

Rosicrucian Society Essay

THE FRATERNITY OF THE ROSE CROSS, PART I

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Who were the Rosicrucians? Were they an organization of deep thinkers rebelling against the religious and philosophical limitations of their time or were they an isolated group of transcendentalists with similar viewpoints and deductions? Who was the mysterious person referred to as “Our Illustrious Father and Brother C.R.C.”? Did those three letters stand for “Christian Rosie Cross”? Was Christian Rosencreutz the founder of the “Society of the Rose Cross?”

What relationship existed between Rosicrucianism and medieval Freemasonry and why were their destinies so closely interwoven? Is the “Brotherhood of the Rose Cross” the link connecting the Freemasonry of the Middle Ages with the symbolism and mysticism of antiquity, and are its secrets being perpetuated by modern Masonry? Did the original Rosicrucian Order disintegrate or does the Society still exist? What was the true purpose for which it was originally formed? Was it a religious and philosophical organization as originally claimed or was its true objective the political control of Europe? These are some of the questions posed in the study of Rosicrucianism.

There are four distinct theories regarding this enigma, each the result of intensive research by scholars who have spent their lives studying the archives of Hermetic Lore. The diverging conclusions are a result of the inadequacy of the available records concerning the origin and activities of this Society. This paper is the first in a series regarding these four investigations.

THE FIRST POSTULATE

It is assumed that the Rosicrucian Order historically was formed and a description of its activities published in its manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, in 1610. The *Fama Fraternitatis* begins with a reminder to all the world of God’s goodness and mercy, and warns the intelligentsia of the time that their egotism and avarice causes them to follow false prophets and to ignore the true knowledge which God in His goodness has revealed to them. Hence a reformation is necessary and the Rosicrucian Order of philosophers has been selected for this purpose.

To bring about this reformation, a mysterious person called “The Highly Illuminated Father C.R.C.”, a German of a noble family, but himself poor, instituted the “Secret Society of the Rose Cross.” C.R.C. was placed in a cloister at the age of five, but later unhappy with its educational system, associated himself with one of the brothers who was setting forth on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unfortunately the brother died at Cyprus and C.R.C. continued

alone to Damascus. Poor health forced him to remain at Damascus studying with the philosophers there and preventing him from reaching Jerusalem.

While pursuing his studies, he heard of a group of mystics and Qabbalists living in the mystic Arabian City of Damcar. He arranged for transportation to that city, giving up on reaching Jerusalem, and arriving there when he was sixteen years old. He was received as one who had been long expected, a fellow philosopher, and was instructed in the secrets of the Arabian adepts. While there he learned Arabic and translated the sacred book *M* into Latin, bringing it with him upon returning to Europe.

After studying three years in Damcar he departed for the city of Fez for further instruction by the Arabian magicians. Here he was instructed how to communicate with the Nature spirits which disclosed to him many great secrets of Nature, adding greatly to his store of knowledge. After two years in Fez, he sailed for Spain, carrying with him many treasures, among them rare plants and animals accumulated during his wanderings. He had hoped the learned men of Europe would favorably receive these rare intellectual and material treasures he had brought for their edification. Instead he encountered only ridicule, for the so called wise men of the time were afraid to admit their previous ignorance lest their prestige be impaired.

At this point in the story there is an interpolation regarding Paracelsus. Paracelsus, born Theophrastus von Hohenheim, was a Swiss physician, alchemist, and astrologer of the German Renaissance. He was a pioneer in several aspects of the medical revolution of the Renaissance, emphasizing the value of observation in combination with received wisdom. While not a member of the "Fraternity of the Rose Cross", he had read the book *M* and from its contents secured teachings which made him the foremost physician of medieval Europe.

Getting back to C.R.C., tired, but not discouraged at his reception, he returned to Germany, where he could quietly continue his study and research. During this time he manufactured a number of rare scientific instruments for research purposes. And while he could have made himself famous by commercializing these, he preferred the companionship of God to the esteem of men. After five years of such "retirement" he decided to renew his struggle for the reformation of the arts and sciences of his time, calling upon the aid of a few trusted friends. He sent word to the cloister of his childhood, and enlisted three brethren, whom he bound to secrecy regarding the knowledge he would impart to them, and had them write down for the sake of posterity the information he dictated. And thus these four founded the "Fraternity of the Rose Cross." They prepared its secret cipher language and a great dictionary in which all forms of wisdom were classified to the glorification of God. They also began the work of transcribing the book of *M* but had to abandon this because of the demands on their time of the great numbers of sick who came to them for healing.

They built a large edifice which they called the "House of the Holy Spirit." They added four new members, thus increasing their number to eight, seven of whom were German and

all unmarried. Working industriously they soon prepared the documents, instructions and arcana of the Order, as well as putting the House in order. They then decided to separate and visit the other countries of the world to spread their wisdom to those who deserved it. Before separating they prepared six by-laws, each vowing to obey them.

The first was that they would take no credit other than that they would heal the sick without charge. The second was from that time on and forever they would wear no special robes or garments, only the customary garb of the country they were in. The third was that every year on a certain day they would all meet in the "House of the Holy Spirit" or if unable to send a representative. The fourth was that each member should search for a worthy successor on his death. The fifth was that the initials RC would be their official seal and mark. And the sixth and final one was that the Fraternity would remain unknown to the world for a period of 100 years. After having sworn to this code, the brethren departed for distant lands leaving Father C.R.C. alone in the "House of the Holy Spirit." Year after year they returned and met on the appointed day celebrating with great joy, for they had quietly and sincerely promulgated their doctrines among the wise of the earth.

When the first brother of the Order died in England it was decided that the burial places of the members should be secret. Soon afterward Father C.R.C. called the remaining six together and it is supposed that he then prepared his own symbolic tomb. The *Fama* records that none of the Brothers alive at the time of its writing knew when Father C.R.C. died, or where he was buried. His body was accidentally discovered 120 years after his death when one of the Brothers, who possessed considerable architectural skill, decided to make some alterations in the "House of the Holy Spirit." While doing this he discovered a memorial tablet inscribed with the names of the original members of the Order. This he decided to transfer to a more imposing chapel, for at that time no one knew in what country Father C.R.C. died or where he was buried. In attempting to remove the memorial tablet some plaster fell from the wall revealing a door concealed in the masonry. This led to the entrance to a vault. Upon the door in large letters were the words:

POST CXX ANNOS PATEBO

This meant according to the interpretation of the Brethren "In 120 years I shall come forth."

The following morning the door was opened and the members entered a vault with seven sides and seven corners, each side five feet wide and eight feet high. Although the sun never penetrated this tomb it was brilliantly illuminated by a mysterious light in the ceiling. In the center was a circular altar, upon which were brass plates engraved with strange characters. In each of the seven sides was a small door which upon being opened, revealed a number of boxes filled with books, secret instructions, and the supposedly lost Arcanum of the Fraternity.

Upon moving the altar to one side a brass cover was disclosed. Lifting this revealed a body, presumably that of C.R.C., which although it had laid there for 120 years, was as well preserved as though it had just been interred. It was attired in the robes of the Order, and in

one hand was clasped a mysterious parchment which, next to the Bible, was the most valued possession of the Society. After thorough investigation of the chamber, the brass plate and altar were put back in place, the door of the vault was again sealed, and the Brothers went their respective ways, their spirits raised and their faith increased by the miraculous spectacle they had beheld.

The document ends by saying, "In accordance with the will of Father C.R.C., the *Fama* has been prepared and sent forth to the wise and learned of all Europe in five languages, that all may know and understand the secrets of the august Fraternity. All of sincere soul who labor for the Glory of God are invited to communicate with the Brethren and are promised that their appeal shall be heard, regardless of where they are or how the messages are sent. At the same time, those of selfish and ulterior motives are warned that only sorrow and misery will attend any who attempt to discover the Fraternity without a clean heart and a pure mind."

Such, in brief, is the story of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. Those who accept it literally regard Father C.R.C. as the founder of the Brotherhood, which he is believed to have organized about 1400. The fact that historical corroboration of the points in the *Fama* have never been discovered is held against this theory. There is no proof that he ever approached the learned men of Spain. The mysterious city of Damcar cannot be found and there is no record that anywhere in Germany existed a place where the sick came and were miraculously cured. A. E. Waite's *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry* contains a picture of Father C.R.C. This picture, however, proves nothing. He was never seen by other than members of his own Order, and they did not preserve a description of him. That his name was Christian Rosencreutz is most improbable, as the two were never associated until the writing of the *Chymical Nuptials*.

To be continued.

References:

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