae*, ed. and transl. by Sebastian Castellio, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1546.
[345] See Sebastian Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria', in Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), sigs $2a^{r}$–$b3^{v}$ ($2a^{r}$). Castellio seems to have referred to Deuteronomy 18:15–22.
[346] Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1546), sig. $2a^{v}$: 'dubitari profecto non potest, quin ea vere vates sit'.
[347] Ibid., sigs $2a^{v}$–$3a^{r}$.

the Jewish people just as openly as the Sibyls had done with the pagans. Furthermore, the lack of any explanatory teachings in the pagan sphere proved the self-revealing nature of their oracular responses, by which alone the gentiles were able to understand them.[348] In fact, in Castellio's exegetical account, it was part of God's providential plan to conceal the Sibyls' pronouncements, so that they could be known only by few enlightened people. In this sense, obscurity – both material and intellectual – was a way of preserving the genuinely prophetic importance of the oracles. Thus Castellio redefined the meaning of obscurity attributed to the Sibylline predictions:

> God, who was the author of these renowned oracles, wanted them to lie hidden for many centuries and not to fall into the hands of ordinary people, but to be read only by very few people. This was the same as if they were most obscure.[349]

Far from being a forgery, therefore, the Sibylline oracles were one of the many means through which God had protected the knowledge of sacred truth from misinterpretation and misuse. This way to understand the obscurity of the Sibylline pronouncements explained why in the past such a limited number of people had been able to follow their message.[350]

In light of Erasmus's scepticism concerning the Sibyl's prophetic nature, it is not suprising that the discussion of the possibly counterfeit origins of the Sibylline oracles stood at the centre of Castellio's analysis. He argued that, because of their divinatory nature, the predictions of the Sibyls had survived all attempts to demonstrate their allegedly counterfeited nature. The reason lay in the high level of prophetic information. Their prophecies had been already corroborated by so many events that they could not be simply the effect of intentional fraud.[351] Significantly, Castellio suggested that it would have been easier and more rewarding to fabricate the lost comedies by Menander (342/1–290 BC) or the missing books of Cicero's *De*

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[348] Ibid., sig. 3a^{rv}.
[349] Ibid., sig. 4a^{r}: 'Deus, qui fuit horum tam clarorum autor oraculorum, idem voluit etiam ea multis latere seculis, nec in vulgi venire manus, sed a paucissimis legi, quod perinde fuit, ac si essent obscurissima.'
[350] This argument strongly resembles that of the Franciscan theologian and Hebraist Pietro Galatino (c.1460–c.1540) in defence of the Fourth Book of Ezra. He held that 'hidden' as the original meaning of 'apocryphal' should be preferred over any other definitions that had the potential to reject such writings as suspect or spurious. See Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, p. 51.
[351] Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1546), sig. 7a^{rv}.

re publica than to invent the whole Sibylline corpus.[352] In the same manner as Lactantius and other Fathers had done before, Castellio argued that the presence of references to the Sibylline oracles in such works of antiquity as Cicero's *De divinatione* (I.4,79, II.110–12) and Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' testified to their genuine prophetic nature.

A humanist trained in the principles of rigorous textual criticism, Castellio furthermore paid close attention to the manuscripts on which he had based his translation. After recounting the circumstances that had led to the publication of Birck's *editio princeps*, the text of reference for this Latin translation, Castellio referred to a second manuscript held by the Ferrarese scholar Marcus Antonius Antimachus (c.1473–1551), which he had used to amend his own translation.[353] He also listed a third manuscript, which he had not been able to consult yet. He knew it was owned by Aimar Ranconet (1498–1559), an acquaintance of Antoine Morelet du Museau (Maurus Musaeus, c.1500–1552) and French diplomat in Basel. Probably in the hope to gain access to this, the last known manuscript, Castellio had dedicated this edition to him. Furthermore, this apparent knowledge of two other manuscripts being held by learned men raises questions of why it was now and not earlier that the Sibylline oracles were published. Was it that the newly founded library in Augsburg intended to distinguish itself by this milestone of humanist scholarship? Or was this indeed the case for the printing press of Oporinus? Since when was it known that there were manuscripts of the oracles extant from antiquity? Who and when were they discovered or were the oracles, in fact, never as lost as is commonly assumed in scholarship? Even if these questions remain a matter of speculation, it is worth acknowledging that at least two manscripts of the Sibylline oracles were known by some to be circulating in the sixteenth century.

By pointing out how the seemingly accidental survival of the Sibylline corpus was intertwined with the meandering but ultimately rational path of providential revelation, Castellio adduced further evidence to support the ancient nature of the

[352] Ibid., sig. 6a^{rv}.
[353] Born in Mantua, Antimachus was well known for his Latin translations from Greek. In particular, his version of Dionysus of Halicarnassus was widely diffused. Very little, however, is known about his life. See the entry on 'Marcantonio Antimacho' in Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 9 vols, Modena 1787–94, VII, p. 1110.

oracles.[354] He concluded his dedicatory letter by countering once again the arguments of those who wished to keep the scope of legitimate prediction within the bounds of biblical prophecy:

> For what is so absurd as not to be able to be satisfied by any large number of books in the fields of philosophy, grammar, rhetoric or poetics, and yet to become so easily fed up with divinations about our Saviour? For my part, I am truly delighted by the testimonies of Christ by Balaam, the Sibyls and Joseph, and I think that they not only confirm Christians in their faith, but also attract and convince those who are outside the Christian faith, for these witnesses are produced as it were from their innermost selves.[355]

Castellio highlighted here the importance of prophetic knowledge together with the most traditional ways of acquiring learning, that is, the canonical disciplines of humanist education. This liberal attitude towards the sources of secular knowledge reminds us of Zwingli's view about pagan philosophers, whom he considered to be capable of pursuing the truth. It is also interesting to note that, together with the Sibyls, Castellio did not refrain from mentioning the value of minor prophets, such as Flavius Josephus (Joseph ben Mathitjahu ha Kohen, 37/38–after 100) and Balaam, a gentile prophet, whom Musculus had referred to as well.[356]

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[354] Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1546), sig. b^{r}: 'Atque hos ego testes fide dignos, ex tribus diversis terrarum regionibus produco, eosque (ut spero) adhuc viventes: quos, si mentirer, mei mendacii testes adhibere neque possem, neque vellem.'

[355] Ibid., sig. b^{v}: 'Quid enim tam absurdum est quam in philosophia, in grammaticis, in arte dicendi, in poetica, nulla posse librorum multitudine satiari: in vaticiniis de Servatore nostro tam cito nauseare? Ego vero et Balaami et Sibyllarum et Iosephi de Christo testimoniis non mediocriter delector, putoque his non solum Christianos confirmari, sed etiam externos allici posse, atque convinci, tanquam productis ex ipsorum intimo penetrali testibus.'

[356] Besides the compilation of further Sibylline verses extant in patristic writings, Castellio's comprehensive apparatus of annotations to his translation reveals his understanding of who the Sibyls were. Distancing himself from the traditional perception of ten or, since the Renaissance, twelve or more Sibyls, Castellio believed their number to be far less, as her high age exceeding that of common men had made her appear to be omnipresent in antiquity. According to this unparalleled view, the two most prominent Sibyls, the Erythraean and the Cumaean, seem to merge in one figure. Notably, Castellio retained the view that the Persian Sibyl had been the daughter-in-law of Noah, who, after having survived the Flood, left Babylon to divine while wandering through Greece, an association long made that appeared already in the tenth-century Byzantine encyclopaedia Suda. Sebastian Castellio, 'Annotationes in Sibyllas', in Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), pp. 113–22 (114–15): 'Igitur hic et ad finem tertii libri tradit se nurum esse Noae, cumque eo evasisse ex diluvio et Babylone profectam vaticinari per Graeciam […] Atque eadem eius vitae longitudo in causa fuit (sicut ego existimo) ut quae eadem esset, plures esse putarentur, quod ea diversis temporibus et locis apparens, plurimum speciem praeberet, non putantibus hominibus eam tamdiu posse vivere, sed aliam esse. Nam quod memoriae proditum est, Sibyllam quandam fuisse Persicam, ex stirpe Noae, haec eam se esse tradit. Erythraeam autem putari, quae alia putata est. Cumaea quoque eadem esse dici potest, ex eo quem citavi Nasonis loco'. The annotations also provide occasional comparisons of Sibylline revelations and those found in the Bible as well as rectifications of the oracles. See Adler, *Suidae Lexicon*, IV, pp. 354–55.

To this volume, Castellio also added a Latin translation of what is known as the *Mosis carmen*, the 'Song of Moses'.[357] In this biblical passage, after arriving at the promised land of Canaan, Moses reminded the Jews to follow God's law and not to rebel against His teachings. Castellio's juxtaposition of Moses's *carmen* with the Sibylline *carmina* is especially telling here, in that the revelation of the Sibyls seemed to conform to the orders of a just God, who directed His faithful in gentle ways while punishing those who deviated from them.[358] By characterising the Sibyls as figures that had alerted Christians and non-Christians alike to the dangers of departing from pure worship and indulging in estranged and adulterated cults, Castellio transformed the pagan prophetesses into holy representatives of God's unfathomable providential plans. As such, they could not be ignored or despised by any true Christian.

There are, however, two other features that make this passage most remarkable. Firstly, unlike its biblical original, this version of the 'Song of Moses' seems to follow a consistent hexametric pattern, suggesting that it is not simply a quotation of the passage, but rather a poetic paraphrase. Secondly, and even more strikingly, this passage revisits elements of a rather classical and in a way pagan Latin lexicon, not commonly used in a Christian context of this kind. Not only did the unaccounted author use, for example, such a word as *Camena* ('Muse'), characteristic of the Roman poetic tradition, but s/he also translated the reference to God as *Iova* ('Jupiter'), the Roman chief god, as opposed to the most common *dominus* ('lord') of the Vulgate or even the Latinised version of the Hebrew tertragrammaton, 'YHWH' (יהוה), spelled out in typically humanistic Latin as 'Iehova'.[359] Therefore, the

[357] The *Mosis carmen* is not taken from Exodus 32, as indicated, but from Deuteronomy 32:1–44. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Mosis carmen', in Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), pp. 123–28 (123). This confusion may well have been caused by the fact that, in addition to the Song of Moses quoted here, there is also another one in the book of Exodus, the Song of Moses and Miriam (15:1–20). The *Mosis carmen* printed here was also included in a collection of poetic works, which too was printed by Oporinus. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Moses Carmen' in *Pii, graves atque elegantes poetae aliquot*, ed. by Orgetorix Sphinter, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, s.a., pp. 426–31. For an analysis of literary influences on this translation, see 'Anthologie de textes de Sébastien Castellion', in *Sébastien Castellion. Des Écritures à l'écriture*, ed. by M.-C. Gomez-Géraud, Paris 2013, pp. 405–541 (479–85).

[358] Castellio, 'Mosis carmen' (1546), p. 123.

[359] Ibid., p. 123. In his *Opus de arcanis catholicae veritatis*, originally published in 1518, Galatino explained the reasons for the transliteration of the Hebrew 'YHWH' (יהוה) as 'Iehova', while explicitly rejecting others such as 'Iova'. See Pietro Galatino, *Opus de arcanis catholicae veritatis*, Basel: Johannes the Elder Herwagen, 1550, sig. g3^{r}. Among other contemporary accounts, the rendering as *Iova* clearly stands out; see R. J. Wilkinson, *Tetragrammaton. Western Christians and the Hebrew Name of God. From the Beginnings to the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden and Boston 2015, pp. 351–415. See also Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, pp. 73–79.

paraphrase in question seems not just to mystify the divine, as argued by Marie-Christine Gomez-Gérard, but it seems even to offer a paganising reading of the biblical Song of Moses.[360] No doubt, the author's approach in this matter is subtle. S/He combined the warning against pagan polytheism represented by Moses, the most important of the biblical prophets, with a reference to the Sibyls, seen as a symbol of non-denominational worship, which transcended the cultural and temporal limits of historical rituals. This notion of reconciling pagan and Christian traditions is particularly striking in the context of the Sibylline oracles, for here two *per se* disparate realms seemed to merge. In the course of his early employment at Oporinus's printing press, Castellio had written biblical paraphrases and published a Latin translation of Moses's Pentateuch in 1546, which was later to be incorporated into his 1551 Bible translation.[361] As in the *Mosis carmen*, in both texts the tertragrammaton was rendered as *Iova*, for Castellio held all other forms to be too 'contaminated' (*pollutum*).[362] This may suggest that he was indeed the author of this poetic paraphrase.[363] In this regard, it is worth remembering that in 1546, as part of his involvement with Moses, Castellio produced a bilingual edition of *Mosis institutio reipublicae* ('Moses's Principles of Government'), an extract from the Romano-Jewish historian Josephus, the Latin translation of which was, too, penned by Castellio.[364] Seen in this light, Castellio's attempt to provide a poetical representation of Moses's instructions about religious rites seems yet another attempt

[360] See M.-C. Gomez-Gérard, 'Des noms pour Dieu. De la traduction à l'expression poétique', in Gomez-Gérard, *Sébastien Castellion*, pp. 189–204 (192–97, 203–4).
[361] Among these texts, Castellio had both his *Ionas propheta, heroico carmine latino descriptus* and his ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ*, sive praecursor, id est vita Ioannis Baptistae* published by Oporinus in 1545. For further information, see Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, p. 49.
[362] In his translation of the Pentateuch, Castellio used not only the Latin *Deus*, but also the word *Iova* and even a combination of both, *Iova Deus*. See, for example, Castellio, *Moses Latinus* (1546), pp. 1, 18; Sebastian Castellio, 'Praefatio', in *Latinus Moses* (1546), sigs β^{r}–$\gamma 8^{v}$ ($5\gamma^{r}$). In explaining this rendering, Castellio argued in the commentary on his Moses translation that this was dictated by philological necessity alone and that *Iova* was to reflect the tetragrammaton or the Greek κύριον of the Septuagint; Castellio, *Moses Latinus* (1546), p. 452. Indeed, in a 1555 edition of his *Dialogi sacri* Castellio ruled out that the word *Iova* as used in this context stands for Iupiter, the Roman chief god. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Praefatio/Christianis lectoribus S.', in Sebastian Castellio, *Dialogi sacrarum libri quatuor*, Cologne: Peter Horst, 1555, sig. $a2^{r}$: 'Quod autem Dei nomen IOVA Hebraeum usurpavimus, quod nullum Dei proprium nomen Latine extat (nisi forte Iupiter: sed id ut pollutum, omittamus) id etsi principio videbitur fortasse durius, tamen usu mollescet et quod insuetum aures radet, idem usitatum demulcebit.' See also Wilkinson, *Tetragrammaton*, pp. 361–62.
[363] It is however noteworthy that the translation in Castellio's *Moses Latinus* and the one offered here are not the same. See Castellio, *Moses Latinus* (1546), pp. 433–36.
[364] The admonition in its preface against 'Jupiter's adultery and Mercury's deception' (*Iovis adulteria, Mercurii furta*) is a necessary rhetorical device to caution the reader from pagan beliefs. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Ad lectores', in Castellio, *Mosis institutio reipublicae* (1546), sigs $a3^{r}$–$a4^{r}$ ($a3^{r}$).

from his part to integrate and reconcile the attitude of the pagan and Judaeo-Christian spheres.

This is all the more striking if we think that Birck's Greek edition of the Sibylline oracles had been published only the year before. The suggested popularity of the Sibyls and, more specifically, Castellio's involvement with them may be ascribed to various reasons. Possibly both Oporinus and Castellio felt the need to defend the legitimacy of the Sibylline prophecy; or, perhaps, Castellio's ability to carry out such a translation prompted Oporinus to have the translation published, not to mention the promise that the book could sell well.[365] Compared to the earlier Greek edition, the 1546 edition presented a more assertive defence of the Sibylline oracles. In other words, from Birck's Greek text to the bilingual edition by Castellio, the original project had clearly grown in scope and meaning, reflecting the chief concerns of Oporinus's publishing house while foreshadowing Castellio's later powerful defence of religious tolerance.

As he did with the poems by Barbieri in the 1545 edition, this time, too, Oporinus supplemented a little giveaway, which could in fact corroborate Castellio's claims about the Sibyls' authenticity. Placed as an appendix at the very end of the edition and briefly introduced by Oporinus, one can find Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' followed by a *scholion* extracted from Vives's commentary on Virgil's Eclogues, his *In Bucolica Vergilii interpretatio*.[366] By providing what at the time must have seemed to be yet another text in support of the pristine truthfulness of the Sibylline oracles, Oporinus intended to show that he was siding with Castellio's philologically-oriented discussion of Sibylline prophecy. In addition, Vives's commentary offered an allegorical interpretation of Virgil's poem that could be read by applying a Christian

[365] That Birck's edition together with Castellio's subsequent translation met indeed a strong demand, as suggested by the short time span between the two publications, ultimately is evident if we consider that also a second edition containing both the original and the translation was printed in 1555. See Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546); Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555).

[366] See Johannes Oporinus, 'Lectori', in Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), p. 129; Virgil, 'Ecloga 4ª', in Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), pp. 129–131; Juan Luis Vives, 'Scholion', in Castellio, *Sibyllina Oracula* (1546), pp. 131–35; Juan Luis Vives, *In Bucolica Vergilii interpretatio*, Basel: Robert Winter, 1539, pp. 51–62. Aside from José Manuel Rodríguez Peregrina, who describes Vives's *interpretatio* as a pedagogical attempt to convey moral philosophy through the text's segmentation into smaller, almost separate emblems, this work of Vives's, completed in Breda in 1537, has received no scholarly attention. See J. M. Rodríguez Peregrina, 'La Égloga IV de Virgilio a través de la Interpretatio allegorica de Luis Vives', *Florentia Iliberritana* IX, 1991, pp. 455–66 (462–64).

key. This certainly helped to Christianise the divinatory core of the Sibylline lore further. In keeping with the characteristic traits of humanistic philology, pursued also by other contemporary commentators such as Eobanus, Vives rejected the pagan readings and contextualised the prophetical experiences of the Sibyls by means of pagan and ancient Christian authorities, including Cicero, Eusebius and Augustine.[367] He also justified his arguments by referring to core Christian beliefs.[368] Acknowledging the risks involved in an allegorical interpretation of Virgil's *Eclogues*, a type of interpretation that he justified in order to obtain a deeper understanding of that particular work, Vives assured his readers that what the Sibyls had foretold corresponded closely to Isaiah's predictions and to St Paul's foretelling of Christ's Return – this thesis had already been espoused by Bullinger in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles.[369] Besides legitimising the Sibyls as sources of truthful prophetic inspiration, Vives presented them as a confirmation that faith and baptism could overcome sin. He stressed this point with an emphasis that seemed to bear Protestant leanings.[370] At the same time, this interpretative attitude seems to have matched Oporinus's conciliatory ideals. From this point of view, the three Fates in the Eclogue were symbols of the Trinity, while sensual temptations could be seen to relate to the power of the Holy Spirit, whose sweet smell indicated the Church at work.[371] This image is particularly interesting, for at the time of the Reformation it might denote spiritualistic tendencies, even of an Anabaptist kind. The question of the religious beliefs of Vives, who sometimes was charged with being too sympathetic towards Protestant ideas, remains extremely complex and cannot be addressed here.[372] What we can safely say, though, is that he tailored his Christian interpretation of the 'Fourth Eclogue' in a way that was open to the diversity of confessional faiths.

What however is most remarkable about Vives's commentary is how he described the Sibyls. Besides calling them 'diviners' (*vates*), as previously done by

[367] See Helius Eobanus Hessus, *In P. Virgilii Maronis Bucolica ac Georgica adnotationes*, Hagenau: Johann Setzer, 1529, sigs K2^{v}–K3^{v}.
[368] Vives, 'Scholion' (1546), pp. 131–35.
[369] Juan Luis Vives, 'In allegorias Bucolicorum Vergilii praefatio', in Vives, *In bucolica Vergilii interpretatio* (1539), pp. 3–7 (4, 7); Vives, 'Scholion' (1546), pp. 132, 134.
[370] Ibid., p. 132.
[371] Ibid., p. 133.
[372] See S. Zeller, *Juan Luis Vives. (1492–1540). (Wieder)Entdeckung eines Europäers, Humanisten und Sozialreformers jüdischer Herkunft im Schatten der spanischen Inquisition. Ein Beitrag zur Theoriegeschichte der Sozialen Arbeit als Wissenschaft*, Freiburg 2006, pp. 30–52.

the majority of reformers, he addressed the Sibyls as 'prophetesses' (*prophetissa[e]*).[373] By adapting the term 'prophet' (*propheta*), which in the literature examined so far had been reserved for the biblical prophets only, to its feminine equivalent, the status of the Sibyls was thus undoubtedly enhanced – only in Bullinger's following Latin confession, the 1545 *Orthodoxa confessio*, can one find a similar use of the word 'prophet' (*propheta*).[374] Closely related to this was Vives's belief in the genuine antiquity of the Sibylline prophecies. Although he demurred that the verses concerning Christ might have been added posthumously, he never questioned their genuineness. He dissented moreover from the traditional assumption that Virgil had based his 'Fifth Eclogue' on the myth of Daphne, the son of Hermes and a nymph, and preferred to ascribe its origin to the Sibyls.[375] Jozef Ijsewijn points out that Vives was always careful to assess the authenticity of the texts under scrutiny.[376] It seems therefore that the ancient pagan sources referred to in Vives's commentary, that is, Virgil and Cicero, were sufficiently authoritative for him to consider the existence of the Sibyls as plausible. He characterised them as prophetesses who helped to turn both the Jews and the gentiles to Christ.[377] His argument was that only God's will and the providential order He had established could allow true prophets to presage the future, a notion that had been defended already by Zwingli and was later accommodated by Castellio.[378] By and large, the most important conclusion one may draw from Vives's analysis is that, with respect to the Sibylline prophecy, he supported a strong rapprochement between Graeco-Roman wisdom and biblical sources, which resembled the medieval notion of dual revelation.

[373] Vives, 'Scholion' (1546), p. 135.
[374] Bullinger, *Orthodoxa confessio* (1545), fol. 19^{v}.
[375] In his commentary on the 'Fifth Eclogue', which was not appended to this edition of the Sibylline oracles, Vives made clear that this poem too had been written about Jesus and not, as it was assumed in ancient times, about Julius Caesar (100–44 BC). See Vives, *In bucolica Vergilii interpretatio*, pp. 62–63. For an example of the persistence of this understanding, see Virgil, *Poemata* (1561), pp. 673–77.
[376] See J. Ijsewijn, 'Vives and Humanistic Philology', in *Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini Opera Omnia*, ed. by A. Mestre, 4 vols, Valencia 1992, I, pp. 77–111 (79–85).
[377] Vives, 'Scholion' (1546), p. 133.
[378] Ibid., p. 134; Zwingli, *In Catabaptistarum strophas elenchus* (1527), p. 145; Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1546), sig. a3^{r}.

Excursion: Juan Luis Vives's approach to the Sibyls

To come to a more thorough understanding of Vives's distinct attitude towards the Sibyls as pagan prophetesses, it is worth examining in more detail the unique understanding he reached throughout his work. In addition to his commentary on Virgil's bucolics, two other works grant insight into his understanding of the Sibylline nature, the first one being his commentary on Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Strikingly, in the preface to this work, Vives refrained from taking sides in the theological debate, leaving this territory to more expert theologians and devoting himself instead to the philological and antiquarian study of sources in a humanist fashion.[379] This sober approach clearly shaped his treatment of the passages concerned with the Sibyls. Relying on the ancient acrostic as well as gathering further Sibylline testimonies scattered in Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*, Augustine had granted the Sibyl – whether the Erythraean or the Cumaean – access to the City of God, for she had helped promote the correct worship (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23).[380] Relying on Varro's list of ten Sibyls, Vives gave an extensive synopsis of the ancient sources somehow related to the Sibyls. By doing so, the commentary first and foremost presents a clear argument for the veracity of the Sibylline tradition. As well as tracing the evidence back to Aristotle, Vives recovered the divinatory lore of the Roman king Tarquinius Priscus, who, according to tradition, had let the Sibyl burn six of her nine prophetic books before saving three, which then had become Rome's state oracle.[381] Going even against the possible claim that the Church Fathers might have relied on interpolated material, Vives was able to object on the basis of ancient authorities. As evident in the Greek original of the famous acrostic poem *Iudicii signum*, one of the most influential sayings of the Sibyl complies with the observation made by Cicero that the Sibyl had prophesied in this very manner. According to him, the frenzied nature of the Sibyl's inspiration was to be rejected on the ground that she had managed to convey such a sophisticated poetic composition (*De divinatione* II.111–12).[382] Besides providing what seems to be the most comprehensive survey of ancient literature regarding the Sibylline oracles of his

[379] See Ijsewijn, 'Vives and Humanistic Philology', pp. 79–85, 97–99.
[380] Juan Luis Vives, *En habes optime lector absolutissimi doctoris Aurelii Augustini, opus absolutissimum, de Civitate Dei*, Basel: Johann Froben, 1522, pp. 592–95.
[381] Vives, *Augustini de Civitate Dei* (1522), pp. 592–93.
[382] Ibid., p. 594.

time, Vives went beyond the level of a philological and antiquarian account by adopting the medieval conviction that elevated Virgil to the rank of sages endowed with prophetic insights (*Augustini de Civitate Dei*, X.27). Acknowledging the origin of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' from the Sibylline songs, Vives assumed that Virgil had subscribed to the prophetic nature of the oracles and foreseen the coming of Christ.[383] In addition to presenting an historical outline of the Sibyls, Vives intended to show that he agreed with Augustine in including the Sibyls within the general plan of salvation and divine revelation as outlined in *De civitate Dei*. Most of all, he wanted to endorse their understanding as Christian prophets of pagan origin.

More insights into Vives's novel understanding of the Sibylline oracles can be gathered from his *De veritate Christianae fidei* ('On the Truth of the Christian Faith').[384] Published posthumously in 1543, this apologetic treatise is pervaded by the spirit of Christian reconciliation and as such is steeped in the tradition of Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones*.[385] Interestingly, a discussion of the Sibyls can be found in Book 2, which deals with the nature of Christ, rather than in Book 5, entitled 'On the superiority of the Christian doctrine' (*de praestantia doctrinae Christianae*), which, in fact, is concerned with alleged leanings to paganism shown by his contemporaries.[386] As for Vives, the question whether or not the Sibyls can be considered as veritable prophets had previously been settled in his commentary on Augustine and Virgil; here they are readily absorbed into the body of revelations informing his theology. He argued that the information obtained from the Sibyls could be used to gain a better understanding of the approaching apocalypse. In the chapter about the coming of Christ (*De adventu Iesu Christi)*, while dismissing the role of astrologers, Vives advocated the importance of taking into consideration all other sources available, because it was too major an event to disregard any possible source of information.[387] Therefore, he championed the value of the Sibylline divinations, aligning the Sibyls with the Jewish Prophets. Interestingly, Vives's

[383] Ibid., p. 320.
[384] Juan Luis Vives, *De veritate fidei Christianae libri V.*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1544. The treatise seems to have been printed for the first time in Bruges in 1543.
[385] See Juan Luis Vives, 'Ad pium lectorem praefatio', in Vives, *De veritate fidei Christianae* (1544), sigs $\gamma 8^{v}$–$\delta 2^{v}$ ($\delta 2^{v}$). See K. Kohut, 'Anmerkungen zu "De veritate fidei christianae"', in *Juan Luis Vives. Sein Werk und seine Bedeutung für Spanien und Deutschland*, ed. by C. Strosetzki, Frankfurt 1995, pp. 122–34 (130–33).
[386] Vives, *De veritate fidei Christianae* (1544), p. 655. See also Kohut, 'Anmerkungen', p. 125.
[387] Vives, *De veritate fidei Christianae* (1544), pp. 254–55.

exegesis laid bare a utilitarian rationale in his exegetical reappraisal for the Sibyls. Any involvement with the Sibylline material, ultimately described as a healing force, provided useful knowledge for one's salvation: 'There is nothing more mournful or bitter than to suffer from a severe illness while ignoring the remedy.'[388]

If thus accepted, Sibylline knowledge could be used for ethical reasons. In the two following chapters, 'On the Old Testament' (*De vetere testamento*) and 'On the authors of the Gospel' (*De evangelii scriptoribus*), Vives expanded on the emotional benefits that could come from knowing the Sibylline oracles. After having once again appreciated the antiquity of the prophecies, he encouraged his readers not to be deterred from seeking the Sibyls' advice. Yet, he also acknowledged that in the past, precisely because of its versatile nature, the Sibylline body of prophetic knowledge had often been greatly misused to support all sorts of superstitious beliefs.[389] In this respect, Vives had no qualms about considering the Jewish prophecies as not only superior and holier, but also as more knowledgeable. What merited the Sibyls was their role as a medium through which God had imparted hope to the faithful. While the Jewish prophets informed the pious conduct of one's life, the Sibyls brought comfort. According to Vives, this consolatory function was particularly evident in the way in which they had foreshadowed the coming of Christ. Alongside the uncontested importance of the Jewish prophets for Christianity, this dichotomy between the two prophetic groups assigned a distinct faculty to the Sibyls: they were not only a potential source of Christian knowledge available to the pagan Romans, but seemed to still have a divinatory potential and, as such, the ability to instil hope and comfort.[390]

If we now return to Oporinus, much light can be shed on his decision both to add a Christian interpretation of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' to Castellio's translation of the Sibylline oracles and to refer to a scholar, Augustine, who had shaped the

[388] Ibid., p. 255: 'Nihil enim tristius, vel acerbius, quam gravi morbo teneri, medicinam autem ignorare.'
[389] Ibid. This view can also be supported by a letter to his friend and Bruges humanist Franciscus Cranevelt (1485–1564) in which Vives stated that past applications of the Sibylline prophecies to matters unrelated to the prophetic intentions of the Sibyls had undermined their authority and significance. Indeed, these distortions had only reinforced the image of a pseudo diviner, who says nonsense in a state of frenzy. See Vives to Cranevelt (22 May–6 June 1520), in 'Litterae ad Craneveldium Balduinianae. A Preliminary Edition', ed. by J. Ijsewijn and G. Tournoy, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* XLI, 1992, pp. 1–85 (32–33).
[390] Vives, *De veritate fidei Christianae* (1544), p. 268–69.

understanding of the Sibyls in a significant manner. The way in which Vives, for all his cautions, had rehabilitated the cognitive and moral functions of Sibylline divination fulfilled many of the aspects involved in Oporinus's programme: the accurate philological study of the historical sources related to pagan divination; the willingness to accept the female prophetesses within the canon of Christian prophecy; and, finally, the need to justify a relationship between the Sibyls and the biblical prophets.

A rivalry about the Sibylline heritage. The two editions of 1555

In 1555, ten years after the first publication of the Sibylline oracles, the text was printed again twice. First, Johannes Herold (1514–1567), a scholar working for various Basel printers, published with Petri a collection of patristic writings, the *Orthodoxographa* ('Orthodox Theological Opinions'), which included a bilingual edition of Sibylline oracles.[391] Then Oporinus brought out his own bilingual edition which juxtaposed an emended version of the Greek original with Castellio's Latin translation, with most of the writings comprised in the earlier editions.[392]

When in March 1555 Herold published his *Orthodoxographa*, a volume of 76 apocryphal and patristic writings, many in bilingual editions, it was the second time that the Greek original of the Sibylline prophecies appeared in print.[393] As an illegitimate child, Herold was precluded from any academic position and, so, he was dependent printers taking pity on him.[394] After the Basel-based printer Petri had himself collected and published 32 largely apocryphal texts composed by representative theologians of early Christendom – his ΜΙΚΡΟΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΙΚΟΝ, a collection of short treatises by ancient Christian theologians and bishops – he

[391] Johannes Herold (ed.), *Orthodoxographa. Theologiae sacrosanctae ac syncerioris fidei doctores*, Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1555. On Petri, known as Henricpetri from 1555, see H. Grimm, 'Geadelte deutsche Buchdruckerfamilie im 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* XXXVII, 1961, pp. 257–71.
[392] Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555).
[393] Ironically enough, Herold's attempts to establish himself as a priest had previously failed precisely because he lacked knowledge of Greek. See Burckhardt, *Herold*, pp. 100–1.
[394] See Burckhardt, *Herold*, pp. 102–5.

commissioned Herold to preserve from forgotten prints and manuscripts further *apocrypha* and *patristica* by minor figures from the early Christian era up to the late Middle Ages.[395] Once gathered, these texts appeared combined with most of the writings published in Petri's ΜΙΚΡΟΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΙΚΟΝ. As argued by Irena Backus, the aim of this publication together with the *Haereseologia* and the *Exempla virtutum et vitiorum*, collections of anti-Arian writings and both Christian and pagan authors compiled by Herold, was to offer less confessionally oriented perspectives on the early Church.[396] It is therefore not surprising to find the Sibylline oracles included in this collection. Strangely enough, however, they were not mentioned in the list detailing all 76 texts included in this volume. Here one keeps looking for them to no avail.[397] The same is true of the preface, where no mention of the oracles can be found, let alone their addenda including Lactantius, Theophilus of Antioch (d. 183–85) and Barbieri.[398] In addition to the volume's index of cited authors, which did include the Sibyls, the pagination of the volume, too, is evidence that the Sibylline prophecies were in fact meant to become part of this volume and not added at a later stage.[399] Indeed, rather than simply reproducing either the Greek original or Castellio's translation, this edition was innovative in that it juxtaposed both texts so as to provide the first bilingual edition of the Sibylline oracles. It is therefore even more surprising that the Sibyls were not explicitly acknowledged.[400] Whether the oblique insertion was a way to smuggle an illustrious representative of pagan divination into the body of relevant Christian writings or what other reasons motivated Herold to do so remain open to debate. Notably, Herold, as the compiler of this collection, left the readers to judge the value of the text for themselves. He

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[395] Heinrich Petri (ed.), ΜΙΚΡΟΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΙΚΟΝ*, veterum quorundam brevium theologorum sive episcoporum sive presbyterorum aut sacri ordinis aliorum, qui aut tempore apostolorum aut non multo post vixerunt, elenchus*, Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1550. See I. Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, Leiden 2003, p. 254.

[396] See ibid., p. 254. [Johannes Herold (ed.)], *Haereseologia*, Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1556; Johannes Herold (ed.), *Exempla vitutum et vitiorum atque etiam aliarum rerum maxime memorabilium historicus conscripta*, Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1555.

[397] Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555), sigs a4^{r}–a6^{v}.

[398] Herold, 'Praefatio', in Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555), sigs a2^{r}–a3^{v}.

[399] Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555), sig. a1^{v}.

[400] Ibid., pp. 1468–1522. The translation of Theophilus's passage and the titles relative to his and Lactantius's part as well as Barbieri's set of twelve poems are taken verbatim from both earlier editions. See Birck, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ (1545), p. 104, sig. P3^{r}; Castellio, *Sibyllina Oracula* (1546), p. 108; Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555), p. 1519–21. Different from the editions published by Oporinus, the Latin translation of the acrostic follows that of Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (XVIII.23). Given his alleged lack of Greek knowledge, Herold would not have been able to produce the translation himself and assemble the quotations from Lactantius, which in his *Divinae institutiones* are rather scattered. There is however no evidence of any possible collaboration on these items.

refused to reject any specific piece of writing and instead invoked St Paul's admonition (1 Th 5:21): 'Examine everything and keep what is good!'[401]

Later, in August 1555, another edition of the Sibylline oracles left the printing press of Oporinus. This volume had again been edited by Castellio, who since siding with the convicted and then executed heretic Michael Servetus (1509/11–1553), had risen to become one of the most representative champions of religious tolerance, a fact that had provoked outright hostility in certain theological circles.[402] A major improvement to both the *editio princeps* and the first Latin translation, this second edition consisted of a bilingual text, with Castellio's Latin translation and, unlike Herold's edition, a critical edition of the Greek original, which comprised both new emendations made by the Italian humanist and Graecist Antimachus, who, as already pointed out, owned a second manuscript of the oracles, and variants from ancient sources, such as Theophilus of Antioch, Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria.[403] This edition also contained the majority of the supplementary texts from both earlier editions with few changes. At the end of the volume, supplements and newly added material were itemised in a revised version of Birck's letter to Oporinus, also found in the 1545 edition.[404] The interpretation of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', by contrast, is

[401] Herold, 'Praefatio' (1555), sig. a2^{v}: 'Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete.'
[402] See Guggisberg, *Castellio*, pp. 107–151. Based on the funeral sermon by Jean Rouxel (1530–1586), in which he praised his collaboration with Castellio, Verdun L. Saulnier hypothesises that, being in a positions similar to that of a famulus, Rouxel had contributed to the second edition of 1555. See V. L. Saulnier, 'Castellion, Jean Rouxel et les oracles sibyllins', in *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion*, ed. by B. Becker, Haarlem 1953, pp. 225–38. For the contemporary inter-denominational debate on textual criticism, see R. Hendel, 'The Dream of a Perfect Text. Textual Criticism and Biblical Inerrancy in Early Modern Europe', in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls. John Collins at Seventy*, ed. by J. Baden, H. Najman and E. Tigchelaar, 2 vols, Leiden and Boston 2017, I, pp. 517–41.
[403] See Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, pp. XI–XII. In a brief introductory note, Castellio as the editor of this volume sheds some light on the design of the marginalia indicating the variants in the different manuscripts. See Sebastian Castellio, 'De secunda hac editione Graeca', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), sig. a2^{rv}. Moreover, a comparison between the emendated passages in Castellio's edition and their equivalent in Herold's confirms the differences between both texts and the chronological order of the editions. See 'Sibyllina oracula. ΟΙ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΑΣ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 32–259 (61, 66); 'ΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΑΣ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ, βιβλιος α. Sibyllinorum oraculorum, liber primus', in Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555), pp. 1468–1522 (1473–74).
[404] Sixt Brick, 'Epistola Ioanni Oporino suo', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 297–99.

omitted as it featured in some sections of recently published writings by Eusebius, which were cited here.[405]

As for the prefatory texts, Castellio kept Birck's dedicatory letter and his short epigram from the 1545 edition.[406] Three major changes, however, occurred compared to Castellio's dedication of 1546.[407] First, while defending his view that the Sibylline oracles were less obscure than those of the Jewish prophets, Castellio now argued that God's intention in doing so was to punish the Jews for their reluctance to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God.[408] Second, when rebutting those assuming the prophecies to be counterfeit, Castellio added that their higher level of clarity proved that they were genuine rather than a forgery, for to provide a rather explicit divination would most certainly have cast doubt on them.[409] Evidently, both arguments served to substantiate Castellio's conviction that the oracles were true prophecies. Finally, the use of the words 'divination' (*vaticinium*) and 'oracle' (*oraculum*) was standardised. Whereas in the 1546 edition these two terms had been used interchangeably, now they were employed to distinguish between forms of predictions in general, be they biblical or pagan, and the specific Sibylline oracles specifically.[410] Thus, the second kind, now consistently denoted as *oracula*, was given full legitimacy as instantiations of divinatory knowledge, on a par with the most authoritative oracles of the Greco-Roman tradition.

In addition to these two letters, Castellio and Oporinus introduced a third and new text, which they deemed to have been authored by Antimachus. They therefore entitled it *Marci Antimachi praefatio in Sibyllina oracula* ('Preface of Marcus

[405] Ibid., p. 298. The edition referred to here, appeared in 1546; Eusebius, *De vita Constantini*, transl. by Joannes Portesius, Paris: Michel Fezandat, 1546. According to Birck's letter, Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History* can also be found in the newly published Paris edition.
[406] Birck, 'Epistola', (1555), pp. 5–9; Sixt Birck, 'In Sibyllas', Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), p. 21. The only addition in the text of the *Epistola* is the specification of the famous acrostics as 'Erythreae quaedam, in quibus'; Birck, 'Epistola' (1555), p. 7.
[407] Minor changes such as substituting a 'videatur' by 'videri possit' or inserting a clarifying 'haec' can be left aside here. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Epistola', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 10–20 (11, 12).
[408] Castellio, 'Epistola' (1555), pp. 11–12: 'Accedit eo, quod (quemadmodum patet ex Esaia) voluit Deus Iudaeis obscuriorem esse Christi adventum, ut in eum saevirem, atque ita suae pertinaciae poenas darent, quod idem de gentilibus dicere non licet.'
[409] Castellio, 'Epistola' (1555), p. 12: 'Quanquam haec perspicuitas eo valet, ut vera esse, non falsa appareat. Nam si quis ea finxisset, profecto abscuriora de industria fecisset, ut ante rem gestam scripta, et his similia viderentur quae sunt in literis sacris.'
[410] On four occasions, the particular form of *vaticinium* was replaced by its equivalent of *oraculum*; Castellio, 'Epistola' (1555), pp. 10, 11, 14, 18.

Antimachus to the Sibylline Oracles').[411] Since Charles Alexandre's nineteenth-century study of the Sibylline oracles, we know that this text was in fact the copy of a prologue written by the unknown fifth- or sixth-century compiler of the Sibylline oracles. Undated as it was, Castellio appears to have wrongly ascribed it to the late Antimachus.[412] In this preface, printed in a Greek-Latin bilingual version, a twofold aim is pursued. By comparing the results coming from those Greek philosophers who only 'meddle about things' (*circa ea elaborant* | ἐντελοὺσι) with the achievements of those who 'know' (*sapiunt* | πολυμαθεῖς), the unknown author motivates his decision to compile the Sibylline oracles as a way to overcome the endangering poor state in which the Sibylline prophecies were.[413] Secondly, in a mere encyclopaedic effort, the author gave the classic list of ten Sibyls, quoting Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.8–13), his *De ira Dei* (22.5–23.14), and a version of the founding legend of the *libri Sibyllini*, drawn from Gelius's *Attic Nights* (I.19).[414] Furthermore, relying on Plato's authority (presumably *Ion*, 533C–535E), he justified the partly incomprehensible nature of the Sibylline utterings as a result of poetic flaws, while attributing the conceptual obscurities to the human inability to provide unhampered transmissions of knowledge in general, let alone divine revelation.[415]

The bilingual text of the Sibylline prophecies is followed by a number of significant excerpts to the textual passages: Eusebius's 'opinion' (*iudicium*), taken from his *De vita Constantini* (V.18–21), here also given in a Latin translation by Musculus – in fact, this is not Eusebius speaking, but Constantine – and a *sententia* by Clement of Alexandria and Augustine's *iudicium*, extracted from his *De civitate Dei*.[416] These are followed by the set of twelve poems by Barbieri already present in

[411] See Marcus Antonius Antimachus, 'Praefatio in Sibyllina oracula', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 22–31.
[412] See C. Alexandre, ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΟΙ. *Oracula Sibyllina*, 2 vols, Paris 1841–56, II p. 421. It seems that the Latin translation was undertaken by Castellio himself. For the missing date, see Antimachus, 'Praefatio' (1555), pp. 30–31.
[413] Antimachus, 'Praefatio' (1555), pp. 22–23.
[414] Ibid., pp. 24–29.
[415] Ibid., pp. 28–31; Plato, 'Ion', in *Plato*, ed. by R. G. Bury, H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb, 7 vols, London and New York 1926–29, III, pp. 401–47 (418–27).
[416] The translation of Eusebius's *iudicium* is given in Musculus's version of 1549. This also contains the Latin translation of the acrostic written by Giraldi, which was taken from his 1545 *Historia poetarum*. See Giraldi, *Historia poetarum* (1545), p. 244; Eusebius, 'De vita Constantini', transl. by Wolfgang Musculus, in Musculus, *Ecclesiasticae historiae autores* (1549), pp. 160–231 (226–30). For a similar argument, see also Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion*, I, p. 280. Book 5 of Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* is generally referred to as 'The Oration of Constantine' (*Oratio ad sanctorum coetum*). For a modern edition of Constantine's life, including this speech, see Eusebius, *Werke*, ed. by J. Ziegler, 9 vols, Leipzig and Berlin 1902–75, I, pp. 179–87.

the 1545 edition, together with a poetic adaptation of the acrostic, produced by a certain Johann(es) Lang(e), the *Propheticum Sibyllae Erythreae* ('The Prophecy of the Erythraean Sibyl').[417] Finally, in a letter addressed to the reader, the first editor of the Sibylline prophecies, Birck, reported with consternation that men of great authority had treated the Sibylline prophecies as mere fables. Not only did they disregard the vast efforts made by their own contemporary Castellio to reveal the precious nature of the Sibyls, but they also dismissed the testimony of most commendable Church Fathers.[418] Birck accused them with hypocritically clinging to their humanist training while pretending to ignore that the Sibyls were an integral part of that tradition, as evident in the cases of the 'Life of Marius' (42.4–5) by Plutarch (c.46–p.120) and *De divinatione* (II.111–12) by Cicero.[419]

What, however, is most intriguing about this letter is the time gap between the year that it dates from, 1551, and the year 1555, in which Castellio's second edition was actually published. By that time Birck had been dead for a year. From these various details, one might argue that the preparatory work behind this edition had been initiated in the early 1550s, a hypothesis that seems to be confirmed by a note on the manuscript used by Birck, dating from June 1550, in which Birck says that he

[417] Johannes Lang, 'Sibyllae Erythreae de extremo in terris iudicio vaticinium', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 290–91. Already in 1553, Oporinus had printed this poetic adaptation as an appendix to Lang's Latin translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* by Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus (fl.1320), without however any direct connection to the main work printed. See Johannes Lang (ed.), *Nicephori Callisti Xanthopuli, scriptoris vere Catholici, Ecclesiasticae historiae libri octo et decem*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1553, p. 965 [956]. Even though the name of the author of this poem is known, Johannes Lang's identity has triggered some debate among scholars. Drawing on the theological implications of this translation in relation to his other intellectual occupation at that time as well as a number of possible allusions to this question by Luther and Konrad Mutian (1470/71–1526), Reinhold Weijenborg proposed to ascribe this work to the Erfurt humanist and reformer Johannes Lang (c.1487–1548). Were we to follow this conclusion, which soon was widely accepted, the text printed here would be a revised version of that which its copyist and Lang's poet competitor Eobanus had deliberately tampered in order to present Erasmus with this poem in lesser quality. The orthography preferred by humanists had been adjusted and missing syllables in otherwise incomplete hexameters inserted. However, the authorship of the poem was recently contested when Harry Vredeveld argued that, since it was the Freystadt-born Johann Lange (1503–1567) who translated Xanthopulus's *Ecclesiastical History* and indeed not Erfurt reformer of the same name, he must be considered the author of this poem, too. See R. Weijenborg, 'Das bisher unbekannte "Propheticum Sibyllae Erythreae" als Gedicht des Erfurter Humanisten Johannes Lang O.E.S.A. und als Faktor der Reformationsgeschichte. Erstausgabe, Übersetzung und Kommentar', *Antonianum* LVIII, 1983, pp. 358–447 (371–428); H. Vredeveld, 'The "Propheticum Sibyllae Erythreae" Ascribed to the Erfurt Humanist Johann Lang and Its Alleged Role in Reformation History', *Humanistica Lovaniensia* LXIII, 2014, pp. 77–82.

[418] Sixt Birck, 'Epistola ad candidum lectorem', in Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 295–97 (295).

[419] Plutarch, *Lives*, transl. and ed. by B. Perrin, 11 vols, London and New York 1914–26, IX, pp. 582–85.

was collaborating with Castellio on a second edition.[420] As the reasons for this publication remain unclear – Jean-Michel Roessli assumes that the editions of 1545 and 1546 had sold out swiftly – we can only conjecture about the factors that prevented this edition from being printed at an earlier stage.[421] As we shall see in the chapter 3 'A new era for the Sibylline prophecies. The immediate reactions to the publications', apart from Castellio himself, until the early 1550s, no major thinker responded to the 1545/46 publications of the Sibylline oracles. And yet, provided with the emendations by Antimachus, which after having been created for Castellio's translation were now inserted in newly designed marginalia, and supplied with the quotations from newly published texts, the new 1555 edition offered a thoroughly-revised critical edition even without having consulted the third known manuscript.[422] By contrast, the new edition from Oporinus's printing press can effectively be seen as a compendium that aims at presenting a wide-ranging scope. Rather than simply recombining material already printed elsewhere, it appears that the reluctance to deal with the Sibyls, which this edition seems to be addressing once again, prompted Birck and Castellio to tackle these issues anew. It may be that the delay depended on the censorship quarrel surrounding the publication of a report on the Council of Trent, which had nearly jeopardised the future activities of the *Officina Oporiniana*.[423] This, however, remains unclear.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the principal aim of this volume was to dispel all persisting reservations about the Sibyls by corroborating the available textual evidence in support of their prophecies. While in all previous endeavours the main line of argument had been to show that any use of the Sibylline prophecies was in agreement with the principles of patristic theology, and that the oracles had not been the result of forgery, both Birck and Antimachus embraced types of evidence that

[420] For the note on the manuscript, see A. Rzach (ed.), ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΟΙ. *Oracula Sibyllina,* Vienna, Prague and Leipzig 1891, p. IX; Buisson*, Sébastien Castellion*, I, p. 281.
[421] See Roessli, 'Sébastien Castellion et les *Oracula Sibyllina*', p. 229.
[422] Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), sigs a8^{v}–b^{r}; Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), p. 17.
[423] In 1552, the Catholic bishop of Vienna, Friedrich Nausea (1495–1552), had commissioned the printing of a pamphlet about the Council of Trent. The target of this work were Protestants, who were both ridiculed for their beliefs and encouraged to return to Catholic dogmata. Oporinus believed that no reader would be fooled by the shameless frankness of Nausea's text. He was, however, denounced for printing material propagating the superiority of the Catholic Church. The financial difficulties incurred upon Oporinus as a result of this operation were further exacerbated by an outbreak of the plague and the cancellation of the Frankfurt book fair in the autumn of the same year, all of which nearly led to a standstill of Oporinus's press. See Steinmann, *Oporinus*, pp. 85–88.

went beyond both the Judaeo-Christian authorities and Cicero, an almost omnipresent figure in contemporary humanist works. By contrast, Gellius, Plutarch and even Plato were called upon to strengthen the authoritative import of the prophecies, which were now clearly branded as pagan 'oracles' (*oracula*). The importance of reinforcing the claim about the true nature of the Sibylline prophecies highlights the fact that probably Birck's epistle may be a slightly adjusted version of what originally was a private letter, in which the author complained about the current tendency not to accept the Sibylline poems as a reliable piece of divine predictions.[424] Despite the persistent struggles for recognition, the publication of both Herold's and Castellio's editions are signs that the Sibylline oracles were enjoying a good level of popularity. Ten years after their first publication in 1545, they had not passed by unnoticed or left neglected, as will be shown in the next chapter. What is more, the 1555 editions had prompted a growing scholarly engagement that demanded the texts to be available for scrutiny and further studies. Indeed, through these editions the foundations for future academic interest had been laid.[425]

Conclusion

The rediscovery of the Sibylline oracles marked a decisive turning point in the reception of the Sibylline tradition in western Christendom. Since the Roman general Stilicho had ordered to destroy the then state oracle in 408, the Sibylline oracles were thought to be lost for posterity. When more than a thousand years later in the early 1540s the Augsburg schoolmaster Birck discovered an extensive Greek corpus that purported to be of Sibylline origin, he and the majority of his contemporaries had no doubts that this was the long-lost text. And since not only various passages were identical with Sibylline texts quoted by Lactantius and Augustine, but also passages from the Bible as well as pagan authorities like Virgil seemed to be somehow in tune

[424] This hypothesis can only be verified through archival research, which would bring to light new evidence on the matter and therefore lead to a revision of the conclusions drawn from the two 1555 editions.

[425] Even nowadays in critical editions of the Greek original, scholars refer back to the volumes first printed by the Basel printer Oporinus as milestones in the preservation of the text and its legacy. See Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel*, p. 20; Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, pp. 6–10.

with this body of knowledge, Birck published the corpus as the Sibylline oracles. In his preface, he embraced the bipartite model of revelation that, since early Christendom, considered the Sibyls to be a medium through which God had revealed himself to the pagans, just as he had done through the biblical prophets to the Jews. Indeed, neither Birck nor the oracles' translator Castellio or their printer Oporinus were able to detect any later Christian interpolations, as is known today.[426] As discussed above, the confluence of pagan, patristic and medieval lines of transmission had moulded the Sibylline legacy into one rather homogeneous lore, so much so that by common consent the corpus was considered to be a summa of pagan prophecy, with the Sibyls' revelations at its core. It was the truly divine revelation, so they thought, which after it had been misunderstood in ancient Rome, was now subject to its rightful scrutiny and consideration by Christians. Yet, however critical Birck was of those scholars who were doubting the authenticity of the oracles, he hesitated to grant the Sibyls the same level of *auctoritas* as the biblical prophets.

Castellio, on the other hand, as the translator and later editor of the oracles, was much more invested in substantiating the claim that the text were ancient, that is, predating Christ and, therefore, not a mere forgery. For Castellio, it was not sufficient to prove that the Sibyls had been true diviners. Most of his preface is dedicated to the defence of the oracles' authenticity, which had come under attack primarily from two groups. The first claimed the oracles to be too blatant to be ancient and written by a non-Christian, an argument Castellio countered by quoting some passages in the Old Testament as evidence of a similar degree of openness. More important was however that, as no Mosaic learning had been received in the pagan realm, the oracles were easily comprehensible for pagans to grasp the notion of a single saviour and other notions foreign to pagan polytheism. In response to the second group of contesters, who denied the oracles any usefulness for Christians, Castellio asserted that it was for no one to impose limits on the scope of divine revelations, just as no one would confine profane disciplines of grammar or philosophy. He went on to launch an attack on his critics, arguing that anyone setting out to forge an ancient text would neither choose the Sibylline oracles over a more attractive text, nor would they produce a clear prophecy, for it would most certainly cast doubts regarding its authenticity. Overall, this rather sophisticated defence of the

[426] See Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity*, pp. 262–65.

oracles' authenticity, which Castellio reinforced in his 1555 edition, is indicative of the high level of distrust and suspicion which surrounded this body of potential revelations. For a spiritualistic theologian who emphasised the divine inspiration not only in the composition but also in the reception of any revelation from God rather than the authority of Scriptures, it was vital to address these concerns regarding the text's authenticity, which was the all important issue on which the possible authority of the corpus relied.[427] To this end, both the translation volume of 1546 included also the comprehensive Christianising commentary on Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' by Vives, for it not only predated Christ, but also was probably the best known example of Sibylline influences on pagan literature.

These three publications from Oporinus's printing press, however, were not the only ones produced in the mid sixteenth century. The Sibylline oracles were also included in Herold's collection *Monumenta orthodoxographa*, the fourth publication of the oracles within ten years after their rediscovery. Indeed, in 1569, a fifth publication was to follow. This comparatively high number of issues gives us a sense of the urgency that accompanied the publication history of the oracles. The pace of new publications testifies to the desire in the unique intellectual millieu of Basel to supply the print market with this corpus in a swift manner. In light of the editorial history of the *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagung*, which after its initial publication in 1517 under the title *Offenbarung der Sibyllen weissagung* was issued five times in the 1530s, it seems safe to say that there was a huge interest in publications dealing with the Sibyls and their divinations.[428] Apart from this quantitative demand for prints about the Sibyls, it is furthermore telling that the oracles found their way into a collection of minor, orthodox early writers. After the outbreak of the Reformation, Basel had become a centre where serious attempts were made to move what nowadays would be classified as New Testament apocrypha from the sphere of devotional literature to that of historical writings, in order to revive the spirit of the early Church and, ultimately, to reunite the divided *christianitas*. One of such collections was the *Monumenta orthodoxographa* by Herold. Among the texts included were also the Sibylline oracles. It was in this liberal milieu that the

[427] For Castellio's understanding of divine inspiration, see H. Liebing, 'Die Schriftauslegung Sebastian Castellios', in *Humanismus, Reformation, Konfession. Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte*, ed. by W. Bienert and W. Hage, Marburg 1986, pp. 11–124 (62); Bracali, *Il filologo ispirato*.
[428] Köbel, *Offenbarung der Sibillen Weissagungen* (1516); Egenolff, *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagung* (1531, 1532, 1534, 1535, 1537).

Sibylline legacy was fostered. Yet, while initially the hope was that the Sibyls' message of the universality with which God had granted salvation and redemption would help ameliorate contemporary religious tensions, the Sibylline oracles soon were to become yet again a bone of contention.

A new era for the Sibylline prophecies. The immediate reactions to the publications of the Sibylline oracles

The publication of the Sibylline oracles marked a watershed in the history of the Sibylline tradition. The availability of the Greek original and a Latin translation granted unprecedented opportunities to engage with the Sibylline oracles and other prophecies of the Sibylline tradition on the basis of new textal evidence. Indeed, this publication prompted new responses to issues surrounding the Sibyls from various perspectives. Knowledge about the discovery and publication of the Sibylline oracles spread quickly as Birck's first edition found its way into the *Bibliotheca universalis* ('Universal Library') by Conrad Gesner (1516–1565), which was published only six months after the oracles had appeared in print and even before the Latin translation by Castellio.[429] In addition to the references to Lactantius and Augustine, Gesner, a theologically well-educated and pious member of the Reformed Church, mentioned the acrostic, as well as the Byzantine *Suidas*, which traced the Sibyls back to biblical figures such as Noah as well as to pagan gods.[430] Moreover, both the Greek original and the then published Latin translation can be found in the second volume of the *Bibliotheca universalis*, the *Partitiones theologicae* ('Theological Divisions'). Together with Barbieri's 1481 treatise *Discordantiae*, they were listed among 'revelations of the future, sacred visions and dreams' (*Revelationes futurorum, visiones sacrae, somnia*).[431] These two entries in one of the most important bibliographical works of the sixteenth century are indicative of the fact that the Sibylline oracles were generally accepted for being what they purported to be. They were henceforth the subject of studies of any kind.

As suggested by the keen interest in the Sibylline tradition prior to 1545, the publication of the Sibylline oracles was met with great interest by the world of letters. Especially theologians busied themselves with finding ways to incorporate

[429] Conrad Gesner, *Bibliotheca universalis, sive Catalogus omnium scriptorum locupletissimus*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1545.
[430] In the Sibylline oracles, the Sibyl is called Noah's daughter-in-law three times (Sib. or. Prologue 33; I.288–89; III.823–27). See also O. Stewart, '"I will speak… with my whole person in ecstasy". Instrumentality and Independence in the *Sibylline Oracles*', in Baden, Najman and Tigchelaar, *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls*, II, pp. 1232–46 (1243).
[431] Conrad Gesner, *Partitiones theologicae, pandectarum universalium*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1549, fol. 40^{v}.

this newly available corpus of prophecies into their notion of divine revelation and Scripture, or to refute it on new theological, philological or historical grounds. These endeavours coincided with the emerging of a plurality of theological discourses, previously oriented towards one orthodoxy. This process made way for the definition of individual positions corresponding to the different Churches of the Reformation. These new divisions within theology grew increasingly self-referential and detached from one another, bar the often polemic refutations of the beliefs of other confessions of faith. This disintegration was only one of the consequences of the so-called confessionalisation, a historical paradigm, coined by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling, which describes the process between roughly 1555 and 1618 whereby the state, church and society were permeated by a confessional identity through means of language, customs and law, ultimately transforming the medieval society relying primarily on interpersonal relationships to one that was increasingly organised according to institutions.[432] Even if this paradigm has recently come under attack, not only the theological debate about the Sibylline oracles, but also the reception of the Sibyls more generally did fall into clear denominational boundaries.[433] It was the Protestant camp, in particular, that developed some of the most sophisticated attempts to reject the Sibylline tradition. Stakes were high given that one of the crucial doctrinal controversies between Protestants and those adhering to Rome had been the issue of what was accepted as divine revelation and, therefore, the foundation for Christianity. In comparison to this intra-Protestant debate, Catholic

[432] On this paradigm, see W. Reinhard, 'Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* LXVIII, 1977, pp. 226–51; H. Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung. Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe*, Gütersloh 1981; H. Schilling, 'Alternative Konzepte der Reformation und Zwang zur lutherischen Identität. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Differenzierung zu Beginn der Neuzeit', in *Wegscheiden der Reformation. Alternatives Denken vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by G. Vögler, Weimar 1994, pp. 277–308; H. Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung von Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft – Profil, Leistung, Defizit und Perspektiven eines geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas', in *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung. Akten eines von Corpus Catholicorum und Verein für Refromationsgeschichte veranstalteten Symposions, Augsburg 1993*, ed. by W. Reinhard and H. Schilling, Gütersloh and Münster 1995, pp. 11–49. For more recent scholarship, see, for example, T. Kaufmann, A. Schubert and K. von Greyerz (eds), *Frühneuzeitliche Konfessionskulturen. 1. Nachwuchstagung des VRG Wittenberg 30. 09.–02. 10. 2004*, Gütersloh 2008; J. M. Headly, H. J. Hildebrand and A. J. Papalas (eds), *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700. Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, Aldershot 2004.

[433] See, for example, K. Hill (ed.), *Cultures of Lutheranism. Reformation Repertoires in the Early Modern Era*, Oxford 2017; A. Pietsch and B. Stollberg-Rilinger (eds), *Konfessionelle Ambiguität. Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Gütersloh 2013; K. von Greyerz et al. (eds), *Interkonfessionalität – Transkonfessionalität – binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität. Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese*, Gütersloh 2003.

theologians maintained a veneration for the Sibyls very much in continuity with the late Middle Ages. And so, as will become apparent, the accessibility of the Sibylline oracles not only opened doors to new appropriations and incorporations, but also allowed for more sustained critiques of the entire Sibylline lore. Eventually, these led to two new publications of the Sibylline oracles, the introductions to which voiced concerns regarding the Sibyls' authenticity. These philological refutations shifted the perception of the Sibyls substantially towards a sober account of them as merely pagan figures rather than Christian prophets of some sort. But before discussing the approaches pursued by the representatives of the (Counter-)Reformation Churches, I will draw attention to rather unorthodox and liberal thinkers. It was they that offered the most extensive appropriations of the Siblline oracles.

The unorthodox and liberal. The appropriation of hailed prophets

With the publication of the Sibylline oracles, a whole corpus of long-lost prophecies was at once made available for savants and thinkers of all different unorthodox or radical traditions to be appropriated each for their own purpose. Through the incorporation of Sibylline insights, Christian history and theology could be reconstructed and reconsidered in order to justify and promote beliefs emerging at the core and equally on the fringes of the ongoing religious debates of the Reformation. In order to demonstrate the diversity of interpretations of the Sibylline oracles, this section centres on three thinkers, who in various degrees can be described as unorthodox or liberal, before turning to the more established Churches and their attempts to allocate the Sibyls a clearly demarcated place within their mainstream theology. For the Catholic Guillaume Postel, the Sibyls were an integral part of his concept of a universal religion. Again, although one of the leading figures of Reformed theology, Theodor Bibliander (1509–1564) diverted so much from the position of his fellow Zurich theologians that it deserves to be regarded as exceptional and worthy of a more detailed analysis. He incorporated the Sibylline oracles especially in his apocalyptic works. He did so, however, always in conjunction with more reliable authorities, for he hesitated regarding their integrity

as Christian prophetesses. These doubts were fully overcome by Castellio, the translator of the Sibylline oracles. Eager to incorporate all the available revelations from God, he appropriated this corpus wholeheartedly into controversial matters of his Christological views and the debate about the Eucharist, in order to further the cause of the Reformation. On a more general level, the analysis of these three thinkers demonstrates that both Catholic and Reformation thinkers promoted their cause respectively by virtue of this corpus, which offered uncharted, but no less rich and controversial testimonies of the divine.

Undoubtedly, the most enigmatic person under discussion in this section is Postel, a French polymath whose knowledge of Semitic languages gained him great respect in his days. Although remaining loyal to the Catholic Church, Postel was imprisoned on a number of occasions, for example, on account of his conviction that he were a prophet sent to unify the world. Many of his controversial views were conceived and publicised in the 1540s, when, after having been rejected from the French court, Postel had turned his attention to spiritual concerns. In 1543 alone he published six books, among which was his greatest work, his *De orbis terrae concordia* ('On the Harmony of the World').[434] Written in the winter 1542/3, it was first rejected for publication by the Sorbonne, before the Basel-based printer Oporinus, who also had published the Sibylline oracles, accepted it for publication despite his own concerns.[435] In his *De orbis terrae concordia*, Postel outlined his belief in the unity of all faiths in one religion based on reason. Religious division had arisen only because God's revelations had been mistakenly interpreted, which had led to the foundation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Even peoples outside the Abrahamic faiths had learnt about divine salvation via different revelations, the culmination of which had been Christ.[436] Instrumental for this kind of recognition were the 'messengers' (*angeli*) through which the incorporeal God had enabled Himself to become visible to all mankind.[437] According to this description, each continent of the old world had its own messenger: Abraham had revealed God's

[434] Guillaume Postel, *De orbis terrae concordiae* [Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1544]. For the publishing process, see Steinmann, *Oporinus*, pp. 31–35.
[435] See H. Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation. Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa*, Beirut 1995, pp. 461–62.
[436] See Y. Petry, *Gender, Kabalah and the Reformation. The Mystical Theology of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)*, Leiden and Boston 2004, pp. 33–37
[437] Postel, *De orbis terrae concordiae* ([1544]), p. 74.

teachings to the Chaldeans, as the representatives of Asia, and Moses had been sent to teach the Egyptians, as the representatives of Africa.[438] Paramount to these biblical patriarchs had been the Sibyls, women who as messengers to Europe had been inspired by God in different regions and times.[439] The Sibyls had taught all pagan peoples about the one God and about the errors of their respective pagan religion, as had been recorded in the Sibylline sayings not only by Romans but also other peoples. Even if acknowledging the crucial role of transmitting the Sibylline prophecies by the Romans up to the time of Constantine, a fact that had led to the common association of the Sibyls with Rome, Postel most remarkably did not deny the possibility that other Sibylline traditions existed.[440] This notion might well relate either to local myths of Sibyls particularly prominent in contemporary oral culture, such as the Sibyl von der Teck mentioned above, or even to the later medieval texts of the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' and the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*. It was, however, this Roman tradition which Postel emphasised and in which he was particularly interested in.

In 1553, Postel's *De originibus* appeared in print, expounding the beliefs put forth in his own commentary on Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue' and in his *De orbis terrae concordia*.[441] According to the chapter specifically dedicated to 'The Rise of the Sibylline Teachings' (*De ortu Sibyllinae doctrinae*), the Sibyls were instrumental in formulating a clear response to Postel's concern about the divine message being available to peoples outside the Abrahamic faiths. The Sibylline teachings had been given to the Chaldeans as a counterpart to the 'holy teachings' (*sacrae doctrinae*) and, for example, similar to the Brahmans in India.[442] Through this channel, the Romans had learned about Christ, whilst still worshipping 'mortal rulers' (*mortalibus tyrannis*).[443] As later generations began to tamper with the Sibylline teachings, until they were finally burnt by Stilicho, the original meaning of these oracles was obscured. For this reason, the Romans, although notoriously known for

[438] Ibid., pp. 74–75.
[439] Ibid., p. 74.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Guillaume Postel, *Sibyllinorum versuum Virgilio in quarta ecloga transcriptorum ecffrasi commentarii instar*, Paris: Jean Gueullart, 1553.
[442] Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), p. 73; Postel, *Sibyllinorum versuum ecloga* (1553), sig. a v^{r}.
[443] Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), p. 73.

preserving the oracles, crucified the redeemer promised by the Sibyls.[444] Nonetheless, this did not prevent Postel from extolling the prophetic virtues of the Sibyls.[445] Indeed, their prophetic role was exceptional in establishing Postel's idea of one universal religion. As was commonplace in the sixteenth century, he too placed the Sibyl in close proximity to Noah, now describing them as 'close to the family of Noah himself' (*proxima sanguine ipsi Noacho*), now identifying her as his daughter-in-law.[446] In fact, as shown by William J. Bouwsma, Postel considered Noah as the founder of religious education wiser than all other prophets and sages except for Christ.[447] And because the Sibyl had established Noah's teachings in Europe by way of the many teachings that have come down to Postel's time – he explicitly listed among others the *ara coeli* legend and the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' – the Sibylline teachings could even be called the 'crown of Egyptian instruction' (*apex Aegyptiacae disciplinae*), with Egypt being the centre of Postel's universal religion.[448] Thus Postel concluded his account of the Sibyls: 'Without any error can we call the teachings of Noah Sibylline.'[449]

Despite this great appreciation for the Sibylline tradition, Postel, entrenched as he was in his esoteric readings, refrained from exploiting any textual sources available to him, including the recently published Sibylline oracles.[450] For him, the sheer existence of the Sibyls was decisive in integrating them in his universal all-encompassing concept of (the Christian) religion, and not the potential meanings of what the Sibyls had prophesied in their oracles. Another scholar who did change his approach in reaction to the new availability of the Sibylline oracles was Bibliander, with whom Postel was connected not only because of their collaborations on, for

[444] Ibid., pp. 75–76.
[445] For his enthusiasm for the Sibyls, see also Postel's letter to his friend Andreas Masius (1514–1573), as discussed in W. J. Bouwsma, Concordia mundi. *The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)*, Cambridge 1957, p. 154.
[446] Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), pp. 73, 75. William J. Bouwsma states that the first Sibyl had even been Noah's wife Naoma. See Bouwsma, Concordia mundi, p. 255. Prior to the sixteenth-century debate, the association of the Sibyl with Noah can be found, for example, in the *Suidas*, to which Gesner referred in his *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545, fols 597^{v}–598^{r}). Here, the Chaldaean Sibyl is considered a descendant of Noah.
[447] See Bouwsma, Concordia mundi, p. 255.
[448] Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), pp. 73–78.
[449] Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), p. 79: 'Possumus autem sine ullo errore, nomine doctrinae Noachi, Sibyllinam nuncupare.'
[450] Postel did however acknowledge the printing of the Sibylline oracles in a passing remark. See Postel, *De originibus seu de historia* (1553), p. 74.

example, the *Protoevangelion*, but also by a great friendship.[451] On the grounds of his conviction that all faiths were rooted in one universal religion, a notion not too dissimilar to that of Postel, Bibliander was throughout his life preoccupied with the study of the Scriptures with special respect to possible concordances and agreements with texts of other religious traditions, above all that of Islam. In order to read the Bible in the original, he had learnt Greek and Hebrew from Jakob Ceporin (1499–1525), Oecolampadius and Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), whilst simultaneously being introduced to Neoplatonic and Kabalistic ideas.[452] And so, when Bullinger succeeded Zwingli as antistes of the Zurich Church after the latter's untimely death in 1531, Bibliander had taken over Zwingli's chair in the Old Testament at Zurich's theological seminary. By then, the so-called *Schola Tigurina* had become a well-reputed centre of Reformed learning, where the foremost biblical scholars such as Gesner, Pellikan and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) had converged.[453] Despite his theological office, Bibliander's scholarly approach remained that of a philologist or 'grammarian' (*homo grammaticus*), as he stated himself. It was only by virtue of his study of the Scriptures that he became a theologian.[454] According to this interest, it was only after the Sibylline oracles had been made available for philological scrutiny in 1545 that his favourable reticence towards the Sibylline tradition changed into a great, albeit cautious curiosity about this text.

His interest in, and yet reservations about, the Sibylline lore came to the fore as early as in his first printed work, the *Oratio ad ennarrationem Esaiae prophetarum principis* ('Speech to explicate Isaiah, the Prince among Prophets'), which Christian

[451] See I. Backus, 'Guillaume Postel, Théodore Bibliander et le Protévangile de Jacques. Introduction historique, édition et traduction française du Ms. Londres, British Library, Sloane 1411, 260r.–267r.', *Apocrypha* IV, 1995, pp. 7–65. The later interdependence of Bibliander's and Postel's linguistic and theological work is debated among historians. Unlike Hartmut Bobzin, Bouswma did not consider the relationship between Postel and Bibliander. See Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*, pp. 365–497.

[452] See C. Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander in seiner Zeit', in *Theodor Bibliander (1505–1564). Ein Thurgauer im gelehrten Zürich der Reformationszeit*, ed. by C. Christ-von Wedel, Zurich 2005, pp. 19–60 (28–29, 42–43); Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, p. 58.

[453] For the *Schola Tigurina*, see H. U. Bächthold (ed.), *Schola Tigurina. Die Zürcher Hohe Schule und ihre Gelehrten um 1550. Katalog zur Ausstellung vom 15. Mai bis 10. Juli 1999 in der Zentralbibliothek Zürich*, Zurich 1999.

[454] E. Egli, 'Biblianders Leben und Schriften', in *Analecta reformatoria*, ed. by E. Egli, 3 vols, Zurich 1901, II pp. 1–144 (39). See also A.-S. Goeing, 'Vernünftig unterrichten. Bibliander als Lehrer', in Christ-von Wedel, *Theodor Bibliander*, pp. 61–82 (68).

Moser characterises as Bibliander's inaugural lecture at the *Schola Tigurina*.[455] It was held on 11 January 1532 and examined several issues regarding the interpreter and nature of Scripture, the prophetic office and prophecy itself. The speech displayed to the leading figures of the Zurich Reformation Bibliander's brilliant humanist learning and orthodox theological views.[456] As Christ-von Wedel points out, central to Bibliander's understanding of prophecy was that there be no distinction between the New and Old Testaments, for all evangelists, apostles and prophets convey the eternal doctrine of God, His truth and will.[457] By means of the natural law, God's revelation extended also to pagan peoples, past and present alike, through the Brahmans in India, druids in France and philosophers in ancient Greece and Rome. In fact, more than the common humanist aim to incorporate ancient eloquence and wisdom in order to adorn Christian religion or render it more appealing, Bibliander was concerned with a full appropriation of extra-scriptural knowledge, which he regarded as inspired by God Himself and not, for example, a study of the divine expression found in nature.[458] This stance clearly stands in the tradition of the Neoplatonic ideas that interpreted Christianity on the basis of Plato's work rather than the Aristotelian viewpoint favoured by scholasticism. Similarly important was the Jewish Kabalah, according to which divine wisdom had found expression in the perceptible world. In contrast to Calvin and his Genevan Church, this tradition proved influential not only on Bibliander alone, who had been taught by Ceporin and Pellikan, two students of the spearhead of Neoplatonism north of the Alps, Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), but on the Zurich Reformation more generally.[459] Differently from what Bruce Gordon stated, Bibliander excluded the Sibyls from the group of divines able to perceive God's wisdom, even if regarding them as a group of women who 'declared to hold hidden knowledge of the truth' (*reconditam veritatis cognitionem sunt professae*).[460] Because of their female sex,

[455] Theodor Bibliander, *Oratio ad ennarrationem Esaiae prophetarum principis*, Zurich: Christopher Froschauer, 1532. See C. Moser, *Theodor Bibliander (1505–1564). Annotierte Bibliographie der gedruckten Werke*, Zurich 2009, p. 1.
[456] For a more comprehensive analysis of this work, see B. Gordon, '"Christo testimonium reddunt omnes scripturae". Theodor Bibliander's Oration on Isaiah (1532) and Commentary on Nahum (1534)', in *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation. Books, Scholars and Their Readers in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by B. Gordon and M. McLean, Leiden and Boston 2012, pp. 107–41.
[457] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander', pp. 38–42.
[458] Bibliander, *Oratio ad ennarrationem Esaiae* (1532), fols 16^{v}–19^{v}.
[459] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander', pp. 42–44.
[460] Bibliander, *Oratio ad ennarrationem Esaiae* (1532), fols 18^{v}. See Gordon, '"Christo testimonium reddunt omnes scripturae"', p. 117.

Bibliander supposed that their veneration could be regarded as 'very insensible and ridiculous' (*nimis stolida et ridicula*) and deduced that the Sibyls' oracular responses were particularly liable to manipulation by demonic forces.[461] For this reason, he criticised the Germans, whom he considered to have followed the Sibyls just like the French their druids, the Indians their Brahmans and the Greek and Romans their philosophers.

Similarly, in his highly original interpretation of the Book of Revelation, Bibliander denied the Sibyls, one of the key figures of late medieval apocalypticism, any relevance for the contemporary struggles.[462] In light of the threat that the advancing Ottoman Empire posed to Christian Europe, Bibliander had been preoccupied with the Book of Revelation since at least June 1543. He first lectured on the Apocalypse, before he condensed his thoughts in a volume which he had printed with the title *Ad omnium ordinum reipublicae Christianae principes viros populumque Christianum relatio fidelis* ('Faithful Report to the Christian Princes of all Ranks and the Christian People').[463] In it, Bibliander stated that there was no longer the need for the Sibylline books and their advice in case of portents as the Romans had done in antiquity, for the Book of Revelation was now fulfilling all the purposes which the Sibylline books and other augural and divinatory practices had once served.[464]

As the text of the Sibylline oracles was made available through its publication in 1545, Bibliander's reservations towards this corpus turned into a keen interest in and appreciation of its rich insights. Henceforth, he regarded their author as a 'heavenly prophetess and an ancient Sibyl and a woman of most excellent virtues' (*coelestis prophetissa, et Sibylla prisca, et excellentissima in omni virtute femina*).[465] Even

[461] See Bibliander, *Oratio ad ennarrationem Esaiae* (1532), fols 18^{v}–19^{r}: 'Oracularum vero responsa neutiquam ad veritatis professionem admittenda esse puto, quibus ut machina validissima cacodaemon veritatis hostis usus est, ad mentes hominum illaqueandas et a veritate ad mendacium, a Deo ad creaturam, avertendas. Nam licet multa vere protulerint, non tamen id mali daemones egerunt intuitu et studio veritatis, sed quum per se mendicum sit infirmum, voluerunt id firmare admixtis sermonibus veritatis, et laqueum sub specie veri latentem in collum improvidorum inicere.'
[462] For Bibliander's interest in the apocalypse and the Book of Revelation, see Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 58–62; I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse. Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, New York 2000, pp. 29–33, 94–102.
[463] See Moser, *Theodor Bibliander*, pp. 15–16.
[464] Theodor Bibliander, *Ad omnium ordinum reipublicae Christianae principes viros populumque Christianum relatio fidelis*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1545, pp. 161–65.
[465] Theodor Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes* (1553), pp. 18–19.

more, the close link of the Sibyls to the German people was further explicated and established as a firm element of his thought. In contrast to statements by Giraldi or the Sibylline oracles themselves (Prologue 33; I.288–89; III.823–27), Bibliander considered one of the Sibyls to have been the wife, not the daughter-in-law of Noah.[466] After fleeing to the West at the time when Babel was founded, the Chaldean or Hebrew Sibyl by the name Sambethe, who was known to the Romans in her Aeolic name *Sibylla*, had married Noah and survived the Flood with her husband and their children. Afterwards, she had foretold the future and all that was narrated in the Gospels to gentile peoples from 24 books, a number that disagrees with the eight books found by Birck or the nine in Gellius's *Attic Nights* (I.19); in fact, the number of 24 found no other mention elsewhere.[467]

To this Sambethe, Bibliander ascribed most of the Sibylline corpus.[468] He did also accept the existence of at least two more Sibyls, the most famous ones known already to ancient authors. In agreement with the classical tradition, he regarded the Cumaean Sibyl as the one who had inspired Virgil, while the Erythraean Sibyl was the author of the famed acrostic, for Bibliander believed that she had written the entire Book 8 of the Sibylline oracles, the book in which the *Iudicii signum* appears.[469] In any event, Sambethe did occupy a central role in the Sibylline lore. According to his *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes, et optimates liberarum atque Imperialium civitatum oratio* ('Speech to the Illustrous Princes of Germany and Optimates of the Free and Imperial cities'), Bibliander followed Tacitus (c.56–c.120) in assuming that the patriarchs of the German nation had emerged from Noah's arch (*De origine et situ Germanorum* 2.3).[470] His and his wife's son Tuisco had fathered Mannus, whom the Germans used to venerate as the son of the earth. Together with his three sons, Mannus laid the foundation for German learning and

[466] Giraldi, *Historia poetarum* (1545), pp. 234–60.
[467] Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes oratio* (1553), p. 18; Theodor Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae somnium vaticinum Esdrae prophetiae*, Basel: [Johannes Oporinus], 1553, p. 116.
[468] Ibid., pp. 116, 129.
[469] For the Cumaean Sibyl, see Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes oratio* (1553), p. 37; Theodor Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1558, p. 118; for the Erythraean Sibyl, see Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (1553), p. 114.
[470] For a modern edition of the *De origine et situ Germanorum* by Tacitus, see Tacitus, 'De origine et situ Germanorum', in Tacitus, *Opera minora*, ed. by M. Winterbottom and R. M. Ogilvie, Oxford 1975, pp. 35–62.

wisdom.[471] This identification of Tuisco, the eponymous father of the German race, as the son of Noah, dated back to the time of the Hohenstaufen's reign of the Holy Roman Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[472] This very notion gained popularity again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On account of the young heritage of the house Habsburg, whose Frederick III (1415–1493) had ascended to the German throne in 1440 and was crowned Emperor in 1452, it had been an abiding interest of the dynasty to extend their lineage into the legendary past. The direct political implications of such endeavour can be exemplified by the case of the title King of Jerusalem, which the Habsburgs were able to defend in 1518, when the theological faculty in Vienna had traced the dynasty's parentage to Noah.[473] Likewise, Wolfgang Lazius (1514–1565), a professor of medicine in Vienna and, more importantly in this context, the historiographer to the Austrian ruler and later Emperor Ferdinand I (1503–1564), argued on the basis of a Hebrew manuscript which he purported to have found in Gumpendorf on the outskirts of Vienna that the Habsburgs had settled in Austria after the Flood.[474] If, as is evident from his argument, Bibliander accepted this heritage, for him this necessarily implied that the Germans, too, had descended from the Sibyl as Noah's wife. Germany's fate was thus intrinsically linked to the Sibyls, whom, so Bibliander thought, they had continued to revere throughout the centuries. Indeed, as shown in the first chapter of this dissertation, the Sibyls were held in great esteem in the German-speaking world, so much so that a German Sibylline prophecy was concocted in the late Middle Ages, the so-called *Sibyllenweissagung*.[475] In addition to this distinctly German veneration of the Sibyl, more localised or oral traditions such as the Sibyl von der Teck mentioned above, which as it lies in proximity to Zurich might have been known to Bibliander, or the fact that Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) came to be

[471] Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes oratio* (1553), p. 18.
[472] See Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas*, p. 88. The idea that Tuisco was the forefather of the Teutonic peoples was already used in the Frankish Empire. See Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas*, pp. 72–73.
[473] See ibid., p. 107; S. Laschitzer, 'Die Genealogie des Kaisers Maximilian I.', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* VII, 1888, pp. 1–200 (30).
[474] See Wolfgang Lazius, *De gentium aliquot migrationibus, sedibus fixis, reliquiis, linguarumque initiis et immutationibus ac dialectis libri XII*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1557, p. 23; A. Grafton, 'From "De die natali" to "De emendatione temporum". The Origins and Settings of Scaliger's Chronology', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XLVIII, 1985, pp. 100–43 (125–26). For a brief account of Lazius's achievements in regard to the historiography of the house Habsburg, see T. Dacosta Kaufmann, *Arcimboldo. Visual Jokes, Natural History, and Still-Life Painting*, Chicago and London 2009, pp. 72–74.
[475] See Neske, *Die Sibyllenweissagung*.

known as a Sibyl herself, might have been decisive in shaping the notion of the Sibyl being a prophet to the Germans.[476]

But beyond this genealogical connection, Bibliander thought that the Sibylline oracles were an invaluable source with rich insights into events of the past and the future alike. He lauded them as an example of the strong protection of the Church, which had been restored by virtue of the printing press.[477] Indeed, while in the last fifteen years of his life, Bibliander's attention diverted to the study of current affairs in light of history, as well as history in its own right, this view was dominated by his simultaneous commitment to apocalyptic matters.[478] This engagement resulted in a commentary on the Fourth Book of Ezra, his *De fatis monarchiae Romanae somnium vaticinum Esdrae prophetiae* ('The Divinatory Dream of the Prophet Esdras about the Fate of the Roman Monarchy').[479] It was closely interconnected with the *Ad Germaniae principes oratio*, which presented a plea to the German princes to free themselves from the influence of the anti-Christian Roman pope, that is, the embodiment of the opposites of all that Christ had preached.[480] Based on the vision of the eagle, the *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* in turn combined a call for Christian unity and emphasised the most pressing issues of the time: the papacy as the source for much of the corruption in theology and the church, and the threat posed by Islam.[481] Nevertheless, this work was dedicated to Pope Julius III (Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte, 1487–1555), for unlike Luther, Bibliander did not consider the papacy an expression of the Antichrist. For Bibliander, the Antichrist would not reveal himself in people, who at all times had the chance of repenting their sins. Hence, every pope ought to be tested on his allegiance to the Gospel and could only be called anti-Christian.[482] Still, Bibliander, whom the Catholic Church considered a

[476] See Götz, *Die Sibylle von der Teck*. For the association of Hildegard of Bingen as a Sibyl, see F. Staab, 'Hildegard von Bingen. Die Sibylle der Deutschen', *Lebendiges Rheinland* XXXV, 1998, pp. 3–11; Dronke, 'Sibylla – Hildegardis', pp. 112–16; S. Gouguenheim, *La Sibylle du Rhin. Hildegarde de Bingen, abbesse et prophétesse rhénane*, Paris 1996.
[477] Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes oratio* (1553), p. 24.
[478] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander', p. 58.
[479] Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (1553).
[480] See Moser, *Theodor Bibliander*, pp. 17–18.
[481] See ibid., p. 17.
[482] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander', pp. 59–60.

heretic, did address the pope directly, for in the face of the threat imposed by Islam he urged him to take actions able to withstand the Ottoman Empire.[483]

In order to sustain his plea for a united Christendom and the fight against Islam, Bibliander provided in his *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* a commentary on the three-headed eagle in the apocryphal Fourth Book of Ezra (11–12). Relying on the conclusion that, partly a vision and partly a revelation, the dream was wholly reliable, he harmonised his interpretation with scriptural prophecies such as Daniel and Revelation and extra-scriptural material such as the Sibylline oracles, which, too, had prophesied doom for mankind and the Roman Empire, in particular.[484] To that end, he quoted extensively from the Sibylline oracles, which he translated disregarding Castellio's version. What was essential was the interpretation of Rome and its decline into the seat of a corrupted Christianity, which, driven by greed and arrogance, had departed from true worship and given in to worldly pleasures (Sib. or. II.17–18, V.166–68, VIII.8–36).[485] For this reason, Rome, which a Sibyl had likened to Babylon (V.159), was about to receive a punishment that would destroy the city (V.174–78; VIII.37–42), as announced in the Book of Revelation (18).[486] It would come as part of the 'last battle of the faithful against the world and Satan' (*certamina ultima piorum adversus mundum et Satanam*), at a time when women had ceased to bear children (II.163–64).[487] These apocalyptic scenarios, which Bibliander had found in the Sibylline oracles, were juxtaposed to Lactantius's exegesis of the same corpus. Here, the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt served as a typological analogy of the final struggle and of the current liberation of the world and Church, as supposedly experienced by the Reformation (DI VII.15.1–19).[488] Indeed, referring to the Sibylline oracles (V.54–59), Lactantius stated that Egypt would again be the first nation to suffer the destruction of the apocalypse (DI VII.15.10), an allusion to Islam, as Bibliander notes in the margin.[489] As the arrival of a just king will initiate the destruction of the powerful and the judgement of humankind (DI VII.18.5–8),

[483] See C. Christ-von Wedel, 'Die biblisch-exegetische Theologie Theodor Biblianders', in Christ-von Wedel, *Theodor Bibliander*, pp. 125–38 (125).
[484] See Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 59–60.
[485] Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae somnium vaticinum* (1553), pp. 114–16, 129–30.
[486] Ibid., pp. 114–15, 130.
[487] Ibid., pp. 117, 129.
[488] Ibid., pp. 117–19: 'Liberatio Israelitarum et Pharaonis deletio, figura ecclesiae et mundi.'
[489] Ibid., p. 118: 'In Mahumedicis bellis id accidit maxime sicque vastata cernitur, ut non millesimum oppidum supersit. Romae occasus.'

Rome, too, will perish under the judgement of God (DI VII.15.18) and, as Bibliander opined, the world will come under the rule 'of the universal Holy Church, not the Roman Curia' (*Ecclesiae videlicet sancta catholicae, non Romanae curiae*).[490]

In his last printed work, his *Temporum a condito mundo usque ad ultimam ipsius aetatem supputatio* ('Computation of the Times from the Creation of the World to Its Last Age'), Bibliander described this time as the 'Complete restoration of the world' (*perfecta restitutio mundi*).[491] This was the time after the fifteen eras of the world – a number unique to Bibliander's concept of world history – had come to an end.[492] Beforehand, Bibliander had concluded that Virgil had learnt about the arrival of the Messiah either from the Sibylline books or by direct inspiration.[493] Bibliander quoted the Sibylline oracles (III.46–50) not only because these were the verses that Virgil most likely had referred to in his 'Fourth Eclogue', but also because it enabled him to ascertain the birth of Christ more precisely within its contemporary political context, for, according to the Sibyl, He would come when Rome was reigning over Egypt.[494] Bibliander's own time, in turn, was that of restoration. Relying on the 948 years given in the Sibylline oracles (VIII.148), Bibliander calculated that, after having traced the foundation of the papacy back to the moment when the Byzantine Emperor Phocas (547–610) presented Pope Boniface III (d. 607) with the seal in 606, a new age had dawned since 1554.[495] Its description drew largely on the Second Epistle of Peter and the Sibylline oracles, culminating in the famed acrostic.

Despite Bibliander's uniquely extensive and repeated employment of the Sibylline oracles in both exegetical and historical questions, it is noteworthy that, in accordance with his belief that extra-scriptural divinations can only be read accurately, if firmly grounded in a sound understanding of the Bible, Bibliander would not rely on the Sibyls as his sole source in any given question.[496] In all the works discussed here, Bibliander did cite canonical books or recognised theological

[490] Ibid., pp. 119, 129.
[491] See Theodor Bibliander, *Temporum a condito mundo usque ad ultimam ipsius aetatem supputatio*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1558, p. 221.
[492] On a more detailed analysis of this work especially in view of Bibliander's Reformation historiography, see C. Christ-von Wedel, 'Ein neuer Blick auf Erasmus von Rotterdam', in *Erasmus in Zürich. Eine verschwiegene Autorität*, ed. by C. Christ-von Wedel and U. B. Leu, Zurich 2007, pp. 14–36 (32–35).
[493] Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio* (1558), p. 118.
[494] Ibid., p. 118.
[495] Ibid., p. 223; Egli, 'Biblianders Leben und Schriften', p. 111.
[496] For this notion, see Christ-von Wedel, 'Theodor Bibliander', pp. 40–42.

authorities such as Lactantius and Augustine when dealing with the Sibylline oracles, even if no immediate necessity appears to arise from the text itself. Although it is apparent that, after the publication of the Sibylline oracles in 1545, Bibliander regarded the Sibyls as genuine prophetesses, their authority was such that the oracles were not interpreted by themselves, but always in conjunction with or in support of more reliable texts. To bolster their reliability in more controversial issues, the Church Fathers Augustine and Lactantius, even though fallible theologians themselves, appear to have sufficed. The only exception in solely relying on the Sibylline oracles seems to be the aim of acquiring subsidiary specifications not given elsewhere. So, for example, in addition to confirming different aspects of the account of Noah's narrative in Genesis, the second of Bibliander's fifteen eras in his *Temporum supputatio*, Bibliander pointed out, just as Castellio had done in his commentary on the Pentateuch, that the Sibyl had located Mount Ararat in Phrygia (Gen 8:4; I.258–62).[497] Interestingly, Bibliander also noted that the Sibyl did not know about the nature or cause of her prophesying, but did have some awareness of when she was divining.[498] By and large, it is evident that, rather than fully embracing her prophecies, Bibliander was conscious of the critical status the Sibylline oracles had as Chrisitan prophecies which were not fully recognised by the majority of (Protestant) theologians, an aspect to be explored below. Indeed, prior to the publication of the oralces, Bibliander himself had shown some resentment in acknowledging the Sibyls, displaying overtly misogynist attitudes and unease on account of the lack of textual remains. Even if these reservations made way for a keen interest and engagement with this extra-scriptural material due to his predilection for it, a certain degree of caution remained. Bibliander did accept the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses whose oracles ought to be read, just as any other non-Christian source, but only in combination with the Scripture.

This marks a clear difference with Castellio, the translator of the Sibylline oracles. He had been the first savant to consider the Sibyls' testimonies as an integral part of his theological work. After 1545, he employed the oracles in accordance with his earlier view that the Sibyls as pagan prophetesses were to be treated with the

[497] See Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio* (1558), pp. 42–43; Sebastian Castellio, 'In quinque libros Mosis annotationes', in Castellio, *Moses Latinus* (1546), pp. 441–531 (459).
[498] Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (1553), p. 116: 'Quaedam vates praesagierunt sibi etiam obscura, sed tempore suo clare intellecta.'

same degree of authority as the biblical prophets. Amidst his work on the translation of the Sibylline oracles, Castellio contributed his *Ecloga de nativitate Christi* ('Eclogue on the Birth of Christ') to a collection of bucolic compositions antique and humanist alike, edited and printed by Oporinus.[499] In this work, which tells us of the shepherd Sirillus experiencing the events surrounding the birth of Christ, Castellio struck a chord with those who considered Virgil to have been capable of prophetic insight. As part of a song praising the birth of Christ, Sirillus was singing that his fellow Tityrus, an allusion to one of the shepherds in Virgil's 'First Eclogue', knew of the birth of Christ 'from the Cumaean song' (*de Cumaeo carmine*), that is, an unspecified piece of writing attributed to the Cumaean Sibyl.[500]

Even more remarkably, the Sibylline oracles informed Castellio's interpretation of the Bible. Such readings were first exposed in his *Moses Latinus* mentioned above, which was printed in preparation of Castellio's Latin translation of the Bible. Here, the sayings of the Sibyls helped to clarify the lacking information in certain narratives. Thus, for instance, one could determine the location of Mount Ararat in Phrygia (Gen 8:4; Sib. or. I.258–62).[501] Even more contentious, however, was Castellio's use of the Sibylline oracles in support of his theologically more controversial readings. Thus the Sibylline account of Christ assisting and counselling God in the creation of man (VIII.265–69) induced Castellio to understand the plural form of *faciamus hominem* ('we shall make man'; Gen 1:26) to denote God's collaboration with Christ, without commenting upon the Sibylline assumption that man had, in fact, been created after the image of Christ, not God Himself.[502] Of

[499] Sebastian Castellio, 'Ecloga de nativitate Christi', in *Farrago quidem Eclogarum CLV. mira cum elegantia tum varietate referta*, ed. by Johannes Oporinus, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1546, pp. 796–99. For the poetic work in the 1540s and the potential role as an editorial adviser for this collection of poems by Oporinus, see Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, pp. 12, 49.
[500] Castellio, 'Ecloga de nativitate Christi' (1546), p. 799. On Castellio's composition, see also D. Amherdt, 'Les "Odae in Psalmos XL" et l'églogue Latine "Sirillus" de Sébastien Castellion. Lorsque Bible et Antiquité classique se rencontrent', in Gomez-Géraud, *Sébastien Castellion*, pp. 239–56 (247–56).
[501] Castellio, 'In quinque libros Mosis annotationes' (1546), p. 459.
[502] Castellio, 'Annotationes' (1546), pp. 450–51: 'Videtur cum filio suo loqui, de quo sic Sibylla lib. 8 ut nos latine vertimus: Huius consilio namque olim primitus usus, / Sic ait omnipotens: Faciamus imagine fili / Ambo de propria mortalia semina ducta, / Nunc ego curabo manibus, tu denique nostram / Effigiem verbis, ut opus commune struamus.' Likewise, to enhance the understanding of how the sea was created, the Sibylline oracles are cited where they disagree. See Castellio, 'Annotationes' (1546), pp. 448: 'Nec vero consentaneum est, Mosem, cum hic de aquis nominatim loqueretur, nullam fecisse pluviae mentionem, quae res est non parvi momenti, et cuius mentionem et Sibylla et Ovidius, de mundi creatione loquentes fecerunt.' In the annotations to the later Bible translation, the reference to

similar significance is Castellio's view of the relationship between God and His messengers as expressed in Ex 3. Since a Sibyl asserted that God reigned over the world through Jesus and created man after Jesus's image, Castellio held it impossible that God appeared to man, but instead deemed that it had been His Son, who directly intervened with mankind:

> So, who is it? It is certainly He, through whom God both has created the world and reigns over it; He whom in those verses that I quoted in the first chapter of Genesis the Sibyl called Son of God. It is He who led the Israelites out of Egypt, with whom Moses and Elijah spoke on Mount Tabor, who here is called messenger of God, as He is sent from the Father, because mortals cannot bear the presence of the Father Himself.[503]

Both these interpretations offer highly controversial readings that diverge from the Christological view held by the majority of reformers.[504] Both Zwingli and Oecolampadius, for instance, believed that the personal pronoun plural underlying *faciamus* was a foreshadowing of the Trinity, which for Zwingli surfaced here in order to justify the creation of man as the peak of creation.[505] Lest polytheistic charges could be made, Oecolampadius had urged his readers not to accept any form of interaction among the three divine persons during the creation, a position that Castellio had hereby negated.[506] Nor can the idea that it was Christ who appeared to Moses be found in, for example, Zwingli's commentary on Exodus published in 1527.[507]

Castellio was willing not only to hightlight where the Sibylline oracles contradicted the Reformed orthodoxy, but also to follow the Sibylline oracles as supposed to adhering to more traditional readings. And yet one might say that he

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Ovid is omitted. See Sebastian Castellio, 'Annotationes', in *Biblia*, ed. by Sebastian Castellio, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1556, cols 1587–1743 (1558).

[503] Castellio, 'Annotationes' (1546), p. 476: 'Quis ergo est? Is profecto, per quem Deus mundum et fecit, et regit: quem Sibylla versibus illis, quos in primum caput Genesis posui, filium Dei vocat. Is est qui Israelitas ex Aegypto eduxit, cum quo Moses et Elias in monte Taburo loquebantur, qui hoc loco Dei nuncius vocatur, quod a patre missus est, quoniam patris ipsius praesentiam mortales non ferunt.' At the same time, Castellio also complemented alternative names for God taken from the Sibylline oracles: 'Sibylla quoque cuius nos oracula hoc anno de Graeco in Latinum conversa publicavimus, eum vocat Deum his verbis, libro 8: "Rex tibi nunc nostris descriptus in ordine summo / Versibus, hic noster Deus est, nostraeque salutis / Conditor aeternus, perpessus nomine nostro." Et in eodem libro Gabriel Mariam alloquens: "Accipe virgo Deum gremio intemerata pudico"' (pp. 476–77).

[504] For the interpretation of these two passages, see also Liebing, 'Die Schriftauslegung Sebastian Castellios', pp. 103–5.

[505] Zwingli, *Farrago annotationum in Genesim* (1527), pp. 12–13.

[506] Johannes Oecolampadius, *In Genesim enarratio*, Basel: Johann Bebel, 1536, fols 20^{r}–21^{r}.

[507] Huldrych Zwingli, *In Exodum alia farraginis annotationum paritucula*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1527, pp. 17–18.

reached these disagreements by following what theologians such as Bullinger had been suggesting in the years prior to the publication of the Sibylline oracles, that is, that they ought to be used in order to hone human understanding of the divine nature. Since Castellio believed that the Bible had been written by fallible men inspired by the Holy Spirit, he did not refrain from confronting traditional Christological notions, which even the Reformation had left undoubted, with his interpretation of the Sibylline oracles.[508] Despite being aware of the need to accommodate the oracles to the realm of the sacred, Castellio did not hesitate to employ that material to attain further certainty about thus far opaque passages in Scripture.[509]

In the annotations to his Latin translation of the Bible, the first edition of which appeared in 1551, this combination of sceptical and spiritualistic tendencies unfolded further. The consideration of Sibylline testimonies served two distinct functions.[510] First, especially in the annotations bearing on descriptions of apocalyptic scenes and passages related to Christ's birth, the Sibylline oracles were repeatedly listed among biblical prophets so as to suggest synoptic readings. This inevitably suggested a canonical standing and a hierarchical position of the Sibyls that was by no means of less importance than that of their biblical counterparts. What had been Castellio's original motivation for translating the oracles back in 1546 was now confirmed by

[508] Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, pp. 69–71. Notably, in his Latin translation of the Bible Castellio included not only passages from Josephus, which were intended to close the chronological gaps in the Bible, but also all apocryphal writings of the Vulgate, the third and fourth Book of Esdra as well as a text that he entitled *Continuatio historiae ex Iosepho* ('Continuation of the History from Josephus'). See Castellio, *Biblia* (1556), fol. a6^{v}. For this reason Heinz Liebing even went so far as to say that Castellio understood the Bible as a historically shaped collection of sources that are to some extent divinely inspired. See Liebing, 'Die Schriftauslegung Sebastian Castellios', p. 62. For a discussion of Castellio's approach to pagan sources, more generally, see Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity*, pp. 118–28. The Latin Bible version referred to here is the second edition, published 1556. Regarding the references to the Sibylline oracles, there are no differences to the first edition. In this regard, see also I. Backus, 'Moses, Plato and Flavius Josephus. Castellio's Conceptions of Sacred and Profane in his Latin Versions of the Bible', in Gordon and McLean, *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation*, pp. 143–65.

[509] For Castellio's sceptical view according to which man's reason alone could establish authority sufficient to resolve ambiguities or the lack of clarity within the Scripture, see R. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism. From Savonarola to Bayle*, Oxford 2003, pp. 11–13.

[510] Notably, the annotations to Castellio's French translation of the Bible have no reference to the Sibylline oracles. The only exception to this concerns the French proverb of *le message du corbeau*, which is explained by referring to the Greek and Latin version of the Pentateuch as well as to the Sibylline oracles. This remark is made based on the language in which the Sibylline oracles were composed and the fact that the lack of any French translation of the Sibylline oracles' so-claimed original text would have imposed language barriers on a French-speaking audience, precisely what Castellio intended to overcome with this work; Sebastian Castellio (ed.), *La Bible*, Basel: Johannes Herwagen, 1555, fol. αa^{r}; Castellio, 'Annotationes', cols 1587–1743 (1592); Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, p. 60.

the way in which he related them to his biblical exegesis.[511] Second, the Sibylline oracles provided information of various kinds, historical and geographical, which made it possible to clarify lacking information in certain narratives.[512] More importantly, Castellio expanded the application of Sibylline knowledge as a means of substantiating his interpretation of the Old Testament, the natural domain of the Sibyls. For instance, in the comments on the Book of Isaiah, Castellio held that Christ's descent from God had necessitated that he be born from a virgin.[513] However much such a stance was contentious in itself, Castellio's view of the purpose of sacrifices was even more controversial. On this issue, Castellio expanded in a manner that dissented from traditional beliefs as previously on the Christological matter. Abiding by the Sibyls' utterances (VIII.402–10), he stated that grave goods gave comfort and consolation to the bereaved rather than benefitting the deceased, to whom they were actually dedicated.[514] This reading of the Book of Tobit challenged common beliefs, as promoted by any of the denominational churches, that religious services of whatever kind were primarily directed towards the pleasure of God, and not, as Castellio demonstrated here, the amendment of the devotee. Moreover, if applied to a typological reading of this passage, which with its bread and wine offerings seems only too appropriate, Castellio's interpretation adhered to Zwingli's notion of the Lord's Supper as an act of commemoration, even with the support of the Sibyls. This understanding agreed with Castellio's notion of faith not being granted *sola gratia*, but as an active choice, thus turning sacrificial offerings into a means of performative reassurance of one's faith.[515] With this particular reading by Castellio, the Sibylline oracles had entered the divisive debate at the very core of the Reformation, that on the Lord's Supper.

With both his French and Latin translation of the Bible – Castellio's main achievement prior to the debate about religious tolerance of the late 1550s and early 1560s – Castellio intended to present eloquently written versions of the Scriptures that reached a broader audience than previous ones.[516] A closer look at the

[511] For examples of such referencing style, see Castellio, 'Annotationes' (1556), cols 1660, 1675.
[512] In addition to the location of Mount Ararat, see also ibid., cols 1628, 1696.
[513] Ibid., col. 1659.
[514] Ibid., col. 1644.
[515] See S. Salvadori, 'Sebastian Castellio and the Holy Supper. Re-reading Zwingli in the Pursuit of Tolerance', *Zwingliana* XXXV, 2008, pp. 23–43 (32–36).
[516] See Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio*, pp. 55–7.

annotations to his Latin version of the Old Testament reveals a wholehearted appropriation of Sibylline knowledge into theology, so much so that scriptural understanding was deepened by it and even conventional doctrines contradicting the oracles revisited. Bolstered by extensive quotations on nearly all references made as if to ensure that they were being heard, Castellio considered the Sibyls no less important than the biblical prophets, nor did he commit himself to his contemporaries' doubts regarding their authenticity.[517] Instead, Castellio allowed the Sibylline oracles as Christian prophecies to inform his interpretation of the Old Testament as a collection of prophetic sources, hence the presence of the Sibyls, in a complementary manner. That this often neglected aspect of his theology is in fact not to be overlooked is revealed in one of Castellio's letters dated the 9 August 1554 which he addressed to Jean Larcher (Arguerius, c.1516–1588). Here, he directed those who might be interested in his Christology to his annotations to the third chapter of Exodus, whose key aspects drew on Sibylline insights, the first chapter of Matthew and the Sibyls themselves.[518] In this way, Castellio could show how consistent he had been in his understanding of the Sibyls as Christian prophets, as he pointed out in 1546. Through the Sibyls, he had complemented what can be described as the traditional theological canon based on both the Old Testament, represented here by Exodus, and the New Testament, represented by the Gospel of Matthew.

The Sibylline oracles in Geneva, Zurich, Wittenberg and Magdeburg. An intra-Protestant debate about the Sibylline lore

While it most certainly holds true that the publication of the Sibylline oracles was welcomed most in the more liberal and unorthodox circles, it is no less evident that it was within the Reformation movement that the most sophisticated attempts were

[517] As Christian prophets, all references to the Sibylline oracles are to be found in the Old Testament.
[518] See Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion*, II, pp. 418–21 (419): 'Qui voudra scavoir ce que je sens de Jésuchrist, qu'on lise mon annotation sur le troisième d'Exode e sur le 1er de saint Mathieu e sur les Sibiles. Ce que j'en ay écrit j'ay toujours dit et ne fus jamais d'autre opinion e ne reconnu onque autre créatur et sauveur que Jésuchrist, mon sauveur, mon Dieu.'

made to rebuke or refute any incorporation or appropriation of Sibylline insights. The publication of the Sibylline oracles in 1545 did confront major reformers with a corpus which, although a number of reformers previously had shown some degree of interest, was at odds with the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, if it was indeed accepted as a form of divine revelation. Therefore, Lutheran and Reformed theologians saw themselves forced to engage with this prophetic corpus to address mainly two inevitable questions: whether or not the Sibylline oracles could be regarded as a divinely inspired prophecy and, if so, what place they would occupy in God's revelatory plan. Given the abundance of potential insights into the divine, the Sibylline oracles could simply not be ignored.

Most remarkable about the debate following the publication of the Sibylline oracles were the different argumentative strategies chosen by each camp of the Reformation to discard the Sibylline legacy. As for Calvin's Geneva, the question of the Sibylline oracles and other pagan testimonies had strong political and moral implications, as it was intrinsically linked with the case of Servetus's execution and its condemnation by Castellio. On the other hand, Melanchthon grounded his attempt to repudiate the Sibyls' utterances for contemporary theology in the proposition that the oracles had been outdated by later revelations. While from a theological point of view, Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) and other Gnesio-Lutherans did agree with this Philippist notion of the oracles being null and void, Flacius himself did consider the Sibyls as veritable prophets in sofar as they had been able to predict future events. The only denominational movement in which the Sibyls were approached with moderate reservations that allowed for a well-measured and moderate consideration of their exegetical value, was that of Reformed Zurich. Until its convergence with Calvinist Geneva, the Sibylline oracles were accepted both as divinely inspired – at least, to a certain extent – and were used as supplementary divinations that could support Scriptural interpretations.

The Genevan Church and its fierce rejection of any Sibylline oracles. Calvin and the entagled debate on religious tolerance

In Calvin's Geneva, the Sibyls were confronted with the most hostile reactions. The debate on the Sibylline oracles and their status as divine revelations was not just a matter of theological controversy, but rather it was inextricably entangled with what has become an epitome of the ruthlessness and fierceness with which denominational conflicts were fought in the sixteenth century: the case of Servetus's execution and its condemnation by Castellio. Servetus was as young as twenty years of age when he first exposed anti-Trinitarian ideas in his 1531 *De trinitatis erroribus* ('Concerning the Errors of the Trinity').[519] It was however his major work *Christianismi restitutio* ('The Restoration of Christianity'), published in 1553 that sparked off a new confrontation first in France, where he was denounced and forced to flee, and then in Geneva, where Servetus stopped on his flight.[520] On account of his rejection of infant baptism and his anti-Trinitarian beliefs, he was arrested, tried, and on 27 October 1553 executed as a heretic. In response, Castellio composed his *De haereticis an sint persequendi* ('Concerning Heretics and Whether They Are to Be Persecuted'), a condemnation of the execution of Servetus and a call for the toleration of denominational differences, which opened up an unbridgeable gap between Castellio and the Genevan Church – aware of the controvery this work would spark off, Castellio had it published under the pseudonym of Martinus Bellius by a Magdeburg printer, who turned out to be Oporinus.[521]

Although not taking centre stage in this whole conflict, the question of the Sibyls fed into the different controversies surrounding the case of Servetus, which directly affected the reception of the Sibylline corpus in Genva. In contrast to the orthodoxy, Servetus had alluded to Sibylline knowledge in his *De trinitatis erroribus*, before he began to embrace the revelations after they were published. In an effort to gather Christian writings composed before the Nicene Council of 325 and its canonisation of God's Trinity, Servetus still asserted in 1531 that none of the gentile testimonies

[519] On this work, see R. H. Bainton, *Michel Servet. Hérétique et martyr 1553–1953*, Geneva 1953, pp. 16–25.
[520] On this work, see ibid., pp. 77–88. For some scholarship on Servetus's radical beliefs, see, for example, F. Sánchez-Blanco, *Michael Servets Kritik an der Trinitätslehre. Philosophische Implikationen und historische Auswirkungen*, Frankfurt 1977.
[521] [Sebastian Castellio], *De haereticis an sint persequendi* [Basel: Johannes Oporinus], 1554.

employed by Lactantius in his *Divinae institutiones*, including the Sibylline oracles, attested to the Trinity.[522] With the Sibylline oracles at hand, Servetus was then able to incorporate new purportedly divine revelations in his *Christianismi restitutio* for a whole array of beliefs. Relying on the Sibylline oracles alongside scriptural evidence such as the Book of Revelation (18:2–3) and Daniel's prophecy (3:12), Servetus championed the idea that Rome was the centre of a decaying Christendom bearing traits of what he called the 'carnal Babel'.[523] Likewise, when refuting infant baptism, he corroborated his argument through two quotations from the Sibylline oracles, in order to emphasise the redemptive effect of baptism (I.339–41; VIII.315–17).[524]

Calvin's Geneva, however, strongly condemned this particular theological approach. Notably, it was the *Christianismi restitutio* which prompted Calvin to position himself against the Sibylline legacy for the very first time. In the *Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra Trinitate* ('Defense of the Orthodox Faith about the Holy Trinity'), a direct response to Servetus's anti-Trinitarian writings published in 1554, Calvin addressed precisely the dogmatic questions which Servetus had raised in his *Christianismi restitutio* on the grounds of Sibylline knowledge. Calvin ridiculed him on the issue of infant baptism for the way in which he had utilised these extra-biblical sources. He insinuated that Servetus had conceded greater authority to Trismegistus and, implicitly the Sibyls, than to God Himself.[525] Crucial as this matter of the superiority of Scripture over any other purportedly divine revelations was, this precise line of critique entered Calvin's principal dogmatic writing, his *Institutio Christianae religionis* ('Institutes of the Christian Religion') of 1559:

> Finally, he summons Trismegistus and the Sibyls as his patrons to defend the view that holy absolutions were possible only for adults. O how honourable is his opinion about Christ's Baptism, which he demands that we perform according to the profane rituals of the gentiles, lest we administer it in a way that is different from the one that Trismegistus likes! But for us God has more authority, for God thought it appropriate to consecrate infants to Himself and to initiate them to the sacred symbol, although they do not have yet the force for it.[526]

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[522] Michael Servetus, *De trinitatis erroribus libri septem*, Hagenau: Johann Setzer, 1531, p. 34.
[523] Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio* [Vienne: Baltasar Arnoullet], 1553, pp. 396, 446–47.
[524] Ibid., p. 567. For the quotations, see also Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), pp. 13, 102.
[525] John Calvin, *Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra trinitate contra prodigiosos errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani*, Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1554, p. 222.
[526] John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis*, Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1559, p. 501: 'Patronos tandem accersit Trismegistum et Sibyllas, quod sacrae absolutiones non conveniant nisi adultis. En

Beyond the specific issue of infant baptism, Calvin regarded the use of pagan and Sibylline material by Christian authors as a deliberate way of degrading the Scripture. For Calvin, the question was not whether or not the Sibyls or any other prophet had been granted divine inspiration. Since they were not canonised in the Bible, these pagan prophets could not be considered for exegetical and doctrinal purposes. For this study, it is this notion that is of interest, as is the fact that Calvin was addressing this question, however reluctantly it might be. This presents compelling evidence for the fact that, in the 1550s the consideration of Sibylline testimonies was gathering momentum and respect among some contemporary theologians. With these two writings, Calvin was reacting to a debate on the Sibylline oracles as it was unfolding.

The extent of his fierce objection to and contention against this corpus becomes even clearer in his *Ultima admonitio ad Ioachimum Westphalum* ('Last Admonition to Joachim Westphal'), written in response to a controversy fought with Joachim Westphal (1510–1574) over the Eucharist. A Lutheran pastor in Hamburg, Westphal had provoked Calvin's anger when in his 1552 *Farrago de coena Domini* ('Farrago on the Lord's Supper') he condemned all those who denied a corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist as heretics.[527] This attack by Westphal on the Reformed notion of celebrating the Last Supper for the sake of remembrance reignited the debate about the Eucharist with intense communications between the theological leaders in Geneva and Zurich and increasingly fierce polemics. In his *Ultima admonitio*, Calvin began to mock Westphal, claiming that if the Cumaean Sibyl lived today, she ought to be sent to him and his followers, whose belief Calvin likened to the erratic doctrine of the pope, repugnant to both camps.[528] Between Lutherans and Calvinists, the Sibyl appears to have become a laughing stock and byname for someone adhering to unreasonable beliefs. This is also reflected in the way Theodore

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quam honorifice sentiat de Christi Baptismo, quem exigit ad profanos Gentilium ritus, ne aliter administretur quam Trismegisto placuerit. Nobis vero pluris Dei authoritas, cui visum est infantes sibi consecrare, ac initiare sacro symbolo cuius nondum per aetatem vim tenebant.'

[527] See R. Gamble, 'Sacramental Continuity among Reformed Refugees. Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Calvin', in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Refromations. Semper reformanda*, ed. by F. A. James III, Leiden and Boston 2004, pp. 97–112 (101–2).

[528] John Calvin, *Ultima admontio ad Ioachimum Westphalum*, Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1557, pp. 113–14: 'Animadverto etiam in eorum scriptis verissimum esse quod mihi amicus quidam celebris doctrinae et facundiae scripsit, mirabiliter in illo maritimo tractu sapere quosdam homines, ut si hodie vivat Sibylla Cumana, ad eos mittanda sit, quo sagire disceret. Non minus secure pronuntiant illi particuli de hac causa, quam Romanus pontifex ex suo tribunali anathematum fulimina in totam Evangelii doctrinam vibrat.'

Beza (1519–1605) condemned Castellio's approach to the Sibylline oracles. In 1557, Beza lampooned Castellio for having allowed the allegedly high degree of prophetic openness and clarity of the Sibylline oracles to challenge the scriptural canon and the status of the prophets of the Old Testament.[529] Likewise, as the Lausanne preacher Pierre Viret (1511–1571) pointed out in his *Cento de theatrica missae saltatione* ('Cento on the Theatrical Performance of the Mess'), the Sibyls belonged to the Roman past alone.[530] For Calvinist Geneva, no good could come from the Sibyls and their oracles.

Well-measured consideration and cautious incorporation. The Zurich Church and the Sibylline oracles

The reactions from more representative figures of the Zurich Church were less dismissive than those from Geneva, but in comparison to the likes of Bibliander and Castellio, more conservative of existing Reformed doctrines, and, therefore, cautious and considerate when dealing with the Sibyls and their newly published oracles. In fact, it is apparent that some of the figures who had earlier been attracted by the Sibyl(s) showed themselves indifferent to the availability of the oracles after 1545 and even would not consult this material when suitable and instead took a more distanced approach. On the other hand, some authors continued to look at the Sibylline oracles as additional revelatory material with which to corroborate Reformed doctrine. Yet, the Sibyls were at no time thought of as prophets in their own right, but were only considered as supplementing the Scripture. With the departure of Bibliander from his post as professor of the Old Testament at the *Schola Tigurina*, the Sibyls slowly disappeared from the Reformed mind.

[529] Theodore Beza, 'Ad Sebastiani Castellionis calumnias, quibus unicum salutis nostra fundamentum, id est, aeternam Dei praedestinationem evertere nititur, responsio', in *Volumen tractationum theologicarum*, ed. by Theodore Beza, Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1570, pp. 337–424 (393). See also D. P. Walker, 'The *Prisca Theologia* in France', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVII, 1954, pp. 204–59 (256); Roessl, 'Sébastien Castellion et les oracles Sibyllina', p. 236.
[530] Pierre Viret, *Centonis de theatrica missae saltatione liber*, in Pierre Viret, *De vero verbi Die sacramentorum, et Ecclesiae ministerio*, Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1553, fols 109^{v}–35^{v} (110^{r}). For this work, see also J. Bernaud, *Pierre Viret. Sa vie et son œuvre (1511–1571)*, Nieuwkoop 1973, pp. 327–49.

Among those who had once cultivated some interest in the Sibylline lore we need to consider the exegete Musculus. As discussed above, he speculated that the Sibyls had possibly instructed the Magi about the birth of Christ.[531] After the publication of the oracles in 1545, however, he no longer engaged with these testimonies or allowed them to intervene in the biblical narrative as he had done before. This new approach to pagan oracles coincided with dramatic changes in Musculus's life, which would alter his stance within the Reformed orthodoxy. After the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League in 1547 and the surrender of the Augsburg Council to the installation of the Interim in June 1548, Musculus turned his back on this much-loved city and flew via Konstanz, Basel and Zurich to Bern, where he was appointed professor of theology in 1549.[532] Taking up this position catapulted him into the centre of the Reformed camp of the Swiss Reformation. As he continued his acclaimed legacy of critical exegesis, the Sibyls for their part were sidelined. Commenting on Genesis, Musculus merely listed them among other pagan prophets and affirmed that their divinations had foretold a few future events.[533] In accordance with this limited focus on apocalyptic divinations, Musculus uniquely presumed in his commentary on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians published posthumously by his son Abraham (1534–1591) that Ovid had been inspired by a Sibylline prophecy when describing the destruction of the universe by fire (*Metamorphoses* I.256–58).[534] Yet, neither this nor his earlier speculation on the announcement of Christ's birthplace were pursued any further. The only doctrinal issue Musculus found worth addressing on the grounds of the Sibylline corpus was that of the Trinity. In his hugely successful magesterial *Loci communes*, which he intended as a manual to the study of the Bible, especially for students of theology, he stated that the Sibyls had known of the Godhead being triune, an issue neither addressed by contemporaries of Musculus nor the Church Fathers.[535] Only Vives, in his

[531] Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), p. 11.
[532] For a more detailed account of the circumstances of Musculus flight from Augsburg, see R. Dellsperger, 'Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563). Leben und Werk', in Dellsperger, Freudenberger and Weber, *Wolfgang Musculus*, pp. 23–36 (30–31).
[533] Wolfgang Musculus, *In Mosis Genesim plenissimi commentarii*, Basel: Johannes Herwagen, 1554, p. 354; Wolfgang Musculus, *Loci communes*, Basel: Johannes Herwagen, 1560, p. 2.
[534] This selection of commentaries was first published in 1565. See Wolfgang Musculus, *In Divi Pauli epistolas ad Philippenses, Colossenses, Thessalonicenses ambas et primam ad Timotheum commentarii*, Basel: Johannes Herwagen, 1578, p. 289.
[535] Musculus, *Loci communes* (1560), p. 9: 'Est itaque Deus essentia unus, quemadmodum et natura et divinitate, hypostasi vero trinus: quam Triadem non solum sacrae scripturae tradunt, sed et philosophorum aliquot literae, et Sibyllina carmina.' For the *Loci communes*, see H. J. Selderhuis, 'Die

Christianising reading of Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', had interpreted the three fates as a foreshadowing of the Trinity.[536] In addition, we know that Servetus had previously argued for the contrary, that is, that neither the Sibyls nor any other pagan prophet employed by Lactantius had spoken about God being triune.[537] The fact that Musculus, otherwise rather indifferent towards the Sibyls, was here emphasising this link between Sibylline prophecy and the Trinity seems to suggest that his remarks were intended as a confutation of Servetus. In this way, Musculus could respond to Servetus without rejecting the Sibylline corpus altogether, as Calvin had previously done.[538] By and large, Musculus's works show no signs of any deeper engagement with the Sibylline oracles after they had been made available in print. Despite Birck having taught Musculus Greek and collaborating with him on a number of occasions, Musculus's erstwhile curiosity about the Sibylline lore had died out. He made merely passing remarks in this regard, which showed no intention of pursuing this earlier interests in this corpus. Yet, he did not reject the Sibylline oracles as irrelevant, spurious or invalid, either. Musculus, rather, had grown indifferent towards the Sibyls and their prophecies.

This inconsistency in the approach towards the Sibylline tradition, which Musculus resolved by tergiversating, was overtly addressed by the Italian-born Vermigli overtly in a number of exegetical works. Like Musculus, Vermigli was forced to seek refuge from the growing denominational tensions within the Holy Roman Empire in the mid 1540s. In 1547, he found protection in Protestant England, where he began lecturing as Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford, first on the First Epistle to the Corinthians and from 1550 on the Epistle to the Romans.[539] In his commentary on the latter, published in 1558 only after Vermigli had returned to Zurich, he conceded that the pagans had divine revelations available in their realms,

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Loci Communes des Wolfang Musculus. Reformierte Dogmatik anno 1560', in Dellsperger, Freudenberger and Weber, *Wolfgang Musculus*, pp. 311–30 (311–15); M. van Wijnkoop Lüthi, 'Druckverzeichnis des Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563)', in Dellsperger, Freudenberger and Weber, *Wolfgang Musculus*, pp. 351–414 (401–3). For an analysis of specific aspects of the *Loci communes*, see J. J. Ballor, 'The "Loci Communes" of Wolfgang Musculus and Reformed Thought on Free Choice', in *Philosophie der Reformierten*, ed. by G. Frank and H. J. Selderhuis, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 203–25 (206–25); J. J. Ballor, Covenant, *Causality, and Law. A Study in the Theology of Wolfgang Musculus*, Göttingen 2012.

[536] Vives, 'Scholion' (1546), p. 133.

[537] Servetus, *De trinitatis erroribus* (1531), p. 34

[538] Calvin, *Defensio orthodoxae fidei* (1554), p. 222; Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis* (1559), p. 501.

[539] See C. Methuen, 'Oxford. Reading Scripture in the University', in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. by T. Kirby, E. Campi and F. A. James III, Leiden and Boston 2009, pp. 71–93 (71–72)

'although not in as great an abundance and not in an ordained succession as the Jews' (*quamquam non adeo copiose, atque ordinata successione, quemadmodum Iudaei*).[540] Accordingly, he alluded to the Sibylline books in his *Defensio doctrinae veteris et Apostolicae de sacrosancto Eucharistiae sacramento* ('Defense of the Ancient and Apostolic Doctrine Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist') against Bishop Stephen Gardiner (c.1483–1555), using them as an affirmative tool on matters regarding the future.[541] Yet, Vermigli refused to grant the Sibyls full recognition as a Christian prophet. In order to qualify as such, he stated in his commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, those divining ought to understand their own words, which in his eyes was not the case with the Sibyls.[542] Therefore, the Sibyls could not be regarded as true prophets. Similar concerns were raised in Vermigli's *Loci communes*, which were first published in 1576, some fourteen years after his death.[543] In the discussion of the nature of prophecy, Vermigli also explored the dangers related to 'diviners of the Devil' (*vates diaboli*) who were 'inspired by an evil spirit' (*afflati spiritu malo*).[544] The following explanation of John Chrysostom's stance on this matter closely echoes Vermigli's earlier thought. John Chrysostom had praised the Sibyls as if divinely inspired and advocated their prophecies as preliminary books before studying the biblical prophets. These oracles were, however, polluted by those noting the prophecies down, for when the divinatory frenzy of the Sibyl had passed, they had forgotten what they had divined. Therefore, Vermigli concluded, it could not be ascertained if they were actually inspired by God.[545]

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[540] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In epistolam Sancti Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos commentarii*, Basel: Pietro Perna, 1553, p. 462. For the commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, see F. A. James III, 'Romans Commentary. Justification and Sanctification', in Kirby, Campi and James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli*, pp. 304–317. On Vermigli's time in Zurich, see E. Campi, 'Peter Matyr Vermigli as a Teacher at the "Schola Tigurina"', in *Scholarly Knowledge. Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by E. Campi et al., Geneva 2008, pp. 391–405.

[541] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Defensio doctrinae veteris et Apostolicae*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1559, p. 50.

[542] See Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In selectissimam Sancti Pauli priorem ad Corinth epistolam commentarii*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1551, fol. 321^{v}. For the commentary on the First Epistle to the Corintihians, see J. Balserak, 'I Corinthians Commentary. Exegetical Tradition', in Kirby, Campi and James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli*, pp. 283–30.

[543] For the *Loci communes*, see N. S. Amos, 'Exegesis and Theological Method', in Kirby, Campi and James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli*, pp. 175–93.

[544] Peter Matyr Vermigli, *Loci communes*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1580, fol. 5^{v}.

[545] Ibid., fol. 4^{v}: 'Laudat enim Sibyllas, quasi illae divino spiritu incitatae loquutae fuerint quasique illarum praedictiones, praeludia quaedam fuerint ad lectionem nostrorum prophetarum. Carmina

Despite these principal concerns, Vermigli did not refrain from referring to the Sibyls as additional material opposing any form of idolatry.[546] Likewise, he exploited the Sibyls and their legacy as Christian prophetesses in the pagan realms in his famous anti-Nicodemite treatise *A Treatise of the Cohabitacyon of the Faithfull with the Unfaithfull*.[547] Published in 1555, when the Catholic Mary I (1516–1558) had began persecuting Protestants in England in order to bring her kingdom back into the fold of the Catholic Church, it fulsomely rebuked practices of religious dissimulation and hypocrisy, even if admitting that full segregation in a confessionally mixed society was impossible.[548] To this end, Vermigli emphasised that by providing Sibylline verses or 'rydles' as Christian testimonies within the pagan realm, 'it pleased the lorde to defende and arme his churche'.[549] Based on the fact that the oracles had been known to all in antiquity, including the Church Fathers Augustine, Lactantius and Eusebius, Vermigli himself refuted any attempts to dismantle this argument by claiming the Sibylline prophecies to be counterfeit. If they had indeed been false, ancient savants would have detected it given their vast knowledge. As they had not, Vermigli concluded, therefore Sibyls were uncorrupt.[550] Regardless of all qualms about the Sibyls, their authority sufficed to be called upon in debates central to the cause of the Reformation, that is, iconoclasm and Nicodemism. Concerning these matters, the Sibyls provided examples of extra-scriptural testimony in support of the Reformed doctrine. Whilst this use of Sibylline material as an additional tool to corroborate controversial doctrinal subjects can be traced even to Zwingli, it is noteworthy that Vermigli spoke of the Sibyls most respectfully only in a more polemical and instructive tract, which was composed in the vernacular and addressed to broader audiences. As demonstrated for the German-speaking lands, a certain extent of reverence was still held for the Sibyls in the middle of the sixteenth century. Even more, it appears that Vermigli's more favourable presentation of the

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autem illarum, corrupta ait fuisse a scriptoribus. Eas enim sedato impetu, cum ad se rediisset, oblitas quid dixissent, non potuisse ea corrigere. Atqui id verisimile non est, si afflatae fuerint spiritu Dei.'

[546] Ibid., fol. 108^{r}.

[547] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *A Treatise of the Cohabitacyon of the Faithfull with the Unfaithfull*, Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1555, fols 55^{v}–56^{r}.

[548] On the issue of religious persecution and Nicodemism in sixteenth-century England, see M. A. Overell, 'Vergerio's Anti-Nicodemite Propaganda and England, 1547–1558', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* LI, 2000, pp. 296–318; P. Collinson, 'The Cohabitation of the Faithful with the Unfaithful', in *From Persecution to Toleration. The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. by O. P. Grell, J. Israel and N. Tyacke, Oxford 1991, pp. 51–76.

[549] Vermigli, *A Treatise of the Cohabitacyon of the Faithfull with the Unfaithfull* (1555), fols 55^{v}–56^{r}.

[550] Ibid., fols 55^{v}–56^{r}.

Sibyls and their oracles in this pamphlet was building on a widespread sense of the veneration held for these Christian prophetesses of pagan origin. In any case, it illustrates the ambiguity with which the Sibylline oracles were treated. Vermigli did not discard the Sibyls themselves, but their oracles as tainted by their writer. This equivocal stance ultimately led to the Sibyls and their oracles continuing to linger in Reformed thought neither being discarded nor utilised to their full potential.

An exception to this was Bullinger, the Antistes of Zurich, who in 1542 had welcomed Vermigli to Zurich. In fact, after initial probing into the latter's theological steadiness from the more established local reformers in Zurich, Basel and Strasbourg, Bullinger and Vermigli would become the closest of friends and theological allies, evident in a vivid epistolary correspondence.[551] However, Bullinger did not share Vermigli's uncertainty regarding the Sibylline tradition. Quite the contrary, Bullinger embraced Sibylline insights in his later theology, although not nearly as expansively as Castellio had done. In his influential and popular '100 Sermons on the Apocalypse' (*In Apocalypsim conciones centum*), published in 1557, the Sibylline oracles were harnessed to complement various aspects in the long-winded historical or theological digression specific to this work.[552] For instance, Bullinger saw the progression of aggressive peoples settling on the banks of the Euphrates, as found in Daniel (10:11–14, 19–20), confirmed by Lactantius's interpretation of the Sibyls.[553] On the surface, the marginalia of the 61st sermon similarly points at the Sibyl, whose prediction of the *Latinus* becoming the Antichrist concurs with Bullinger's demonstration of the pope as the Antichrist, a notion also later expressed in his 1565 commentary on Daniel.[554] Yet, with the term *Latinus* Bullinger hinted not only at the

[551] See E. Campi, 'Zurich. Professor in the Schola Tigurina', in Kirby, Campi and James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli*, pp. 95–114 (97–99, 112–14, 166–67).
[552] See F. Büsser, 'H. Bullingers 100 Predigten über die Apokalypse', *Zwingliana* XXVII, 2000, pp. 117–31 (117, 121).
[553] See Heinrich Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim Iesu Christi, revelatam quidem per angelum Domini, visam vero vel exceptam atque consriptam a Ioanne apostolo et evangelista, conciones centum*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1557, p. 120–21.
[554] Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim conciones* (1557), p. 191. As two sermons are numbered as the 47th, the numbering of the Latin sermons is wrong, hence the differing number, for example, in the German version; Heinrich Bullinger, Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi Anfangs durch den heiligen Engel gottes/Joanni dem säligen Apostel vnd Evangelisten geoffenbaret/vnd jm gesähen und beschriben, transl. by Ludwig Lavater, Muhlouse: Peter Schmidt, 1558. What is numbered as the 61st sermon is, in fact, the 62nd. In his Daniel commentary, Bullinger criticised the denial of Mount Zion as the holy seat in preference of Rome, which, in fact, also the Sibyl in her eighth book had denounced as the Antichrist's seat. See Heinrich Bullinger, *Daniel sapientissimus Dei propheta, quia vetustis polyhistor, id est, multiscius est dictus, expositus homiliis LXVI*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1565, fol. 133v. For further reference, see T. Krüger, 'Heinrich Bullinger als Ausleger des Alten Testaments am Beispiel

medieval concept of the pope having become the Antichrist. Rather, it was the language itself, which Bullinger made responsible for barring people from access to the church. Even more, its perverted preference over the Bible's original, and hence divine, languages Hebrew and Greek, which were traditionally branded as 'Jewish' (*Iudaica*) and 'heretical' (*haeretica*), had obscured and distanced the church from its roots.[555] Bullinger furthermore interpreted the Antichrist's numerical symbolism of 666 and its link to the concept of the *Latinus* by means of the patristic authorities of Irenaeus (c.135–c.202), Arethas (c.860–944), and Andreas of Caesarea (563–637).[556] By framing what the Sibyls' testimonies supported as a factor ultimately contributing to or even epitomising the corruption of the church, they were appropriated as a witnesses and (albeit quiet) champions of Protestant notions, just as Vermigli had done.

The way Bullinger employed Sibylline testimonies clearly exceeded the rather corroborative function evident in most of the Reformed orthodox thinkers examined above. He achieved this exegetical strategy in the conclusion of his 62nd [61st] sermon by directly drawing on the Sibylline oracles as published in the edition by Birck, as opposed to relying on the Church Fathers alone.[557] And so Bullinger quoted the 'Erythraean Sibyl or whoever she might have been' (*Sibylla Erythraea sive quaecunque illa fuerit*) as having foreseen the Fall of Rome and then proceeded to the matter of identifying the arrival of the Antichrist.[558] According to Bullinger, she had identified him as being incarnated by the pope, who since the Donation of Pepin (c.714–768) in 754/56 had laid the foundation for the Papal States and had digressed from its *spiritualia* to its *temporalia*.[559] Even if Bullinger had previously held the Sibyls in high esteem, defending their prophetic insights into future events, this hermeneutic strategy with its resulting associations can clearly be linked to the work

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seiner Predigten über Daniel 1 und 2', in Campi, *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit*, pp. 105–31; A.-S. Goeing, 'Schulausbildung im Kontext der Bibel. Heinrich Bullingers Auslegungen des Propheten Daniel (1565)', in Campi and Opitz, *Heinrich Bullinger*, I, pp. 437–58. See also P. Opitz, *Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe. Eine Studie zu den* Dekaden, Zurich 2004.

[555] Ibid., p. 191: 'Videmus enim Romanam ecclesiam appellari Latinam, Papam Latinae ecclesiae pontificum summum. Videmus omnia in templis peragi Latina lingua: in curia et in omnibus iudiciis episcoporum usurpari duntaxat linguam Latinam. Quinimo nemo servierit huic ecclesiae, nisi sit Latinus. Quid quod Hebraeam, id est, sanctam linguam, Latini illi appellant probroso vocabulo Iudaicam, Graecorum ecclesiam et linguam haereticam? Suspecta illis sunt exemplaria Bibliorum Hebraea et Graeca. Nam sola Latina biblia volunt esse authentica et legi ab omnibus ut authentica.'

[556] Ibid., p. 191.

[557] Ibid., pp. 194–95.

[558] Ibid., p. 194.

[559] Ibid., pp. 194–95.

of Bibliander, with whom Bullinger collaborated closely in leading the Zurich Church. In his preface to the *In Apocalypsim conciones*, Bullinger had specifically named Bibliander's *Relatio fidelis* as a source of inspiration for this work.[560] A close comparison of Bullinger's and Bibliander's readings of the Book of Revelation reveals, with respect to the Sibyls, that Bibliander's *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* with its synopsis of apocalyptic imagery gathered from the Sibylline oracles and their anaylsis by Lactantius proved to be more influential than the *Relatio fidelis*, the work declaring the Sibylline prophecies worthless and obsolescent.[561] Of the Latin translations Bullinger offered for the two passages from the Sibylline oracles the first was taken from the *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (VIII.37–40), while the second has to be assumed to be Bullinger's own (VIII.49–53).[562] Castellio's translations were simply ignored, an instance probably due to the fact that for Bulligner as the Antistes of the Zurich Church, Castellio had become a *persona non grata* over the controversy regarding Servetus' execution and his irreconcilable condemnation. What is more, in his *Epitome temporum et rerum ab orbe condito* ('Short Account of the Times and Events since the Creation of the World'), Bullinger considered it possible that a Sibyl might have been Noah's wife. As we have seen, the association with Noah had long been anchored in the Sibylline lore and popular imagination;[563] the clear identification of the Sibyl as Noah's wife rather than his daughter-in-law was, however, unique to Bibliander's thought.[564] Besides thus conflating Christian chronology with Sibylline lore, the approach pursued by Bullinger towards the Sibylline prophecies went beyond the level of Sibylline knowledge accounted for by the Church Fathers.

On the whole, this embracing of the newly available oracles sat ill at ease with the mainstream thought of Reformed Protestantism. This was despite the fact that this particular method of employing the Sibylline oracles as adopted by Bullinger

[560] Heinrich Bullinger, 'Praefatio in Apocalypsim', in Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim conciones* (1557), sigs $\alpha 2^{r}$–$4\beta^{r}$ (β^{r}).
[561] Bibliander, *Relatio fidelis* (1545), p. 165. Similarly, Irena Backus argues that, while Bibliander was an important influence on Bullinger, the latter's eschatology was much more independent of Bibiander's thought and, even more so, tailored towards practical application, unlike the principles expounded in the *Relatio fidelis*. See Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, pp. 102–4. Bibliander, *De fatis monarchae Romanae* (1553), pp. 114–9, 126–30.
[562] Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, pp. 194–95; Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (1553), p. 115.
[563] Heinrich Bullinger, *Epitome temporum et rerum ab orbe condito*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1565, fol. 7^{r}.
[564] Bibliander, *Ad illustrissimos Germaniae principes oratio* (1553), p. 18; Bibliander, *De fatis monarchiae Romanae* (1553), p. 116; Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio* (1558), p. 43.

was influenced by the appropriation of the same by none other than the chair of the Old Testament at the *Schola Tigurina*, Bibliander. Indeed, the two major figures of the Zurich Church had incorporated Sibylline knowledge in their studies of the Book of Revelation or other apocalyptic visions, a subject that since the Church Fathers was intrinsically linked to the Sibylline oracles. In the late 1550s, however, Bibliander's star was continually declining. While since his appointment Bullinger had been willing to overlook Bibliander's heterodox views, the differences between the much more moderate Bibliander and the long-term friend of Calvin Vermigli exacerbated doctrinal issues concerning predestination, so much that Bibliander was forced to retire from his professorship in 1560.[565] This was done not least to appease other Reformed Churches, above all that in Genva, and reassure them of Zurich's orthodoxy. As discussed above, the rejection of any appropriation of Sibylline material was fiercest among the Genevan theologians Calvin, Viret and Beza. But even among the more moderate Zurich theologians who had explored more cautious ways of fostering Sibylline lore, this appropriation, incorporation and use of sources supplementary to biblical studies was not uncontended. Especially in view of the overarching arguments put forth by the Genevan representatives, there appears to have been a gap bewteen Bibliander and his attitude towards the Sibyls and the incontestable superiority of the Bible. Accordingly, Bullinger's incorporation of Sibylline material remains an exception from the general Reformed theology and evidence for the much more permissive attitude by the Zurich scholarly and civic community, attested by Christ-von Wedel.[566]

More generally, after the Sibyls had attracted some interest in immediate response to the publication of the oracles, even the well-measured consideration typical of Zurich ebbed out. In a manner not too dissimilar from that of Lutheran theologians, Bullinger's successor as the Antistes of the Zurich Church Gwalther still emphasised the great importance of the Sibyls to the pagan peoples of the past, leaving a sense of irrelevance in his own time. When still a pastor at St Peter's in Zurich, he did acknowledge that the Sibyls had created some expectation of Christ

[565] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Die biblisch-exegetische Theologie Theodor Biblianders', p. 138; Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, p. 145; F. A. James III, 'The Bullinger/Vermigli axis. Collaborators in Toleration and Reformation', in Campi and Opits, *Heinrich Bullinger*, I, pp. 165–75 (168–70).
[566] See Christ-von Wedel, 'Die biblisch-exegetische Theologie Theodor Biblianders', p. 138.

among the pagans.[567] Despite this recognition, he otherwise characterised their teachings by the lack of the office of apostle.[568] As is evident in his Sermons on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, published in 1578, Gwalther maintained this view. When discussing the role of women in the Church, he told of the pagan Corinthians turning to the much-revered Sibyls in times of calamities.[569] To similar end, Ludwig Lavater (1527–1586), who was to succeed Gwalther as Antistes of the Zurich Church, reiterated the passage from the Sibylline oracles (VIII.52–53) previously discussed by Bullinger.[570] But instead of using them for exegetical purposes, the oracles were presented embedded in their original pagan cult. For Christian readings they had lost their relevance for Reformed theologians. The Sibyls' time in Zurich was over.

The Lutheran rejection of the legacy of the Sibyls as pagan prophetesses

Decisive for the reception of the Sibylline oracles within the Lutheran camp of the Reformation was the fact that their publication coincided with the death of Martin Luther on 18 February 1546 and the subsequent disintegration of the Lutheran movement. In July 1546, the growing denominational tensions within the Holy Roman Empire, which by then had become an overtly political conflict about questions of authority and the inner constitution of the Empire, culminated in the Schmalkaldic War of 1546–1547.[571] The defeat of the Protestant powers in this military confrontation led not only to the oppression of Protestant life in the form of the so-called Augsburg Interim, which, as mentioned, forced Musculus and Vermigli to flee, but also resulted in the acceleration of the disintegration within the Lutheran

[567] Rudolf Gwalther, *In Divi Pauli Apostoli epistolam ad Romanos homiliae*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1561, fol. 17^{v}.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Rudolf Gwalther, *In priorem Divi Pauli Apostoli ad Corinthos epistolam homiliae*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1578, fols 178^{v}, 222^{r}: 'Solebant enim inter gentes fere oracula Deorum per mulieres aedi, ut nunc de Sibyllis nihil dicam, quarum maxima fuit autoritas.'
[570] Ludwig Lavater, *Liber Ruth homiliis XXVIII expositus*, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1578, fol. 25^{v}; Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim conciones* (1557), p. 195.
[571] On the Schmalkaldic War and its definition as a political or religious war, see G. Haug-Moritz, '"Ob wir uns auch mit Gott / Recht und gutem Gewissen / wehren mögen / und Gewalt mit Gewalt vertreiben?". Zur Widerstandsdisskussion des Schmalkaldischen Krieges 1546/47', in *Das Interim 1548/50. Herrschaftskrise und Glaubenskonflikt*, ed. by L. Schorn-Schütte, Gütersloh 2005, pp. 488–509; L. Schorn-Schütte, 'Der Schmalkaldische Krieg. Ein kaiserlicher Religionskrieg?', in *Religionskriege im Alten Reich und in Alteuropa*, ed. by A. Schindling, Münster 2006, pp. 93–105.

movement. At the centre of the fiercely fought contest between the two Lutheran camps stood the question of the intellectual legacy of Luther and the new Church he had ended up founding. Wittenberg as the cradle of the Reformation movement with Luther's close ally Melanchthon at its epicentre emerged as its most obvious leader in the time following Luther's demise. In preparation of the Augsburg Diet in 1530, Melanchthon had superintended the composition of the *Confessio Augustana* ('Augsburg Confession), which, initially devised as a treatise outlining the belief held by the Saxon elector John (1468–1532) alone, grew to become the principal Protestant creed with its three key articles of faith: *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *solus Christus*.[572] Open conflict broke out when in the so-called Leipzig Interim Melanchthon and his followers conceded a number of doctrinal positions to the Catholics, in order to settle the prolonged conflict with Emperor Charles V – the most prominent intra-Protestant controversy was that of the adiaphora.[573] In opposition to these concessions which were argued to betray central pledges of Luther, a group of theologians assembled in the city of Magdeburg, which in modern scholarship are commonly termed Gnesio-Lutherans. Under the leadership of Matthias Flacius Illyricus, they declared that they upheld an untainted legacy of Lutheran theology and in this quest were supported by the Ernestine territories of Saxony and the duchy of Württemberg. Even when in 1555 those adhering to the *Confessio Augustana* found legal recognition and protection within the denominational sovereignty of each territory in the Empire, which secured the right to adopt the Reformation, the so-called *ius reformandi*, later described as *cuius regio, eius religio*, still no agreement could be reached within the Lutheran movement.[574] Therefore, to overcome this rift and to preserve a unified Lutheran faith, in 1577 the

[572] For the text of the *Confessio Augustana*, see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Göttingen 1959, pp. 31–137. As representative of the vast scholarship on the development and formation of the Reformation, see T. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation*, Frankfurt and Leipzig 2009, pp. 581–94.

[573] See F. Engel, 'Die Genese der Leipziger Artikel von 1548/49 zwischen politischer Einflussnahme und lutherischer Bekenntnispflicht', *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte* LXXXV, 2014, pp. 79–123; G. Wartenberg, 'Das Augsburger Interim und die Leipziger Landtagsvorlage zum Interim', in *Politik und Bekenntnis. Die Reaktionen auf das Interim von 1548*, ed. by G. Wartenberg and I. Dingel, Leipzig 2006, pp. 15–32; E. Koch, 'Der Ausburch des adiaphoristischen Streits und seine Foglewirkungen', in Wartenberg and Dingel, *Politik und Bekenntnis*, pp. 179–90; R. Kolb, 'Controversia perpetua. Die Fortsetzung des adiaphorischen Streits nach dem Augsburger Religionsfrieden', in Wartenberg and Dingel, *Politik und Bekenntnis*, pp. 191–209.

[574] See Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation*, pp. 699–702. For the text of the Peace of Augsburg, see in A. Buschmann (ed.), *Kaiser und Reich. Klassische Texte und Dokumente zur Verfassungsgeschichte des Heiligen Römischen Reichs Deutscher Nation vom Beginn des 12. Jahrhunderts bis zum Jahre 1806*, Munich 1994, pp. 215–83.

Formula of Concord was issued.[575] At the behest of Saxon Elector August (1526–1586), a group of Lutheran theologians around Jakob Andreae (1528–1590) and Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) formulated twelve articles of faith agreeable to the different currents within sixteenth-century Lutheranism.[576]

As will become apparent, this fragmentation of the Lutheran camp into Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans was of vital importance in regard to the reception of the Sibylline tradition.[577] Nevertheless, the Lutheran approach to the Sibylline corpus as pursued by both strands was not so much shaped by the theological quest of how to use the oracles from an exegetical perspective. After, or probably because of, Luther's unequivocal rejection of the notion that the Sibyls had been true Christian prophets, Lutherans were much more concerned with redefining the Sibyl's role within their soteriological narrative as expressed in their historical works. Both major strands of sixteenth-century Lutheranism spent a considerable amount of effort in forging their own distinct Lutheran version of universal history.[578] It was primarily within this realm of historical investigation that the Sibyls were discussed. Although inextricably intertwined with issues of Lutheran doctrine, the Philippists were adamant not to engage in any exegetical analysis of the Sibyls' prophetic corpus and, instead, diverted to a historical reconstruction of the Sibyls' role in the past, arguing that they were outdated and, hence, irrelevant to contemporary thought. Overall, it does seem that in the face of the publication of the oracles the Philippists were much more engaged in providing a vigorous argumentation to this end. To gain further leverage on the Sibyls, their gender was presented as highly problematic with respect to the Sibyls' prophetic integrity. Although it must be assumed that a gender dimension was inherent in the entire debate about the Sibyls' value as Christian prophetesses, this was an attack unparalleled in its openness. It can be argued that it was

[575] For the text of the Formula of Concord, see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Göttingen 1959, pp. 735–1100. On its genesis, see R. Kolb, '"Perilous Events and Troublesome Disturbances". The Role of Controversy in the Tradition of Luther to Lutheran Orthodoxy', in *Pietas et Societas. New Trends in Reformation Social History*, ed. by K. C. Sessions and P. N. Bebb, Kirksville 1985, pp. 181–201.
[576] For the theological work of Andreae and Chemnitz, see F. Kramer, 'Martin Chemnitz' and R. Kolb, 'Jakob Andreae' in *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, 1560–1600*, ed. by J. Raitt, New Haven and London 1981, pp. 39–51, 53–68.
[577] For this time of inner-Lutheran struggle, see E. Cameron, 'One Reformation or Many? Protestant Identities in the Later Reformation in Germany', in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, ed. by O. P. Grell and B. Scribner, Cambridge 1996, pp. 108–27.
[578] See M. Pohlig, *Zwischen Gelehrsamkeit und konfessioneller Identitätsstiftung. Lutherische Kirchen- und Universalgeschichtsschreibung 1546–1617*, Tübingen 2007, pp. 75–79.

indicative of the need perceived by Philippist theologians to find powerful reasons against any consideration of the recently published oracles. By employing this argumentative approach, potential interest in the Sibyls' revelations could be deterred once and for all. Ultimately, the Protestant notion of *sola scriptura* was upheld and the Sibylline oracles rendered not only irrelevant, but potentially dangerous.

A milestone work in defining and categorising the different manners of revelation and prophecy, the 1553 *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus* ('Commentary on the Particular Types of Divination') by the Philippist Caspar Peucer was concerned primarily with historicising the Sibylline oracles as part of the Lutheran idea of salvation.[579] This lengthy treatise on the principal types of divination was to prove hugely successful with nine Latin and two French editions issued, and continued to be cited and referred to by scholars across the denominational borderlines into the eighteenth century.[580] In proposing a system to classify texts purporting to be prophecies of various kinds, Peucer addressed the crucial and delicate matter of the nature of divine revelations and consequently the question by what measures these texts could be identified and accepted as such. After having initially followed, for example, Karlstadt in his 1520 *Welche bucher Biblisch seint* mentioned above, the advanced theology of Protestantism and its recognition, both in legal and scholarly terms, called for further clarifications and specifications on this matter. The same happened with the rediscovery of the Sibylline oracles, a corpus that for its comprehensiveness, long tradition and popular fascination could hardly be ignored even by its strongest opponents.

At the centre of Peucer's categorisation of predictions stood a threefold distinction: there were prophecies, which, 'passed down by the prophets by divine authority' (*a prophetiis divina autoritate traditis*), were 'neither impious nor superstitious' (*non impia, nec superstitiosa*); demonic divinations, which as 'the devil's deceits and superstitious observations' (*Diabolicae fraudes et superstitiosae observationes*) were 'condemned and impious' (*condemnata atque impia*); and finally the 'determination' (*certitudo*) by 'natural signs' (*physicis praedicationibus*).[581] As dis-

[579] Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553).
[580] See Ossa-Richardson, *The Devil's Tabernacle*, p. 55.
[581] Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), title page, [fol. A viij^{v}].

played in the diagrammatic Ramus-tree prefixed to Peucer's treatise, the Sibyls and their oracles were to be understood as an example of θεομάντεια ('spirit of divine inspiration'), a subcategory of demonic inspiration, which the devil forged 'in reflection of the special presence of God in the Holy Fathers, Prophets, Apostles, and those beatified in their life' (*imitatus praesentiam Dei specialem in sanctis Patribus, Prophetis, Apostolis, beatis in hac vita*).[582] According to this initial classification, the 'Sibyls of the pagans' (*Aethnicorum Sibyllae*) were purportedly 'enthused' (ἐνθουσιάσμοι/afflati) with divine inspiration, but in reality their oracles had been authored by the devil himself.[583]

This passing specification of 'Sibyls of the pagans' is the key to Peucer's extraordinary notion of the Sibyls and their tradition, which he deduced from the etymology of the Latin *Sibylla*. The first, somewhat more conventional of the two proposed possibilities, traces the origins of the word Sibyl to ancient Greece. Their name, Peucer suggested, was a compound of Σιός (gen. for Σεύς), the Doric for Διός, and βουλή (council).[584] With preference given to the Doric dialect over the Aeolic, this etymology varies only slightly from the one proposed in Varro's account, as it was transmitted in Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.7) – as demonstrated above, this had become a commonplace in scholarship by the Middle Ages. The more remarkable etymology and indeed the one favoured by Peucer is that from Hebrew. Peucer considered it more likely that the word *Sibylla* derived from a corrupted version of קַבָּלָה (transl.: kabalá) in its literal sense of revelation, without following the interpretation of Jewish Mysticism. The unnamed source Peucer claimed to rely on gave the past tense קִבֵּל (transl.: kibel) as the origin for *Sibylla*.[585] This particular way of etymologising may seem implausible and irrelevant; it was, however, significant for Peucer who related himself to the bipartite model of revelation prevalent in contemporary theology. As the Sibyls appeared to be of Hebrew origin, they had attained divine wisdom 'in the most ancient school of the Holy Fathers' (*in antiquissimis sanctorum Patrum scholis*) and therefore belonged to the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Although Peucer did not name his source for the Hebrew etymol-

[582] Ibid., [fol. A viij^{v}].
[583] Ibid.
[584] Ibid., fol. 107^{v}. Although not able to trace the origin of this claim, Ben-Tov hesitates to consider this etymology an original idea of Peucer's. See A. Ben-Tov, *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity. Melanchthonian Scholarship between Universal History and Pedagogy*, Leiden 2009, p. 64.
[585] Ben-Tov again does not consider Peucer to be the father of this idea. See ibid.

ogy, he is very likely to have referred to Carion's 1532 *Chronica* and the notion that the Sibyls had known the 'doctrine of the [holy] fathers' (*der heiligen Vetter lar*/*doctrina patrum*).[586] Compared to Carion, though, Peucer did develop this argument much further, in that he argued for the name Sambethe – for Peucer, the name of the first and oldest of the Sibyls – being no less than a merger of Sem and Iaphet, the two sons of Noah, whose daughter-in-law was supposedly a Sibyl (Sib. or. III.823). Therefore, the name Sambethe was not the name of a divinely inspired prophetess, but of a corpus of ecclesiastical teachings.[587] As this compilation was corrupted by succeeding generations, the devil had been able to interpolate it, so much so that, as documented by Varro, almost every people in antiquity adopted a Sibyl as a revelatory device to satisfy the needs of each culture: the Romans for power, the Egyptians for superstition and the Chaldeans for philosophical wisdom.[588] For this reason, Peucer clarified that, although the *Sibylla Sambethe* was initially a rightful compilation of ecclesiastical writings containing indications of the divine order, the Sibyls, as they were known in the sixteenth century, were purported to be female prophetesses revered in their cult of origin; for this reason, he continued, they had been since antiquity the 'Sibyls of the pagans' (*Aethnicorum Sibyllae*).[589]

This historical argument by Peucer against the appropriation of Sibylline testimonies for theological purposes clearly influenced Melanchthon's thoughts as expounded in the authoritative *Chronicon Carionis*. After he had set out to rewrite this work in the 1550s, Melancthon's version of the chronicle came to fruition in 1558, when the first of three volumes appeared in print.[590] The two men were closely connected not only intellectually, but also on a personal level. Since 1543, Peucer had been a lodger at Melanchthon's house in Wittenberg and in 1550 he would marry

[586] Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), fol. 107^{v}; Carion, *Chronica* (1532), fol. 26^{v}; Bonnus, *Chronica Carionis* (1537), fol. 45^{r}.
[587] See Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), fol. 107^{v}: 'Vox Sambethe absque dubio nihil sonat aliud, quam Sem Iaphet. Ea notata est doctrina, de Deo, de lapsu, de restitutione, redemptione, et gratuita receptione generis humani, de Messia et caeteris, continua serie a mundi initio usque quasi per manus tradita Nohae, cuius deinde explicationem curam, custodiam et conservationem ipse duobus praecipue filiis Sem et Iaphet commendavit.'
[588] Ibid., fol. 108^{rv}.
[589] Ibid., fol. [A viij^{v}].
[590] Relying on Gotthard Münch's study, the vast majority of historians agrees that Melanchthon actually rewrote the work rather than merely reissuing it. See G. Münch, 'Das Chronicon Carionis Philippicum. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung Melanchthons als Historiker', *Sachsen und Anhalt* I, 1925, pp. 199–283. The present analysis shows that this holds true also for Melanchthon's account of the Sibyls.

Melanchthon's daughter Magdalena (1531–1576).[591] Although Melanchthon did not reiterate the Hebrew etymology proposed by Peucer, in his 1558 edition of the *Chronicon Carionis*, he placed the Sibyls within the Noachian tradition.[592] After the Flood the memory of God's doctrine given to Noah and his kin soon faded, giving way to the new classical cultures of pagan antiquity with their highly refined art forms, literature and state.[593] Within this world, the Sibyls held an exceptional status insofar as they were the eldest of diviners. Moreover, they were the repository of divine knowledge, which originated partly from their ancestors descending from Noah, as originally suggested by Carion, and were partly forged by the devil, as suggested by Peucer.[594] On account of their close accordance with the Decalogue, Melanchthon considered those verses extant to his time to derive from the 'doctrine of the [holy] fathers' (*doctrina patrum*/*der heiligen Vätter Lere*).[595] As they were ignored by the pagans, the sixth-century philosopher Phocylides was said to have compiled them in order to publicise them. Nonetheless, while the pagans had been able to detect the truth granted in the biblical law by way of studying nature, they were ignorant of the coming of Christ, even though, as Lactantius would show, the Sibyls had retained some insights into the life of the Messiah.[596]

In his *Chronicon Carionis*, Melanchthon abandoned the stark condemnation of the Sibylline corpus by Luther, Peucer and other Lutheran thinkers by offering an

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[591] In addition, after taking over Melanchthon's history lecutureship after the latter had deceased, Peucer also translated and expanded the *Chronicon Carionis*. Caspar Peucer (transl.), *Neuwe vollkommene Chronica Philippi Melanthonis. Zeytbuch vnd Warhafftige Beschreibung*, Frankfurt: Sigismund Feyerabend, 1566. Since the German translation proved similarly influential as Melanchthon's Latin original, the German is provided in the following, too. See Bauer, 'Die Chronica Carionis von 1532', pp. 226–35; U. Neddermeyer, 'Kaspar Peucer (1525–1602). Melanchthons Universalgeschichtsschreibung', in *Melanchthon in seinen Schülern*, ed. by H. Scheible, Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 69–101; Pohlig, *Zwischen Gelehrsamkeit und konfessioneller Identitätsstiftung*, pp. 175–78.

[592] Melanchthon did adopt Peucer's unique Greek etymology. Like his son-in-law, Melanchthon argued that the word *Sibylla* was compound of the Doric σιόσ (god) and βουλή (council) and not of the Aeolic variants, as suggested in the standard etymology by Lactantius (DI I.6.7). See Philipp Melanchthon, *Chronicon Carionis Latine expositum et actum multis et veteribus et recentibus historiis*, Wittenberg: Georg Rhau, 1558, sig. I 2^{v} (CR XII.774); Peucer, *Neuwe vollkommene Chronica* (1566), fol. G^{v}; Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), fol. 107^{v}.

[593] Such conflation was not uncommon in the sixteenth century. See P. Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula. Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age*, Leiden 1994, pp. 21–46.

[594] See Melanchthon, *Chronicon carionis* (1558), sig. I 2^{v} (CR XII.773–74); Peucer, *Neuwe vollkommene Chronica* (1566), fol. G^{v}.

[595] Melanchthon, *Chronicon carionis* (1558), sig. I 2^{v} (CR XII.774); Peucer, *Neuwe vollkommene Chronica* (1566), fol. G^{v}.

[596] See Melanchthon, *Chronicon carionis* (1558), sig. I 2^{r}–I 3^{r} (CR XII.774); Peucer, *Neuwe vollkommene Chronica* (1566), fol. G^{v}–G ij^{r}.

original combination of Carion's and Peucer's ideas.[597] Melanchthon emphasised that the Sibyls were not diviners that God had chosen to inspire, but conveyors of the divine revelation as stated in Scripture. By adding the Sibyls as a further medium of dissemination instructed by Noah's kin, Melanchthon modified the predominant model of bipartite revelation. This allowed him to maintain the crucial principle of *sola scriptura*. Unlike Peucer, who regarded the entirety of the Sibylline oracles as pervaded by the deception of the devil, Melanchthon bestowed a certain degree of respectability onto the Sibyls, for he considered the extant verses which concurred with the Decalogue to be genuine. Yet, as the verses themselves were only a memory of the divine knowledge codified in the Bible, the Sibylline oracles were only of antiquarian value, with no exegetical benefit. The true nature of the Sibyls and their oracles was then unravelled by Virgil, who, unlike his pagan contemporaries, understood the indications of the coming Messiah.[598] This characteristic attempt to defend the alleged presence of Christian messages within the Sibylline oracles while strengthening their prophetic content had already surfaced in his *Liber de anima* of 1552. To demonstrate the necessary existence of a creator, Melanchthon had quoted a Sibylline verse as a proof of both the creator's existence and man's resemblance to him: 'Man is my image, gifted with right reason' (εἰκών ἐστ'ἄνθρωπος ἐμὴ λόγον ὄρθὸν ἔχουσα, CR XIII.5; Sib. or. VIII.402).[599] By reiterating through the Sibylline verse the Christian core belief that man was the image of God, and that he was such an image precisely by sharing the gift of reason, Melanchthon was able to defend his theological view of the soul by bridging the gap to antiquity, whilst remaining in an

[597] For the *Chronicon Carionis* by Melanchthon, see also V. Leppin, 'Humanistische Gelehrsamkeit und Zukunftsansage. Philipp Melanchthon und das "Chronicon Carionis"', in Bergdolt and Ludwig, *Zukunftsvoraussagen in der Renaissance*, pp. 131–42.

[598] It is worth noting that in Melanchthon's posthumously published considerations on Virgil's Eclogues, the 'Fourth Eclogue' was interpreted to divine the coming of a victorious leader from the Pollio dynasty, a prediction which had been embellished poetically by means of the Cumaean Sibyl's foretelling. As widespread a messianic reading of this passage may have been, Melanchthon provided here a plain mythological reading that had no hints of possible Christian interpretations. Earlier in his 1561 Virgil commentary, he remarked the fact that Lactantius had attributed a redemptive role to the Sibyls with the concession 'if we trust Lactantius' (*si Lactantio credimus*), similar to the one in his *Chronicon*. See Philipp Melanchthon, *In hoc libellum continentur argumenta seu dispositiones rhetoricae in eclogas Virgilii*, ed. by Stephanus Reich, Weißenfels: Georg Hantzsch, 1565, sigs D2^{v}–D3^{r} (CR XIX.322–26); Virgil, *Poemata* (1561), p. 670; Melanchthon, *Chronicon* (1558), I 2^{v}–I 3^{r} (CR XII.774).

[599] Philipp Melanchthon, *Liber de anima*, Wittenberg: Clemens Schleich, 1552, sig. B^{v}. Begun in 1530, Melanchthon's book on the soul was originally printed in 1540 as a commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* and then published as an independent work in 1552.

allegedly Christian frame.[600] By and large, it seems however rather unlikely that Melanchthon studied the Sibylline oracles in more depth. Indeed, we do not know whether he ever got hold of either Birck's or Castellio's edition. His view in the *Chronicon Carionis* is merely a moderating combination of two conflicting views and even the analysis of the quotation given in his *Liber de anima*, which he might well have extracted from Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* (II.10.4), does not hint at a more in-depth engagement with the corpus.[601] It is apparent, however, that Melanchthon tempered the attitude of strong opposition to Sibylline divination advocated by Luther, Peucer and other Lutheran thinkers.

There was another aspect that Peucer had addressed in his work on the 'principal kinds of divination'. Although it had sometimes appeared in previous texts, the question of the Sibyls' sex became especially problematic with Peucer. He had argued that the name *Sibylla* derived from the Hebrew word קַבָּלָה for revelation, for initially the corpus comprised a collection of prophetic utterances made by holy women. However, he believed that the devil had chosen female prophetesses over male prophets only to spread his deceptions more easily:

> But even if I list my conjectures about the etymological origin and meaning of the word one by one, nevertheless, I do not oppose what has been written about the prophetic women … Following God's example, he [the devil] has chosen his prophets, and he has chosen them especially from the female kind, because this sex is by nature weaker and simpler and is less able to beware ambush, to discern astute advice, to resist any urge, or to conceal an enterprise. Also, the female sex has suitable and many natural means to influence and persuade others. As a result of these actions, the devil spread contrary cults and worships among divine things, and he very often combined them with some indication of future events, so that they were submitted to him more eagerly.[602]

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[600] The opening of his considerations with a reference to Virgil, who despite being a pagan poet born before Christ, had long been seen as endowed with prophetic insight, points in the same direction. For a medieval understanding of Virgil as a prophet of Christ, see Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, pp. 96–103; Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, pp. 72–73.

[601] Contrary to the study of E. P. Meijering, according to which Melanchthon had drawn on the Fathers except for Lactantius, this reference to the Sibylline corpus suggests otherwise. Moreover, throughout Melanchthon's annotations to Virgil's *Aeneid*, posthumously printed by Christoph Froschauer (c.1490–1564) in 1561, all his referencing to the Sibyls derive from the fragments that had arrived to him from antiquity via indirect sources such as Lactantius's writings. See E. P. Meijering, *Melanchthon and Patristic Thought. The Doctrine of Christ and Grace, the Trinity and the Creation*, Leiden 1983, pp. 139, 148–63; Virgil, *Poemata qui extant omnia*, ed. by Johannes Fries and Philipp Melanchthon, Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1561, pp. 201, 278, 290.

[602] Peucer, *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), fols 108^{v}–9^{r}: 'Etsi autem meas de vocabuli origine et significato coniecturas recito: non tamen refragor historiarum annotatis de mulieribus vatidicis … Suos sibi Dei exemplo delegit Prophetas et potissimum ex muliebri genere, quod sexus iste

In accordance with the Aristotelian comparison of the qualities attributed to the male and the female gender, which was predominant throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century, Peucer asserted the inferiority of the female sex on account of their deceptive nature and the allegedly weaker mental constitution of women, which rendered them more vulnerable to external influences.[603]

This allusion to common gender stereotypes, however, is not specific to Peucer nor to the Lutheran camp in general. In addition to the lack of written remains, Bibliander's reservations about the Sibyls stemmed from a similar discomfort about accepting female prophets. Indeed, in his notion of God having revealed Himself to savants in each culture, the Sibyls were the only female prophets to have received such insights. As demonstrated above, Bibliander's concerns regarding the Sibylline tradition were characterised by a clear gender bias: 'The reverence of the Germans [for the Sibyls] can seem very insensible and ridiculous because they indiscriminately attribute divinity to the female sex.'[604] Notably, Bibliander did not recant any of his misogynist resentments against the Sibyls despite their later incorporation into his theology. Despite having exalted the female gender on numerous occasions, Postel, too, built his praise of the Sibyls as extraordinary prophets on gender stereotypes similar to these. According to his gender dichotomy, which Postel believed to pervade the world on all different levels, women exceed men in the intelligence of God's word insofar as women constituted the point at which men and the divine met. As argued by Bouwsma, this spiritual superiority combines the medieval conviction about women being the weaker of the sexes with the idea that a special grace was bestowed upon the female sex to compensate for its spiritual frailty. Because women needed special illumination, they would necessarily receive greater revelations from God.[605] On the example of Postel's political thought, Yvonne Petry maintains that this seeming contradiction concerning the alleged superiority of women in divine matters was an attempt to compensate for their lack of intellect and the

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imbellicior est natura simpliciorque, et minus vel cavere insidias, vel intelligere astuta consilia, vel reniti impulsui, vel commissa celare potest, quodque ad permovendos ac persuadendos alios accommodatiora pluraque adiumenta habet. Ex his cultus et religiones contrarias divinis sparsit, easque coniunctas plerumque cum denunciatione aliqua futurorum eventum, ut eo avidius susciperentur.'

[603] See P. Allan, *The Concept of Woman*, 2 vols, Montreal and Cambridge 1985–2002, I, pp. 218–27; II, pp. 1051–90.

[604] Bibliander, *Oratio ad enarrationem Esaiae* (1532), fol. 18^{v}: 'Germanorum quidem religio nimis stolida et ridicula in hoc videri potest, quod in universum muliebri sexui divinitatem promiscue tribuerunt.'

[605] See Bouwsma, Concordia mundi, pp. 153–54.

resulting inferiority in a variety of subject matters, revealing the underlying Aristotelian dichotomy of gender.[606] While it is methodologically difficult to trace the direct influence of these misogynist views on these thinkers, the case of Postel is noteworthy insofar as it not only exemplifies the extent to which this engrained view of women being the weaker sex underpinned the views even of those who held favourable attitudes towards the Sibyls and their lore. Even more importantly, this view appears intrinsically linked with the idea of the female sex being granted special divine gifts precisely for their alleged inferiority. An implicit gender bias must therefore be assumed for the whole debate, even if it is by no means acknowledged, let alone openly debated.

At the same time, it is worth keeping in mind that the Sibyls were also extolled outside this persisting gender bias. One of the most exuberant endorsements of the Sibyls as female prophets came from the humanist Agrippa. His *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* ('Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex') was in more general terms the culmination of a series of humanist writings defending the worthiness of women in the so-called *querelle des femmes* debate.[607] Although delivered as his inaugural lecture in 1509 in praise of Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), the then governor of Franche-Comté, Agrippa's untimely departure from Dôle delayed the printing of this piece until 1529. This, however, did not affect the great influence that this tract exercised during the sixteenth century, as is strikingly evident not least in the translation into French, German, English, and Italian, almost immediately following the publication of the Latin original.[608] With great rhetorical flair and by using a novel argumentative strategy, Agrippa stated that women were oppressed by the current laws, customs and education despite their superiority over men. He did so, by providing a theological argumentation which,

[606] See Petry, *Mystical Theology of Postel*, pp. 51–69.
[607] See M. L. King and A. Rabil, Jr., 'Editors' Introduction to the Series', in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, transl. and ed. by A. Rabil, Jr., Chicago 1996, p. xxi; A. Rabil, Jr., 'Agrippa and the Feminist Tradition', in Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, pp. 3–33 (18–29).
[608] *Déclamation de la noblesse et préexcellence du sex féminin*, transl. by Galliot du Pré, Paris: Denis Janot, 1530; *Vom Adel und Fürtreffen weiblishes Geschlechts*, transl. by Johannes Herold, Frankfurt: Christian Egenolff, 1540; *Of the Nobilitie and Excellencie of Womankynde*, transl. by David Clapam, London: Thomas Berthelet, 1542; *Della nobilità et eccellenza delle donne*, transl. by Francesco Coccio, Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1544. Rabil also mentioned a Polish translation dating from 1575, but does not provide bibliographical information. See Rabil, 'Agrippa and the Feminist Tradition', pp. 3, 27; M. van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian and His Declamations*, Leiden 1997, pp. 186–87.

following his own principles of reasoning, dismantled the philosophical and theological tradition dominant at that time, by means of a radically new reading of the account of the Creation (Gen 2–3). Despite having the same soul, for Agrippa women were created as physically and intellectually superior to men. From this interpretation he derived the conclusion that the current society of Renaissance Europe was not granting women the rights they deserved.[609] Exemplifying the moral and virtuous superiority of women over men, Agrippa mentioned the Sibyls as prophets who 'have always been inspired by a more divine spirit than men' (*semper diviniore spiritu afflatae sunt quam viri*).[610] Women were not only equal to men, but surpassed their prophetic abilities. Although cabalistic ideas shaped Agrippa's treatise just as much as they had the thought of Postel, this particular line of argument based on the prophets and concrete historical examples strongly resembled the veneration for the Sibyls held by Peter Abelard (1079–1142).[611] Like Abelard, Agrippa exalted women such as Mary and other biblical prophets as the crucial intermediaries in the salvation history of men.[612]

Originally regarded as an ironic treatise in the tradition of Erasmus's *Stultitiae laus* ('Praise of the Folly'), scholars have reached the consensus that Agrippa's *De nobilitate* is a forceful refutation of predominant misogynistic attitudes of the society of sixteenth-century Europe. While Agrippa's *De originali peccato* ('On the Original Sin') is often cited to ascertain the consistency of his thought throughout his oeuvre, with respect to the Sibyls, his *De occulta philosophia* ('On the secret philosophy') is illustrative of his lifelong admiration for the ancient prophetesses.[613] As is the case with the *De nobilitate*, the *De occulta philosophia*, as it was printed in 1531, was an

[609] For the novel interpretation of Genesis 2–3, see van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa*, pp. 199–200, 202–13.
[610] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De nobilitate et praecellentia foemini sexus*, Cologne: [Peter Quentel], 1532, sig. C^{r}.
[611] For an example of a cabalistic reading in the *De nobilitate*, see van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa*, pp. 198–99. For Abelard's notion of the Sibyls, see Abelard to Heloise, in *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise*, ed. by D. Luscombe, transl. by B. Radice, Oxford 2013, pp. 321–25. On the Sibyls in Abelard, see J. Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 329–30.
[612] Agrippa, *De nobilitate foemini sexus* (1532), sig. C^{r}. A similar list of examples of women's excelling prophetic abilities containing the Sibyls is later extended by medieval divines Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373) and Hildegard of Bingen. See Agrippa, *De nobilitate foemini sexus* (1532), sig. C ij^{v}.
[613] See D. S. Wood, 'In Praise of Woman's Superiority. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's "De nobilitate" (1529)', in *Sex and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Text. The Latin Tradition*, ed. by B. K. Gold, P. A. Miller and C. Platter, New York 1997, pp. 189–206 (190); van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa*, pp. 192–93.

enlarged, revised and modified version of a much earlier one, which has survived in a manuscript dating from 1510.[614] A cumbersome work which leads its readers from earthly matters via the stellar universe to the realm of religious truth and mystic contemplation, it maintains that, on the account of their prediction of Christ's incarnation, the Sibyls serve as an example of direct revelation by means of the soul being inspired by the divine or demons as its messengers.[615] As part of this process, the Sibyls' imagination and reason were captivated, so much so that they were able to receive divine inspirations.[616] This ability of being captivated results from a frenzy occupying the Sibyls which was coupled with a melancholic disposition and the influence of Saturn.[617] Apart from both the controversial occult and cabalistic nature of this exposition and the exaltation of the Sibyls because of their female gender, what makes this notion stand out in regard to the Sibylline tradition is that Agrippa took into account the Sibyls' frenzy, which once part of their ancient and patristic perception had disappeared from her medieval image. For Agrippa, however, this aspect was of crucial importance as it enabled him to define the nature of the Sibyls' inspiration.

Even before the *De occulta philosophia* was printed, however, Agrippa recanted most of this writing. In the prefactory note added just before the work's publication, he distanced his scholarly work of the 1520s from his *De occulta philosophia* on account of his intellectual immaturity.[618] As far as the Sibyls are concerned, it is however interesting that in this preface, the Sibyls were pivotal to his argument that magic used to enjoy great approval before coming into ill repute, but also that it was the true form of ancient belief.[619] Contrary to the allegedly common

[614] See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 351–52.
[615] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia*, [Cologne: Johann Soter, 1533,] pp. LXXVIII–LXXX.
[616] Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia* ([1533]), p. CCCXII.
[617] Ibid., pp. LXXVIII.–LXXX. On Agrippa's notion of inspiration and melancholy, see Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 354–59
[618] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, 'Ad lectorem', in Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia* ([1533]), sigs aa ij^{rv}: 'sic enim opus esse visum fuerat quo pauciora preteriremus, multa insuper Platonicorum caeterorumque, gentilium philosophorum placita secuti sumus, ubi instituto nostro scribendi suggerebant argumentum: ideo si alicubi erratum sit, sive quid liberius dictum, ignoscite adolescentiae nostrae, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui, ut possim me escusare ac dicere, dum eram parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus: sapiebam ut parvulus, factus autem vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli.' See also C. G. Nauert, Jr., *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*, Urbana 1965, p. 208.
[619] See Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*, pp. 263–64. On this, see also Agrippa's thoughts in his *De vanitate ac incertitudine scientiarum et artium declamatio* (Antwerp: Johannes Grapheus, 1530). See van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa*, pp. 116–52.

misunderstandnig of its being 'superstitious' (*superstitiosum*), bearing the 'seeds of heresies' (*haeresum semina*) and entailing dealing with 'demons' (*daemonia*), Agrippa, pursuing his self-set task of recovering the lost purity and wisdom of antiquity, favoured this older notion of magic.[620] With reference to the philosophers and theologians of antiquity and even the Gospel itself, a magician or 'divine' (*magus*) was claimed to be a 'wise man' (*sapiens*), 'priest' (*sacerdos*) and 'prophet' (*propheta*).[621] Of this kind were also the Sibyls, who recognised Christ and were among the first to worship him. Irrespective of his recantation of most of the *De occulta philosophia*, Agrippa continued to believe that the Sibyls had a historical role as divines. Yet, in the light of this flat denial of any prophetic value of pagan letters in the quotation above as well as in his *Dehortatio gentilis theologiae* ('Dissuasion against Pagan Theology') dating from 1526, Charles Nauert, Jr., concludes that the Sibyls were rendered superfluous by the Gospel, as well.[622] However, the concerns voiced here were meant to caution against giving priority to texts outside the Scriptural canon.[623] In fact, for Agrippa the Sibyls were not as much pagans as belonged to the lost group of *magi*. Their source of inspiration was the Christian God and, therefore, their prophetic office, even if it was made obsolete by the Gospel, was genuine.

As for the gender aspect of the Sibylline tradition, the most helpful distinction is that between those misogynist views that were employed to reject the Sibyls' prophetic legacy and those views, be they misogynist in their core or not, that were used to endorse the Sibyls' prophetic faculties. It is noteworthy that the latter can only be detected in the thought of theologians outside the representative confessional churches. Both Agrippa and Postel each in their own time struggled with orthodoxy and advocated the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses. In light of recent scholarship on the gender aspects concerning the Reformation movement, it is remarkable to note that both Bibliander as the chief theologian of the Zurich theological seminary and Peucer as a leading Philippist uttered critical remarks about the Sibyls on the basis of their gender. This observation is in line with the Reformation described as a shift away from women's ability to partake in and actively contribute to their own

[620] Agrippa, 'Ad lectorem' ([1533]), sig. aa ij^{r}.
[621] Ibid.
[622] See Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*, pp. 208–9.
[623] See also van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa*, pp. 24–26.

salvation by serving in spiritual offices, such as beguines, nuns or even prophetesses, towards a focus on their domestic role in the household as wife and mother.[624] Whereas Luther belittled women's intellectual capabilities, which would forbid them from engaging with Christ's teachings without any mediation, it has been argued that Calvin conceded that the exclusion of women from ordination was a matter of human rather than divine law, arguing for the equal value of their souls, on the one hand, and inferiority of the female body, on the other.[625] Nonetheless, a growing sense of suspicion about the female sex, which seems to have intensified during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witch craze, appears to have lessened the initial admiration of the Sibyls.[626] While their female sex had previously predisposed the Sibyls for the incorporation into Marian cults, now, as a consequence of the changing attitudes towards women, their female gender arose suspicion and mistrust, fuelling the decline in the Reformation approach to their lore.

Among the second generation of Philippist theologians, the lasting influence of Melanchthon's thought becomes apparent. As part of his exegetical work on the Pentateuch, the Rostock professor David Chytraeus (1530/31–1600) took interest in the Sibylline corpus and presented the Sibyls as acquainted with God's revelation either because they descended from Noah or because they were manifestations of God's presence in nature.[627] In his commentary on Genesis dating from 1557, he presented a passage from the Sibylline oracles (VIII.402) to exemplify that pagans had been able to conceive men's likeness to God.[628] This potential knowledge originated either 'from the doctrine of holy fathers' (*ex doctrina sanctorum doctorum*) or through 'natural light' (*naturali luce*).[629] While the latter source was

[624] See L. Roper, *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, Oxford 1989, pp. 7–55.
[625] See M. E. Wiesner, 'Luther and Women. The Death of Two Marys', in *Disciplines of Faith. Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. by J. Obelkevich, L. Roper and R. Samuel, London 1987, pp. 295—308 (300); J. D. Douglass, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin*, Philadelphia 1985, pp. 79–81.
[626] See M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 256–57. For recent research and the role of fear in the allegations and trials, see L. Roper, *Witch Craze. Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, Yale 2004; for an example of early witch hunts in Franconia, see S. Kleinöder-Strobel, *Die Verfolgung von Zauberei und Hexerei in den fränkischen Markgraftümern im 16. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 2002.
[627] For the life and work of Cythraeus, see K.-H. Glaser and S. Stuth (eds), *David Chytraeus (1530–1600). Norddeutscher Humanismus in Europa. Beiträge zum Wirken des Kraichgauer Gelehrten*, Ubstadt–Weiher 2000; K.-H. Glaser, H. Lietz and S. Rhein (eds), *David und Nathan Chytraeus. Humanismus im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Ubstadt-Weiher 1993.
[628] David Chytraeus, *In Genesim enarratio*, Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1557, p. 59
[629] Ibid.

commonplace in sixteenth-century Protestant theology, the former reveals Chytraeus's closeness to Melanchthon's stance. Being committed as Chytraeus was to his former teacher Melanchthon, he organised his history lectures at the university of Rostock, where he taught since 1550, as an extensive commentary on Melanchthon's *Chronicon Carionis*.[630] Even though by the time Chytraeus composed this commentary on Genesis, Melanchthon was still working on his version of the *Chronicon Carionis*, the same terminology *ex doctrina sanctorum doctorum*, which had already been used in the chronicle's original version and later in Melancthon's version, is striking.[631] Besides, Melanchthon himself had quoted this very Sibylline verse in his 1552 *Liber de anima*.[632] In addition, the fact that Chytraeus, like Bullinger in his *In Apocalypsim conciones centum*, did not cite the translation offered by Castellio makes it seems rather unlikely that this passage originated from Chytraeus's engagement with the newly published oracles or that it was independently taken from Lactantius (DI II.10.4), as the revisited edition of the commentary from 1568 suggests.[633] By and large, this acknowledgement that the pagans had some insight into the divine concurred with Melanchthon's general view that, as descendants from Noah, the Greeks had been able to retain a greater understanding of the divine than any other people of antiquity.[634] As Chytraeus appears to suggest, one of the means by which this became apparent was the allegedly pagan diviners, the Sibyls, whose predictions still contained many revelations that God had granted in the pre-Noachian age. This notion is also emphasised in Chytraeus's dedicatory letter to his commentary on Exodus. Opening up with this very Sibylline verse, the notion that men is made in God's likness and gifted with reason is presented as the prerequisite known to Judaeo-Christian tradition and discernible in classical polytheism alike.[635] In the tradition of Melanchthon, for Chytraeus, too, the Sibyls were conveyors of divine revelations, not those who revealed the divine.

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[630] For Chytraeus's alignment with Melanchthon's ideas, see Ben-Tov, *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity*, pp. 67–70.
[631] Bonnus, *Chronica Carionis* (1537), fol. 45^{r}; Melanchthon, *Chronicon carionis* (1558), sig. I 2^{v} (CR XII.774).
[632] Melanchthon, *Liber de anima* (1552), sig. B^{v}.
[633] David Chytraeus, *In Genesim enarratio, recens recognita*, Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1568, p. 61; Castellio, *Sibyllina oracula* (1546), p. 105; Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), p. 252.
[634] See Ben-Tov, 'Eine späthumanistische Konfessionalisierung der Antike', pp. 131–32.
[635] David Chytraeus, 'Epistola dedicatoria', in David Cythraeus, *In Exodum enarratio*, Wittenberg: Johannes Crato, 1561, sigs. A 2^{r}–[A 7^{v}].

Most remarkably, even the champion of orthodox Lutheranism, Flacius, one of the leading theologians of the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans, diverted from the stance of his spiritual leader Luther ever so slightly.[636] Before Lutheranism had been legally recognised as a Christian denomination in the Augsburg Peace of 1555, Flacius had begun working on a monumental chronicle, which set out to trace the Lutheran faith by means of a unique system of fourteen *loci communes* from early Christendom to his time.[637] Whilst compiling archival material for the so-called *Magdeburg Centuries*, he also came across an unknown Sibylline prophecy. In 1556, this brief piece of writing was published together with a divination authored by Hildegard of Bingen in a small booklet that did not even comprise a single sheet of paper.[638] Without any preface or other commentary note, the pamphlet's title *Duae veteres prophetiae de pia ecclesiae Dei instauratione, ad nostra tempora pertinentes* ('Two Old Prophecies on the Renewal of God's Faithful Church, Pertaining to Our Times') leaves no doubt about Flacius's conviction that these two sayings were true prophecies. As argued by Thomas Kaufmann, they were instrumental in constructing the Reformation as a historical period in its own right.[639] They offered testimonies of prophetic certainty to endorse the legitimacy of the Reformation, for this had been an event conceived by God. And so, the first of these texts, the Sibylline verses, which Flacius reported to have taken from the Hilfeld library, presented a riddle concerning the downfall of the 'imaginary church' (*ecclesia fantastica*) and the persistence of

[636] On Flacius as the most influential church historian of early Lutheranism, see T. Kaufmann, 'Matthias Flacius Illyricus. Lutherischer Theologe und Magdeburger Publizist', in *Mitteldeutsche Lebensbilder. Menschen im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. by W. Freitag, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna 2004, pp. 177–99.

[637] For the most recent in-depth study, see H. Bollbuck, *Wahrheitszeugnis, Gottes Auftrag und Zeitkritik. Die Kirchengeschichte der Magdeburger Zenturien und ihre Arbeitstechniken*, Wiesbaden 2014.

[638] A provenance note in the little booklet helps gauge the time of origin of this otherwise undated publication. The second text is recorded to be taken 'verbatim from a collection of communes loci by Heinrich Token, formerly a canon in Magdeburg 130 years ago' (ex sylva locorum communium Henrici Token, olim ante annos 130 Canonici Magdeburgensis ad verbum), also known under the title *Rapularius*. Since Heinrich Token (ca. 1390–1454/55) was made canon in Magdeburg in 1426, the earliest date possible is in the mid 1550. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, Flacius knew about these prophecies when he specifically accounted for them in his 1556 *Catalogus testium veritas* ('Catalogue of Testimonies of the Truth'). See Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis, qui ante nostram aetatem reclamerunt Papae*, Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1556, pp. 75–76. Since Michael Lotter (fl.1528–1556), the printer to whom this work has traditionally been ascribed, died 1556 and Flacius himself spoke of having published this piece of prophecy in his 1556 *Catalogus testium veritatis*, we can assume that this work was published in 1556. See Flacius, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556), p. 75.

[639] See T. Kaufmann, *Das Ende der Reformation. Magdeburgs "Hergotts Kanzlei" (1548–1551/2)*, Tübingen 2003, pp. 358–61.

the 'true church' (*vera ecclesia*).[640] It evoked Book 8 of the Sibylline oracles, the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' and the animals the *Sibilla Eritea Babilonica* not only through its calamitous imagery, but also through the sequence of letters representing future princes.[641] Similarly, the brief passage by the 'Sibyl of the Rhine' or 'Sibyl of the Germans', as Hildegard of Bingen also came to be known, spoke of the collapse of the papal church and a subsequent reformation of the Church.[642] In presenting the unnamed Sibyl and Hildegard of Bingen as veritable prophets who had foreseen the Reformation as an inevitable reform of the Church, Flacius was able to detach the Sibylline legacy from a general soteriological teleology as had commonly been the case. Similar to the Frankfurt preacher Melchior Ambach (1490–c.1559) in his *Vom Ende der Welt/Vnd zukunnft des Endtchrists* ('On the End of the World and the Future of the Antichrist'), he seems to have applied the definition of a Sibyl as a prophesying women in order to describe a divining woman with insight into the future, not into the nature of God.[643] As well as her source of inspiration, her nature was no further explored, as was that of Hildegard of Bingen. Flacius merely exploited these two divinations from a Sibyl and Hildegard of Bingen for his own historical pursuits.

This approach becomes more apparent in his second major historical work, the *Catalogus testium veritatis* ('Catalogue of the Testimonies of the Truth'). Despite its proclaimed twofold aim of listing all opponents of the papacy, on the one hand, and of proving the Melanchthonian idea of continuity of doctrine, that is, the Lutheran teaching, on the other hand, this work presented a list of 400 figures from the Apostle Peter to the Magdeburg archibishop Ernst II of Saxony (1464–1513) who had each in their own way spoken out against the corruption of the church as

[640] Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Duae veteres prophetiae de pia ecclesiae Dei instauratione, ad nostra tempora pertinentes*, Magdeburg: [Michael Lotter, 1556], fol. [1^{v}].
[641] See Kaufmann, *Das Ende der Reformation*, p. 358; Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 499–502, 507, 515; Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, pp. 181–82.
[642] For the association of Hildegard of Bingen as a Sibyl see Gouguenheim, *La Sibylle du Rhin*; P. Dronke, 'Sibylla – Hildegardis', pp. 112–16. Hildegard of Bingen's prophecy here is a slightly altered passage taken from the *Liber divinorum operum* (Book 3, Vision 5, Chapters 25 and 26). See M. Embach (ed.), *Die Schriften Hildegards von Bingen. Studien zu ihrer Überlieferung und Rezeption im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 2003, pp. 453–54. Although the juxtaposition of these two prophecies by Hildegard of Bingen and a Sibyl is enticing to the association of Hildegard as a Sibyl, it is worth noting that Flacius refrained from drawing this connection. See Flacius, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556), pp. 650–55.
[643] Melchior Ambach, *Vom Ende der Welt/Vnd zukunnft des Endtchrists*, Frankfurt: Hermann Gülferich, [c. 1545], fols D iij^{v}–E^{r}. See also Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, p. 77.

embodied by the papacy.[644] A key witness to the ecclesiastical downfall, the Sibyl also found its way into this compilation. In the first edition of 1556, the section concerned with the Sibyl simply recurred to the published prophecy examined above. According to the *Catalogus testium veritatis*, this Sibylline prophecy told of the 'exile and return of the powerful because of the true faith' (*exilium et reditus potentum ob veram pietatem*) as well as 'the ruin of the imaginary church and the success of the true one' (*ruina fantasticae ecclesiae, et successus verae*).[645] Of particular appeal to Flacius was the adjective *fantastica*, which in his opinion elucidated the melancholic disposition and the lack of any efficacy in the ceremonies, rites and good deeds performed by Catholics.[646] In his second edition of the *Catalogus testium veritatis*, dating from 1562, Flacius incorporated another Sibylline prophecy, which he had taken from Bibliander's *Temporum supputatio*.[647] Along the same lines, its more dramatically narrated calamities were interpreted as driving even the good leaders back into the servitude of Rome and going as far as to smear the deceased.[648] In his use of the two Sibylline documents, despite the great attention given to such a contested source as a Sibylline prophecy, Flacius refrained from specifying or even speculating on the identity of the purported author of the first text, leaving the second Sibyl without any additional remark at all. His only concession was that he would not know when the prophecies were composed, a possible allusion to the state of frenzy in which the ancient Sibyl was known to have prophesied.[649] Other than that the text foretold the downfall of the Church 'in eloquent terms' (*diserte*), there is no further qualification of the prophecy itself. His interest was not to penetrate the nature of either divination, their source of inspiration or indeed their application for theological considerations, but to incorporate them into his historical argument. For this specific purpose, the lack of further information concerning the origin of the two Sibylline prophecies is of no concern. In fact, it is their apparent age that enabled Flacius to use them for his historical purposes.

[644] See M. Pohlig, 'Matthias Flacius, Simon Goulart and the "Catalogus testium veritatis". Protestant Historiography in an Age of inner-Protestant Struggle', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte/Archive for Reformation History* CI, 2010, pp. 263–74 (264–66).
[645] Flacius, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556), p. 75.
[646] In addition to pointing out the more general failings of the Catholic Church in dogmatic and ritual issues, Flacius emphasised the on-going nature of the Reformation by foregrounding unresolved tensions, for example, around the exiled Hermann V of Wied (1477–1552) in the electorate of Cologne. See Flacius, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556), p. 75.
[647] Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio* (1558), p. 222.
[648] Flacius, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1562), pp. 140–41.
[649] Ibid., p. 76.

Furthermore, the historicity of the Church Fathers' testimony and their chronological proximity to the Sibyls convinced Flacius of the oracles' veracity. In his 1567 *Clavis Scripturae*, he stated: 'But if it had not been true, they [the Church Fathers] with their most recent memory would have refuted them as pagan; and, yet, these verses of theirs [the Sibyls] still exist today.'[650] Implicitly by means of this statement, Flacius appears to align the two Sibylline prophecies cited in the 1567 *Clavis Scripturae* to the ancient corpus of the Sibylline oracles. In the quest to unearth new source material for his *Magdeburg Centuries*, Flacius offered to extend the corpus of Sibylline material. He was able to do so, as he pursued an antiquarian approach for his historical interests, which ignored crucial issues such as how to conceptualise the Sibyls and their oracles. Indeed, notoriously militant and polemical about any conciliatory approach intending to defile the pure Lutheran doctrine of which he accused the Philippists, Flacius distanced himself from the idea exposed in the *Chronicon Carionis*.[651] He eluded these considerations by solely relying on the authority associated with and the antiquity of the patristic writings. For him, the Sibyl(s) were no more than heralds of the Reformation.

Although working closely with Flacius on the *Magdeburg Centuries*, Johannes Wigand (1523–1587), who, despite having co-authored this central piece of Lutheran historiography, has been little studied, did not adopt this notion.[652] By contrast, he held that the Sibyls and their oracles were null and void. In his 1571 Commentary on Daniel, which resulted from his professorship in theology in Rostock and Jena, he expounded that the 'leaves of the Sibyl' (*Sibyllae folia*) were 'complex and dubious' (*intricata, dubia*).[653] Commenting on Daniel 11, he stated: 'From here, the Sibyls copied their divinations, of which there is no doubt.'[654] For him the Sibyls were neither conveyors of Noachian knowledge, nor prophetic heralds of the Reformation,

[650] Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae, seu de sermone sacrarum literarum*, 2 vols, Basel: Paul Quecus for Johannes Oporinus, 1562, II, p. 577: 'Quod si non fuisset verum, in recenti eorum memoria redarguissent eos gentiles, et extant adhuc illi earum versus.'
[651] On the controversy between orthodox and Philippist Lutheranism, see A. Waschbüsch, *Alter Melanchthon. Muster theologischer Autoritätsstiftung bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus*, Göttingen 2008.
[652] See R. Diener, 'Johann Wigand (1523–1587)', in Raitt, *Shapers of Religious Traditions*, pp. 19–38.
[653] Johannes Wigand, *Danielis prophetiae explicatio brevis*, Jena: Günther Hüttich, 1581, fol. 366^{v}.
[654] Wigand, *Danielis prophetiae explicatio* (1581), fol. 404^{r}: 'Hinc Sybillae descripserunt sua vaticinia: quod non est dubium'. Elsewhere Wigand pointed out further parallels between Daniel 17 and the eighth book of the Sibylline oracles. See Wigand, *Danielis prophetiae explicatio* (1581), fol. 441^{v}.

but women who purported to be prophets. They had simply forged their divinations by copying existing books of the biblical canon.

A remarkable source for the view on the inter-denominational debate about the Sibyls is Flacius's *Clavis Scripturae*. In this guideline of biblical exegesis designed for Lutheran pastors and theologians, Flacius scrutinised the view concerning the obscurity of the Scripture as understood by Martín Pérez de Ayala (1504–1566). According to Pérez de Ayala, who, as Bishop of Guadix and since 1560 of Segovia took part in the Council of Trent, Protestants were giving to much credit to the Sibyls as prophets for theological purposes.[655] For him, the Sibyls were 'immature adolescents, easy girls…who hardly held any principles of faith' (*immaturis adolescentulis, levibus mulierculis…quae vix fidei rudimenta tenent*).[656] These accusations were rebuffed by Flacius in this way:

> Do they [the Protestants] really think that the prophets' oracles are easier or more unbecoming than the Sibylline leaves? Or that for some particular reason prophets had wrapped up their opinions in so many envelopes? Of course not! Rather this was the result of a divine disposition, which took care that only men of spirit and well trained can reach the understanding of these truths and prevented unworthy and carnal men from desecrating and despising sacred and divine knowledge.[657]

Here it is apparent that for Flacius the Sibyls were not prophets of divine revelation in the sense of the prophets canonised in the Bible, but that they were mere soothsayers, who had gained some popularity and authority by virtue of their age. Even more importantly, the question of how to treat the Sibylline tradition appears to be a bone of contention between the different confessional churches. It was used in a polemical way to demean other positions. A comparison of the alleged accusations made here by Pérez de Ayala with the results of this investigation of the Protestant camp and its attitudes towards the Sibylline tradition and, specifically towards the Sibylline oracles, reveals how little these attitudes were congruent with one another. In order to be

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[655] Flacius, *Clavis Scripturae* (1567), II, p. 552: 'Et quod nullam velint differentiam fieri, imo omnes aptos indiscriminatim esse dicunt Erasmiani et Lutherani isti, non ad audiendam modo, sed ad tractanda et legandam coelestiam philosophiam, committendo illam passim immaturis adolescentulis, levibus mulierculis, crassis senibus, stultis vetulis, Epicureique sensus hominibus, quae vix fidei rudimenta tenent.'

[656] Ibid.

[657] Ibid.: 'An putant (obsecro) isti, Prophetarum oracula faciliora, aut indigniora esse, quam Sibyllinarum folia? Aut casu quodam Prophetas tot involucris suas sententias obvoluisse? Non certe: sed divina hac procurante dispositione, ut nisi spiritualis homo et exercitatus, ad earum intelligentiam possit pervenire: et ne sacra et divina doctrina ab indignis et carnalibus hominibus prophanaretur aut conculcaretur.'

able to examine these inter-denominational conflicts on this matter, the next chapter will focus on Catholic attitudes.

The Council of Trent and the Enduring Interest in the Sibylline Tradition in the Catholic World

When compared to the Protestant approach to the Sibylline oracles, the position of the Roman Church regarding apocryphal material was less defined and the lines between it and the canonical books often blurred.[658] As part of the efforts to formulate a response in doctrinal, ecclesiastical and liturgical terms against the attacks of the Reformation movements, the Council of Trent, which convened between the years 1545 and 1563, had set out the orthodox understanding of what writings were to be regarded as canonical and what to be disregarded as apocryphal.[659] However, it was two of the most authoritative encyclopaedic works of the Catholic world that would define the position of the Sibylline oracles among other revelations. The notion that would reach the status of recognised doctrine status was first exposed in the *Bibliotheca sancta* by the erstwhile Franciscan and later Dominican friar Sixtus of Siena (1520–1569). Dedicated to Pius V (Antonio/Michele Ghislieri, 1504–1572), who is likely to have saved Sixtus of Siena from accusations made by the Roman Inquisition, the *Bibliotheca sancta* was the first biblical encyclopaedia of the Counter-Reformation issued in 1566 in the wake of the Council of Trent.[660] With its rich repertoires of dogma and ecclesiastical tradition, it became an immense success which, produced with papal approval and support for its strict orthodox stance, served as compulsory reading material for generations of Catholic theologians up to the eighteenth century. In it, Sixtus of Siena, who remains a rather mysterious and notoriously understudied figure, defended not only the Sibyls, but

[658] For the example of the 4 Book of Ezra, see Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 88–114.
[659] For the Council's debate on the Scriptures, see H. Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, 4 vols, Freiburg 1949–1975, II, pp. 42–82.
[660] The edition used for the purpose of this study is *Biblitheca sancta*, Frankfurt: Nikolaus Bassée, 1575. For its immediate reception among Catholic theologians and for Sixtus of Siena's life in general, see J. W. Montgomery, 'Sixtus of Siena and Roman Catholic Biblical Scholarship in the Reformation Period', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* LIV, 1963, pp. 214–34 (216–25).

also passed an ambiguous verdict over other apocryphal texts like Book 4 of Ezra.[661] Crucial for the presentation of the Sibyls in the *Bibliotheca sancta* was a remarkable quotation which, although not canonised in Scriptures, was attributed to Paul according to a locus in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (VI.V.43.1):[662]

> Take up the books, you Greeks, and recognise the Sibyls, how they indicated the one God, and all that will happen in the future. Among them, you will also find very clear and open writings about the son of God.[663]

Paul, who in other traditions, particularly the Protestant one, warned against any divergence from the canonical books of the Bible, was here fostered as someone 'encouraging his likes to the study of the Sibylline volumes' (*hortatur suos ad lectionem Sibyllinorum voluminum*).[664] This appearance of Paul as a pivotal figure in the debate on the Sibylline tradition is not coincidental. In fact, Sixtus of Siena was able to accept the ten classical Sibyls described as Christian prophetesses, only because Paul had called for their study.[665] After the negotiators of the Council of Trent had debated about the Scriptures and their canonicity and authority in February and March 1546, the decree regulating these matters was formally issued on 8 April of the same year. From that moment on, orthodoxy would dictate that divine revelation was conveyed by those written books that were part of the Scriptures and by the unwritten traditions which the apostles had received either from Christ Himself or by the grace of the Holy Spirit.[666] Although he had not been one of the twelve original apostles, Paul was therefore able to endow the Sibyls with the apostolic approval necessary for them to be included into the body of revelations in post-Tridentine Catholicism. Even in the face of the admonitions from both the Christian realm, by Ambrose, and from the pagan one, by Tacitus, that there were vain women purporting to be Sibyls, the Sibyls as listed in Lactantius could

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[661] See Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 94–97.
[662] For a modern edition of the *Stromata*, see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, in *Clemens Alexandrinus*, ed. by O. Stählin, L. Früchtel and U. Treu, 4 vols, Berlin 1960–85, II.
[663] Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca Sancta* (1566), p. 117: 'Libros Graecos sumite, et Sibyllas agnoscite, quomodo unum Deum significent, et ea, quae futura sunt; et invenietis in eis filium Dei clarius et apertius scriptum.'
[664] Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca Sancta* (1566), p. 117. For the Protestant use of Paul, see, for example, Herold, 'Praefatio' (1555), sig. a2^{v}.
[665] Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca Sancta* (1566), pp. 117–18. In the list offered here, the *Sibylla Cimmeria* was substituted by the *Sibylla Cumaea*, which Sixtus of Siena identified as the one who had inspired Virgil.
[666] See Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, II, pp. 46–48, 59–60, 71.

withstand this criticism with their authority granted by Paul.[667] There was no doubt about Sixtus of Siena's view that the Sibyls had revealed divine truth. After accounting for the Sibylline oracles as the whole of this prophetic corpus, each classical Sibyl had an entry dedicated to herself, each with some information as given in Lactantius's *Divinae institutiones* (I.6.8–14) and possibly other pagan or patristic authorities, as well as with a passage which Sixtus of Siena extracted from the Sibylline oracles attributed to her, just as if it had been that particular Sibyl who uttered that particular phrase. For example, in his description of the *Sibylla Cumana* Sixtus of Siena extended the information given by Lactantius (DI I.6.10–11) by a report by the third-century historian Gaius Julius Solinus, claiming that he had seen the Sibyl's grave on Sicily; Sixtus of Siena then gave a quotation of the Sibylline oracles (I.324–60).[668]

The understanding of the Sibyls presented in the *Bibliotheca sancta* was shaped by two other noteworthy features. In the account dedicated to the *Sibylla Cumana*, Sixtus offered a numerical reading of the Greek for Jesus, Ιησούς. As the Sibyl had pointed out and as was also explained by the Venerable Bede (672/3–735) yet without any mention of the Sibyl (*In Lucae Evangelium expositio* PL 92.338), the numerical value traditionally attributed to each letter of the Greek alphabet added up to 888. According to Sixtus, the number eight represented the resurrection, for Christ had risen from the dead the day after the Sabbath, which made it the eighth day.[669] Just as Bullinger had highlighted the numerical interpretation behind the transformation of Rome into the Antichrist, as provided by the Sibyl, so did Sixtus use this approach to emphasise the extent of the Sibyls' prophetic knowledge. Furthermore, Sixtus was not only entrenched in the patristic tradition, a common feature of any engagement with the Sibyls, but he also placed the Sibylline legacy in the medieval tradition, as evident in his reference to the Venerable Bede.

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[667] According to Sixtus of Siena, the Sibylline books were the only Greek or Roman divinations which were saved thanks to the efforts of Augustus, until Stilicho ordered their destruction on account of these rumours. See Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca sancta* (1566), pp. 99, 120–21.

[668] Ibid., p. 119. With the only exception of the *Sibylla Samia* (VIII.324–27) and the *Sibylla Erythraea* (VIII.217–50; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* XVIII.23), all other passages ascribed to a Sibyl were taken from the First Book of the Sibylline oracles: *Sibylla Persica* I.336–39; *Sibylla Hellespontica* I.331–32; *Sibylla Libyca* I.351–55; *Sibylla Delphica* I.365–67; *Sibylla Phrygia* VIII.305–6, 311 and *Sibylla Tiburtina* I.379–81. See Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca sancta* (1566), pp. 119–20.

[669] Ibid., p. 119: 'Octavus enim numerus in Sacris literis resurrectionis gloriae convenit: quia Dominus octava die, hoc est, post septimam sabbati resurrexit; et ipsi post sex huius saeculi aetates, et septimam sabbati animarum, quae nunc interim in alia vita geritur, quasi octavo tempore surgemus.'

This is precisely what is important for the second element to be discussed here. In the account of the *Sibylla Cumaea*, Sixtus reiterated Augustine's argument, as exposed in the latter's *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio*, that there had been foreknowledge of Christ among the pagans. For Augustine, this was most apparent in Virgil's reference to the Cumaean Sibyl in his 'Fourth Eclogue' (*Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* 3.3–4).[670] What follows in Augustine's *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* is the concession that although knowledge of Chirst was available in the pagan realm, these testimonies should be discarded as they were not canonised in the Bible.[671] In the *Bibliotheca sancta*, however, this crucial remark was left out. In order to substantiate the contemporary acceptance of the Sibyls by the then most authoritative of the Church Fathers, that is, Augustine, Sixtus appropriated or rather contorted the patristic tradition to fit his argument. Augustine's reservations were thus ignored and erased.[672] The same can be said about the way in which Sixtus extracted the passages from the Sibylline oracles. First, he claimed that the Sibyls had characterised the Messiah as the Prince of Peace. Then, in order to make this claim conformable to the same prophecy made by Isaiah, Sixtus offered a potpourri of snippets taken from the oracles.[673] This rather distorting approach to the Sibylline oracles resembles his overall selection and attribution of the passages to each Sibyl, as mentioned above. The criteria according to which Sixtus ascribed to each Sibyl the passages, many of which were taken from the same section within Book 1, are not elucidated, nor are there any indications in the Sibylline oracles themselves which would suggest such attributions. The identification of the Sibyl referred to in the extensive quotation from pseudo-Justin Martyr's *Cohortatio ad Graecos* (37.1–38.2) as the Cumaean Sibyl is thus without any foundation apparent to the reader.[674]

What emerges by virtue of this selective approach is a veneration of the Sibyls as Christian prophets grounded in the continuity of the patristic and medieval tradition.

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[670] Ibid., p. 118.
[671] Augustine, *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* (3.4–5): 'Sciens ergo apostolus ea in libris gentium inveniri testimonia veritatis, quod etiam in Actibus Apostolorum loquens Atheniensibus manifestissime ostendit, non solum ait: "per prophetas suos", ne quis a pseudoprophetis per quasdam veritatis confessiones in aliquam impietatem seduceretur, sed addidit etiam: "in scripturis sanctis", volens utique ostendere litteras gentium superstitiosae idolatriae plenissimas non idea sanctas haberi oportere, quia in eis aliquis, quod ad Christum pertinet, invenitur.'
[672] For a systematic survey of Augustine's legacy in the sixteenth century, see Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation*.
[673] Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca sancta* (1566), p. 118.
[674] Ibid.

After all, the call to link the Sibylline testimonies to Paul was of decisive importance in placing the discussion of the Sibyls and their oracles in the second book of the *Bibliotheca sancta*, that is, the one concerned with 'writings and writers mentioned in the Scriptures' (*scripturis, et scriptoribus, quorum in sacris voluminibus sit mentio*).[675] In doing so, Sixtus depended on the Sibylline oracles, which, he said, had been published 'a few years ago in Germany' (*proximis annis ex Germania*).[676] Indeed, unlike Bullinger and even Bibliander, both of whom refrained from giving the translation authored by Castellio, Sixtus did precisely rely on that text, without acknowledging, however, either Birck's or Castelio's achievements.[677] Although the confessional rift in the debate over the relevance of the Sibylline oracles to contemporaries had widened and deepened, achievements made by potential representatives of the other confession appear impossible to acknowledge.

The second work in post-Tridentine Catholicism that is significant for the aim of this study is the comprehensive study of a whole array of articles of faith, the *Disputationes de controversiis Christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos* ('Disputations on the Controversies of the Christian Faith against the Heretics of this Time') by the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621).[678] Although parts of Bellarmine's work were temporarily put on the index of prohibited books, this work lay the foundations for a career of the utmost distinction, which would elevate Bellarmine to the cardinalate.[679] In fact, acclaimed as one of the foremost scholars of his day and recognised as a standard-bearer of Catholicism, Bellarmine himself later occupied the feared office of a censor.[680] With respect to the stance taken towards the Sibyls and their appropriation into the context of dogmatic questions, Bellarmine's *Controversiae* appear to be strongly influenced by the *Bibliotheca sancta*. Bellarmine recounted Paul's alleged plea that the Sibylline prophecies ought to be read (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI.V.43.1), an argument uniquely employed

[675] Ibid., [sig.)(1^{v}].
[676] Ibid., p. 121.
[677] Castellio, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΝ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΝ. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum* (1555), pp. 64–69, 150–51, 238–41.
[678] Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes de controversiis Christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*, 4 vols, Ingolstadt: Adam Satorius, 1581–1593.
[679] See S. Tutino, *Empire of Souls. Robert Bellarmine and the Christian Commonwealth*, Oxford 2000, pp. 49–80, 106.
[680] For a study of Bellarmine's time as a censor, see P. Godman, *The Saint as Censor. Robert Bellarmine between Inquisition and Index*, Leiden, Boston and Cologne 2000.

by Sixtus of Siena.[681] In addition, he provided a list of Church Fathers who had accepted the prophetic status of the Sibyls.[682] While deriving the Sibyls' trustworthiness from a host of patristic authorities had been common practice since the arrival of humanism even with Protestant theologians, for Bellarmine, the acceptance of apocryphal material by others worthy of faith was crucial for his decision about which writings he was willing to rely on for doctrinal issues and which not.[683] These two categories of authorities – Paul's apostolic office and the Church Fathers' worthiness of faith – allowed Bellarmine to refer to the Sibyls as the eighth key in proving the divinity of God's Son and His oneness with God the Father.[684] Evidence for this belief was presented within the Sibylline oracles through Augustine's translation of the infamous *Iudicii signum*, which named Christ as the one and only eternal God, who would come to divide the faithful from the evil (*De civ. Dei* XVIII.23).[685] In an effort to present the acrostic as the poetic form in which the Sibyls used to reveal their insights, Bellarmine went to great lengths to ground this medium in the classical Roman tradition, tracing it down to Constantine's *Ad sanctorum coetum*, as given by Eusebius, and stating that Cicero had spoken of the acrostic as the usual genre in which the Sibylline prophecies were revealed (*De divinatione* II.110–112).[686] Underlining the divinity of Jesus, Bellarmine concluded with allusions to the biblical miracles of the Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–44) and the feeding of the multitude (Mt 14:13–21; 15:32–39; Mk 6:31–44; 8:1–9; Lk 9:12–17; John 6:1–44) as referred to in the Sibylline oracles (VI.15–16), the suffering of God at the Cross (VI.21,26) and the baptism of the Son of God, which was marked by a dove hovering over the baptised, a reference to the Trinity (VII.66–67). Even the Virgin's role in bearing the Messiah was recovered from the Sibylline oracles (VIII.461).[687] By providing a synopsis of prophetic credentials through these quotations, all of which follow Castellio's translation, the Sibylline oracles were presented as a body of prophecies which Bellarmine seemed to encourage his contemporaries to use in a manner similar to his. The Sibyls, no doubt, were to him a corpus that could help sustain doctrines, even if only by those oracles that were well

[681] Bellarmine, *Controversiae* (1592), p. 128; Sixtus of Siena, *Bibliotheca sancta* (1566), p. 117.
[682] Bellarmine, *Controversiae* (1592), p. 128.
[683] See Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*, pp. 90–91.
[684] Bellarmine, *Controversiae* (1592), p. 45.
[685] Ibid., p. 128: 'Unus et aeternus Deus, hic serator, et idem / Christus pro nobis passus, quem carmina signant.'
[686] Ibid.
[687] Ibid., pp. 128–29.

established in the past. The Sibyls were to be recognised as prophets able to reveal a certain level of divine truth.

As much as Catholic orthodoxy considered the Sibylline oracles to present a trustworthy body of prophecies that could be appropriated to corroborate specific doctrinal questions, Sibylline prophecies with a less reliable pedigree also continued to attract some attention in the Catholic world. So, in 1570, a tract entitled *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinum* ('A True and Famous Prophetic Response of the Erythraean Sibyl') was printed in Venice. It contained nothing less than an abridged version of the medieval *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*.[688] Most remarkably, in his dedicatory letter to the archbishop of Tours, Simon de Maillé (fl.1554–1597), Jean Garet (c.1499–1571), the editor of this volume, claimed to have translated the prophecies presented in this pamphlet from Greek into Latin.[689] Unlike the Sibylline oracles, which had been composed in Greek, the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* as a medieval forgery had been written in Latin, which inevitably raises questions about Garet's claim and its possible intentions. In his 1524 *Onus Ecclesiae*, Pürstinger, too, had relied on this text and had referred to a work with the Greek sounding title *Bazilographus* ('The Account of the Emperors') by the Erythraean Sibyl, which was held in Venice.[690] In six of eight manuscripts of the shorter older verison of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, the Sibyl claimed in the prologue that it was she who had extracted and translated this prophecy from the *Bazilographus*.[691] Yet, according to Jostmann's recent study, the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* was transmitted only in Latin, most likely the original language in which the prophecy was composed; no Greek manuscript is known to exist.[692] Nor does Jostmann believe that a Greek version of this manuscript had existed.[693] It seems more probable that Garet was either aware of Pürstinger's work when composing his edition of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, or that he based his volume on one of the manuscripts with the prologue

[688] Jean Garet (ed.), *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinum*, Venice: Comin da Trino, 1570. For a brief description, see Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 491–92.
[689] Jean Garet, 'Illustrissimo, et eruditissimo viro Simoni de Maillè Turonum Archiepiscopo', in Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinum* (1570), sig. A 2^{rv} (A 2^{v}): 'Cum igitur in veterem quendam Graecum codicem incidissem, in eo inter alia multa opuscula vaticinum reperi Sibyllae Erythraeae, cuius lectione ita sum captus, et delinitus, ut e tenebris est ossum a Graiis ad latios transtulerim, haud absurde me facturum arbitratus, si in tuam notitiam, et latinorum omnium ederetur.'
[690] Pürstinger, *Onus Ecclesiae* (1524), sig. [Z vj^{v}]
[691] See Jostmann, Sibilla Erithea Babilonica, pp. 228–35.
[692] See Jostmann's detailed catalogue of extant manuscripts (ibid., pp. 377–489).
[693] See ibid, pp. 235–46.

mentioning the *Bazilographus*. Indeed, in light of the publication of the Greek Sibylline oracles, a Greek original of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, whose alleged author, the Erythraean Sibyl, reported that she herself was Greek, might not have seemed unlikely to sixteenth-century audiences. Moreover, a Greek original would certainly have boosted the reliability of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* immensely, given that the Greek Sibylline oracles were so readily accepted by Catholic theologians like Sixtus of Siena. In order for the prophetic element in the *Vaticinium* to be considered part of this trustworthy tradition, Garet appended to the tract a catalogue of patristic and classical excerpts. In it, once again, he promoted the conflation of the medieval forgeries and the classical origins of the Sibylline lore, for the *Sibilla Erythea Babilonica* was equated with the classical Erythraean Sibyl. This catalogue bears clear traits of its Catholic origins, in that it quoted not only Sixtus of Siena himself, but also the call to study the Sibylline prophecies ascribed to Paul which was so crucial for the Catholic notion of Scripture.[694]

The degree to which this Sibylline prophecy was relevant to sixteenth-century audiences is evident also in the way in which the volume was illustrated and in which it related to the current affairs of the time. Printed south of the Alps in Venice, one of the great trading centres of the Mediterranean, it is not so much the Reformation, but the conflict with the Ottoman Empire that dominated this reading of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*. This interpretation is offered by way of large woodcut illuminations, which are placed within the text, almost on every single page. The two illuminations centred on the conflict with the Ottoman Empire show a lion and a bear assaulting a city which by the moon crescents on top of its buildings and the text referring to it as *Byzantium* can easily be identified as Constantinople (see fig. 11). The two animals were supported by an army behind them, holding flags possibly those of the Republics of Venice and of Genoa, and the Holy Roman Empire.[695] The second woodcut illumination displays a battle between two fleets, one of which is indicated by a flag with moon crescents marked as Ottoman, the other by a cross as Christian (see fig. 12).[696] As the architect of the Holy League, which in 1571 would defeat the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Lepanto, Pius V is

[694] Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), sigs B 2^{v}–[B 4^{v}].
[695] The text of the prophecy reads: 'Leo foedus, et belli societatem cum Urso, inibit. Itaque Draconem spoliabunt Leo, et Ursus, Byzantium expugnabunt, aedificia dealbabunt, aurum Draconi, et spolia per orbem dispergent.' (Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), sig. [B 1^{r}]).
[696] Ibid.

portrayed in this volume, as it seems, in honour of his efforts in the fight against the Islamic power (see fig. 13).[697] The conflict with the Ottoman Empire was also alluded to also in the prefatory poem addressed to the Venetian lion. Here, Garet set the scene for this interpretation of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, by highlighting its providential signs in the fight against the 'arrogant Turk' (*Turca superbus*) and the 'impious hearts of the Turks' (*impia Turcarum pectora*).[698]

This emerging indication that the Sibyl(s) continued to be held in high esteem by Catholics can also be confirmed by evidence outside the theological debate. An example of such are the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, a collection of Sibylline sayings set to music by the Flemish composer Orlando di Lasso. Although the time of composition is still debated among musicologists, it appears that di Lasso had presented these pieces to the Bavarian duke Albert V (1528–1579) shortly after joining the Munich court of his new patron in 1556.[699] To understand the composition in its cultural and religious context, it is important to call to mind the earlier finding of this study that not only the *ara coeli* legend, but also the Sibylline tradition more broadly had come to be closely associated with Mary and her cult. In Bavaria as the heartland of the European Counter-Reformation, all sovereigns since Albert V forcefully promoted the devotion of Mary as a means to further the Catholic cause.[700] Although little is known about the compositional process of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and the influence Albert V exercised on the choice of sujet and style, it may not be too daring to say that this set of songs were a product of this Counter-Reformation cult of the Virgin. Di Lasso had set to music the poems which, originally published in in a Venetian print of Barbieri's *Discordantiae* and later resumed by Oporinus, invoked Mary for her purity and chastity.

Two aspects are of particular interest to this study. The first is the use this piece was put to. Pointing to the tradition of the 'Song of the Sibyl', a composition which from the tenth to the fifteenth century brought to life a Sibylline prophecy to celebrate the arrival of Christ, Isabelle His holds that the prominence given to the

[697] Ibid., sig. [B 1^{v}].
[698] Garet, 'Ad potentissimum Leonem Venetum Carmen', in Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), sig. [A 1^{v}].
[699] See R. Schlötter, 'Introduction', in *Orlando di Lasso. Sämtliche Werke (Neue Reihe)*, 29 vols, Kassel 1956–2001, XXI, pp. I–XXXVIII (p. XII). For a discussion of the date, see Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 520–21.
[700] See Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 189–94.

delivery of a messiah by a virign in the poems suggests a performance of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* on the occasion of or in close proximity to Christmas.[701] This association, as we have seen above, was a well-established link in sixteenth-century belief. Moreover, Reinhold Schlötterer raised the possibility that this set of music was intended for liturgical services.[702] He based his argument on the fact that the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* was part of a lavishly illustrated manuscript dating from 1558–60, which also contained *Sacrae lectiones ex propheta Iob* ('Sacred Readings from the Prophet Job').[703] Because the passages from Job were read in various liturgical contexts, a similar use can be assumed for the Sibylline songs. If this had indeed been the case, it could be maintained that although pictorial representations of the Sibyls in sacred spaces had ceased to be produced in quite the same quantity as around the turn of the sixteenth century, the Sibyls nonetheless did not disappear from liturgical services altogether. Rather, they at least remained part of private devotion. What however prevents us from drawing wider conclusions is the fact that the reception of this composition was very much limited to the court of Albert V.

Second, the composition features chromatic alterations that were highly unusual for contemporary music. The 'Prologue', for example, opens up with a fairly standard progression from c major to g major, which then advances via b major over c# minor to f# minor, a sequence previously unheard in western European music. It is this opening that scholars grapple with to this day.[704] Beyond the implication for music theory, this piece also raises questions as to what allowed di Lasso to compose this kind of music. Was it, as appears obvious, the Sibyls that demanded such compositional liberties? Was it their alleged frenzy that seems to have affected the music? If so, this would create a compelling disparity to the image of the prophetic authority evoked by Catholic orthodoxy. As a matter of fact, we do know that the

[701] See I. His, 'La sibylle en musique. D'Orlande de Lassus à Maurice Ohana', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 255–72 (258). For the tradition of the 'Song of the Sibyl', see M.-N. Colette, 'La chant de la sibylle. Composition, transmission et interprétation', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 165–76.
[702] See Schlötter, 'Introduction', p. XII.
[703] See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', pp. 516–20.
[704] See W. J. Mitchell, 'The Prologue to Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', *Music Forum* II, 1970, pp. 264–73; K.-K. Hübler, 'Orlando di Lassos "Prophetiae Sibyllarum" oder Über chromatische Komposition im 16. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie* I, 1978, pp. 29–34; K. Berger, 'Tonality and Atonality in the Prologue to Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum". Some Methodological Problems in Analysis of Sixteenth-Century Music', *Musical Quarterly* LXVI, 1980, pp. 484–504; W. E. Lake, 'Orlando di Lasso's Prologue to "Prophetiae Sibyllarum". A Comparison of Analytical Approaches', *In Theory Only* XI, 1991, pp. 1–19.

piece was very well received. Although Albert V confined the performance of this set of songs to his court, an exception was made for the French king, who was presented with the composition by the influential publisher Adrian le Roy (c.1520–1598) in 1574. With him too it proved a great success. To preserve the music for posterity, Charles IX commanded it to be printed.[705] However, it was not until 25 five years later that Rudolph di Lasso (c.1563–1625), the son of Orlando, had it printed.[706] By then, however, musical development had moved on, so that, despite its uniqueness, it seems not to have agreed with the musical taste of the time anymore.

In the light of the dominating issues of the time the composition by di Lasso and the 1570 interpretation of the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica* are evidence that the Sibylline tradition was not only of concern to the theologians representing Catholic orthodoxy. Rather, there remained a great reverence for the Sibyls and an interest in the application of their prophecies to current affairs, just as used to be the case before the Council of Trent and the publication of the Sibylline oracles – the bipartite model of revelation was not discussed, but taken as the given foundation for the consideration of the Sibylline oracles. It was Sixtus of Siena who in his *Bibliotheca sancta* established a doctrinally secure footing that allowed any such interpretations of Sibylline material to thrive whilst remaining in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent. To that end, the apostolic approval of Paul had been obtained through Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, while other patristic authorities had been contorted. However problematic these methods might have been, they are proof of the ingenuity with which theologians forged ways to allow for the endurance of the fascination with Sibylline lore and its rich insights into doctrinal matters and current affairs.

[705] See Schlötter, 'Introduction', p. XXI; H. Leuchtmann, *Orlando di Lasso. Sein Leben*, 2 vols, Wiesbaden 1976–77, I, pp. 169, 331–12.
[706] Orlando di Lasso, *Prophetiae Sibyllarum, quatuor vocibus chromatico more*, ed. by Rudolph di Lasso, Munich: Nikolaus Heinrich the Younger, 1600. See Bergquist, 'Orlando di Lasso's "Prophetiae Sibyllarum"', p. 520.

Two publications of doubt and the end of the Sibylline legacy

As we have seen, the enthusiasm that Birck and Castellio showed in their publications of the Sibylline oracles was not shared by contemporary theologians except for those from the Catholic Church. Among the Protestants, an increasing unease about the Sibylline oracles led either to their outright rejection as pagan prophecies undermining God's authority or their incorporation into historical narratives that would deny them any prophetic role in the unfolding of Christianity. When the Sibylline oracles were published again in 1569, this negation that the Sibylline oracles had any relevance for the sixteenth century shaped this edition. Previously, no attempt had been made to refute the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles. Rather, Protestants had left their antique origin unquestioned. The new edition by Johann Jakob Grynaeus opened up a new direction in the debate about whether or not the Sibylline oracles were ancient or simply a later forgery. It was his edition that shifted the focus towards the question concerning the authenticity of the oracles. Despite this innovative criticism, the volume was a reissue of the collection of *apocrypha* and *patristica* which Herold had edited in 1555.[707] Compared to the earlier edition, the size of the *Monumenta orthodoxographa* published in 1569 had grown by a third, as the number of early Christian and medieval authors gathered in the volume reached the number of 85.[708] This work can safely be considered as one of the first to be produced by the young Grynaeus, who, after having graduated as *doctor theologiae* from Tübingen in 1564, served as Superintendent in the hamlet of Rötteln, near Basel. Still very much under the influence of his *rector mentis*, the Basel Antistes and Lutheran-minded professor of theology Simon Sulzer (1508–1585), Grynaeus dedicated his work not to any noble or learned benefactor, but instead to the 'Holy Bride of Jesus Christ, the orthodox Church' (*Sanctae Iesu Christi sponsae, ecclesiae orthodoxae*).[709]

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[707] Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555).

[708] Grynaeus, *Monumenta Sanctorum Patrum orthodoxographa* (1569). After Petri's ΜΙΚΡΟΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΙΚΟΝ, Herold's succeeding collection *Orthodoxographa*, his *Exempla virtutum et vitiorum* and the *Haereseologia*, Grynaeus's *Monumenta orthodoxographa* mentioned before can be considered as a kind of writing published in an attempt to reconcile divisions through a renewed engagement with apocryphal and patristic sources. See Petri, ΜΙΚΡΟΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΙΚΟΝ (1550); Herold, *Orthodoxographa* (1555); Herold, *Exempla virtutum et vitiorum* (1555); [Herold], *Haereseologia* (1556); Grynaeus, *Monumenta orthodoxographa* (1569).

[709] Grynaeus, 'Praefatio' in Grynaeus, *Monumenta orthodoxographa* (1569), sigs $a2^{r}$–$b3^{v}$ ($a2^{r}$). Influenced by his brother-in-law Thomas Erastus (Lüber, 1524–1583), Grynaeus embraced Reformed

Unlike Herold, who somehow seemed to have hidden the Sibyls in his compilation, Grynaeus joined the controversial debate about the Sibyls' legacy openly and discussed their prophetic role in the preface to this volume. What was crucial for all the texts published was the criterion he introduced at the very beginning. The crux of the texts under scrutiny was the question whether they belonged to the body of 'the doctrine of the prophets and apostles' (*prophetarum et apostolorum doctrina*).[710] To qualify them as such, Grynaeus applied a definition based on Paul (Rm 12:6):

> A prophecy, that is, a faithful and truthful interpretation of the Scriptures corresponding to the level of one's faith, excels amongst the other gifts of grace from the Holy Spirit, and is by all means necessary for this campaign of yours against Satan, the son of destruction.[711]

In contrast to Castellio, who in 1546 had defined those whose predictions were verified by actual events and who worshipped the one and only God as 'diviners' (*vates*), Grynaeus was not that much concerned with the conveyor of the divinatory act, but with divination itself.[712] For him, what matter was primarily the conformity of any given prophecy with the authority of the Bible. The Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* prevailed over contemporary claims concerning the crucial place that the Sibylline oracles as prophecies outside the biblical canon occupied in the universal scheme of salvation. This becomes even more evident when examining Grynaeus's account of the Sibyls, outlined in this preface. In accordance with the mainstream rejection of the Sibylline oracles, Grynaus denied the corpus the age it claimed to have. Moreover, he did not find it reasonable that 'they had surpassed the prophets with regard to the light of the Spirit' (*eas luce Spiritus Prophetis antecelluisse*).[713] It was no surprise, therefore, Grynaeus argued, that what was contained in the oracles barely granted any divinatory insights into the coming of Christ, but

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views, so much so that in 1577 he renounced the Formula of Concord, the confession of Lutheran faith. After structuring the influential Heidelberg university according to Reformed beliefs from 1584 until 1586, Grynaeus took office as the Antistes of Basel, a position that he would hold until his death. For his shift towards the Reformed Church, see C. D. Gunnoe, *Thomas Erastus and the Palatine. A Renaissance Physician in the Second Reformation*, Leiden and Boston 2011, pp. 380–87.

[710] Grynaeus, 'Praefatio' (1569), sig. a2^{r}.

[711] Ibid., sig. a2^{rv}: 'prophetiam, id est, fidelem et sinceram scripturarum interpretationem, congruentem τῇ τῆς πίστεως ἀναλογίᾳ, inter caetera Spiritus sancti χαρίσματα excellere, et prorsus esse necessariam in hac tua militia adversus Sathanam, filium perditionis.'

[712] Castellio, 'Epistola nuncupatoria' (1546), sig. 2a^{r}.

[713] Grynaeus, 'Praefatio' (1569), sig. a5^{v}.

instead simply reiterated Christ's story as told in the Gospels.[714] Grynaeus placed his position, which was acceptable by the orthodoxy of any Protestant Church, decidedly within the ongoing debate regarding the Sibyls. He did so by stating that neither Moses, on whose authority Castellio had based his acceptance of the Sibyls, nor the Church Fathers, who, as we have seen, were crucial for the argument advanced by Birck and Castellio as well as by the Catholics, provided evidence to determine the antiquity of the Sibyls, Grynaeus's key argument to reject the Sibyls.[715] Conclusive as this argument may seem, Grynaeus did concede a sense of undecidedness when calling on Paul for the readers to decide for themselves.[716]

Despite this sceptical verdict, the Sibylline oracles were not excluded from this collection; indeed, they were provided in an up-to-date version, the best available at the time.[717] This may be explained either as a gesture of humility which held Grynaeus, as a rather young editor, back, or as evidence that the debate over the prophetic legitimacy of the Sibyls was still not fully resolved. At the same time, this volume was the first publication of the Sibylline oracles to challenge not only their value as divinely inspired prophecies, but also to elaborate doubts about the authenticity of this allegedly ancient pagan oracle. In that, it strongly disagreed with all three volumes of Sibylline prophecies that had come out from Oporinus's presses. Neither did any of the Reformation theologians utter such specific concerns about the genuine age of the oracles. After the initial outburst of enthusiasm about their value and the belief that they were dependable sources of pagan knowledge of the divine, now the Sibylline prophecies were subject to challenges of authenticity from their editor.

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[714] Ibid., sig. a5^{v}: 'Videntur enim ex Christianis quidam haec carmina Sibyllina in pretio habuisse et Ethnicis (quibus minus esse poterant suspecta) inculcasse, ut eos vel hac ratione Christo lucrifacerent. […] Atqui multa sunt in his Sibyllinis carminibus de Christo dicta, quae et illustriora sunt quibusdam locis Prophetarum, et historiam magis de exhibito Christo, quam de venturo vaticinium, sapiunt.'

[715] Ibid.: 'Sed tamen non videntur eam sapere antiquitatem, quam postulant ea tempora quibus vixerunt Sibyllae, quas ego ex lectione Mosi et sermone Patrum multa hausisse arbitror. Nec moveor eorum argumento qui ex Lactantii vetustate, colligunt, non esse recens aliquod scriptum.' See Castellio, 'Epistola' (1546), sigs a2^{rv}.

[716] Grynaeus, 'Praefatio' (1569), sig. a5^{v}: 'Unde colligo non esse vetustissimum hoc scriptum. Sed licet, ut loquitur Scriptura, unicuique abundare suo sensu in hac re [Romans 14:5].'

[717] Compared to Herold's volume, which in any case is the basis of Grynaeus's expanded compilation, the 1569 *Monumenta orthodoxographa* includes the bilingual version of the Sibylline prophecies that corresponds to Antimachus's emended text, originally printed in Castellio's 1555 edition, as can be seen, for example, in Grynaeus (ed.), ΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΑΣ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ, βιβλιος α. *Sibyllinorum oraculorum, liber primus*, in *Monumenta orthodoxographa* (1569), pp. 116–66 (120, 122); Castellio, 'Sibyllina oracula. ΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΑΣ ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ' (1555), pp. 32–259 (61, 66).

Soon these new arguments gained momentum. And so, in a new edition of the Sibylline oracles published in 1599 in Paris, the concerns about the historicity of the text were underpinned by a philological analysis provided by Johannes Opsopoeus. While practising as a physician in Paris and, from 1589, holding the chair of physiology in Heidelberg, the Reformed Opsopoeus also enjoyed some fame as a philologist and corresponded with some of the most famous humanists of his time, including Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553–1617) and Claude Dupuy (1545–1594).[718] It was only after Opsopoeus had died of the plague that in 1599 his edition of the Sibylline oracles was published. Since he had gained access to five manuscripts, his edition was a great improvement on Castellio's edition, which was based on only two manuscripts.[719] In his preface, Opsopoeus set out to determine whether the so-called Sibylline oracles had actually been written by the Sibyls and, if so, how many Sibyls there had been.[720] Like his fellow Protestants, he did not deny the existence of the Sibyls as women who had divined in the past.[721] Rather, he expounded the reasons why the Sibylline oracles were, at least in part, composed after the birth of Christ and therefore should be considered as forgeries. Aware that this argument might undermine the authority of the Church Fathers, Opsopoeus undertook to base his argument solely on criteria immanent in the text of the Sibylline oracles themselves. One of these criteria disproving the composition prior to the establishment of Christianity was that some of the Sibylline sayings showed clear signs of influence from the doctrines advanced by later Church Fathers.[722] Also, Opsopoeus remarked that the oracles were believed to have been revealed in a moment of frenzy, which had rendered them 'inelegant, obscure and mutilated' (*inconcinna, obscura, mutila*),

[718] For a synopsis of all his works, see 'Johannes Opsopoeus (Obsopäus, Obsopoeus, Opsopaeus; eigentlich: Koch)', in *Die Deutschen Humanisten. Dokumente zur Überlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by W. Kühlmann, V. Hartmann, S. El Kholi and B. Spiekermann, 5 vols, Turnhout 2005–16, III, pp. 143–300 (143). For his time in Heidelberg, see W. Kühlmann and J. Telle, 'Humanismus und Medizin an der Universität Heidelberg im 16. Jahrhundert', in *Semper Apertus. Sechshundert Jahre Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg 1386–1986*, ed. by W. Doerr et al., 6 vols, Berlin 1985, I, pp. 255–89 (271–77).

[719] See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, pp. 12–13.

[720] Johannes Opsopoeus, 'Praefatio ad lectorem', in Opsopoeus, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΙ (1599), sigs. ã iiij^{v}–[a vij^{v}] (ã iiij^{v}).

[721] In fact, to give as clear an account of the different numbers, names, origins, parents and oracles attributed to the Sibyls, Opsopoeus provided a synopsis of a number of Greek and Roman writers ('Τῶν Σιβυλλιακῶν εγκωμια, καὶ μαρτυρìαι ἐκ τῶν παλαιῶν συγγραφέων | Sibyllarum elogia et testimonia ex veteribus auctoribus', in Opsopoeus, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΙ (1599), pp. 56–143) as well as the *De Sibyllis et carminibus Sibyllinis liber* by the Italian historian Onofrio Panvinio (1529–1568), which had been published in 1588 by Jérôme Commelin (c.1550–1597) in Heidelberg (in Opsopoeus, ΣΙΒΥΛΛΙΑΚΩΙ ΧΡΗΣΜΩΙ (1599), pp. 1–55).

[722] Opsopoeus, 'Praefatio' (1599), sig. [ã v^{v}].

as Justin Martyr had said. Yet, there was a chronological progression structuring the oracles, which gave the impression of a more historical work than an abstruse and disorderly revelation of the divine.[723] Considering the possibility that the Sibylline oracles had indeed been written after the birth of Christ, Opsopoeus was not surprised, either, to find their predictions much clearer than the prophecies of the biblical prophets, nor that there were so few passages of the oracles in Homer, who according to the historian Diodoros Siculus of the first century BC, had been well known for having incorporated many Sibylline sayings.[724] Finally, there was a stark contrast in the description of the rulers that the Sibyls had allegedly foretold and those that they actually had not known. So, the account of the fifteen Roman Emperors resembled a compendium of Roman history, even if their names had been concealed in numerical enigmas so as to obscure them, as Opsopoeus believed. In contrast, future rulers and events unknown to the Sibyls were cryptographically disguised and remained unclear altogether. For Opsopoeus, this was evidence enough to discard the Sibylline oracles, even if he admitted that they might be regarded as a composite collection, consisting of texts written both before and after the birth of Christ.[725] More generally, however, he believed the corpus to be written by just one Sibyl, who was given different names thoughout the oracles.[726]

These two editions by Grynaeus and Opsopoeus both testify to a new level of distrust in the Sibyls as prophetesses and in their oracles, which was growing at the end of the sixteenth century. However, this does not mean that the debate about the Sibyls and their oracles halted or indeed came to an ultimate close. Rather, it was now shaped by an antiquarian interest intermingled with great ambivalence and credulity which persisted in areas where the Reformation Churches had established a strong base. For example, the Lutheran scholar Erasmus Schmid (1570–1637) delivered three lectures on the Sibyls and their prophetic legacy, which were published in 1618.[727] While the first two are concerned with the Sibyls themselves and the Roman tradition of the *libri Sibyllini*, the third deals with the 'the authority of the extant Sibylline books' (*De librorum Sibyllinorum, qui adhuc extant, autoritate*). By providing pre-Christian evidence to prove the existence of this corpus within

[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid., sig. [ã vj^{r}].
[725] Ibid., sigs [ã vj^{v}–ã vij^{v}].
[726] Ibid., sig. [ã vij^{rv}].
[727] Erasmus Schmid, *Sibyllina in tria* TMĦHMATA *distributa*, Wittenberg: Samuel Selfisch, 1618.

pagan culture, Schmid contested the view that it was a Christian fraud.[728] With respect to the approach taken in this argument, the choice of terminology is crucial. Rather than calling the corpus under discussion *Sibyllina oracula*, as this corpus had come to be known by Christians, the emphasis was placed on the tradition of the Roman state oracle, that is, the *libri Sibyllini*, understood as the root of this body of prophecies. By anchoring what were now called Sibylline oracles in their classical past, it is evident that Schmid's lecture examined them from an antiquarian and philological perspective without intending to identify their prophetic value for contemporary Christianity. Similarly, the chronicler Ioannes Temporarius, who is only known through his *Chronographicae demonstrationes* ('Chronological Demonstrations'), first published in 1596, held that the Sibylline oracles were of genuinely pagan origin, but composed by a Christian.[729] Also, more in the historical tradition of Flacius, Johannes Wolff (1537–1600) argued in his *Lectiones memorabiles* ('Memorable Lectures'), published in 1600, for the chastisement of the Catholic Church being prophesied in the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*.[730]

By contrast, among Catholics, the Sibylline oracles were not deemed fraudulent and, as we have seen, remained part of theological debates. One of the crucial topics regarding the Sibyls continued to be the question of how the Magi had learnt about Bethlehem as the place where Jesus would be born. After the Protestant Musculus speculated about this event even before the Sibylline oracles had been available, their publication provided promising evidence since Book 8 revealed that the Magi had venerated a wondrous star (475).[731] And so, both Franciscus Lucas Brugensis (1548–1619) and Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637) were convinced that the Magi had been led by the oracles of the Sibyls.[732] Yet, only in the Catholic Church did the appropriation of Sibylline knowledge enter mainstream theology beyond the

[728] Erasmus Schmid, 'De librorum Sibyllinorum, qui adhuc extant, autoritate', in Schmid, *Sibyllina in tria* TMĪHMATA *distributa* (1618), sigs E 5^{r}–[G 8^{r}]. See also Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, pp. 14–15.
[729] I. Temporarius, *Chronologicarum demonstrationum libri tres*, Frankfurt: Andreas Wechel, 1596, pp. 13–19; Grafton, 'Higher Criticism Ancient and Modern', p. 167.
[730] For a more detailed discussion of the *Lectiones memorabiles*, see A. Holdenried, '"De Oraculis Gentilium" (1673) and the "Sibilla Erithea Babilonica"', pp. 260–62; S. Schmolinsky, 'Im Angesicht der Endzeit? Positionen in den Lectiones memorabiles des Johannes Wolff (1600)', in Brandes and Schmieder, *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, pp. 369–417; S. Schmolinsky, 'Prophetia in der Bibliothek. Die "Lectiones memorabiles" des Johannes Wolff', in Bergdolt and Ludwig, *Zukunftsvoraussagen in der Renaissance*, pp. 89–130; M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 487–88.
[731] Musculus, *In evangelium Matthaeum commentarii* (1544), p. 11.
[732] See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, p. 15.

sixteenth century. In the regions where reverence for the Tiburtine Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend had once been the greatest, now Protestant orthodoxy prevailed, according to which the Sibylline oracles were Christian fabrications or, at least, interpolations dating from after the birth of Christ. The Sibyl was not an authoritative prophet of divine inspiration equal to that of the biblical prophets, but an obscure figure from classical antiquity.

Indeed, the advancement of new philological arguments against the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles coincided with wider sceptical currents challenging the authority that had once been attributed to the Sibyl(s), even among Catholics.[733] With the rise of scepticism, the Sibylline oracles also began to be perceived as a pliant corpus, which was vulnerable to any sort of interpretation by a variety of self-interested readers.[734] As has become apparent in the analysis above, certain pieces of information were accepted beyond the boundaries of confessional faiths, as in the case of specific geographical locations such as Mount Ararat by Castellio and Bibliander.[735] Again, other passages were wilfully employed to back the beliefs of each individual reader. For example, the Sibylline oracles were cited to emphasise the exceptional role which Mary was given in Christianity by Castellio and Bellarmine alike, each with his own understanding of Mary in mind.[736] This flexibility was the reason why Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) dismissed the Sibylline oracles. In his *Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde* ('Apology of Raymond Sebond'), the Sibyls served as a negative example for those whose 'words … cannot be made to say whatever you want, like the Sibyls' (*paroles, … on ne face dire tout ce qu'on voudra, comme aux Sibylles*).[737] Especially among Protestant scholars, the idea that the Sibylline oracles had been Christian forgeries gained much support. For

[733] For the contemporary case of the refutation of the authenticity of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by Isaac Causabon (1559–1614), see Grafton, *Defenders of the Text*, pp. 162–77.
[734] See Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, pp. 165–66. For the early scepticism, see Welti, 'Das Zwischenspiel zwischen Humanismus und Konfessionalismus', p. 27; Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*, pp. 3–63.
[735] Bibliander, *Temporum supputatio* (1558), pp. 42–43; Sebastian Castellio, 'In quinque libros Mosis annotationes', in Castellio, *Moses Latinus* (1546), pp. 441–531 (459).
[736] Castellio, 'Annotationes' (1546), p. 477; Bellarmine, *Controversiae* (1592), p. 129. For Mary in the Sibylline oracles, see J. B. Bauer, 'Die Messiassmutter in den Oracula Sibyllina', in *Marianum* XVIII.1, 1956, pp. 118–24.
[737] Michel de Montaigne, 'Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde', in Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by J. Balsamo, M. Magnien and C. Magnien-Simonin, Paris 2007, pp. 458–642 (622). For the translation, see Michel de Montaigne, 'Apology for Raymond Sebond', in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, transl. by D. M. Frame, Stanford 1958, pp. 318–457 (442). See also Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, p. 166.

the Reformed historian and philologist Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), it was clear that in order to bolster Christian truth, Christians had fabricated these prophecies, which, he claimed, were absent from pagan libraries.[738] What was crucial in the genesis of these new doubts regarding the Sibylline oracles was, however, the practice of textual criticism, which humanists had employed to debunk the authenticity of such texts as the *Donatio Constantini*.[739] The fascination with the Sibyl(s) originated as much from late medieval forms of lay devotion as from a humanist interest in bridging the gap between classical antiquity and Christianity by means of this corpus. Yet it was the new humanist philology that shifted the debate about the Sibyls onto questions of historicity and veracity rather than the potential theological import and relevance of this allegedly divine revelation. In fact, this change in the general controversy disqualified any engagement with the Sibyls on theological grounds. Any occupation with this corpus could be primarily antiquarian in nature, not theological. Unless recovered by means of new textual remnants conducive to their authenticity, the authority of the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses of pagan origin was undermined and lost.

Conclusion

Contrary to what was assumed by Birck and Castellio, the analysis above shows that, until it was discussed by Grynaeus and Opsopoeus in 1569 and 1599, the question regarding the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles would not exercise sixteenth-century theologians. Instead, each denominational faith developed its own distinct set of reasons against or in favour of an appropriation of the Sibylline oracles into their theological thought. What is striking on a more general note is that for the different Protestant camps, it was not so much the text of the Sibylline oracles that was of interest and therefore subject to scrutiny. Rather, the sheer existence of the oracles

[738] See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, pp. 13–14; H. J. de Jonge, 'Joseph Scaliger's Historical Criticism of the New Testament', *Novum Testamentum* XXXVIII.2, 1996, pp. 176–93 (178); for Scaliger's work, see A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger. A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols, Oxford 198–1993.
[739] See Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla e la polemica sulla donazione di Costantino*; Setz, *Lorenzo Vallas Schrift gegen die Konstantinische Schenkung*.

and the amplitude of their revelations confronted Protestant theologians with the need to respond to them and the Sibylline tradition as a whole. So, for Calvin and his followers, the pagan origin of the Sibyls was used to reject their prophecies, for it was not acceptable to give pagan authors, be they divinely inspired or not, greater authority than the books canonised in the Bible. As much as this was a theological argument to maintain the authority of Scripture, it was also one shaped by political considerations, just as the debate on the Sibyls was overshadowed by Castellio's confrontation with Calvin over the execution of the heretic Servetus. Not only did Calvin develop his rejection of the Sibyls as a response to the specific doctrinal issues which Servetus raised on the basis of the Sibylline oracles, but also Beza directly attacked Castellio for his consideration of Sibylline testimonies as a reliable prophecy. As for the Lutherans, they approached the Sibylline legacy more from a historical perspective. Of central importance to their argument was the fact that the Sibyls were not representatives of a pagan strand of revelation, but part of the Hebrew prophetic tradition canonised in the Bible. Both Peucer and Melanchthon argued that the Sibylline prophecies were revelations not in the sense that they had been inspired by and received from God, but as a corpus of teachings that subsumed the instructions Noah had received from God. While Peucer ascribed the carelessness of later generations to the legacy of the Sibyls being infiltrated by the devil, Melanchthon considered those Sibylline verses which agreed with the Decalogue to be genuinely ancient, that is, Noachian in origin. Regardless of the different nuances in their approach, neither Peucer's *De praecipuis divinationum generibus* nor Melanchthon's *Chronicon Carionis*, two of the most influential Protestant writings of the sixteenth century, justified any appropriation of the Sibylline oracles for exegetical studies. Nor did the Gnesio-Lutherans. Whereas Wigand rejected the Sibyls as forgers who had simply copied biblical prophecies, Flacius conceded that the Sibylline material he had unearthed did provide insight into future events, but not in the nature of God. For him, the Sibyls were prophets of the Reformation, not of the divine.

In effect, these argumentative strategies exhibited by Lutheran and Calvinist theologians were shaped by two crucial aspects. First, they helped to uphold the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. By integrating the Sibyls into the one prophetic tradition that Protestants accepted for canonisation, their oracles could be sidelined

and declared irrelevant without undermining this crucial principle of Protestantism. This argument made it possible to account for the great amount of knowledge the Sibylline oracles contained, while a tampering by the devil could be suggested, either on account of the long time that the Sibyls had spent in the realm of the pagans or the Sibyls' frenzy, a feature of the Sibylline tradition that had long disappeared from the debate on their prophecies. As a consequence, the study of the Sibylline oracles was neither encouraged nor pursued by any Calvinist or Lutheran theologian. Thanks to the dissemination of this position through influential works of sixteenth-century Protestantism, Protestants could hope that the Sibyls would soon be forgotten. The second trend inherent in the Reformation and decisive in the decline of the Sibylline tradition within Protestant thought was that of redefining the role of women in Christian society. The idea of regarding the Reformation as a movement that intellectualised and masculinised Christianity, I think, can be very fruitful in the analysis of the Sibylline lore and its reception in the sixteenth century.[740] Prior to the Reformation, the female sex of the Sibyls was mainly worthy of praise, as in the case of Abelard and, in the sixteenth century, of Agrippa. Whether or not gender played a role in the incorporation of the Sibyl(s) into the Marian cult from the fifteenth up to the mid sixteenth century, which was more driven by lay piety, cannot be ascertained from the sources studied here. What is evident however is that those reformers who did discuss the Sibyls reveal some misogynist prejudice on which they draw to either condemn the Sibyls or to hamper the unimpeded study of their revelations.

In the light of this rejection of the Sibyls as prophets inspired by God and the misogynist attitudes shaping the Calvinist and Lutheran attitudes, it is not surprising that we have no record of any Sibylline imagery being produced for Lutheran sacred spaces – given its iconoclast stance, Calvinism can silently be excluded from these considerations. As for Lutheran territories, it took almost a hundred years for new depictions of Sibyls to be produced, this time in the heartland of Lutheranism, the electorate of Saxony. What is more, Sibylline images were now employed in contexts devoid of any devotional or otherwise religious implications. One such example can be found in the Berg- und Lusthaus Hoflößnitz, a summer house built by the Saxon elector Johann Georg I (1585–1656) and his successor, Johann Georg II (1613–1680). The Sibyls feature in the pictorial programme which the court painters

[740] See Petry, *Mystical Theology of Postel*, pp. 151–58.

Christian Schiebling (1603–1663) and Centurio Wiebel (1616–1684) created to embellish the state rooms of the Saxon Electress.[741] The walls of the reception room display in their lower part eight puttos representing the seven liberal arts and the art of 'painting' (*Malerei*).[742] On the upper part, there are twelve Sibyls depicted in grisaille. Their busts rest on a pedastal and a white plinth bearing their names in French.[743] As a motif for such representations in state homes, the Sibyls were rather unusual, a fact that has led scholars to the conclusion that they served as an allusion to the electresses' names Magdalene Sibylle of Prussia (1586–1659) and Magdalene Sibylle of Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1612–1687).[744] Besides, since the Sibyls complemented a group of amazons, these figures are thought to have been forming a programme of strong women, as was not untypical in contemporary French literature.[745] In other words, the Sibyls were no longer representations of the universality of God's message, or a supporting device of Marian worship, nor had they been translated into any other form of Lutheran piety. What this example shows, by contrast, is that they came to be used as representatives of strong females of the past. In no way did the Sibyls retain any relevance for contemporary pious practices. At best, the interest in them can be described as antiquarian.

In contrast to the approach pursued in Geneva, Wittenberg and Magdeburg, sixteent-century Zurich was the one Reformation centre that remained interested in the Sibylline oracles from a theological perspective. Unlike Castellio, who appropriated the Sibylline oracles for a host of exegetical issues, both Bullinger and Bibliander as the leading figures of the Zurich Church limited their use of Sibylline testimonies to apocalyptic matters, the realm which since the Church Fathers was intrinsically linked to this tradition. In line with this appreciation of the Sibylline oracles, neither Musculus nor Vermigli condemned the Sibyls in the same way as

[741] Although the building was finished in about 1650, the interior paintings took another six years until their completion. See S. Herz, '"Zur Lust gantz Fürstlich ausgezieret." Die Innenräume des Berg- und Lusthauses: Nutzung, Ausstattung und ikonographisches Programm', in *600 Jahre Hoflößnitz. Historische Weingutanlage*, ed. by H. Magirius, Dresden 2001, pp. 47–72 (47–52).
[742] The ninth putto appears to be a later addition with no specific iconographic meaning required by the need to fill the gap on the wall left by the moved oven. See Herz, '"Zur Lust gantz Fürstlich ausgezieret"', p. 68.
[743] See F. Schmidt, 'Sibyllendarstellungen in der Hoflößnitz. Ein ikonographischer Beitrag zu den Räumen der Kurfürstin', in Magirius, *600 Jahre Hoflößnitz*, pp. 90–94 (94).
[744] See Herz, '"Zur Lust gantz Fürstlich ausgezieret"', p. 70.
[745] See Schmidt, 'Sibyllendarstellungen in der Hoflößnitz', p. 94; Herz, '"Zur Lust gantz Fürstlich ausgezieret"', p. 70. For this genre, see I. Maclean, *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in French Literature 1610–1652*, Oxford 1977, pp. 64–87.

Calvin had done. Rather, they dealt with their legacy in response to specifc issues raised by other theologians or as a polemical device in tracts intended for a lay audience. In general, this comparatively moderate attitude towards the Sibylline oracles isolated the Zurich Church increasingly from the other Protestant Churches, in particular, that in Geneva, and brought it closer to heretical thinkers such as Castellio and Postel. So, when Bibliander, the driving force behind the study of apocryphal material in Zurich, became untenable for other highly controversial opinions, the interest in the Sibylline oracles in Zurich faded away, too. Generally, the 1560s marked a shift in the perspective on the Sibylline tradition and the Sibylline oracles in particular. With the edition of the Sibylline oracles by Grynaeus in 1569, the first doubts about the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles as the main body of Sibylline prophecies were voiced. The first systematic challenge to the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles was then composed in 1599 by the Opsopoeus. He had obtained clear philological evidence that some of the oracles had been composed after Christianity had emerged. The knowledge of the interpolated nature of the Sibylline oracles made any occupation with them untenable for theology.

For the Catholics, the case was different. For them, the definition of what could be considered as a divine revelation was much broader even after the Council of Trent had devised new criteria to define scriptures. In fact, Sixtus of Siena was able to bestow the apostolic approval necessary for the acceptance of any apocryphal material onto the oracles by way of a quotation attributed to Paul in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (VI.V.43.1). This allowed him and other Catholic theologians to incorporate the Sibylline oracles into their theology, as, for example, Bellarmine did. The Sibylline prophecies remained part of Catholic belief and doctrine. In addition to the musical representation discussed above, there are numerous examples of Sibyl series being produced, including in print and in sacred spaces.[746]

Yet, it cannot be claimed that the Catholics maintained a unaltered continuity in the veneration of the Sibyl throughout the sixteenth century. As for the *ara coeli* legend, once so popular, there was still no evidence for any ancient pedigree. Giraldi's claim that it could only be a 'fictitious invention' (*commentitia*) appeared

[746] For an example, see E. Buron, 'Oracles humanistes et rumeurs de la cour. "Sibyllarum duodecim oraclua" de Jean Rabel, Jean Darot et Claude Binet (1586)', in Bouquet and Morzadec, *La sibylle*, pp. 241–54.

confirmed by the lack of written evidence in the entirety of the oracles.[747] Indeed, from a intellectual point of view, scholars appear to have lost interest in this particular tradition, with no discussion of it in the debate about Sibylline revelations and their insights. In this regard, it is also noteworthy that new images of this legend ceased to be produced for devotional purposes after the 1550s. In turn, the few images that were produced of the *ara coeli* legend clearly served other purposes. So, for example, Antoine Caron (1521–1599) used the narrative in a painting from the late 1570s, in order to glorify the French kings.[748] The scene of the Sibyl revealing Augustus the Marian apparition was set in a theatrical scene on the banks of the Seine in what seems to be contemporary Paris. The French capital was heavily decorated with temporary triumphal archs, columns and other architectural features contemporaneously used to stage the sumptuous entrées of the last Valois kings. Prominent were also landmarks of Rome, such as the aqueduct in the background, which suggests an identification of contemporary Paris with Imperial Rome, as was done on the occasion of the entrée celebrating the wedding of Charles IX (1550–1574) and Elisabeth of Austria (1554–1592) in 1571 (see fig. 14).[749] The figure representing Augustus here clearly resembles Charles IX. From the sumptuousness of the entire scene and the composition of the mannerist painting with the Marian apparition moved away from the centre of the piece, it is clear that this image breaks with the earlier representations of the *ara coeli* legend. It is not an exaltation of Mary, but an idealisation of France and its ruling house of Valois as the successors of ancient Rome. Moreover, rather than choosing any equivalent pagan motive to construct this succession, as similarly the Spanish King Philip II (1527–1598) would do by personifying himself as the pagan god Apollo, the choice of this Christian narrative appears deliberate insofar as it alluded to the understanding of the French monarch as the most Christian king, a title which since Charles VII (1403–1461) was hereditary.[750] In addition, the Sibylline motif feeds not only into the previously strong veneration of the Sibyl in France, but also could be understood as an allusion to Joan of Arc (1412–1431), of whom there is evidence dating from 1429 that

[747] Giraldi, *Historiae poetarum* (1545), p. 255.
[748] This painting was ascribed to Caron in the 1930s by Gustave Lebel in his article 'Un tableaux d'Anoine Caron. L'Empereur Auguste et la Sibylle de Tibur', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* XVIII, 1937, pp. 20–37.
[749] For this identifaction, see F. A. Yates, 'Antoine Caron's Paintings for Triumphal Arches', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institutes* XIV, 1951, pp. 133–34 (133); J. Prevosteau, *Entrée de Charles IX à Paris le 6 Mars 1571*, Paris 1858, p. 19.
[750] See Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas*, pp. 223–25.

suggests her identifaction as a Sibyl.[751] In this regard the fondness for the Sibylline tradition which Frances Yates attested to Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589), the queen mother, becomes less relevant to the image of the glorification of France and her kings as evoked by these symbols of strength, piety and tradition.[752]

Caron's depiction of the *ara coeli* legend reveals new manners of expressing the reverence held for the *ara coeli* legend, in particular, and the Sibyls, more generally. Another example of this motif being employed for purposes other than devotional is the depiction by Paris Bordone (1500–1571), which presumably was created during his stay in Augsburg in 1538–1540. Here, the moment is captured when the Tiburtine Sibyl revealed the celestial apparition of Mary, in order to create a sumptuous *veduta architettonica* painting (see fig. 15). As argued by Tamara Formicheva, this artwork is not a depiction of the *ara coeli* legend, but a unique example of an abstract architectural perspective, for which the legend offered nothing but a narrative framework.[753] As a motif for the arts, the legend retained some appeal to those seeking to bestow a sense of antiquity upon the topic chosen to be depicted. By contrast, by the second half of the sixteenth century, the formerly clear devotional element of this tradition appears to have receded. No later exemplars from after the 1550s are known to have survived or indeed ever existed.

To identify the causes leading to the decline of the legend, the changes in Marian devotion into which the legend had been completely absorbed offer some potential explanations. It is well-established that after the Council of Trent Catholic ecclesiasts sought to focus on Mary's glorification and invocation in order to lessen the focus on her intercessory role.[754] Narratives highlighting exactly this, among which the *ara coeli* legend has to be reckoned, slowly disappeared from the new sacred art created in the sixteenth century. The ability to hightlight the Virgin's mediating role in human salvation was no longer relevant to Catholic devotion, and the legend therefore lost its relevance for worshippers and artists alike. The different local forms of Marian devotion however affected the pace of this gradual shift. Its latest example

[751] See Raybould, *Sibyl Series*, pp. 64–65.
[752] See Yates, 'Antoine Caron's Paintings for Triumphal Arches', p. 133; J. Ehrmann, *Antoine Caron. Peintre des fêtes et des massacres*, Paris 1986, pp. 124–34.
[753] See T. Formicheva, 'An Architectural Perspective by Paris Bordone', *The Burlington Magazine* CXIII 1971, pp. 152, 154–55.
[754] See Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 109, 179–83.

of this iconography being installed in a liturgical space is that of the Church of the Teutonic Order in Siersdorf in the Rhineland. On the arch of the rood screen there is a Marian figure with the Tiburtine Sibyl and Augustus on either side of her. Simple in its artistic execution, this set of figures, Neu argues, was commissioned by the Teutonic Knight Johann of Ghoir (fl.1539–1554).[755] With Johann of Ghoir's previous activities in Ramersdorf in the Rhineland, we have reason to believe that his beliefs were steeped in the prolonged Marian devotion in late medieval fashion in Cologne, illustrated by Heal, and that the *ara coeli* representation rooted in this very milieu and its continued reverence of Mary as the divine intercessor.[756]

[755] See Neu, *Der Lettnerbogen in Siersdorf*, [pp. 4–5].
[756] See Heal, *The Cult of the Virign Mary*, pp. 207–61.

Conclusion

In the early eighteenth century, a new parlour game emerged, for which we have evidence from the Academy of the Apatisti in Florence. A person was chosen at random from those participating in the game to sit in the chair of office. On either side another member of the Academy was seated. The person in the middle was then given a question, for example: 'why do women weep more often and more easily than men?' To this, the person in the chair of office gave a one-word answer, which those seated next to him had to interpret by elaborating the matter as eruditely as possible. This game was called *Sibilla* or *Sibillone*.[757] And so, the person in the middle, divining as it were a one-word oracle, was mimicking a Sibyl. Even though temporarily distant from the time under scrutiny in this study, this rather strange game illustrates what had become of the Sibyl in the early eighteenth century: a laughing stock.

This study has traced the emergence of the historical and cultural conditions that determined this outcome. By reconstructing the *Nachleben* of the Sibyls in terms of their authority and the meanings attributed to them in both belief and doctrine, a transformation has become evident from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. In the mid fifteenth century, the Sibyls were commonly accepted as prophetic authorities. Their prestige was not tainted by any doubts concerning their authentic nature. In fact, mutliple traditions including medieval fabrications, such as the *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, the 'Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl' and the *ara coeli* legend, had merged with the ancient legacy and the patristic appropriation of Sibylline prophecies to form a rich and variegated lore whose origins were largely forgotten and obscured. From a theological point of view, a bipartite model of revelation was devised according to which the Sibyls were the prophets through whom God had chosen to reveal Himself to the pagans, just as He had done with the canonical prophets of the Bible and the Jewish people. Also, as apparent in the multiple images in sacred spaces produced in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Sibylline lore enjoyed great popularity especially with audiences of a lesser theological training. And as the Tiburtine Sibyl of the *ara coeli* legend was absorbed

[757] See F. A. Yates, 'The Italian Academies', in F. A. Yates, *Collected Essays*, 2 vols, London 1983, pp. 6–29 (24).

into strong currents of late medieval Marian devotion, new meanings beyond the apocalypticism commonly ascribed to it were associated with this particular Sibylline tradition. This process of reformulating and nurturing Sibylline reverence coincided with and, as far as the great lay participation in these practices is concerned, resembled the intensified religious activities of the *devotio moderna* with its call for a renewal of piety as advanced primarily by the laity. Even the concerns about the untaintedness of the Sibylline prophecies by some humanist scholars like Erasmus and Giraldi did little to prevent any consolidation of the legacy of the Sibyls. In fact, after the Council of Trent had established clear principles for the definition and selection of Scriptures, Catholic theologians endeavoured to maintain the authority of the Sibyls. In doing so, they even went so far as to manipulate patristic sources and relied on Pauline material that was not canonical in the Bible. This way, the Sibyls entered doctrinal writings of such gravitas as the *Bibliotheca sancta* by Sixtus of Siena and the *Controversiae* by Bellarmine. By contrast, from the mid sixteenth century there is little evidence to prove a continued veneration of the Sibyls beyond the theological debate. Even in the case of the popular *ara coeli*, in western and central Europe north of the Alps, new images ceased to be produced for religious spaces, but instead served to help formulate a princely glorification or to allow to showcase an artist's mastership in the art of perspective. From a devotional perspective, the Sibyl(s) appear to have lost their appeal.

This slow decline in popularity with wider audiences is also evident in Protestant territories. The once so successful *Zwölff Sibyllen Weissagung* still appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century and beyond, albeit less frequently, but it remained one of the few pieces of evidence that indicate a continued religious interest in the lore at that time.[758] As for Protestantism more generally, the legend's loss of significance to the pious was coupled with a rejection of any appropriation or incorporation of Sibylline material into both Calvinist and Lutheran thought. Since its very emergence, representatives of Lutheranism had been cautious in their dealings with the Sibyls. Yet, at no time was the authority or authenticity of the Sibyls and their prophecies challenged. While Luther declared them to be too

[758] *Zwölff Sibyllen weissagungen* ([1550]; 1565; [c.1575]; 1594; 1600; [1620]; 1637; 1676; [1700]). As Green has shown, the amount of apocalyptic prints including those dealing with Sibylline prophecies declined significantly in the second half of the sixteenth century. See Green, *Printing and Prophecy*, pp. 155–203.

uncertain to be reliable, after the publication of the Sibylline oracles in 1545, Melanchthon and Peucer devised a sophisticated historical argument to deny the Sibyls any relevance to contemporary theology. They did acknowledge the existence of the Sibyl as a female prophet in the age of Noah, but did not admit her to be another branch of revelation as in the bipartite model of revelation that had been prevalent since early Christianity. Rather, the Sibyls were incorporated in the revelatory tradition of the Bible. Their prophecies were merely a compilation of teachings and instructions given to Noah, which had then been transmitted to the Sibyls and, as they were passed down to future generations, possibly tainted by demonic forces. Even if the Gnesio-Lutherans did not follow this exact line of argument, Wigand, too, rejected the significance of any Sibylline prophecies. An exception might be the historian Flacius, who fostered certain materials of some Sibylline origin, which he incorporated into his construction of the Reformation as a historical period. Even this use, however, bore no explicit theological implications, but reflected an understanding of the Sibyls as diviners of future events only. By and large, Lutherans considered the Sibyls no longer as divinely inspired prophets, but found other ways of harnessing their authority of the Sibyls. The reaction in Calvinist Geneva was much fiercer. As the clear referencing in the works dealing with the Sibyls reveals, the arguments against any employment of Sibylline material was entangled with Calvin's conflict with Castellio, the editor of the Sibylline oracles and a vehement critic of Calvin's ruthless practices of enforcing conformity in belief and worship. In Geneva, the Sibyls were not considered part of any Christian theology, since the acceptance of their prophetic abilities would lead to the erosion of God's authority.

Eventually, these rejections of the Sibylline lore seem to have prompted a re-evaluation of the Sibylline oracles as a body of prophetic sources. If the authority of the Sibyls was recognised up to a point in the previous theolgical debate, in the new editions of 1569 and 1599 the authenticity of the Sibylline oracles came under attack. First, Grynaeus expressed his doubts about the age of the oracles. Even if this was the only concern uttered, and the final verdict regarding the trustworthiness and reliability of the oracles was left to the readers, Grynaeus utlimately challenged their authenticity, for if they had indeed been composed after the birth of Christ, no divine inspiration was needed to tell of his life, passion and resurrection and other key

Christian beliefs. Yet, implicit as these conclusions were, Opsopoeus must be considered the first to provide a systematic refutation of the oracles' authenticity. On philological grounds, he was able to ascertain that the whole or, at least, parts of them had been composed after the birth of Jesus. Although unwilling to challenge patristic conclusions that the Sibyls had been Christian prophets of pagan origin, the method of textual criticism employed by Opsopoeus was unmistakably clear in their verdict about the Sibyls. As an interpolation or an outright counterfeit prophecy, the Sibylline oracles could have no relevance to theological considerations, but could only be of antiquarian interest.

However, that does not mean that there was no interest in the Sibylline oracles from a theological point of view. In fact, when the Sibylline oracles were first published in 1545, they were hailed by the Lutheran Birck as true prophecies. Nonetheless, it was above all more liberal and heterodox divines who fully appropriated the Sibyls for theological purposes. A case in point is Castellio. In the annotations to his Latin Bible translation, the Sibylline oracles featured alongside the prophetic authorities of the Old Testament, just as if they deserved the same attention. Indeed, Castellio's reading of the creation of the world was informed by the Sibylline oracles, as was his view regarding which of the divine figures had appeared to mankind. Since neither his thought nor that of any other unorthodox thinker was carried on by later generations to form a long-lasting intellectual legacy as far as their exegetical strategies are concerned, the approaches analysed remained isolated. Not as insular, but similarly short-lived was the influence which Bibliander's approach exerted on the Reformed Church in Zurich. Even before the publication of the Sibylline oracles in 1545, the likes of Zwingli and Bullinger had accepted the bipartite model of revelation and the prophetic authority of the Sibyls. As the oracles were made available, Bullinger had used the corpus to obtain further material to corroborate his views on the Book of Revelation. This approach of incorporating specific information or arguments strongly resembled that of Bibliander. He, too, had used the prophetic insights of the Sibyls, especially their apocalyptic scenarios, to bolster his warnings against the threat of the Ottoman Empire and to anchor his notion of one universal religion that had been revealed to mankind by various different kinds of prophets, in his historical work. Yet, when Bibliander was forced to leave his influential position at the *Schola Tigurina*, the

attitude towards the Sibylline tradition was tarnished. Indeed, the decision not to rely on Sibylline material soon took hold in Zurich. The medieval belief in the Sibyls as a Christian prophet of pagan origin was extinguished and made way for new early modern forms of belief and dogma.

The results of this dissertation have shown a shift in the attitudes towards the prophetic figure of the Sibyls. Over the course of the sixteenth century, representatives and, as it seems, adherents of all streams of the Reformation ceased to regard them as Christian prophets of pagan origin and, instead, dealt with their legacy more cautiously and without the intention of seeking any bearing on contemporary Christianity. On the other hand, Catholics maintained their interest in the Sibyls as prophetic authorities, at least until the end of the sixteenth century. As much as this dissertation is a first attempt to shed some needed light on the reception of the different Sibylline traditions in the early modern period, further investigations are needed especially with regard to the Catholic world. Much remains to be said about how, in Spain and on the Italian peninsula, the two strongholds of Catholicism, both excluded from this study, Sibylline beliefs developed and how these regions mutually influenced the area studied here. How, for example, did Catholic theologians react to the challenges of the oracles' authenticity just after they themselves had engrained their authority in Catholic doctrine? Is the parlour game mentioned above a good indicator of general attitudes or to be seen as an exception? And, if the answer is the former, how did the Sibyls come to have lost their appeal in Catholic territories? Also, the comparison with the Protestant world suggests that misogynist attitudes prevalent among the reformers played some role in condemning the Sibylline tradition from a theological point of view. To determine the influence which these new gender dynamics had on other female prophetic authorities such as Bridget of Sweden or Mechthild of Magdeburg would certainly help to contextualise the development in Sibylline beliefs. Furthermore, while this study is based on both textual sources and artistic testimonies, the sacred plays are only one genre which, despite its intersectional position between different layers of society, has not been considered to the extent it deserves. In particular, the inclusion of such genres would allow us to extend the research temporally further into the Middle Ages and in terms of the different Sibylline traditions studied. For, despite its importance for the Sibylline legacy, the acrostic *Iudicii signum* has not received the scholarly attention

necessary to understand its place in medieval and, possibly, early modern liturgy. With these limitations, this study can only be the foundation for further investigations into the Sibylline tradition in medieval and early modern Europe. It provides a comprehensive explanation for the shift that occurred in the perception of the Sibyl, who from being a prophetic authority became a pagan figure who had claimed and was believed to have been a prophetess.

Appendix I: Images

Figure 1: Hans Memling, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1480, Sint-Janshospital, Bruges.

Figure 2: anonymous, *Saturn, the Cumaean Sibyl and the Virgin with Child*, early 1470s, in Heitz, *Oracula Sibyllina* (1903), fol. A^{r}.

Figure 3: Rogier van der Weyden, *Bladelin altarpiece*, c.1450, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Figure 4: anonymous, *Marian altarpiece*, c.1450–1500, Falsterbo, St Gertrud Church.

Figure 5: Nicolas Spierinc, *Annunciation with John of Patmos, and the* ara coeli *legend*, 1486, in BL Harley MS 2943, fols 17^{v}–18^{r}.

Figure 6: Henrick Douwerman, *Seven Sorrows Retable*, 1518–1521, St Nicolai Church, Kalkar.

Figure 7: Henrick Douwerman, *Marian altarpiece*, c.1535, Cathedral, Xanten.

Figure 8: Henrick Douwerman, *Marian altarpiece*, c.1535, Cathedral, Xanten.

Figure 9: Master of the Holy Blood, *Marian altarpiece with the* ara coeli *legend and John of Patmos*, c.1524, Church of St James, Bruges.

Figure 10: anonymous, ara coeli *legend*, 1481, in Barbieri, *Discordantiae* (1481), [fol. 21^{r}].

Figure 11: anonymous, *Assault on Constantinople*, in Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), [sig. B 1^{r}].

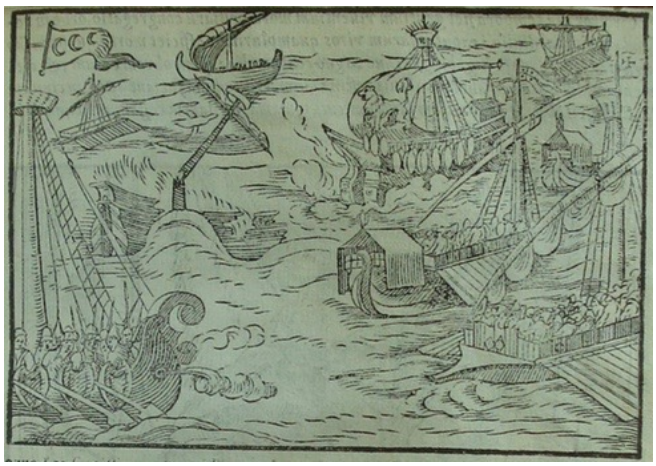

Figure 12: anonymous, *Sea battle*, in Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), [sig. B 1^{r}].

Figure 13: anonymous, *Pope Pius V*, in Garet, *Verum et celebre Sibyllae Erythraeae vaticinium* (1570), [sig. B 1^{v}].

Figure 14: Antoine Caron, ara coeli *legend*, late 1570s, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 15: Paris Bordone, ara coeli *legend*, 1538–1540, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

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