

# THE ROSIKRUCIAN MANIFESTOS

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*In this article, Christian Rebisse presents the history and narratives of the three Rosicrucian Manifestos published in 1614, 1615, and 1616—the Fama Fraternitatis, the Confessio Fraternitatis, and the Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz. From Rosicrucian History and Mysteries. For the complete English translations of the Rosicrucian Manifestos, visit <http://www.rosecroixjournal.org/resources/index.html>.*



On the eve of the publication of the Rosicrucian Manifestos, Europe was embroiled in the strife engendered by its moral crisis. Everyone was longing for a “new Reformation.” It was in this context that the Rosicrucians sent out their call proposing new means for restoring harmony. In general, we can say that the Rosicrucian Order proposed Hermeticism as a solution for the enveloping crisis.

With this intention in mind, an anonymous manifesto usually called the *Fama Fraternitatis* was published in 1614 at the print shop of Wilhelm Wessel in Kassel, Germany. The complete title is: “Universal and General Reformation of the whole wide world; together with the *Fama Fraternitatis* of the Laudable Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, written to all the Learned and Rulers of Europe; also a short reply by Herr Haselmayer, for which he was seized by the Jesuits and put in irons on a Galley. Now put forth in print and communicated to all true hearts.” The text constituting the middle portion, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, had already been circulating in Germany as a manuscript since 1610. It is the only part that has been retained in modern editions of this manifesto.

## Advertisements from Parnassus

Introduced by a short preface, the first Rosicrucian manifesto consisted of three

distinct texts. The first explained the necessity for a general reformation of the world. Although not indicated, this was a German translation of Notice 77 from Traiano Boccalini’s book *Ragguagli di Parnasso* (The Advertisements from Parnassus), a little-known text published in Venice in 1612. However, it is important as it placed the Rosicrucian project in context—that is, in describing the necessity for a reorganization of Europe in agony. Thus, it is pertinent that we present here the author’s intentions. Boccalini, a friend of Galileo, belonged to the antipapal circle of the Venetian patriot and statesman Paolo Sarpi. Boccalini’s satiric work used mythology to depict the political climate then prevailing in Europe. He criticized the hegemony of the Spanish Habsburg kings over Christian Europe. In many places, Henry IV of France appears as a hero, and one of the scenes in the book emphasizes the despair felt after his assassination in 1610.

## Apollo’s Reform

The portion of the *Advertisements from Parnassus* quoted in the *Fama Fraternitatis* describes how Apollo learned from Emperor Justinian that Earth’s inhabitants were suffering great despair due to the incessant quarrels which set them at odds with one another. Apollo was unstinting in his efforts to send countless guides and philosophers to humanity in order to teach

them excellent morals, and so he decided to propose a universal reform that would be conducive to restoring humanity to its original purity. To accomplish this end, he assembled on Parnassus the seven sages of Greece, among whom were Cato, Seneca, Thales, Solon, and others. Each of the sages made his proposals. Thales, who thought that hypocrisy and deceit were the primary causes of evil among humanity, proposed that a little window be drilled in people's hearts so as to bring about candor and transparency in their relationships. At once an objection was raised: if each person could see into the hearts of the princes who ruled this world, it would be impossible for them to govern! Thales's proposal was immediately shelved.

Solon felt that disorders were provoked by the hates and jealousies raging among humans. Thus, he counseled that charity, love, and tolerance be spread among them. He added that if property could be more equally divided, life would be better. But once again the critics protested and the sages of Parnassus called Solon's proposal "utopian." Cato proposed an extreme solution: a new flood to remove in a single stroke all "evildoers." Finally, after everyone had expressed their ideas, the project of Apollo's universal reform ended up in regulating the price of beans and anchovies. Through this satire, Traiano Boccalini illustrated how institutions—whether re-

ligious, political, or philosophical—are incapable of making things evolve for the better.<sup>1</sup>

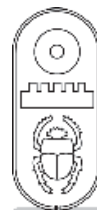
### The *Fama Fraternitatis*

The pessimism of this text, which despaired of seeing peace restored to Europe, was followed by the optimism of the first Rosicrucian manifesto. After the initial text, the *Fama Fraternitatis* itself appears. Although this piece of literature is quite short, constituting some thirty pages in a book which includes a total of 147 pages, the *Fama* constitutes the heart of the first Rosicrucian manifesto. In this work, the brothers of the Fraternity of the Rose Cross appealed to the rulers, clerics, and scholars of Europe. After having paid their respects to their progressive era which had witnessed so many discoveries contributed by enlightened minds, they emphasized that, unfortunately, these discoveries had not brought the light

and peace for which humanity had hoped. They blamed the scholars, who were more concerned with obtaining personal success than with placing their abilities in service to humanity. Likewise, they pointed to those who clung to the old doctrines—such as the supporters of the pope<sup>2</sup> and the defenders of Aristotle's philosophy and Galen's medicine—in other words, those who refused to question authority. The Rosicrucian brothers discussed the conflict



*Fama Fraternitatis*. First Rosicrucian manifesto, 1614.



between theology, physics, and mathematics. Their position was similar to that of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, especially in his definition of magic, which he described as being genuine science. At the beginning of the first book of his *De Occulta Philosophia*, Agrippa presented magic as being the acme of all science, since all philosophy is divided into three branches of knowledge which complement one another: physics, mathematics, and theology.<sup>3</sup> Following this “inventory” of their era, the Rosicrucian brothers proposed to offer their contemporaries a regenerated knowledge. This knowledge of infallible axioms came to them from Father C.R., the founder of their fraternity, who laid down the basis for a universal reform many years before.

Who was this mysterious individual, Father C.R.? The answer to this question occupies the remainder of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. It involves Christian Rosenkreuz, a young German, who, we are informed by the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, was born in 1378. At sixteen years of age, he accompanied a brother of a convent who was in charge of his education on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. This journey to the East was a true initiatic journey for young Christian. But on their way to Jerusalem, his companion died in Cyprus. According to mythology, Cyprus is the birthplace of Aphrodite (Venus), whose union with Hermes gave birth to Hermaphrodite, an androgynous child. This allusion to Cyprus in Christian Rosenkreuz’s biography is replete with alchemical connotations, and served as the prelude for themes later developed in the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*.

### Arabia Felix

Despite the death of his companion, Christian Rosenkreuz decided to continue his journey. However, his destination was changed and he went instead to Damcar. Contrary to what has sometimes been stat-

ed, Damcar is not Damascus, but rather a town in southwestern Arabia, as indicated by Mercator’s *Atlas* (1585). Damcar was also mentioned by Abraham Ortelius in his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* as a city located in Arabia Felix. This region, celebrated for its incense, was the home of Ismaelism. It was known to have preserved the *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>4</sup> In Damcar there was a university with no fewer than 500 students.<sup>5</sup> Under the direction of the Brothers of Basra, an important encyclopedia was compiled here that gathered together all forms of knowledge – both scientific and esoteric. In the twentieth century, Henry Corbin, quite intrigued by this branch of Islam strongly tinged by esotericism, took delight in imagining a dialogue between the Brothers of the R.C. and the “Brothers of a Pure Heart” of Basra. He detected in the two fraternities a similar purpose.<sup>6</sup> A little earlier Émile Dantinne made comments along the same lines.<sup>7</sup> While at Damcar, Christian Rosenkreuz associated with magi who transmitted to him important knowledge, particularly in physics and mathematics, thus enabling him to transcribe the *Book M*—i.e., the *Book of the World*—into Latin. After three years of study, Christian set out once more on his journeys. After a brief sojourn in Egypt, he arrived in Fez, Morocco.

### Fez, City of Gold

According to the sixteenth century geographer Leo Africanus, Fez was an important intellectual center. Students flocked to this city, which possessed magnificent libraries. Since the Umayyad era (661 CE), its schools taught the alchemy of Abu-Abdallah, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, and Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber), as well as the magic and astrology of Ali-ash-Shabramallishi.<sup>8</sup> Leo Africanus stated that at Fez a form of theurgical magic was practiced which, beginning with a sort of circular-pantacle traced on the ground, allowed the



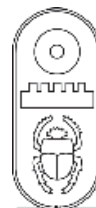
Route depicting the journey of Christian Rosenkreuz.

practitioner to approach invisible worlds. The *Fama Fraternitatis* informs us that the magic of these inhabitants of Fez was not altogether pure. Nevertheless, what made a lasting impression on Christian Rosenkreuz was the spirit of sharing which reigned among the scholars in this city, in contrast to the situation in Germany, where most of the learned tended to keep their secrets closely guarded.<sup>9</sup> In Fez, Christian Rosenkreuz perfected his knowledge of the harmony of the historical cycles. He also understood that, as every seed contains a tree in embryo, in similar fashion the microcosm (human being) contains the macrocosm with all its components (nature, language, religion, medicine). The authors of the *Fama Fraternitatis* had taken this vision from Paracelsus, who, in his *Philosophia Sagax*, stated: "...in this sense, a human being also is a seed and the world is its apple, and what's true for the seed in the apple is equally true for humans in the world surrounding them."<sup>10</sup>

After having completed his studies in mathematics, physics, and magic, Christian Rosenkreuz became acquainted with the "elementary inhabitants who revealed unto him many of their secrets." The latter were probably those which Paracelsus described in his *Treatise on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, Salamanders, and Other Beings*. These beings, which Paracelsus was said to have seen, did not descend from Adam, although they had a human appearance, but had a different origin. By contacting them, humans could learn the secrets of Nature.

### The House of the Holy Spirit

After this initiatic journey to the East, Christian Rosenkreuz returned to Europe. On his way home he stopped in Spain to share with Spanish scholars what he had learned on his journey. He soon realized that these scholars did not wish to have their knowledge questioned. To the authors of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the scholars of Spain symbolized those who are re-



stricted to a doctrine which they do not wish to have questioned at the risk of seeing their authority disputed.

Disappointed by the closed attitude of the Spanish scholars, and having been met with similar criticism in other countries, Christian Rosenkreuz returned to Germany. There, he undertook to put into writing the sum of learning which he had obtained in the East. His aim was to create a society capable of educating the princes of Europe, for they would become the guiding lights. After five years of work, Christian Rosenkreuz surrounded himself with the first group of three disciples to assist him in his projects. Thus was born the Rosicrucian Fraternity. Together, the Master and his disciples wrote the first part of the *Book M*. Then the fraternity was enlarged with four more brothers. They then moved into a new building called the *Domus Sancti Spiritus*—"House of the Holy Spirit." The fraternity remained discreet and Christian Rosenkreuz died in 1484 at the age of 106 years. In 1604, long after the death of the first group of Rosicrucians, the brothers accidentally rediscovered the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz as they were doing work on their building.

Over the door of his tomb appeared the inscription: "After 120 years I shall open." In this cavern, conceived as a "summary of the universe," they discovered a quantity of scientific objects, heretofore unknown, and some texts containing all the knowledge gathered by their Master.

### The Tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz

The discovery of a mysterious tomb holding many manuscripts is a frequent theme in alchemical literature. The example of Basil Valentine, involving a manuscript discovered under the altar of a church in Erfurt is well known. The discovery of the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz recalls that of Apollonius of Tyana, who had discovered in the tomb of Hermes Trismegistus the fa-

mous Emerald Tablet and a book explaining the secrets of creation.<sup>11</sup> This symbolic system referred to the concept wherein one may "visit the bowels of the Earth; by rectifying, thou shalt find the hidden Stone." Gerhard Dorn, in his *Congeries Paracelsicae Chemiae* (1581), gives this meaning to *Vitriol*,<sup>12</sup> a word which is likewise closely linked with Hermes Trismegistus, since it is associated with an alchemical drawing entitled "The Emerald Tablet." Moreover, the Emerald Tablet which Hermes holds in his hands seems to foreshadow the *Book T* of Christian Rosenkreuz.

The room where the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz was discovered took the form of a cupola or heptahedron. According to Frances A. Yates, the appearance of the tomb may have been suggested by the portal depicted in Plate IV of the *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* by Heinrich Khunrath (1603).<sup>13</sup> Placed in the center of a cavern, the tomb in which the perfectly preserved body of Christian Rosenkreuz reposed had a circular form. The tomb was covered by a brass plaque on which enigmatic phrases were engraved. One of them proclaimed: "The vacuum exists nowhere." Along with other meanings, this phrase recalls a dialogue between Hermes and Asclepius in Treatise II of the *Corpus Hermeticum*... The third Rosicrucian manifesto includes many allusions to texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

### Paracelsus and Rosenkreuz

Especially noteworthy among the various writings represented in the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz were *Book T*, which he held in his hands, and what is called the *Vocabulary of Theoph: Par. Ho*. The latter text is probably one of the vocabularies of Paracelsus, in particular the *Dictionarium Theophrasti Paracelsi, Continens obscurorum vocabulorum* ... published in 1584 by Gerhard Dorn, a disciple of Paracelsus. It may be noted that Paracelsus is the only



Paracelsus.

author referred to in the *Fama Fraternalitatis*. Moreover, many of the themes developed in this manifesto come from his works or those of his disciples. The *Book M*, which we mentioned previously, refers directly to his ideas. We will not delve into this subject here. Nevertheless, we need to point out the concept of Paracelsus's alchemy found in this first manifesto, particularly in the way it viewed the Great Work – namely, as being a “preliminary work of little importance” in regard to the spiritual procedure of the Rosicrucians. By this stand, the Rose Cross dissociated itself from the alchemical methods pervading Germany in this era that gave rise to considerable excesses.

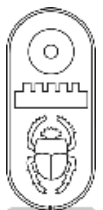
After having gathered together the treasures of learning found in Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb, the Rosicrucian brothers closed it again. Fortified by this legacy based upon immutable axioms, they felt ready to bring to fruition the “divine and humane general reform” previously envisioned by their Master. The *Fama Fraternalitatis* reveals that, like the brothers who had discovered a treasure of knowledge after having smashed the wall which concealed the opening of the tomb, Europe would open itself to a new era by adopting new

knowledge after having set aside old beliefs that acted like walls to its advancement. However, as the *Fama Fraternalitatis* states, the knowledge which the Rosicrucians proposed was “... not a new invention, but as Adam after his fall hath received it.” Thus, it involves restoring a lost knowledge that some people are endeavoring to perpetuate.

The first manifesto gave the names of various individuals who were the transmitters of this Primordial Tradition. These names recall those mentioned by Marsilio Ficino in a similar context.

### Adam Haselmayer

The *Fama Fraternalitatis* ends with an invitation to the people of science and to the sovereigns of Europe to join the Rosicrucian brotherhood by sharing in its reforming knowledge. However, this appeal is peculiar inasmuch as it specifies that “... although at this time we make no mention either of our names, or meetings, yet nevertheless everyone's opinion shall assuredly come to our hands, in what language so ever it be, nor anybody shall fail, who so gives but his name to speak with some of us, either by word of mouth, or else if there be some other let [i.e., issued] in writing.” This statement indicates in effect that the house of the Rosicrucians “shall forever remain untouched, undestroyed, and hidden to the wicked world...” This message was heard and the open letters to the Rosicrucians were printed at various places in Europe, such as the one that was published at the end of the first Rosicrucian manifesto. The text of this letter is what Adam Haselmayer (1560-?) published in 1612 with the title of *Answer to the Laudable Fraternity of Rosicrucian Theosophists*, after having read a manuscript of the manifesto which was circulating in the Tyrol in 1610, some four years before it was published. Many authors have considered Haselmayer to be an imaginary individual. This is not the



case, as proved by Carlos Gilly, who, after patient research, succeeded in reconstructing the biography of this Paracelsian, who was a great collector of alchemical manuscripts.<sup>14</sup>

Adam Haselmayer was so enthusiastic about the *Fama Fraternitatis* that he asked Archduke Maximilian to subsidize research on the Rosicrucians. The text of his *Answer to the Rosicrucian Manifesto* is strongly influenced by the prophecy of the Lion of the Septentrion and by Joachimism. He made the Rosicrucians the forecasters of the Age of the Holy Spirit and felt that they were “those that God has chosen to spread the Theophrastical and divine eternal truth.” He announced that 1613 would mark the end of time and that the Great judgment would take place in 1614. He thus thought that attending church was useless – an attitude which led him to be suspected of heresy. Refusing to retract such statements, Haselmayer was condemned to the galleys in October 1612. He remained there four and a half years, but during this period he seemed to have enjoyed special treatment, because he remained in contact by letter with many other individuals equally fond of alchemy. According to Carlos Gilly, Adam Haselmayer’s enthusiasm was excessive and was not in full accord with Rosicrucian philosophy.

As noted previously, it was in this context of moral crisis that the first manifesto advocated a program of reform in which esotericism held the place of honor.

The Rosicrucians placed themselves in the mainstream of Renaissance esotericism, to which were added some specifically Christian mystical preoccupations. We may also note that this first manifesto did not hesitate to distance itself from the “puffers” [show-offs] of esotericism, just as it did with all ossified religions. The Rosicrucians wished to move closer to science, esotericism, and mysticism in an optimistic project of reform strongly characterized by Paracelsianism. In placing itself squarely within the Primordial Tradition,

as it was defined in the Renaissance, the Rosicrucians relegated Egypt to a secondary role. The enigmatic Hermes Trismegistus, whose legitimacy was compromised by Isaac Casaubon in 1614, disappeared in favor of a more human personality, namely, Christian Rosenkreuz.

### The *Confessio Fraternitatis*

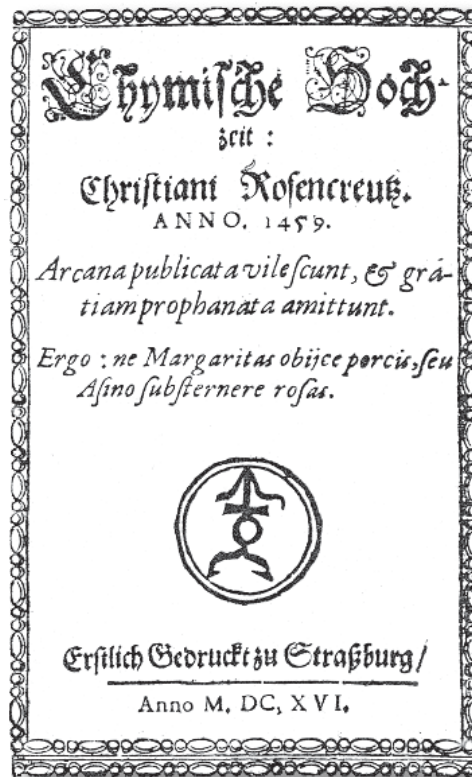
In 1615, the year following the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, Wilhelm Wessel published a second manifesto in Kassel, Germany. Just as the previous manifesto had been supplemented by the *Advertisements from Parnassus*, this second manifesto was accompanied by a text entitled *Secretioris Philosophiae consideratio*



Title page of *Confessio Fraternitatis*.

*brevis a Philippo a Gabella.* The full title of the latter translated into English reads: “A Brief Consideration of the More Secret Philosophy, written by Philip a Gabella, a student of philosophy, published for the first time with the updated Confession of the R.C. Fraternity.”<sup>15</sup> The author of this text remains anonymous. In the introduction, he points out that this work involves a philosophical treatise, after noting “that it is embellished by the actions, studies, and knowledge of the R.C. Fraternity.” A short preface follows, signed “Frater R.C.,” wherein the author indicates that this “Brief Consideration” was derived entirely from Hermes, Plato, Seneca, and other philosophers.

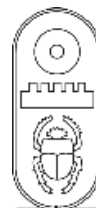
The first manifesto announced the forthcoming publication of a “Confession” in which thirty-seven reasons for which the Order exists would be set forth. The second manifesto did not provide these reasons, but provided information that attempted to make the *Fama* more clear by reformulating “anything too deep, hidden, and set down over dark in the *Fama*.” *The Confessio Fraternitatis*, or the *Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the most honorable Order of the Rosy Cross, written to the Learned of Europe*, was divided into fourteen sections, although later editions did not always observe this division. In this text, the Rosicrucians emphasize that they possess the antidote for the disease which gnaws at science and philosophy, because they hold the key to all knowledge, whether it be the arts, philosophy, theology, or medicine. They also give new particulars as to the sources of their knowledge, indicating that they do not simply come from investigations carried out by Christian Rosenkreuz, but also from those revelations he obtained by divine illumination brought about through the mediation of angels.



Title page of the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*.

### The Fortress of Truth

The *Confessio Fraternitatis* declared that the sages of the city of Damcar would set an example for Rosicrucians, “...according unto which example also the government shall be instituted in Europe.” These individuals were said to have a plan established for this purpose by Christian Rosenkreuz. As in the first manifesto, the Rosicrucians invited the people of their era to join their fraternity and proposed that these seekers unite with them for the purpose of constructing a “new fortress of truth.” They promised health, omniscience, and inner calm to everyone who wanted to be initiated into the heritage of all of Nature’s bounties. However, they warned those who were “blinded with the glistening of gold,” and who wanted to join their fraternity with the aim of obtaining material profits, that they would never be admitted.





## The *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*

The *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*, a book that is considered to be the third Rosicrucian manifesto, made its appearance in 1616. It was printed in Strasbourg by Lazarus Zetzner, the publisher of *Theatrum chemicum* and numerous other alchemical treatises. This work differs considerably from the first two manifestos. First of all, although it was likewise published anonymously, it is known that Johann Valentin Andreae was the author. Secondly, it is unusual in form in that it is presented as an alchemical novel and as an autobiography of Christian Rosenkreuz.

### The Story

Briefly, here is the story. (For an in-depth description of the story of the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*, see the *Rosicrucian Digest* Alchemy issue - Volume 91, Number 1, 2013 at [http://www.rosicrucian.org/publications/digest/digest1\\_2013/table\\_of\\_contents.html](http://www.rosicrucian.org/publications/digest/digest1_2013/table_of_contents.html).) Christian Rosenkreuz, an elderly man who is eighty-one years old, describes his adventures over a seven-day period in 1459. After being summoned to a royal wedding by a winged messenger, Christian leaves his retreat, situated on a mountain slope. After various incidents, he arrives at the summit of a high mountain, and then passes through a succession of three gates. Once within, he and the other people who have been invited are put to a test in which they are weighed on scales. If they are judged virtuous enough, they are allowed to attend the wedding. The select few receive a Golden Fleece<sup>16</sup> and are presented to the royal family.

After being brought before the royal family, Christian Rosenkreuz describes the presentation of a play. This is followed by a banquet, after which the royal family is decapitated. The coffins containing the corpses are loaded onto seven ships bound

for a distant island. Arriving at their destination, they are placed in the Tower of Olympus, a curious seven-story edifice.

For the remainder of the narrative we witness the strange ascent of the guests through the seven stories of the tower. At each level, under the direction of a maiden and an old man, they participate in alchemical operations. They carry out a distillation of the royal skins from which a liquid is obtained that is afterwards transformed into a white egg. From this a bird is hatched that is fattened before being decapitated and reduced to ashes. From the residue, the guests fabricate two human-shaped figurines. These homunculi are fed until they become the size of adults. A final operation communicates to them the spark of life. The two homunculi are none other than the king and queen who have been restored to life. Shortly afterwards, they welcome their guests into the Order of the Golden Stone, and all return to the castle. However, Christian Rosenkreuz, at the time of his first day in the castle, committed the indiscretion of entering the mausoleum where the sleeping Venus reposes. His inquisitiveness condemns him to become the guardian of the castle. The sentence does not seem to be executed, because the narrative suddenly ends with the return of Christian Rosenkreuz to his cottage. The author leaves us to understand that the hermit, who is eighty-one years old, does not have many more years to live. This last statement seems to contradict the *Fama Fraternalitatis*, which claimed that Christian Rosenkreuz lived to the venerable age of 106. Moreover, other aspects of the narrative depict a Christian Rosenkreuz who is quite at odds with the one presented in the earlier manifestos.

### The Sources of The Rosicrucian Manifestos

Countless scholars have speculated as to who wrote the first two Rosicrucian

manifestos and what the sources were that they drew upon. We may note here the influence of the medieval era, as the infallible axiom to which the manifestos refer recalls the *Ars Magna* of Raymond Lully, whose works were published in 1598 by Lazarus Zetzner, the famed publisher of Strasbourg.<sup>17</sup> The Rhenish mystic had also considerably influenced the authors of the early Rosicrucian writings, particularly by way of Johann Arndt, who shall be discussed later. However, the *Fama* and the *Confessio* draw essentially from three currents of the tradition: Paracelsianism, contemporary Neo-Joachimism, and the Hermeticism of the Renaissance.<sup>18</sup>

It is not by accident that Paracelsus is the only author praised by the manifestos, as he constituted a primary source for the ideas presented in these writings. The need for sharing the knowledge acquired from various parts of the world, the fact that man is a microcosm, the reference to the *Liber Mundi*, and to the dwellers of elementary worlds — or more particularly, the metaphor of the seed — are themes in the manifestos originating with Paracelsus. Let us recall that in Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb there appeared a book called the *Vocabular of Theoph: Par. Ho.*, identified as being one of the dictionaries of Paracelsian terms published by the seventeenth century. Such influences are perfectly understandable in that Paracelsian texts were widely read during the time of the manifestos. Between 1589 and 1591 Johann Huser had published Paracelsus's complete works, following the enormous task of researching his manuscripts. A second edition was then issued in ten volumes between 1603 and 1605 by Lazarus Zetzner, the future editor of Johann Valentin Andreae's works.

Neo-Joachimism is ever-present in the manifestos. The theories of Joachim of Fiore experienced a revival of interest in the sixteenth century, as had the Prophecy

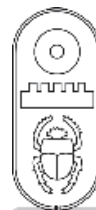
of Elijah or that of the Lion of the Septentrion — along with the many predictions of channeling the people's aspiration for a renewal — a reformation that allowed the sixteenth century's numerous conflicts to be calmed. Renaissance Hermeticism is also present in Rosicrucian texts, particularly in connection with alchemy. However, it should be noted that the Kabbalah, both Jewish and Christian, occupies a minor role here. Other influences are equally apparent, such as those regarding time, which is presented as being cyclic. These texts could very well refer to Ismaelism, with Damcar being one of the sources.

### The Tübingen Circle

The study of the ideas expressed in the manifestos allows us to hypothesize about their authors. Most present-day experts agree that they were not the work of one person, but rather of a small group of students and scholars living in Tübingen, a university town in Württemberg, Germany. This group was called the "Tübingen Circle." It was formed around 1608 and consisted of about thirty individuals who were passionate about alchemy, Kabbalah, astrology, naometry, and Christian mysticism. The most important individuals included Johann Arndt, Tobias Hess, Abraham Hölzel, the pastor Vischer, Christoph Besold, and Wilhelm von Wense. They conceived the project of another reformation, contemplating those of Luther and Calvin, which were judged to be inadequate. Two of these scholars, Tobias Hess and Abraham Hölzel, were previously involved in a movement for circulating esoteric and mystical works among the faculty of the university.

### Johann Arndt

Johann Arndt (1555-1621), considered by Andreae to be his spiritual father, was the group's mentor. A pastor, theologian, physician, alchemist, and keen



follower of Johannes Tauler and Valentin Weigel, he was the author of a commentary on the plates of Heinrich Khunrath's *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*. According to a letter written on January 29, 1621, to the Duke of Brunswick, his desire was to lead students and researchers away from polemical theology and to bring them back to a living faith, to a practice of piety. He was the popularizer of *The Imitation of Christ*. His mystical tendencies are noticeable in his sermons on the Gospels or on Luther's *Small Catechism*, and in his collection of prayers entitled *Paradies Gärtlein Aller christlichen Tugenden* (1612). He wrote a devotional text entitled *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (Four Books on True Christianity, 1605-1610) that was one of the most widely read until the nineteenth century. Both a mystic and an alchemist, he attempted to integrate the Paracelsian heritage with medieval theology, and in this latter work, he developed the idea of an inner alchemy, of a spiritual renaissance.

Roland Edighoffer has shown that an entire passage of the *Confessio Fraternitatis* discussing the Book of Nature is taken almost word for word from the final volume of Arndt's *Four Books on True Christianity*.<sup>19</sup> In his *De Antiqua Philosophia* (1595), Arndt emphasizes that wisdom is found not in speculation, but in the practical – a concept also found in the manifestos. He is considered to be one of the instigators of Pietism. In 1691, Johannes Kelpius and his followers took Arndt's works with them as they left for the New World. According to a letter from Johann Arndt found among the papers of the theosophist Christophe Hirsch, Johann Valentin Andreae acknowledged having written the *Fama Fraternitatis* with thirty other people. Another letter, sent by Johann Valentin Andreae to his friend John Amos Comenius, made the same claim. However, some questions have been raised regarding the authenticity of these letters.<sup>20</sup>

Tobias Hess (1558-1614) was one of the most important members of the Tübingen Circle – perhaps even its instigator. His preoccupations synthesized perfectly the various elements presented in the manifestos. Hess, who was a member of Tübingen University, a Paracelsian physician, Kabbalist, philosopher, and admirer of Simon Studion, Julius Sperber, and Joachim of Fiore, probably played a fundamental role in drafting the *Fama* and *Confessio*. In 1605, he was accused of practicing naometry and continued to promote millennialism in certain publications where he expressed himself to be in favor of worldwide reform. The *Fama* repeated his idea which basically declares: "It is wrong to claim that what is true in philosophy is false in theology." Hess was also accused of being an instigator of a secret society. Even though his accusers did not provide the name of this society, it is probable that they were referring to the Rosicrucian Order, whose first manifesto was circulating at this time in manuscript form.

Tobias Hess was associated with Oswald Croll, a disciple of Paracelsus. Due to his medical talents, Hess had healed Andreae of a terrible fever, and the latter admired him immensely. Hess died in 1614, just before the publication of the manifestos, and his funeral oration was delivered by Andreae. This text was printed afterwards, and curiously enough, as Roland Edighoffer notes, it included the following words in italic type, *Tobias Hess* and *Fama* – the only ones in the book – as though to emphasize a link between the two. An astonishing fact should be mentioned: In 1616, Andreae published anonymously *Theca gladii spiritus* (The Sheath of the Glory of the Spirit), indicating in the book's preface that it was authored by Tobias Hess. Interestingly enough, forty-eight passages of this book are taken from

the *Confessio*! In his autobiography Andreae would later acknowledge that all of the text found in the *Theca* was his. Can we not conclude from this that Hess was the author of either a part or the entirety of the *Confessio Fraternitatis*?

### Johann Valentin Andreae

As early as 1699, in his *Unparteyische Kirchen und Ketzer Historie* (History of the Church and of Heretics), Gottfried Arnold claimed that Johann Valentin Andreae was the author of the Rosicrucian manifestos. For a long time this theory was considered to be authoritative. In Andreae's case we are dealing with a particularly noteworthy individual whom we will discuss in further detail when we touch upon the third manifesto, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*. However, Andreae took pains to distance himself from the Rosicrucians, and in one of his books,

*Menippus* (1617), he speaks harshly about the Rosicrucian Fraternity when he deals with *ludibrium* —in other words, farce or mockery. Nevertheless, as Frances A. Yates indicates, these terms are not forceful pejoratives when spoken by Andreae, because he attached considerable importance to the moral influences of stories and the theater.<sup>21</sup> His literary output likewise testifies to this interest.<sup>22</sup> It should be added that throughout his life, he did his best to organize societies or associations corresponding in many ways to the project presented in the manifestos. It appears that Andreae basically took an official position in opposition to the manifestos so as to protect his religious career. It may be said that unforeseen circumstances led to the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis* at the exact moment when, after a series of difficulties, Andreae finally obtained the post of deacon at Vaihingen and married Elisabeth Grüninger, the daughter of a pastor and niece of a Lutheran prelate.

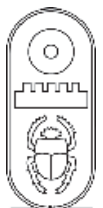
Much speculation has swirled around the subject of the possible authors of the manifestos; however, none of them is entirely satisfactory. Although the “author” of the early manifestos has kept his secret well, Tobias Hess and Johann Valentin Andreae probably played a fundamental role in developing these works.

### An Initiatic Narrative

Let us return to Christian Rosenkreuz, the individual presented by the manifestos as the founder of Rosicrucianism. Are we dealing here with a real or a mythical individual? As many have stated, these texts do not recount the biography of one person, because they involve initiatic narratives that present many facets. What can be generally said is that through the travels of Christian Rosenkreuz, his sojourns in the Arab lands and then in Spain, we may rediscover the advances which various esoteric sciences made when passing from the



Johann Valentin Andreae.



East to West. These sciences, after having experienced further development in Europe, were to come into full bloom under Paracelsus. After his death, Valentin Weigel and other individuals succeeded in rectifying any flaws and enriched them with the mysticism of the Rhineland and Flanders. What Rosicrucians proposed was to recover this heritage and include it in the body of knowledge of an era that they envisioned as being the dawn of a new age.

Many elements contribute in proving that the manifestos are symbolic narratives. For example, the important dates in Christian Rosenkreuz's life correspond to significant historical events. The year of his birth, 1378, corresponds to the year of the Great Schism of the West in which Avignon and Rome were at loggerheads. And that of his death, 1484, corresponds to the year that Martin Luther—the individual who attempted to reform Christianity—was born. Although it is now thought that Luther was born in 1483, his own mother wavered between 1483 and 1484, and Luther himself opted for 1484. There exists an astrological tradition based on the studies of Paulus von Middleburg and Johannes Lichtenberger, who saw his birth sign in the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that took place in Scorpio in 1484. Equally significant is that the writings relating to Paracelsus's texts were placed in Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb in 1484. But keep in mind that Paracelsus could not have written anything yet, seeing that he was born in 1493! The theme of the discovery of a tomb is a recurring symbol in the tradition, and we will have occasion to return to this subject later.

Only one step separates symbol from invention, and certain authors do not hesitate to cross the threshold. Several historians have pointed out that the authors of the manifestos did not need to adapt the biographies of real persons to invent Christian Rosenkreuz. Paul Arnold has shown

that several mystics bear uncanny similarities to Christian Rosenkreuz.<sup>23</sup> First there is Joachim of Fiore, who undertook the foundation of a fraternity after his travels to the Orient. Then there are Rulman Merswin (1307-1382), the founder of the Friends of God,<sup>24</sup> and Gerhard Groot (1340-1384), the creator of the Brothers of the Common Life. The latter group promoted the *Devotio Moderna*, a spiritual movement which emphasized the inner experience. The most beautiful flowering of this movement is seen in *The Imitation of Christ*, a book which had considerable influence on Rosicrucians.<sup>25</sup> Paul Arnold's observations are of interest in that the parallels between these personalities and Christian Rosenkreuz are striking, even though notable differences do exist. In addition, many of the ideas promulgated by these mystics are found in the manifestos.

It is possible to view such matters from another angle as the manifestos can also be read as the account of a spiritual experience. They fall within an indisputable historical context, but, as with all initiatic accounts, they are associated with a metahistory that goes beyond a mere chronology. This is where we leave the historical realm and place ourselves on another level, one whose characteristics need to be defined so that we may understand the meaning of the Rosicrucian manifestos.



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## ENDNOTES

1. A French edition of this text was published in 1615 under the name *Les cent premières nouvelles et aduis de Parnasse par Traian Buccalin Romain, où sous admirable inventions, gentilles metaphors, et plaisans discours sont traictees toutes matieres politiques d'Etat de grande importance et preceptes mauraux choisis et tirez de tour les bons autheurs*, published in French by Thomas de Fougasses, chez A. Perier, rue Saint-Jacques, au Compas, Paris. Chapter 77 occupies pages 457 to 515. The first German translation dates from 1644. The extract represented in the *Fama Fraternitatis* was probably translated into German by Wilhelm Bidenbach, a friend of Tobias Hess. The Rosicrucians of Tübingen admired Traiano Boccalini. Christoph Besold quoted him in *Opus politicum*, and Johann Valentin Andreae's *Christian Mythology* shows his influence.
2. Thomas Vaughan mistakenly translated this as "Porphyry," rather than the "Pope" or "Popery," which the German manuscripts specify.
3. *La Magie naturelle*, Book I of Philosophie Occulte, translation and commentaries by Jean Servier (Paris: Berg, 1982) pp. 32-37. English edition: Agrippa von Nettesheim, Heinrich Cornelius. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy Written by Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, completely annotated with modern commentary*. James Freake, translator. Donald Tyson, editor (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1993).
4. Concerning this matter, see Chapter I, "The Sabaeans."
5. The first edition of the *Fama* reads "Damascus," but the erratum in the same work specifies that it should be "Damcar" instead. *L'Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (Leyden-Paris: 1965) Vol.II, p. 224, calls this town Dhamar.
6. Henry Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabi*. (Paris: 1955; reprint 1993, Aubier) p. 20. English editions: *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. Ralph Manheim, translator (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); and *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* with a new preface by Harold Bloom. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).
7. Émile Dantinne, "De l'origine islamique de la Rose-Croix," in *Inconnues*, No. 4, 1950, pp.3-17.
8. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Vol. II.
9. For this study, two editions of the manifestos have been used. The first is that published by Diffusion Rosicrucienne in 1995 under the general title of *La Trilogie des Rose-Croix*. This French edition is based on the English translation that Thomas Vaughan made in 1652 from a German manuscript then circulating in England. We feel it would be useful to also refer the reader to Bernard Gorceix's translation, *La Bible des Rose-Croix* (Paris: PUF, 1970), which is based directly on the original German. The quotations in this edition are taken from this edition.
10. Roland Edighoffer, "Les Rose-Croix et Paracelse," *Aries*, No. 19, 1998, p. 71, from which we have taken the translation of Paracelsus's text.
11. See Chapter 1, "The Emerald Tablet."
12. *Visita Interiora Terra Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*—V.I.T.R.I.O.L.
13. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London/New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1986) facing p. 48.
14. Carlos Gilly, *Adam Haselmayer, der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer* (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 1994).
15. Papus provided a French translation of this text at the end of his *Traité élémentaire de sciences occultes* (Paris, 1903).
16. The Golden Fleece is a symbol which designated the Great Work. A fascinating work regarding this subject was written by Antoine Faivre, *Toison d'or et Alchimie* (Paris: Archè 1990). English edition: *The Golden Fleece and Alchemy* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).
17. He was the publisher of many alchemical texts, including the celebrated *Theatrum Chemicum* (6 vols.), the *Complete Works of Paracelsus*, the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* (10 vols.), and various other works by Johann Valentin Andreae, Christoph Besold, etc.
18. Antoine Faivre, *Das Erbe des Christian Rosenkreutz* (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1988). This text was repeated in *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), tome II, pp. 263-289. English edition: *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
19. Roland Edighoffer, *Les Rose-Croix et la crise de conscience européenne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Dervy, 1998) pp. 296-297.
20. See Paul Arnold, *Histoire des Rose-Croix et les origines de la franc-maçonnerie* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1990), pp. 120-122, who considers this information to be probable despite some misgivings.
21. See *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1978) p. 50.
22. Roland Edighoffer has done a detailed study of this author's work in *Rose-Croix et société idéale selon Johann Valentin Andreae* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Arma Artisk, 1982).
23. *Histoire des Rose-Croix...*, *op. cit.*, chap. V, pp. 136-156.
24. For more information about this group, see Bernard Gorceix, *Les Amis de Dieu en Allemagne au siècle de Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984) and Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, *op. cit.*, book VII.
25. *The Imitation of Christ* (1471) by Thomas à Kempis is, after the Bible, one of the most widely read books among Christians. Theophilus Schweighardt (Daniel Møgling), in *Speculum sopicum Rhodo-Stauroticum...* (1618), said that when reading Thomas à Kempis one is "already a semi-Rosicrucian."

