

# **The Foundation and Content of the Rosicrucian Manifestoes: A Brief Commentary**

by

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## **GENERAL OUTLINE**

1. Merging Currents of Esoteric Thought
2. The Rosicrucian Manifestos
3. The Fama Fraternitatis
4. The Confessio Fraternitatis

The historian Frances Yates writes in her book *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* the following: "Rosicrucian in this purely historical sense represents a phase ... in which the Renaissance Hermetic-Cabalistic tradition has received the influx of another Hermetic tradition, that of alchemy. The 'Rosicrucian manifestos' are an expression of this phase, representing, as they do, the combination of Magia, Cabala, and Alchymia, as the influence making for the new enlightenment."

### **Merging Currents of Esoteric Thought**

**Gnosticism** (Greek *gnosis*, "knowledge") represents a broad variety of spiritual teachings that spread throughout the Hellenized Near East of the first few centuries of the Common Era. Although Gnosticism had a Christian veneer, it was transparent, as these teachings were an obvious blend of Jewish, Iranian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and other Oriental traditions as well as Greek concepts (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). The major theme centered around the idea that there was a hidden truth, a *gnosis* that could be realized - and by this realization, the soul could be liberated. "The goal of Gnostic striving is the release of the inner man from the bonds of the world and his return to his native realm of light." (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)

The Cathars were a Gnostic sect of Christianity lest anyone think that the Gnostics all died out after the first few centuries A.D., especially after the Church gained prominence in Europe and declared them heretic. Remember the Albigensian Crusade, ordered by Pope Innocent III, against the Cathars in 1208. This was in Northern Spain and Southern France where one of Europe's most enlightened cultures was destroyed in about 40 years.

**Hermeticism** represents a group of writings probably to be dated between A.D. 100 and 300 and written in and around Alexandria. "They are an amalgam of Greek philosophy, particularly Platonic, ..." The writings were attributed to Hermes, supposedly an Egyptian priest. "Much of it is concerned with astrology, alchemy, and other occult sciences, but there is also a philosophical Hermetic literature." (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) The writings include the collection of treatises referred to as the *Corpus Hermeticum* and also a treatise known as the *Asclepius*. These writings propound a "philosophical-religious

approach to the cosmos, involving regenerative experiences and ... religious ecstasy." (Encyclopedia) About 1460, parts of the Corpus were brought to and translated in Florencia. It is just recently the importance of its impact upon the Renaissance has been realized. Many of the great thinkers of this Era were highly influenced by these teachings.

**Cabala** (Qabala or Kabbalah) which means literally "a tradition" or "to receive" as in from mouth to ear. That is, an oral tradition handed down. Cabala is a type and development of Jewish mysticism. It is mainly a mysticism that gives a type of "theosophical formulation to the doctrines of the Jewish religion, particularly those concerned with creation, revelation, and redemption. This occult system structures and, in part, fossilizes individual intuitions of divine reality in terms of the culture in which it arose. Typically, the purpose of the complicated structuring of these formulated intuitions is to supply a focus in contemplation by which the Cabalist can recover the untarnished brightness of direct mystical awareness." (Encyclopedia of Philosophy) Although we can find traces of earlier cabalistic thought, its major emergence was in the 13th century in southern France and Spain. From there it had a major impact on Christian European thought.

**Alchemy** We can trace alchemy back to the earliest times when mankind began exploring his world and found it made up of numerous minerals and metals. He began mining and smelting and developing a Craft of taking materials from their natural state and by employing certain operations, isolated and enhanced them. Making use of copper, iron, tin, and developing brass and bronze. In the same way, different substances were found to react in specific ways with one another. Ways of extracting properties from plants and minerals were developed. The idea developed that Nature could bring things to a certain stage but that it took humankind to finish the process and perfect it.

The merging streams of thought came together, reacted and set a foundation for the emergence of Rosicrucian thought. Gnosticism with its multi-tiered universe in which the soul could gain access if it knew the correct signs and passwords, the Truth that was lost of which we only had a substitute. Hermeticism with its magical and astronomical scheme, neo-platonism, regeneration themes and Way of Return. Cabala with its number and letter mysticism, secret words, the hidden light and so on. Alchemy with its ideas of transformation, secret formulas, natural philosophy; They all converged, also with Christian mysticism, about the time of the publication of the Rosicrucian Manifestos.

### **The Rosicrucian Manifestos**

The initial Rosicrucian document, the Fama Fraternitatis, was first issued as a manuscript and circulated in Germany around 1610. Its first published edition came out in 1614. In 1615 another edition came out as well as the second Rosicrucian document: Confessio Fraternitatis. "The Fama and the Confessio tell the story of the Order and its mysterious Founder and set forth its principles and philosophy. These tiny volumes aroused great interest. Alchemists and Qabalists, magicians and astrologers, kept the German presses busy with letters and essays addressed to the mysterious Brothers. For six or seven years

the Rosicrucian question engaged the minds and pens of European occultists." (Paul F. Case, The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order)

### **Fama Fraternitatis**

The Fama is only about 12 pages long. Very short but packed full of symbolism. I will offer this arbitrary outline:

1. Highly illuminated Father, Our Brother, C.R.C., the chief and original of our Fraternity
2. The Journey of Initiation
3. The Founding of the Order
4. The Rosicrucian Agreement - six articles
5. The Discovery of the Vault of Brother C.R.C.

Begins in Germany (Brother C.R.C. was born in 1378 - according to the Confession. Brother C.R.C. is not to be confused with the main character of the so-called 3rd manifesto - The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosenkreutz. This book was written by a different author: Johann Valentine Andreae.)

By Hebrew gematria - every letter is also a number - this number is significant especially to Freemasonry:

Hiram Abiff	Ch V R M	A B I V	=	273
Hiram, King of Tyre	Ch V R M	M L K Tz V R	=	640
King Solomon	M L K sh L M H		=	465
				----
				1378

Every Greek letter is also a number - as are the old Roman letters. So every Hebrew, Greek, and Latin word adds up to some number as well. The idea is that words of the same numerical value or that have some mathematical relationship usually have a hidden or significant meaning.

Other examples: The same numeration of Hiram Abiff is: AVR GNVZ - aur ganuz - Hidden Light = 273; ABN MASV HBVNIM, Ehen masu ha-bonim (the stone refused by the builders) as in Psalm 118:22, - 273

"By reason of his poverty" (state of spiritual lack - reminds one of the 1st degree) He was cloistered at the age of 5 (learns Greek and Latin).

He leaves the cloister to go to the Holy Land with Brother P.A.L. P.A.L. dies at Cyprus, but C.R.C. travels on to Damascus (develops skill in medicine - obtained favor with the Turks -- became acquainted with the Wise Men of Damcar in Arabia)

"Cyprus is the most easterly Island In the Mediterranean Sea. Its name is the Greek root of our English noun copper, which was called the Cyprian metal because in that island were the copper mines that supplied the ancient world." (Paul Foster Case, The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order)

Copper is the metal that relates to the throat center. Remember also that Cyprus was the birthplace of Aphrodite or Venus. The Hebrews called her Ashtoreth (0 sh Th R Th) which = 1370. This number is the sum of the Hebrew words for Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty (the 3 pillars that symbolically support the Lodge.)

Decides to go to Damcar instead of Jerusalem (Age is now 16)

Learns the Arabian tongue, translates Book M (Liber Mundi into Latin - takes about a year)

Also learns more Medicine and his Mathematics)

Damcar or DMKR = 264, same as the River Jordan, IRDN.

Dam (Blood) OM = 44 as is taleh TLH (lamb, as in ram)

Kar (Lamb) KR = 220

varedi (of a rose or rosy) VRDI = 220

novus ordo seclorum = 220

Damascus means "work"

After 3 years (age 19?) he went over Sinus Arabicus into Egypt (not long there).

Sailed over the Mediterranean Sea to Fez. (where he got acquainted with the Elementary inhabitants; who revealed unto him many of their secrets, ...) Stays in Fez for 2 years.

C.R.C. then goes on to Spain. He is rejected there and He goes on to other nations of Europe.

After many painful travels & fruitless instructions, returns to Germany, builds a "fitting and neat habitation"

After 5 years, founds Order by binding 3 others with him:

Brother G.V.

Brother I.A.

Brother I.O. (very expert and learned in Cabala - R.C.'s cousin)

Builds another edifice: Sancti Spiritus (The House of the Holy Spirit)

He decides to draw and receive others into the Fraternity (four new members)

Brother R.C.

Brother B., a skillful painter

Brother G.G.

Brother P.D. their secretary

(All Germans except I.A., all bachelors and virgins; 8 in total)

They compose an Agreement of Six Articles; then 5 Brethren depart to several countries (every one being sufficiently instructed and able perfectly to discourse of secret and manifest philosophy).

Two brothers stay with Father, Brother R.C. for 1 year Then they depart; Brother I.O. (his cousin) come to be with him. Brother I.O. dies (wrote a book: Book H)

Mentions the text Manifesto where they set down their "37 reasons"  
Remember the Pythagorean Triangle (3,4,5 right triangle: angles are 90, 53, and 37)

Father R.C. dies  
born in 1378, lives 106 years, died in 1484

A Brother A. was the successor of D (presumably Brother P.D. because it mentions him as the last of the second row of succession). Brother A is of the third row and possibly the last to have known Brother C.R. The question is raised that maybe even the 2nd row might not have been admitted to all things or even reached the same level of Wisdom.

## **THE VAULT**

Statement: "Now, the true and fundamental relation of the finding out of the high-illuminated man of God, Fra. C.R.C., is this....:"

After Brother A. (aleph ?) dies (in the part of France where the Albigensians had their stronghold - where the Rose was most important as a symbol; rose or rhodon = 294 as does ekklesia "church" and Nimrod NMRD, a legendary founder of the Craft), He is succeeded by Brother N.N. (Hebrew letter `n' pronounced as noon - English letter N - corresponds to Scorpio) who becomes head of the Fraternity.

Brother N.N. ("he being a good architect") finds the Vault. Pulled the Memorial Table of Brass - connected by a great Nail stuck in a Stone in the wall which when pulled broke out and revealed a Hidden Door - above it written: "After 120 years I will open." (that would be 1604) Also 120 was the age that Moses died. Biblically man should live 120 years. In other words, once one reaches the mystic age of 120, the vault opens.

In the morning they opened the Door "and there appeared to our sight a vault of seven sides and seven corners, every side five foot broad and the height of eight feet. ...enlightened with another sun ...in the center of the ceiling. In the midst, ... was a round altar, covered with a plate of brass (copper), and thereon this engraven:"

(The 8 by 5 ratio is very significant. It relates to the Golden Proportion and the Pentagram.) "The name Jesus Christ, in the Greek language, is spelled with letters that give a total numeral value of 2368. The word Christ is spelled in Greek with letters that add up to 1480. Now, the ratio of 1480 to 2368 is exactly the ratio of 5 to 8, for 5 x 2368

is 11,840 and  $8 \times 1480$  is also 11,840." (Paul F. Case, The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order). Jesus, of course, adds up to 888.

(All these quotes are in Latin.)

"I have made this sepulchre as a single compendium of the universe."

On the brim was engraved: "Jesus is all things to me"

In the middle were four figures enclosed in circles and they were circumscribed with four mottoes:

"Nowhere, not at all, a void." (Lion)

"The yoke of the Law" (Ox)

"The liberty of the gospels." (Eagle)

"The undefiled Glory of God." (Man)

Of course, these 4 creatures are found in Ezekiel, the Revelation of John, our own Royal Arch rite, and Key 10 & 21 of the Tarot.

Every wall of the Vault "had a door for a chest, wherein there lay divers [sic] things..."

Removing the Altar: "and we lifted up a strong a plate of brass, and found a fair and worthy body, whole and unconsummed, ... In his hand he held a parchment called T,..."

At the end of this parchment was a short piece of writing called the Elogium which gives a summation of C.R.'s life. It begins with a short sentence: "A seed planted in the breast of Jesus" and ends with the signatures of 8 Brothers, and finished with the saying: "From God we are born, in Jesus we die, through the Holy Spirit we become alive again!"

They then put everything back in order, closed the vault and "made it sure with all our seals."

Ends soon thereafter with a few more statements.

Further notes on the Vault:

- figures and sentences" = various Qabalistic attributions
- Each wall has a planetary correspondence.
- These songs are tonal sequences, heard within the `vault', or within the initiates's own inner house of life, ..." (Paul Case).
- vault = our own inner house

- In the chests in the walls of the Vault: books, looking-glasses, little bells, burning lamps, wonderful songs. "the work and discoveries of Paracelsus were useful to Qabalists"
- "looking glasses of divers virtues" = power of self-reflection that is developed by practical work in occultism. (Paul Case)
- Little bells = hearing interior sounds similar to bells is common in meditation.
- burning lamps = perception of the chakras (as in Yogic physiology, or interior stars, or metals of the alchemists.)
- under the plate of brass, laid "a fair and worthy body" holding the parchment "T" (Tav, last letter of Hebrew: Saturn, Tarot - the World)
- dead body of C.R.C. = the same as the "dead Osiris"; "One does truly come upon it in the secret vault." We can clearly see parallels with Hiram and the 3rd degree work.
- Rosicrucian ROTA = Tarot (see page 771 of Albert Pike's *Morals & Dogma* regarding the Lost Word.)
- Book T (written on parchment, or sheepskin) = "record of all time, written on the flesh of the human body, within and without." (Paul F. Case)
- Discoverer of the vault = Brother N.N. (Nun, governed by Scorpio Brother N.N. is a type of the awakened consciousness resulting from the sublimation of the occult force ..." (Paul F. Case)

### **Confessio Fraternitatis**

The Confession of the Rosicrucian Fraternity addressed to the Learned of Europe is, like the Fama; very short. It is divided into 14 chapters, but each chapter is only 2-3 paragraphs long. In my translation, it is only 9 pages long.

(The 'learned' or "erudite" which is the word used means 'finished' or 'polished' as in the statement - brought to a high degree. We can see it also as the crude stone that was eventually dressed by our Craft.)

It begins with the statement: "Here Gentle Reader, You shall find incorporated in our confession thirty-seven reasons of our purpose and intention, (As mentioned before, this is an allusion to the Pythagorean triangle or the 3,4,5 right triangle with angles necessarily; of 90, 53, and 37 degrees. If the vertical is the 3, and the horizontal is the 4, then the angle formed by the base and ascending hypotenuse is 37 degrees. The hypotenuse was considered by the Egyptians, according to Plutarch, the line of Horus.

With the vertical as Osiris and the horizontal as Isis. A whole volume could be written on the mystical allusions of this triangle.)

Other statements of interest:

"...wherefore now no longer are we beheld by human eyes unless they have received strength borrowed from the eagle."

(The eagle is one of the 3 symbols of Scorpio and in esoteric lore, Scorpio is the transformative force itself. The allusion here is that the Rosicrucian Order remains invisible except to those who have activated this transformative power. Other symbolism: the eagle has the power of vision; it was also thought to be able to fly directly into the Sun, the Light.)

"this Fraternity, which is divided into degrees;..."

(Western spirituality has always considered spiritual advancement to be gradual and basically step-by-step; or, as we say - by degree only.

The definitions for the merging streams of thought came from the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Paul Edwards, Editor in Chief. The material and ideas from the manifestoes came from The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order by Paul Foster Case.)