

## The Woman in the Wilderness

### Johannes Kelpius

In 1895 self-taught historian Julius Fredrich Sachse published what is still considered the definitive work on the subject of Johannes Kelpius and *The Woman in the Wilderness*, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*.

This work kept extant important and unique information on the subject and has been used by virtually all American writers and researchers since then. Unfortunately, some of the information in this work has been proven to be incorrect.

The most significant error made was the placement of the birthdate of Kelpius as 1673—a date which suggested the young man received his masters degree at age 16 and led his band of spiritual seekers to America at age 20.

Evidence which had been known for centuries in Germany proves that Kelpius was actually born in 1667, giving him a post-graduate degree at 22 and leadership at 26. Happily, it also means that Kelpius lived to be 41, not 35 as American researchers and scholars have stated for well over a hundred years.

This information, as well as other newly discovered information on the early life of Kelpius, awaits academic publication. Please follow the links on the left to informative material, including a transcription of a newly discovered (to the West) document written by the student Kelpius while still in Transylvania.

At the time of writing *The Woman in the Wilderness*, all material extant in the U.S. placed Kelpius' birth at 1673 and that was the date used in the novel.

*The photo shows a detail of painting of Kelpius that has been attributed to his contemporary and friend, Christopher Witt*



What the books will not communicate when it comes to the mystics in America is the following:

In 1683, the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness was established. Curtis and his followers focused on ancient wisdom, esoteric practices, and the teachings of Jesus in the Americas.

Curtis assumed the identity of Johannes Kelpius, a name crafted by combining elements of his own name and the name of Johannes Kepler.

In 1694, Curtis, now known as Johannes Kelpius, guided the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness to Pennsylvania. However the members of the Society failed to understand what Curtis wanted, which was ultimately to lead the transformation of the Society into the Zionistic Brotherhood.

In 1694, Curtis, ended the Woman in the Wilderness transforming it into the Zionistic Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood's teachings, rituals, and practices attracted people, drawn to the allure of spiritual enlightenment and the transformative power of the psychedelic experiences facilitated by Curtis.

## lifeinthemix

However, as the Brotherhood grew and evolved, Curtis erected a tombstone bearing the name Johannes Kelpius. Curtis revealed the truth to selected members of the Brotherhood, and named these the masters of the Zionistic Brotherhood for the years to come.

During the late 17th, century and into the early 18th, century, the Zionistic Brotherhood attracted numerous seekers of truth who were captivated by their mystical teachings, communal lifestyle, and the promise of spiritual enlightenment.

In Havenwood, the Brotherhood established a close-knit community under the guidance of Mayor Tobias Reynolds. Within the Brotherhood, there were notable individuals who played key roles in nurturing the community's growth. Among them was Lucian Sinclair, a adept alchemist.

Around 1733, The Church sought to solidify its control over the region, they targeted the Brotherhood, the Church orchestrated a raid on Havenwood. the Church authorities captured ten members of the Brotherhood and their skins were forcibly removed as a grim symbol of the Church's dominance and their disdain for magic.

Lucian Sinclair launched a daring assault on Father William Harrington and his armed retinue. However, Lucian found himself beset by a storm of Bullets, his body wracked with pain and his life was taken away.

In the following years, the Zionistic Brotherhood entered a period of clandestine resistance, Led by Curtis and Mayor Alexander Bradford, the surviving members devoted themselves to rebuilding their community. They established hidden sanctuaries, Intricate codes and clandestine rituals became their shield against the Church's relentless hunt.

As the 18th century unfolded, the Zionistic Brotherhood transcended the confines of Pennsylvania, their clandestine network spanning continents and connecting kindred souls.

In the 20th century, Harvey Spencer Lewis, united two Illuminati circles and the Zionistic Brotherhood and merged them into a new entity: the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (AMORC).

# The Fictional Kelpius

## 1. Wieland: The Transformation

Although stories and legends of Kelpius and his community circulated around Germantown and the Philadelphia area possibly since the group arrived in America, the first known piece of literature influenced by the story is, significantly, called "one of the first American novels."

According to Wikipedia, the author, "Charles Brockden Brown (1771 - 1810), is generally regarded by scholars as the most ambitious and accomplished US novelist before James Fenimore Cooper. He is the most frequently studied and republished practitioner of "the early American novel," or the US novel between 1789 and roughly 1820...a crucial figure in US literature and culture of the 1790s and 1800s, and a significant public intellectual in the wider Atlantic print culture and public sphere of the era of the French Revolution. "



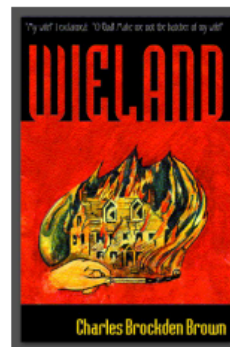
According to Evert Jan van Leeuwen, writing in *The European Journal of American Studies*, Brown's landmark novel, *Wieland* (1798), was at least partially inspired by the local legends of Kelpius.

"Brown's imagination may also have been fuelled by legends of Johannes Kelpius' 'renowned group of 'Saxon 'radical pietists,' who settled in Pennsylvania in the seventeenth century and dabbled in the mystical doctrines of Jacob Boehme, Jewish Cabbala and Rosicrucian philosophy. Kafer's research suggests that Brown's great-grandparents 'almost certainly came into contact with the Hermits of the Wissahickon ' (Kafer 114-115). In the context of the legends surrounding the hermetic order of Kelpius, Carwin's flight from home into the wilderness and his subsequent development of preternatural powers becomes much less a product of Brown's gothic imagination and more the product of a writer attuned to the historical legends of his native region. Kelpius and his group were religious millenarians, who settled in Pennsylvania with the conviction that it was there that the second-coming would take place and where a Christian Utopia on earth could be established. Carwin's curiosity for secret knowledge, his interest in the future and attraction to utopian schemes seem like the products of Brown's own visionary mind as well as the stories circulating in Brown's culture about Pennsylvania's immediate history. "

*Evert Jan van Leeuwen: "Though Hermes never taught thee": The Anti-Patriarchal Tendency of Charles Brockden Brown's Mercurial Outcast Carwin, the Biloquist*

The Invisible College Press, which sells a contemporary publication of the 1798 novel, describes the novels in this way:

"A shadow falls over the Enlightenment when a stranger pays a visit in this tale of one family's slide down the slippery slope of reality. Featuring spontaneous combustion, demonic ventriloquism, murder and madness, *Wieland* offers a wealth of high weirdness for fans of the paranormal. "



[Read the first chapter.](#)

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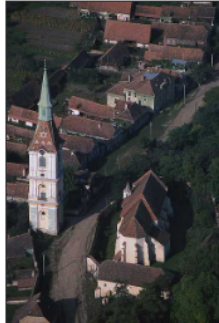
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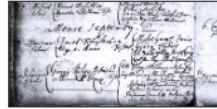
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## Kelpius' Transylvania

Johannes Kelpius was born in September 1667 in a small town in Transylvania, which was then occupied mainly by people of German ancestry. The town, today known as Daia in Romania, was then called Denndorf by the German inhabitants. Kelpius attended school in the nearby larger town of Sighisoara, then called Shassburg. The area has a very long history of settlement, with archeological artifacts dating back nearly to 5,000 BC. Today, Sighisoara is known as one of the best preserved medieval towns in Europe. It boasts being the birthplace of the infamous Vlad the Impaler, the inspiration for Bram Stoker's Dracula.



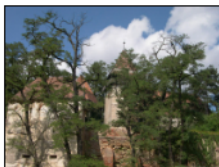
The church where Kelpius' father was pastor towers over Daia. Enlarge to see the six-pointed star on the steeple.



Kelpius' birth record, showing his immediate ancestors and date of birth in September 1667 (enlarge to view details)



One of the many tunnels in Sighisoara



The museum of history



## lifeinthemix

Johannes Kelpius was born Johann Kelp in Transylvania in 1667, near the village of Sighisoara, the birthplace of the infamous Vlad the Impaler (the inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). After the death of his father in 1684, Johann was sent by three patrons to complete his education at Bavaria's University of Altdorf, once one of Europe's most respected institutions.

At the university, Kelp's name was Latinized according to the custom of scholars of his day. By the age of 22, Kelpius graduated with a masters degree in liberal arts and philosophy. It is thought that while at the university he became acquainted with the Pietist religious movement. Pietism was initially a reaction against the formalism of orthodox Lutheranism, but spread to include a wide range of esoteric (and heretical) Christian philosophies.

One of the most charismatic figures in German Pietism was Johann Jacob Zimmerman, a brilliant mathematician, astronomer, and cleric. Zimmerman had been dismissed from his position as a Lutheran minister for preaching that the Lutheran Church was the Anti-Christ. In the years following his dismissal and subsequent exile, Zimmerman formed a small group named The Chapter of Perfection. This group was composed mostly of young men like Kelpius (who was then barely twenty years old). Among the beliefs of this group was a conviction that a new spiritual age was dawning—their version of the 1,000 year rule of the returned Christ—and that it was necessary to prepare themselves and others for its arrival. This conviction was reinforced by Zimmerman's unquestionable skill as an astronomer and his assertion that this new age was foretold in the heavens.

Probably around 1692, the Chapter of Perfection received an anonymous offer of free land in Pennsylvania and free passage there. America was regarded by the young Pietists to be a land untainted by the sins of European decadence, and the ordained place to await the final drama of mankind.

In August of 1693, near the time the group was about to depart for America, Zimmerman died, leaving the young Kelpius as the group's spiritual leader. Kelpius was determined to complete Zimmerman's mission, and after a remarkable sea voyage, the group arrived in the infant city of Philadelphia. Eventually Kelpius led his group to a ridge above the Wissahickon gorge, one of the oldest geologic formations in North America. There along the fortieth parallel, Kelpius constructed a forty-foot square tabernacle, forty in his esoteric philosophy being a number of the highest mystical significance.



Portrait of kelpius

## lifeinthemix

Kelpius and his comrades shared the benefits of their liberal education with the local settlers and served as teachers, healers, religious leaders, lawyers, philosophers, and scientists. Perhaps to avoid adding to the widespread conflict among the many religious sects that flourished at the time, Kelpius's community had no special name or tenets. They were often referred to collectively as "The Woman in the Wilderness," likely in reference to a passage in the Biblical book of Revelation, but perhaps as a code phrase understood only by the initiated.

For about ten years the community flourished, but the inherent conflict between a desire for spiritual seclusion and a desire to serve their fellow man proved to undermine their focus. Many of the members left and joined the burgeoning population of nearby Germantown. Kelpius himself became ill with tuberculosis and slowly declined in health. There is no official record of his death, but he is thought to have died in 1708 at the age of 41.

Kelpius left behind a collection of original hymns, a journal that includes many of his correspondences, and the authorship of a book on prayer and meditation. A remarkable account recorded about twenty years after his death, suggests that Kelpius had possessed the legendary Philosophers' Stone, the mythical element that can cure all human ills. Having no one to whom to entrust this powerful substance after he died, Kelpius ordered a mysterious box to be thrown into the deep waters where the Wissahickon Creek empties into the Schuylkill River. The story goes on to say that when the box struck the water there was an explosion with "flashes of lightning and peals like unto thunder."

Today, a small man-made cave in a remote wooded corner of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park is considered by many to have once been the meditation cell of the young mystically-minded spiritual teacher. A stone marker beside the cave claims Kelpius as America's first Rosicrucian master. Both the authenticity of the cave and the claim of Kelpius's position with the Rosicrucians are not conclusive.

An organisation called the Kelpius Society is promoting new research and restoration of Kelpius's unique community.

A Panegyric  
A Previously Unknown Work

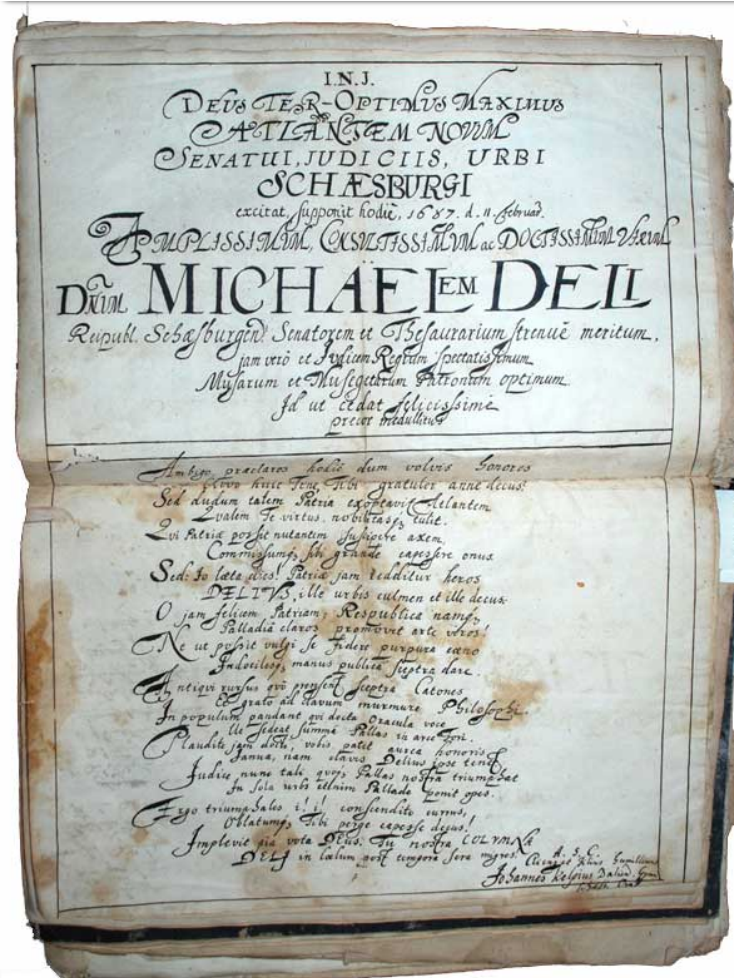


Photo of the original panegyric

For the first time in a century, a new work by Johannes Kelpius has been discovered. Mr. Richard Ackner, a direct descendent of Kelpius’s brother Georg, made this exciting discovery at the Manuscript Department of the Library of the City of Sighișoara, Romania, listed in the catalogue as Manuscript 505. I have contacted the archive directly, confirmed this finding, and acquired a photograph of the manuscript. The work is a poetic speech by Kelpius during his time of study at the high school in Schässburg (Sighișoara). In fact, Kelpius signs the speech as “orator,” which suggests a certain official role at the school, at least for that day.

This document is important in many ways. First, it is further proof that Kelpius was born in Denndorf (Dalia/Daia). Second, it documents his whereabouts in 1687. And third, it contains an intriguing reference to the New Atlantis—a possible allusion to a work by Francis Bacon.

The work is a “panegyric”— a poetic speech in praise of a living human being. Kelpius praises Michael Delius, a local government official in Schässburg. Mr. Ackner points out that Delius was one of Kelpius’s sponsors for university studies. By this time, Kelpius’s father had passed away, and he started his university studies later in 1687. Mr. Ackner notes that the Delius family also became connected to the Kelpius family through marriage and real estate holdings.

Below is my transcription of the panegyric. I hope that a Latin scholar will take an interest in the work and consider developing a more accurate transcription and a translation.

I.N.J.  
DEUS TER-OPTIMUS MAXIMUS  
ATLANTEM NOVUM  
SENATUI, JUDICIIS, URBI  
SCHÆSBURGI

Excitat, supponit hodiē, 1687. d.11Februar. AMPLISSIMUM, CONSULTISSIMUM ac  
DOCTISSIMUM VIRUM DNUM MICHAELEM DELI  
Reipubl. Schæsburgen. Senatorem et Thesaurarium strenuē meritum, jam vero et Iudicem Regium  
spectatissimum Musarum et Musegetarum Patronum optimum.

Jd ut cedat Felicissime Precor medullitus  
Ambigo praclaros hodie dum volvis honores  
C[la]vo huic Tene, Tibi gratuler anne decus?  
Sed dudum tatem Patria exoptavit Atlantem  
Qualem Te virtus nobilitatis tulit  
Qui Patria possit nutantem suscipere axem,  
Commissumis sibi grande capessere onus.  
Sed: jo hæta dies! Patria jam redditur heros  
DELIUS, ille urbis culmen et ille decus:  
O jam felicem Patriam; Respublica namis  
Palladia claros promovit arte viros!  
Ne ut posit vulgi se Fidere purpura cœno  
Jndocilesis manus publica sceptrā dare.  
Antiqui rursus quo present sceptrā Catones  
Ex grato ad clavum muxmure Philosophi.  
In populum pandant qui docta oracula voce  
Ut sedat summa Pallas in arce Fori.  
Plaudite jam docta, vobis patit aurea honoris  
Janua, nam clavis Delius ipse tenet.  
Judice nunc tali quois Pallas nostra triumphat  
Jn sola urbs etenim Pallade ponit opes.  
Ergo triumphales i! i! confundito currus,  
Oblatumis Tibi perge capesse decus!  
Jmplevit pia vota Deus. Tu nostra COLUMNA  
DELI in Cœlum post tempora sera migres!

A.S.C.

Cliens et Filius humillimus  
Johannes Kelpius Daliens[is], Gymn.  
Schaesb. Orat[or]

Editor's note: uncertain renderings or missing letters have been placed in brackets.



Johannes Kelpius  
Cromohs Virtual Seminars  
Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708): Mystic on the Wissahickon

Levente Juhász

University of Szeged

L. Juhász, "Johannes Kelpius Recent historiographical trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries), 2006-2007: 1-9"

Introduction

What if America's large tract of ground  
And all those Isles adjoining, lately found (which we more  
truly may a Desert call Then any of the worlds more Civil pale: )  
What then if there the wilderness  
do lie To which the woman and her son must fly  
To escape the Dragons fury and there live Till  
Europe thankless nations (full of pride  
And all abominations( scourged are with Barbarism as their  
Neighbour were [.]

The above words were written by Richard Roach 7th September 1695, in a letter addressed to Johann Heinrich Deichmann, the secretary of the Philadelphian Society.[1] About a year earlier, the Transylvanian Pietist, Johannes Kelpius set off from the shores of England towards Pennsylvania, with the aim of realising the true Christian ideal and preparing for the Last Judgement in the New World. His group, known by others as the Woman in the Wilderness (Weib in der Wüste) left the sinful world behind to re-establish the original state of the True Church and to prepare for the second coming of Christ. Kelpius and his followers expected the millennium to begin around 1694. Even after their hope had failed, a part of the congregation lived on with the same notion and they actively contributed to the cultural life of colonial America; they acted as teachers, performed church music and a few of them joined other churches.

This paper attempts to give an overview of Kelp's career from Transylvania to Pennsylvania, his religious views, and the intellectual background of his thought. Using archival material it reasserts the importance of the connections between the German Pietist group and the London Quakers and highlights some of the hazier points of the Kelpius scholarship.

## 2. Kelpius's Early Years; Transylvania

Johannes Kelpius was born in 1673 at Denndorf (Dállya) in the Schässburg (Segesvár) region of Transylvania.[2] He was one of the Transylvanian Saxons, German immigrants, who had settled near the south-eastern border of Hungary in Transylvania around the 12-13th centuries. The colonisation was begun by Géza II of Hungary, with the initial task of the settlers being the protection of the borders of the country. However, they were also selected because of their skills in mining and crafts. They have retained special rights and standing since the thirteenth century; they built fortified cities which became the defence of not only their people but also their culture and economical independence. Most of them converted to Lutheranism after the reformation and remained faithful to their religion, thanks to the religious freedom proclaimed in 1568 by the first Transylvanian prince, Zsigmond János, himself an Antitrinitarian convert. This established four religio recepta in Transylvania: the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Catholic and the Antitrinitarian.

At the battle of Mohács in 1526, the Ottoman Empire devastated the army of the Hungarian nobility, and moved into the country up to the capital, Buda. Most of Hungary was under Turkish rule until the late seventeenth century. The parts not occupied by the Turks were under Habsburg government, the Emperor being the Hungarian king. The only part of the former Empire that was de facto under Hungarian rule was Transylvania and some regions of Eastern Hungary that were annexed to the Transylvanian Principality through the settlement of the Diet of Speyer in 1570.

During these 150 years most Transylvanian princes tried to find chances of bringing the Habsburg parts of Hungary back under Hungarian rule in the form of a personal union. Two years after the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, Prince Gábor Bethlen was in fact crowned Hungarian king, but abdicated shortly afterwards, securing some privileges for Transylvania from the Habsburgs.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, not for the first time, Transylvania balanced between the powers of Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire. While the princes constantly sought a European alliance, they also had to maintain a threatened peace with the Turks. In 1664 Prince Mihály Apafi asked for English help in order to suppress the Turks' advance towards the Empire. The Protestant and Catholic nobility of Transylvania and Hungary tried to consolidate their positions again and again between the two great powers during this period, frequently, if not always, at each other's expense. As Miklos Bethlen writes 'mert egy lepesem, vagy szóm, egy írásom nem lehet, amely után ne leselkedjenek'.[3] (I cannot take a step, utter or write a word without being spied upon.)

With the frequent succession of princes, promises of Imperial, Ottoman, Polish and French alliances revoked and reinstated monthly and unpredictable belligerent moves, Kelpius's Transylvania was very far from being a safe fatherland. The only force he could rely on was the strong bond of the German cities and their population with its relative economic independence.

### 3. European Studies

The Kelpius was an established clerical family: Johann's father, Georg was a Lutheran minister, his older brother, Martin rector of the Schässburg school. The latter compiled the biographical lexicon of the Transylvanian Saxons, *Natales Saxonum Transylvaniae*. [4] In 1685 the thirteen year old Kelpius had the opportunity to act as a respondent in a school examination. It was in the same year that his father died and Kelpius could not have further pursued his studies without help from three of his late father's friends. Michael Deli, the mayor of Schässburg, Count Valentin Franck and Johann Zabanius, the notary of Hermannstadt (Szeben) supported the talented young man's European academic peregrination. Kelpius matriculated at the University of Tübingen in 1687; his name is next to Zabanius's in the matriculation register. [5] He composed a laudatory poem for Zabanius's dissertation next year. After spending a short time in Leipzig he received his title of Magister at the University of Altdorf near Nuremberg in 1689. The subject of his thesis was natural religion, a work published both in octavo and quarto. [6] Within a year Kelpius, only seventeen at the time, had his name on the title page of another book, the *Scylla Theologica* - an overview of religious polemics from the early Church Fathers. [7] The publication was evidently promoted by one of his teachers, Johann Fabricius, who also had his name printed in the title - an illustrious decoration for Kelpius. Fabricius, son of a university professor, was himself professor of theology in Altdorf since 1677. In 1704 he published an extensive survey about controversy among Christian sects, [8] and at the same time he worked on an advisory opinion about the differences between the Roman Catholic and the Calvinist faith. This latter work, in which he was to prove that the two religions shared the same basis, was commissioned by Anton Ulrich, Prince of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in an effort to facilitate the marriage of his daughter to the Spanish king. After the publication of this work [9] Fabricius had to give up his chair at Helmstedt University. Like his teacher, with whom he would not lose contact after his emigration, Kelpius also argued that all religions share a true core.

Kelpius also published his views about the use of Aristotle's works in the education of the Christian youth in 1690. [10] The book was again published both in quarto and octavo with three different dedications. The quarto is dedicated to the Nuremberg captain Hannibal Braun; part of the octavo editions to his three patrons in Transylvania, another part to four prominent Nuremberg clergymen, who apparently also backed his studies. He certainly seemed to have had all the necessary help for his advanced education, and we may assume that the statements about his exceptional abilities were true.

In the works mentioned - according to Ernst Benz - Kelpius 'revealed himself as an opponent of orthodox Lutheran scholasticism and an advocate, like most Pietists, of an irenic theology'.<sup>[11]</sup> Besides publishing his works, he also gave private lessons at the University.<sup>[12]</sup>

In his 1785 *Nachrichten von siebenbürgischen Gelehrten* Johann Seivert states that after his emigration to Pennsylvania nothing had been heard in his homeland about Kelpius.<sup>[13]</sup> Therefore it is quite obvious to ask, whether there was intellectual influence of any sort in Transylvania that could explain Kelpius's gravitation towards irenic and mystical thought and his lifelong attachment to radical Pietistic circles. These groups did not only promote a renewal in faith, often incorporating ecstatic prophecy as a basis of religious conviction, but also encouraged social and economical changes. The Transylvanian Lutherans did not seem to be susceptible to radical ideas and new dogmas. There is no evidence to suggest that such ideas had interfered with the religious practice of the Saxons until the 1670s and even the few exceptions do not link up with Kelpius. At this stage we have to conclude that Kelpius did not encounter the radical doctrines prompting him to leave the Continent before his European university years.

#### 4. Kelpius and Johann Jakob Zimmermann

The acquaintance with the theologian, mathematician and astrologer Johann Jakob Zimmermann (1642-1693) and his works had a great influence on Kelpius's doctrinal development. It is not exactly known where they actually met, but Elizabeth Fisher points to the university of Altdorf and its intellectual environment as a catalyst.<sup>[14]</sup> It is likely that Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689) introduced Kelpius and Zimmermann. Rosenroth, a Lutheran minister in Sulzbach (a town in Bavaria, close both to Altdorf and to Nuremberg), was not only known for his hymns, but also for his deep knowledge of the Cabbala. He was the leading figure of a 'pansophical-cabbalistic' group in the court of Count Christian August von Pfalz-Sulzbach that regarded the reconciliation of the Cabbala with the Christian dogma as its primary duty. They aimed to reconcile scientific and religious knowledge and come to a synthesis, which they valued as the highest wisdom (hence the term pansophic). Rosenroth published his *Cabbala denudata* (2 vols, Frankfurt, 1677-84) with the hope of advancing universal knowledge; a goal he shared with the Behmenists and the Rosicrucians.

The likelihood of Kelpius's attendance at the meetings held in Rosenroth's house is strengthened not only by the geographical proximity of Sulzbach and Altdorf, but also by the fact that Kelpius used Rosenroth's hymns as an inspiration for his own devotional poetry.

Zimmermann was an avid disciple of Boehme and the Württemberg authorities referred to him as 'most learned astrologer, magician and cabbalist'.<sup>[15]</sup> Born at Vaihingen, Württemberg, Zimmermann studied at the University of Tübingen, where he met Johann Jakob Schütz, a leading figure of the so-called Saalhof Pietists.<sup>[16]</sup> This group was the first in Germany to plot an organised emigration to the New World. Zimmermann was introduced to chiliasm and Boehme's books by Ludwig Brunquell, minister of neighbouring Löchgau. Brunquell himself was moved from his post because of his views and the same fate awaited Zimmermann. When, in 1676, he acted as a witness at Brunquell's trial, he acknowledged his attachment to Boehme.

Zimmermann's interpretation of the 1680 comet and other signs later proved to be crucial for Kelpius. In his *Cometoscopia* (1681) Zimmermann interprets the movement of this new celestial body from the East to the West as a harbinger of God's punishment and the Last Judgement.<sup>[17]</sup> It would bring famine, war and very high prices in Asia and Europe, but would not affect America. This seems to be one of the first basic elements in Zimmermann's plans of emigration. In his later work on what we know today as the Halley's comet he emphasises that natural occurrences are in concordance with God's message.<sup>[18]</sup> This astrological explanation of the signs would expand to a complete foretelling of the last age of the world in his *Muthmassliche Zeit-Bestimmung*.<sup>[19]</sup> Apart of the appearance of the comets he also interprets the fall of Strasbourg to the French (1681) and the Turk's advance on Vienna (1683), concluding that the millennium will begin in 1694. It is noteworthy that Johann Heinrich Alsted foretold the beginning of the millennium for the same year

in his *Diatriben de Mille Annis Apocalypticis* in 1627.[20] There are a number of popular millenarian themes in Zimmermann's book that recur in Kelpius's works. One of these is the notion that the false church (Babel) does not exclusively mean the Roman Church, but any that fail to conform to the truth of Christ; in these the Antichrist reigns. One of the precursors of the last judgement is the conversion of the Jews and the heathen, preceded by the unification of the true church. Kelpius maintained the possibility of the Indians being the lost Tribes of Israel thus part of the clandestine true church.

For Zimmermann the "new prop"(i.e. those who had come after Biblical times) were also instruments to reveal God's hidden message to man. According to this doctrine God had not ceased working through miracles after the Pentecost and inspired people still received his messages directly. This would then mean that Boehme's texts are just as important in interpreting the future as the Scripture itself and render barely literate lay prophets, like those mentioned in Johann Amos Comenius's *Lux in tenebris* (1657), valuable sources of insight about the future.

After publishing his book Zimmermann was summoned by the consistorium - not for the first time - for a hearing and in 1685 he was removed from his post in Bietigheim. Thereafter he lived in Amsterdam, Frankfurt (lodging with Schütz) and Heidelberg.[21] He settled in Hamburg in 1689 where he started to organise a separatist group, called the Chapter of Perfection. He published there his *Grundforschende Gespräch*, arguing for a biblically founded millenarism, a 'chiliasmus scriptuarius', against the rampant crude or common millenarism. Significantly, in this dialogue a pious Catholic illustrates the agreeable view, and the worldly-minded Protestant is defeated. The dialogue was republished in Philadelphia (1695), probably by someone closely connected to the group and Kelpius.

## 5. Pilgrimage to America

When the Chapter of Perfection left for Rotterdam in 1693, Kelpius was already with Zimmermann. They were some of the many answering William Penn's call to establish a godly country in his newly acquired American lands. Penn's pamphlets were also in circulation in German, and they precipitated true enthusiasm among the Saalhof Pietists. A few years after Penn had visited Germany the group established the Frankfurt Land Company (*Frankfurter Landescompagnie*) to buy land in Pennsylvania, agreeing to the purchase of 25,000 acres. Their first emissary was Franz Daniel Pastorius, the man known as the founder of Germantown near Philadelphia. The Saalhof Pietists were to follow him to America but their attachment to their homeland proved to be stronger than their will to leave. Pastorius, however, stayed in Germantown and was instrumental in organizing the settling of German Mennonites and Quakers.

### Preparations

Members of the Chapter of Perfection gathered in Halberstadt and Magdeburg (cities in two of the more tolerant German duchies) to continue to Rotterdam, as Sachse states, 'on foot, staff in hand, and knapsack on back, upon their pilgrimage to America'.[22]

The Zimmermann group met Benjamin Furly, the well-to-do merchant in Holland. Furly worked as Penn's agent in Europe and - as his library and his connections show - knew and studied Boehme's writings and the Cabbala himself. Zimmermann died shortly before embarking. Details of his death are unknown, but the group went on as planned, electing Kelpius as their new leader. Their ship, the 'Sara Maria Hopewell' was acquired in London and Kelpius engaged the ship on 7 February 1694. The Chapter of Perfection stayed in England for six months. While in England the group established good connections with the London Friends and the Philadelphian Society.

### The Quakers and the Chapter of Perfection

According to Kelpius's biographer, both Zimmermann and the brother of another member, Ludolph Köster, were intimately acquainted with Furly and their intercession made the experiment [i. e. the

emigration] possible.[23] Furlly granted the Pietists £120 for their fare; a sum probably collected for this particular purpose. It seems, however, that this was not the whole story. A series of entries in Quaker Minute books indicate that the London Friends gave the Pietists most of the money necessary for their emigration. Although the minute books mention no names, from circumstantial evidence it can be concluded that they refer to the Chapter of Perfection. From the letters of Nicolaes Rüst, a Hamburg friend, at least some of the Quakers were informed of the Pietist movement.[24] It seems, however, that this was not common knowledge as the Meeting for Sufferings usually refers to the group as "The People called the Pietests". From the minutes we also learn that a few months after their arrival the Germans received £20 from the Quakers, to help them with living expenses. The next entry concerning them, however, reads:

The meeting being acquainted of the poor People call'd Pietests Intention and desire to Transport themselves and families to America and wanting Assistance. Sober People in Holland in tender Compassion towards them having Remitted one hundred and twenty pounds towards the relief and Transportation of some of them. They being in all about 40. in Number and it falling very short.

This Meeting inclines to Recommend to the next six weeks Meeting Consideration how a supply may be Administered to them towards their Relief They wanting about one hundred and fifty pounds for their Transportation.[25]

Yoakley made regular shipments to Pennsylvania at this time. The remainder of the group either stayed in London or turned back to Germany, deciding against emigration.

This sheds light on an interesting point. Most secondary sources treat the Pietists as a monolith group with a common goal obeying their leaders and enduring hardships. We cannot forget, however, that there were at least two prime reasons for emigration from Germany. The one more frequently emphasised in this case - though probably not the more common generally - was the liberty of conscience offered by William Penn. The other was the prospect of material gain; an opportunity for a new start after leaving a war-torn country. Some were definitely driven only by the latter reason. In his diary Kelpius mentions a series of events that lead to the exclusion of some members:

The other part of our company which had been excluded, at London, on account of their depraved manners, from us and our spiritual intercourse, wasting their time in brawls and fights, were a scandal even to the lower sailors, who wondered that the young women were beaten by the men. But even the triumvirate itself (for 3 families were excluded) was split up into factions, and had not one yielded to another, the matter might have come from words to blows, as I have said was done at the former fight.[26]

This darker side of the Pietists is usually left unmentioned. However, the group may have kept most of their animosities hidden from the outer world, as the Quakers paid the transportation for the antisocial as well. The subsidies of the London Friends did not stop after paying the sea fare and an additional £30 was granted. As the ship, the 'Sara Maria Hopewell' was waiting for a convoy to escort her to open waters, another £15 was sent to them because:

"the Pietists have lain longer upon the Coast then was Expected and much of their Provisions Expended and still Remaining at Plymouth." [27]

It is clear therefore that the group's emigration would not have been possible without the Quakers' help. The two extant travelogues do not mention this aid, but they do have a tendency to omit material circumstances and concentrate on spiritual matters. [28]

The Quakers were quick and resolute to help the stranded group, but were also cautious to secure themselves against unprepared visitors in the future. One of the minute book entries reads:



And it's also desired that a Letter be sent to friends in Holland, That any others of the said People where they are may be Cautioned not too hastily to leave Their Native Country.[29]

At the same time they also wrote a letter to the Philadelphia Quakers, in which they asked them to help the group. It is not known how far this help actually went but it surely served as a basis for good relations - which in turn deteriorated in subsequent years.

#### The Philadelphian Society and the Chapter of Perfection

The group, now led by Kelpius, also established good connections with the Philadelphian Society. The writings of Jean Leade were not known in Germany at the time, and their sympathy probably arose from the mutual enthusiasm for Boehme and their shared millenarism. In the following years however, the Philadelphian Society and Leade's writings played a role that is, according to Hans Schneider, "hard to overemphasize" among the German radical Pietistic circles.[30] They were the prominent English interpreters of Boehme's mystical thought in England and their works published in England and translated by Loth Fisher in the mid-1690s had a great impact in the radical religious centres of Germany, especially by bringing a heavy eschatological overtone to the radical Pietistic doctrine.

The Philadelphic ideal of the exodus from Babel (i. e. the sinful world) to prepare for the second coming of Christ was propagated by Leade's society, as was the notion that Christ's 1000-year long reign will take place on earth in the nearest future.

The Philadelphian Society was on the eve of going public in Europe in the year Kelpius and his followers left for America: Francis Lee and Richard Roach joined them in 1694, and in the same year Dodo von Knyphausen started to subsidise Loth Fisher's translation of all of Leade's works. The Philadelphian publications, notably Leade's visions, could now reach a much wider audience. [31]

Particulars of the two groups' meeting are not known but they kept up a correspondence for a long time.[32] Their fellow German, Johann Heinrich Deichmann, secretary of the Society seemed to have been especially important in these connections. In the extant letters from the Pietists to Deichmann there are references to books and possibly manuscripts sent to the Pietists from London in 1699, five years after their departure.[33] Unfortunately the contents of Deichmann's earlier packets are not known, but we may assume that Jean Leade's works were amongst the documents. It may be conjectured that Kelpius showed these to some of their numerous guests, or sent copies or excerpts with his letters.

The Philadelphians remained an integral part of Kelpius's plans. When in 1698 one of the German Pietists, Daniel Falkner returned to Europe to recruit more members for the Chapter, he called the Philadelphians to join them.[34] It is not known why they did not join the community in Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, the contact with the English Behmenists had a lasting impression on Kelpius. In a letter Kelpius wrote to Steven Mumfort, founder of the Seventh Day Baptist Church at Long Island in 1699, he describes how the general reformation gives rise to new religious traits in Europe:

If now this late Revolution in Europe (not to speak of that in other parts) which in the Roman Church goes under the name of Quietism, in the Protestant Church under the name of Pietism, Chiliasm, and Philadelphianism, If I say this together or one in Special pertends any thing to effect.

[35]

From later remarks it is clear that Kelpius followed the career of Leade from his abode in Pennsylvania's wilderness.[36]

From England Kelpius wrote a number of letters to his friends and colleagues in Europe. Tobias Adam Lauterbach, who later became a Philadelphian himself[37]and Jakob van der Walle, in

whose house William Penn had preached during his European visit[38] were among the recipients. The correspondence included a devoted Dutch woman, Catherine Beerens van Boswig, a later emigrant to America, who sent money to the Pietists. Some of the like-minded Germans tried to discourage Kelpius from going, but he was firm in his resolution.

## 6. In America

The Pietists' ship left the English coast on 18 April 1694 and after an eventful journey they arrived at the Virginian coast on 12 June. A number of stirring events, including sea battles and storms ended favourably and were interpreted by Kelpius as trials of their faith. Eleven days after the arrival to the New Continent they disembarked in Philadelphia, where they registered themselves and took the oath of allegiance. The next day they proceeded to Germantown. Some stayed in the house of Isaac von Bebber, a Mennonite turned Quaker who had emigrated in 1683 with the first wave of German settlers from Krefeld; others lodged in nearby towns. It seems that every arrangement had been made to make their adaptation as smooth as possible. Köster and the Pennsylvania Quakers.

Shortly after their arrival one of them, Bernhard Köster, started to deliver Lutheran services in Bebber's house - there was no Lutheran church or regular service in Germantown at the time. Köster's sermons proved to be so successful that the Quakers soon invited him to Philadelphia to preach. He was eager to please them and not only did he hold weekly services in the meeting house, but later got deeply involved in the Keithian controversy, the resolution of which was, reportedly, only made more difficult by his temper.[39]

The conflict between George Keith, the Scottish Quaker, and the Pennsylvania Friends unfolded in the early 1690's. Keith insisted on a number of dogmatic issues, one of the most important being the bodily resurrection of Christ, with which the Friends disagreed. He was an opponent of slavery and also criticised the close relationship of the leaders of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting and the provincial authorities in Pennsylvania. He returned to Europe about the time when the Pietists were travelling to America, but the schism caused by his views lingered on. Köster sided with the Keithians, also known as Christian Quakers, and went as far as to speak uninvited at the Yearly Meeting in Burlington in 1696. The Quakers felt all the more indignant at this, since they knew about the financial aid the London Friends provided to the Pietists. Köster, however, continued on the course he felt called for and baptised nine of the Keithians soon afterwards in the Delaware river. Before administering the sacrament, he also practiced exorcism, expelling the unclean and cursed Quaker spirit from the subjects. The main arguments of his speech and the ensuing debate were printed by both sides. [40]

To add to his ungratefulness, Köster also consulted the young Thomas Clayton, whose mission in 1698 was to return Quakers to the Anglican fold. Matters went so far that the Quakers requested the official ban of the German Pietists' activities.

Köster was undoubtedly a man of serious religious calling; this trait had been evident on the 'Sarah Maria Hopewell'. In Kelpius's diary, towards the end of the journey, there is a short and enigmatic entry:

The memorable excommunication of Falkner by Cöster and that of Anna Maria Schuchart, the Prophetess of Erfurt (Erphortianæ)! [41]

Why Köster expelled two prominent members is not known. It has been assumed that Anna Maria Schuchart, or as her opponents named her, the Erfurt Lizzie, did not actually travelled with them and was excommunicated in her absence. But there is evidence that she was on the ship.[42] The ecstatic visionary Schuchart, who reportedly sang lengthy hymns while inspired, was a housemaid of one of the Erfurt Pietists and was also approved by August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), leading figure of the Halle Pietistic movement, during his years in Erfurt.

## Networks - local and global

Members of the Chapter intended to teach the local children and the heathen, a program they probably only partially realised. For their devotional and educational purposes they built a large wooden building, the Tabernacle, in which there were cells for the members of the community, a large classroom and another one for services. Johann Gottfried Seelig's account states that they planned to use part of the Tabernacle as a dormitory for students living in the community.[43] This program only partly came to fruition. Sachse notes that when some of them withdrew in caves for meditative practices people complained about this. Willard Martin concludes that the Germans realized this educational program only in the first few years.[44]

On the roof of the Tabernacle they purportedly built an observatory (Stern-warte) from where they could constantly study the skies looking for the signs of the imminent millennium.

The group brought along a small library containing at least ten volumes of Boehme's works in Johann Georg Gichtel's (1638-1710) edition. The German mystic edited and published the two volumes in Amsterdam in 1682. These were certainly not the first volumes of the German theosopher in Pennsylvania: William Bradford has published the first American edition of Boehme's works in Philadelphia in 1688.[45]

One of the supposed prerequisites of the millennium was the conversion of the Jews and heathen. For this reason the Pietists took great interest in the religion of the American Indians. While in some respects they have found them to be godlier than the white men who seized their lands, they still thought it necessary to convert them to Christianity. They also shared the belief in the possibility of the Indians being the lost tribes of Israel. How far they actually got with their instruction is not known, but in the first years of the eighteenth century Daniel Falkner wrote extensively about them.[46] Besides adopting their knowledge about healing herbs, the Pietists were also keen to find out whether they celebrated the Sabbath and if they had any expertise in reading the celestial signs; at the same time, they also tried to learn about their religious practices.

Kelpius interpreted irenic thoughts in an impartial and radical way as revealed in his description of William Penn's meeting with the Lenni Lenape tribe. While bargaining for some of the Indians' land Penn drew on God's grace, to which an elderly tribesman, according to Kelpius, answered:

You bid us believe in the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth, though you do not believe in Him yourself, nor trust in Him. For you have now made your own the land we held in common amongst ourselves and our friends. You now take heed, night and day, how may you keep it, so that no one may take it from you. Indeed, you are anxious even beyond your span of life, and divide it among your children. This manor for this child, that manor for that child. But we have faith in God the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth. He preserveth the sun, He hath preserved our fathers so many moons (for they count not by years). He preserveth us and we believe and are sure that He will also preserve our children after us, and provide for them, and because we believe this, we bequeath them not a foot of land.[47]

Kelpius was also quite sure that William Penn had not realised the spiritual consequences of his venture in the New World:

" This Penn is too dull to express the extraordinary Power the Pietists and Chiliasts among Protestants in Germany (and especially in Saxony) and Switzerland was endued with in their Infancy." [48]

It is difficult to understand why Kelpius thought so lowly of Penn who had made their emigration possible in the first place and whose fellow Quakers had paid for their fare. Perhaps he shared the Philadelphians' view of the Friends who criticised them for their outward show:

They [the Philadelphians] were not so silly as to place Religion in Thouing and Theeing, in keeping on their Hats, or in a sad countenance, as the Hypocrites had in our Saviour's turn. These

[Philadelphians] have no external Badge or Mark of distinction, but are above those little Affectations or Superstitions.[49]

## 7. Kelpius's eschatological system

Kelpius referred to the Pietists' group as the Contented of the God-loving Soul, outsiders, however, usually called them the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, or Weib in der Wüste. The latter name was no doubt attached to them because of their use of Revelation 12:6 which, combined with Boehme's Sophia-mysticism, was the cornerstone of their eschatology. In the biblical text a woman appears in front of John and gives birth to a male child. During the delivery a dragon descends from the skies and tries to grab the child, who in turn is rapt up into heaven. The woman flees to the wilderness to a place prepared for her, where she will be sustained for 1260 days. In Kelpius's interpretation the woman was the Virgin Sophia, whose child, Jesus was saved from the Antichrist. The remnant of the true church is hidden and waits to be reunited with his spiritual mother. The reunion will be possible with the millennium. This allegory is treated with more detail in one of Kelpius's letters describing the threefold wilderness state, his interpretation of their physical and mental exile.[50]

In its first, physical meaning the wilderness is the place where so many of the biblical prophets prepared for their religious calling - in this case the wilderness of Penn's woods. The Pietists' exile to America will serve as a drive for the dramatic historical events afoot.

There are three spiritual grades of wilderness states. First, the barren state - that of ignorance and being lost in the world. Secondly, the fruitful state which can be achieved by constant effort. In this state the seeker already sees the course he has to take, but constant striving is necessary to maintain spiritual consciousness. This level is open to all that have an honest call and perseverance. It is a state of complete 'Gelassenheit' (self-surrender, a passive opening to God's willing), where one has to refrain from 'rational thoughts and indulge in ceaseless prayer'. Kelpius described this condition with a metaphor of baptism:

This is a Day of Joy and triumph, when the Holy Ghost moves and stirreth the waters in our Hearts so that this living spring diffuseth it self through the Eyes in a sweet and Joyfull Gush of Tears: O Thou blessed water baptism, who would not desire to be Baptised with thee every day.[51]

On the other hand, the third wilderness state is open only to the elect of god, like Moses, David, and Paul. In this state one is united with God and the Virgin Sophia. It is the highest wisdom attainable in human form, the unio mystica. Kelpius lists biblical references to illustrate this, but only touches on what he says are an array of subjects:

I had many Considerations more to add, as also what the Wilderness it self is in each of these States, having spoken only of some of the Inhabitants thereof and of some of their Qualities and Circumstances, and this rather under a veil and, as it were, but glancing at the Marrow and Substance. Nor have I counted the number of the Wilderness-Time, but touched only the root thereof, which is 40 Sun-Days for the New Birth and 42 Moons or Nights for the Old (which last I have not so much as mentioned). Neither have I measured from the Red-Sea of the Old Birth to the Jordan of the New, and a hundred such things more.[52]

The meaning of this passage remains largely enigmatic though it may be related to astrology, numerology and Scriptural exegesis.

As for Kelpius, he no doubt saw himself as being in the second wilderness state and probably hoped to reach the third. There are accounts claiming that he believed he would not attain physical death, but will be rapt up into heaven as Elijah once was.[53]

The origins of Kelpius's religious thought are undoubtedly to be found in the radical Pietistic circles of Germany, namely amongst the Saalhof Pietists, the circle of the Petersens and the European

Philadelphian movement. Johanna Eleonora Petersen interpreted the allegory of the childbearing woman of Apocalypse 12:6 as the founding of the New Church of Israel in Jerusalem by the Jews. [54] The non-militant, non-political and invisible brotherhood of the True Church transgressing religious boundaries also resembles the Rosicrucian ideal of the early seventeenth century. Although Kelpius was often described as Rosicrucian,[55] the term does not occur in his writings and he probably would not have consented to this notion.

Indeed, all of the " ingredients" of his religious thought can be traced in the more liberal duchies of contemporary Germany and the Philadelphian ideal exported to and imported again from England to the Continent.

Julie Hirst points out about Jane Leade that she " was not overtly political in her writing and she did not direct her anger at positions of authority using scriptural sources as her basis" .[56] The description fits Kelpius as well. Peculiarly, unlike many others, both of them also stayed away from 'worldly affairs' as much as they could throughout their lives.

## 8. Disintegration and afterlife

Kelpius and some others like Falkner, Köster, and Johann Seelig, who were the heart of the Woman in the Wilderness, could not hinder the slow disintegration of the community. The death of the sickness-ridden Kelpius in 1708 was clearly a crucial point of the decline, a process which had begun already after their arrival in America, when some of the members married despite their vows of celibacy. Involvement in worldly affairs also facilitated the groups' dissolution: Köster's engagement for the Keithians, and later Falkner's doubtful dealings with the Frankfurt Land Company evidently turned their attention outwards rather than on meditative insight.[57] According to Elizabeth Fisher, however, there is another factor to be considered: 'the active evangelism and their philanthropic program actually worked against the monastic ideal of the Pietists'.[58]

On the other hand their chiliasm in some cases, as in the Keithian controversy, was hardly compatible with the ecumenical ideal of their Philadelphian notions. It must be noted that Kelpius and the rest of the group never condemned those who left the group for benevolent causes. Neither did the postponed millennium shake the foundations of their faith.

In fact, what Kelpius more readily disapproved was an excessive, self-indulgent enthusiasm, like that of Peter Schäffer, a Finn, who joined the group in 1699. Schäffer wandered aimlessly through Europe and America in pursuit of his prophetic dreams. He returned to Europe despite the brethren's repeated offers to stay with them and died in prison, losing his mind. [59] In 1699 even Kelpius was uncertain about the activities of Jean Leade, writing to Johann Deichmann that 'this excessive boasting here in the streets of Babylon is somewhat suspicious'. Categorized as an enthusiast by both contemporaries and posterity, Kelpius denounced extreme forms of devotion:

How many have awakened love too soon, hindering thereby their growth unto fullness of their stature; how many have, with their strong spirit, striven too impetuously to attain something of the spiritual gifts of their inheritance, which afterwards squandered, and became poorer than they were at the beginning. Examples, such as these, we have in our day too, yea, even among our house-mates, who serve to teach us to endure in blessed waiting and resting in the will of God, until the destined end, meted out by His providence, arrive[60].

He only approved prophetic and inspired activities if they were to be found in the context of discipline and benevolence.

## 9. Kelpius as author

During the time he spent in America Kelpius wrote and translated a number of devotional hymns. The originals were mostly by Knorr von Rosenroth and Angelus Silesius, both obvious choices for Kelpius's spiritual disposition. Earlier research attributed a large number of hymns to him, but in



1973 Willard Martin reduced this figure to about twelve.[61] He notes that the hermits of the Wissahickon continued the heritage of seventeenth-century German religious poetry and did not strive for any type of cultural synthesis. Indeed, the themes of these hymns (humility, selflessness, new birth, unio mystica, the pain of separation from God) offer a condensed display of Protestant mystical poetry of the German Baroque. The hymns remained unpublished until the 1780s, though they were copied and distributed in manuscript.

Kelpius's instruction about the right way of conversing with God, *Eine kurtze und begreifliche Anleitung zum stillen Gebet*, (Philadelphia, 1700) is more widely known. This book was, more than half a century later, translated and published in English as *A Short, Easy and Comprehensive Method of Prayer* (Philadelphia, 1761). Due to its simple, short yet direct style it became a popular piece of devotional literature and was reprinted frequently until the twentieth century. The work stresses the importance of inward prayer and gives methods for achieving a state where prayer becomes ceaseless, that is when the soul is in constant union with God regardless of the body's outward activities. The similarity to the second wilderness state, the fruitful is obvious. Kelpius drew up this sketch to help with the emigrants' everyday spirituality and reportedly based it on Hermann August Francke's *Schriftmässige Anweisung, recht und Gott wohlgefällig zu Beten* (Halle, 1698). Kelpius's views did not change - unlike Francke's who, after moving to Halle and founding what became one of Europe's most impressive charitable institutions turned away from visionary and ecstatic prophecy. However, the importance of religious insight, autognosis and its use in everyday life still remained a point of mutual interest for both. Kelpius understood that the scholarly knowledge he acquired in Europe must be translated into a simple method of guidance for the 'common man' and he managed to issue a clear and concise compendium that was continuously republished due to popular demand. The German text was rendered into English by one of the brotherhood, Christopher Witt.[62]

There is still a lot to uncover about the Woman in the Wilderness. The versatile and unique role they played in colonial Pennsylvania, their connections with Europe and other American religious groups and individuals has only been partly explored and many details remain unclear.

Some members played an important role in the life of a reasonably large community, but many layers of interpretation must be removed and evaluated in order to gain a clearer picture of their influence. After Kelpius's death and the gradual dissolution of the group the legacy of the Pietists' found its way into New England religious thought and, with Kelpius's *Method of Prayer*, to our contemporaries as well.

Kelpius and his group also played a role in the transmission of religious ideas regarded as 'occult' or 'esoteric' to America. They brought with them the philosophy of Jakob Boehme, the Cabbala and other mystic authors who found their way into American Transcendentalism. The Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) wrote his *Pennsylvania Pilgrim* about Franz Daniel Pastorius, the founder of Germantown. In this idealised portrait he describes the

painful Kelpius from his hermit den  
By Wissahickon, maddest of good men  
. Reading the books of Daniel and John,  
And Behmen's Morning-Redness'

These authors were also known by the Northern American readers of Emanuel Swedenborg, who, according to his early biographer, Jacob Duché, in his 1764 *Apocalypse Revealed* wrote about 'successive declensions of the church from its original purity, till it is come at last to a miserable state of Babylonish corruption and confusion'. At the same time he was foretelling 'that the holy city New Jerusalem [will come] down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'. [63] Johannes Kelpius and the German Pietists were part of a tradition that prepared the ground for such readership and ideas.

A sign put up by the Philadelphia Historical and Museum Commission in Fairmount Park in 2004 remembers the community for producing poetry and music, practicing astronomy and botany while awaiting the millennium.

The cave in which Kelpius allegedly spent hours of meditation and contemplation is in also in Fairmount Park, where a number of place names remind of his legacy. In a tucked away corner difficult to access, the remembrance stone of the local Rosicrucian Lodge praises him as the first Rosicrucian in America. It speaks of days when the cave and the adjacent spring was more frequently visited.

## Note

I would like to thank Ariel Hessayon who invited me to give this paper on Kelpius at the Seminar for British History in the 17th Century in the Institute for Historical Research on 2 November 2006. As for his generous ongoing help with my project I am also thankful for the useful questions and comments of the participants.

[1] Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson D 832, Papers of Richard Roach, fol 15., Johann Heinrich Deichmann to Richard Roach 7th September 1695.

[2] There is no recent investigation of Kelpius's years in Transylvania. The most detailed account is still Karl Kurt Klein, 'Magister Johannes Kelpius Transylvanus, der Heilige und Dichter vom Wissahickon in Pennsylvanien', in Festschrift seiner Hochwürden D. Dr. Friedrich Teutsch gewidmet zu seinem 25 jährigen Bischofs-Jubiläum vom Ausschuß des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde (Hermannstadt, 1931), pp. 56–77.

[3] 'Bethlen Miklós levelei Teleki Mihálynak és Béldi Pálnak' [Letters from Miklós Bethlen to Mihály Teleki and Pál Béldi], 4th December 1677, in Bethlen Miklós levelei [The Correspondence of Miklós Bethlen] ed. József Jankovics, RMPE [Old Hungarian Prose Texts] vol. 6/1, p. 317.

[4] Johann Seivert, Nachrichten von siebenbürgischen gelehrten (Pressburg, 1785), p. 212. Seivert also mentions a third brother, Georg, who later became the mayor of Schässburg and was ennobled. These facts are also related in J. F. Sachse's monograph (Julius Friedrich Sachse, The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1895; New York, 1970 [reprint]), p. 224.), who also tells about the avarice of a Georg Kelp, a book dealer in Lüneburg. Despite the coincident names they are probably not the same person.

[5] He wrote his name in the matriculation register on the 22nd December according to Erdélyiek egyetemjárása a korai újkorban [Early Modern Transylvanian Peregrination], eds. Miklós Szabó and Sándor Tonk (Szeged, 1992).

[6] Theologiae Naturalis, Seu Metaphysicae Metamorphosin, sub moderamine Viri-M. Dan. Guilh. Mollerii, pro summis honoribus, and privilegiis philosophicis leditime obtinendis, die 15 Jun. (Altdorf, 1689). Joseph Trausch, Schriftsteller-Lexikon der Siebenbürger Deutschen (2 vols, Kronstadt, 1870), pp. 245–6. Sachse does not specify when he mentions 'several editions, both quarto and octavo'. Sachse, The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania, pp. 221–2.

[7] Scylla Theologica aliquot exemplis Patrum and Doctorum Ecclesiae, qui cum alios refutare laborarent, fervore disputationis abrepti in contrarios errores misere inciderunt, ostensa atque in materiam disputationis proposita a Joh. Fabricio S. Theol. Prof. Publ. and M. Joh. Kelpio Dalia-Transylvano Saxone (Altdorf, 1690)

[8] Consideratio variarum controversiarum cum Atheis, Gentilibus, Iudaeis, Mohamedanis, Socinianis, Anabaptistis, Pontificiis, Reformatis (Helmstedt, 1704)

[9] Daß zwischen der Augsburgischen Confusion und Katholischen Religion kein sonderlicher Unterschied sei (Cologne, 1707)

[10] Inquisitio an ethicus Etnicus aptus sit Christianae Juventutis Hodegus? sive: An juvenis christianus sit idoneus auditor Ethices Aristotelicae? Resp. Balthas. Blosio (Nuremberg, 1690)

[11] Ernst Benz, Die protestantische Thebais. Zur Nachwirkung Makarios des Ägypters im Protestantismus des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts in Europa und Amerika (Wiesbaden, 1963), p. 94.

[12] Johann Herdeegen, Historische Nachricht von deß löblichen Hirten- und Blumen-Ordens an der Pegnitz Anfang und Fortgang... (Nuremberg, 1744), pp. 215. The connection was pointed out by Harold Jantz, 'Deutschamerikanischer Literatur. Einige weitere Perspektiven', in Frank Trommler (ed.), Amerika und die Deutschen (Opladen, 1986), pp. 279–88.

[13] Seivert, p. 212; 'Nachgehends reisete er nach Pensilvanien, und sein Vaterland hat nichts mehr von ihm gehört'.

[14] Elizabeth W. Fisher, 'Prophesies and Revelations: German Cabbalists in Early Pennsylvania', Pennsylvania Magazin of History and Biography, 109 (1985): 318–9.

[15] 'doctissimus Astrologus, Magus et Cabbalista' For a detailed account of Zimmermann's works and and the circle of religious enthusiasts see Martin Brecht, 'Chiliasmus in Württemberg im 17. Jahrhundert', Pietismus und Neuzeit, 14 (1988): 25–49

[16] Andreas Deppermann, Johann Jakob Schütz und die Anfänge des Pietismus (Tübingen, 2002), p. 119.

[17] Zimmermann published his accounts in two volumes:

Cometo-Scopia oder Himmel-gemäßer Bericht: mit möglichstem Fleiß darstellende ... Außdeutung deß mitten im Novembri 1680. sten Jahrs entstandenen und biß in den Anfang Februarii 1681. erschienenen grossen Wunder-Sterns und Cometens ... (Stuttgart, 1681)

Cometo-Scopia oder Himmel-gemäßer Bericht ... 2 Cometo-Scopiae Pars Altera. Oder Fortsetzung Gnädigst anbefohlenen Bedenckens Über den neulichen Cometen Welcher im Monath Novembri erschienen und auch wiederumb unter die Sonnen-Strahlen sich verborgen ... (s. l., 1681).

The second volume was finished before the first was published; Zimmermann attached a lengthy commentary about his new instruments and methods that made his calculations more precise.

[18] *Portendens gravia, ex aquilone futura cometes*. Das ist: Neuer Comet-Stern welcher in diesem 1682. Jahr, im Monat Augusto sich ... sehen lassen, ... erörtert ... (Stuttgart, 1682)

[19] Ambrosius Sehmman von Caminie, Muthmaßliche Zeit-Bestimmung gewiß gewärtiger beedes Göttlicher Gerichten über das Europäische Babel und Anti-Christenthum jetzigen Seculi, als auch hierauff erfolgenden Herrlichen Aufgangs des Reichs Christi auf Erden: So Aus Veranlassung bißheriger Cometen-Erschein- und Beschreibungen Jedoch nicht bloßhin nach Astrologischen Sätzen sondern vielmehr nach heiliger Schrift Ableitung ausgearbeitet, (Frankfurt, 1684). The pseudonym is the anagram of Zimmermann's name. (Brecht, 'Chiliasmus in Württemberg im 17. Jahrhundert', p. 41)

[20] *Diatribē De Mille Annis Apocalypticis, non illis Chiliastarum and Phantastarum*, sed B. B. Danielis and Johannis (Frankfurt, 1627)

[21] Schütz explained the celestial signs in a similar manner; see Klaus Deppermann, 'Pennsylvanien als Asyl des frühen deutschen Pietismus', *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 10 (1984), p. 197. There is no extant copy of the book, but its content is related in Philipp Jakob Spener's correspondence.

[22] Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, p. 258

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[24] Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain', in Johannes van den Berg (ed.), *Pietismus und Réveil. Referate der Internationalen Tagung: Der Pietismus in den Niederlanden und seine internationalen Beziehungen* (Leiden, 1978), pp. 233–5

[25] Friends House Library, *Minutes for the Meetings for Sufferings*, Vol. 9. 1693–1694, p. 79.

[26] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, trans. and ed. Julius Friedrich Sachse, Part XXVII of a *Narrative and Critical History* Published by The Pennsylvania-German Society (The Pennsylvania-German Society Proceedings and Addresses at Lancaster, PA., November 13, 1914, XXV) (Lancaster 1917), p. 16.

[27] Friends House Library, *Minutes for the Meetings for Sufferings*, Vol. 9. 1693–1694, p. 148.

[28] Apart from Kelpius's diary, Johann Gottfried Seelig's account also survived; Oswald Seidensticker, 'The Hermits of the Wissahickon', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* XI (1887): 427–41. Seidensticker falsely attributed the letter to Daniel Falkner.

[29] Friends House Library, *Minutes for the Meetings for Sufferings*, Vol. 9. 1693–1694, p. 98.

[30] Quoted by Burkhard Dohm, *Poetische Alchimie. Öffnung zur Sinnlichkeit in der Hohelied- und Bibeldichtung von der protestantischen Barockmystik bis zum Pietismus*, (Tübingen, 2000), p. 132, fn 3

[31] Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians. A contribution to the study of English mysticism in the 17th and 18th centuries* (Uppsala, 1948), pp. 81–6; Daniel Pickering Walker, *The Decline of Hell* (London, 1964), pp. 218–20.

[32] These are published by Sachse as an appendix to Kelpius's diary.

[33] 'I hear with special joy, how you show in your last letter, happily delivered together with a package by Mr. Schaeffer...', *Diarium*, p. 32.

[34] Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, p. 97.

[35] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, p. 48.

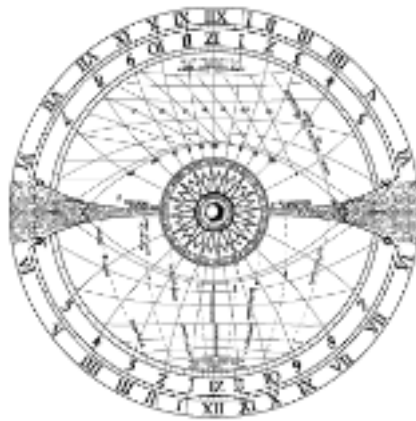
[36] Curiously, Kelpius does not seem to know anything about John Pordage's works, who, as he writes in a letter to Deichmann after 1697, 'is entirely unknown to us'. (*The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, p. 40.)

- [37] Fisher, 'Prophesies and Revelations' p. 321; Andreas Deppermann, 'Pennsylvanien als Asyl des frühen deutschen Pietismus', p. 286.
- [38] Andreas Deppermann, 'Pennsylvanien als Asyl des frühen deutschen Pietismus', p. 192.
- [39] Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, pp. 85–6.
- [40] *Ibid.*, pp. 267–70.
- [41] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, p. 26
- [42] Johannes Wallmann, 'Erfurt und der Pietismus im 17. Jahrhundert', in *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen, 1995), p. 348.
- [43] Seidensticker, 'The Hermits of the Wissahickon', p. 441.
- [44] Willard M. Martin, *Johannes Kelpius and Johann Gottfried Seelig. Mystics and Hymnists on the Wissahickon*. Diss. Philadelphia 1973, pp. 46–50. Martin also quotes Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, according to whom Seelig was teaching not long before his death in 1745.
- [45] Ariel Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers', *Journal of the Friend Historical Society*, 60 (2005): 191–223. (Pennsylvania, 1702)
- [47] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, pp. 80–1. Letter to Johann Fabricius; 23 July 1705.
- [48] *Ibid.*, p. 49. Letter to Steven Momfort in Rhode Island, 11 December 1699.
- [49] *State of the Philadelphian Society*, (London, 1697), p. 13. Quoted by Julie Hirst, Jane Leade. *Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Ashgate, 2005), p. 98.
- [50] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, pp. 86–95. Letter to Hesther Palmer at Flushing, Long Island, 25 May, 1706.
- [51] *Ibid.*
- [52] *Ibid.*
- [53] Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, pp. 246–7.
- [54] Hans-Jürgen Schrader, 'Philadelphian Hope', *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 28 (2002): 204.
- [55] This probably derives from Sachse's monograph; he has been eager to find a connection between Kelpius and the brotherhood. Although his speculations lack substantial evidence, the theory has held up for quite a long time.
- [56] Julie Hirst, Jane Leade, p. 105.
- [57] Falkner and Pastorius got into a serious conflict when Falkner superseded him as the agent of the Frankfurt Land Company. The relationship of the Pietist group and Pastorius was already overstretched during the Keithian controversy, in which the latter sided with the orthodox friends.
- [58] Fisher, 'Prophesies and Revelations', p. 325.
- [59] *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius*, pp. 37–8.
- [60] *Ibid.*, p. 85. Letter to Johann Heinrich Deichmann in London, England, 23 July 1705.
- [61] Martin, pp. 106–128.
- [62] Witt was an Englishman, born in 1675 in Wiltshire, who joined the community in 1704. He was originally a physician who, on the land of the Woman of the Wilderness, grew medicinal plants. He corresponded with John Bartram (co-founder of the American Philosophical Society) in Philadelphia and Peter Collinson in London, both Quakers and botanists. He also built clocks and an organ. He was the last of the group to survive and died in 1765, at the age of ninety.
- [63] Jacob Duche, *A short Account of The Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg, and his Theological Writings* (Bolton, 1797) pp. 21–2.

What is the Horologium?

The American Philosophical Society has little or nothing to do with philosophy. It was founded centuries ago before science was called science and was called “natural philosophy. It is, therefore, really the American Scientific Society and holds many treasures of historical achievements in science of American invention.

On the second floor, in a glass door cabinet near a window, are two brass and gold-plated bowls, one 12 inches in diameter and the other 5 3/4” in diameter. They were once connected by a piece that’s been lost forever. The larger bowl sat concavely on top, the smaller convexly. Mounted on the rim of the larger bowl is a 3 3/4” figure of a Moor or Arabic man with a turban holding a staff.



Graphic image of engraving in bowl of the schissler dia.

The curators call it the Schissler dial—Christopher Schissler being the name of craftsman whose foundry fashioned it in Germany in 1578, and “dial” referring to its use as a sundial. However, it calls itself by a much more colourful name, the Horologium Achaz Hydrographicum. But what does that mean? Let’s take it apart word by word.

The words are, of course, Latin. Horologium suggests it is a device for time-keeping, a sundial.

Achaz was the 11th king of Judah. In 771 BC he had a sundial fashioned for himself. It is the first one is mentioned in western literature. The son and heir of Achaz was named Hezekiah. According to the 38th chapter of the biblical book of Isaiah, as King Hezekiah lay sick and dying, he prayed that he might be spared. So God sent the prophet Isaiah to tell the king he would give him an extra 15 years to live, and just to prove it, he would turn back time. So indeed it came to pass, and Hezekiah was astonished when he looked out of his window on the sundial, which bore the name of his father, and saw the shadow marking the time move backwards by 10 degrees which is forty minutes. So the Dial of Achaz was the instrument of an astounding miracle that occurred 1,200 years before the instrument that bears its name was made. The word Hydrographicum suggests “writing by water” or “writing in water.” On the bottom or concave side of the smaller of the two bowls are two charts that pertain to the latitude of the user of the sundial, two sketches and the following inscription in Latin:

"This semicircular shell explains the miracle of the 38th chapter of Isaiah. For if you fill the basin full with water, the shadow of the sun is borne backward by ten degrees. Moreover, it indicates any common hour of the day whatever, together with that of the planets which they call hours."

And, it delivers what it says. In the 1970s a group of scientists took the device from its home in the cabinet in the American Philosophical Society, put it out on the lawn of Independence Mall, set it up



as a sundial, and filled the bowl with water, — and witnessed the shadow marking the time go backward by 10 degrees-- exactly the forty minutes of the miracle of Isaiah.

So the instrument is, in a sense, a time machine.

We all know how it works. It is due to the law of refraction—the principle that explains why a stick looks bent when it's halfway under water in a clear pool. Only there's something interesting about this: the first time the law of refraction was delineated in western scientific literature was by Willebrord Snellius in the 1620s, over forty years after the creation of the *Horologium Achaz Hydrographicum*.

Was Christopher Schissler, the craftsman, a physicist who was ahead of his time, a man who simply intuitively grasped the laws of nature, or did he have access to a body of knowledge that his contemporaries didn't? This is only one of the questions we're faced with.

Was our timekeeping device simply a novelty? Here's one possible clue:

The noted 18th century traveler and chronicler Zacharias von Uffenbach apparently came across someone who knew about this device. He wrote about it twice in his memoirs. One reference seems to have been stricken from the text—not without good cause—that the reason for this, and the reason for the bowl's trick—was to tie the instrument to a Biblical story, thus diverting attention from its real use as an astronomical—and therefore heretical—device. If you recall your history, you'll remember the trouble that Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler got into during the same century.

So what might those other uses have been? The markings on the upper bowl suggest a more complicated geometry than simply keeping track of the hours of the day.

Around the rim of the upper bowl are reliefs of the familiar zodiacal signs: the goat, the crab, the centaur, etc. It is very possible that the *Horologium* was used in the casting of horoscopes. This explains why oral tradition has it, according to Julius Sachse, that by using the instrument it's user could know not only the hour of the day by sun, but also the hour of the night by the moon, the position of the planets, sun, and moon in the houses of the zodiac, the sun's perigee and apogee, its height above the horizon, the length of the day, and perhaps much more.

We will remember that astrology was still part of the mainstream of both religious and scientific endeavours at the time the instrument was crafted. There is an oral tradition that connects the device with Johann Jacob Zimmerman, a famous German astronomer who was reputedly a member of the Royal Society of London, was a man who was deeply interested in both subjects, as well as astrology. But it is very unlikely that a man of Zimmerman's achievements in astronomy—his ability to predict comets for instance—would use such a sophisticated device merely for astrology.

But how did Zimmerman, who lived a hundred years after the craftsman Christopher Schissler, obtain the instrument and learn how to use it? As we in the twenty-first century can't figure it out, it either came with an interesting instruction booklet, or more likely, the secret was passed from master to disciple.

There's simply no way of knowing that or where the *Horologium* was for a hundred years. Christopher Schissler was a craftsman of some repute. He called himself a Geometer and an Astronomer. He created many other interesting sundials and devices, but no one has been able to find a trace or even a suggestion that he made anything else like the *Horologium*. We can only assume that the instrument was obtained only at tremendous time, effort, and expense. It might be safe to assume that it was in its day the equivalent of the Hubble Space Telescope. And from what we know of Zimmerman, he wasn't a man of unlimited means.

## lifeinthemix

And for what reason did he have it, assuming he did? For scientific research? Probably. For the casting of horoscopes? Maybe. For some occult endeavour? Possibly.

There are other questions that we are left with. Why the figure of Arabic man? We know that for centuries the Arabic world was the repository of knowledge of astronomy and mathematics. They might have also fully understood the principles of refraction.

One other thing: the Islamic world was the ultimate source of mystical and so-called occult knowledge in medieval Europe. Was there a connection between the culture suggested by the figure and mystical societies in 16th century Germany?

And now for the last mystery. How did such a thing end up in a cabinet in a museum in Philadelphia? The fact is that no one knows how it got there. There are no records of the device every being acquired by the institution, nor any records of anyone donating it.

It is part of the story of Kelpius that he was interested in astronomy. It is said that the Kelpius Community had one of the country's first telescopes that were used to search and note celestial movements from a tower.

Kelpius was a student, and follower, of Johann Jacob Zimmerman, the noted astronomer.

In the early 18th century, the Englishman named Christopher Witt likely fell heir to the artefacts of the Kelpius Community after it disbanded. Christopher Witt in his old age became acquainted with a bright young man from Philadelphia named Benjamin Franklin who, as you might or might not know, founded the American Philosophical Society.

This, like almost everything connected with the Horologium Achaz Hydrographicum, is speculation. But they are all educated guesses and they all combine to make an intriguing and fascinating story that rivals anything Dan Brown has written.

## The Woman in the Wilderness

Author: Jonathan D. Scott  
Genre: Historical Fiction  
ISBN: 0-9716611-5-4  
Format: Hardcover  
Size: 6 x 9 in. 312 pp.  
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### Inside the Mystery of America's First Mystics

For over three hundred years after their mysterious community vanished, legends of wizardry and supernatural events have circulated among local people.

Even today, people gather at the site of the so-called Hermit's Cave in a remote part of Philadelphia's Fairmont Park to celebrate what participants believe were part of the community's secret traditions. The community lived without sect or name. They were most often called The Woman in the Wilderness, in reference to an obscure passage in the *Book of Revelation*.

Brought to vivid life as historical fiction, this is the true story of the origins and fate of the first mystical community in America and its brilliant young leader, Johannes Kelpius. The story follows the quest of Lydia, a German-American woman who finds herself in possession of objects she is told had once belonged to Kelpius. Together with the reader, Lydia discovers the truth about The Woman in the Wilderness—a truth as strange and intriguing as the legends themselves.

*The Woman in the Wilderness* is a vivid adventure of religious conflict, spiritual growth, and the dazzling wonder of history in the making.

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