

Fama Fraternitatis

A Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross

Seeing the only wise and merciful God in these latter days hath poured out so richly his mercy and goodness to mankind, whereby we do attain more and more to the perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ and Nature, that justly we may boast of the happy time, wherein there is not only discovered unto us the half part of the world, which was heretofore unknown and hidden, but he hath also made manifest unto us many wonderful, and never heretofore seen, works and creatures of Nature, and moreover hath raised men, imbued with great wisdom, who might partly renew and reduce all arts (in this our age spotted and imperfect) to perfection; so that finally man might thereby understand his own nobleness and worth, and why he is called Microcosmus, and how far his knowledge extendeth into Nature.

Although the rude world herewith will be but little pleased, but rather smile and scoff thereat; also the pride and covetousness of the learned is so great, it will not suffer them to agree together; but were they united, they might out of all those things which in this our age God doth so richly bestow upon us, collect *Librum Naturae*, or a perfect method of all arts: but such is their opposition, that they still keep, and are loth to leave the old course, esteeming Popery, Aristotle, and Galen, yea and that which hath but a mere show of learning, more than the clear and manifested light and truth; who if they were now living, with much joy would leave their erroneous doctrines. But here

is too great weakness for such a great work. And although ^{scrip}in theology, phisic, and the mathematics, the truth doth manifest itself, nevertheless the old enemy by his subtlety and craft doth show himself in hindering every good purpose by his instruments and contentious wavering people. To such an intent of a general reformation, the most godly and highly illuminated father. our brother, C.R., a German, the chief and original of our Fraternity, hath much and long time laboured, who by reason of his poverty (although descended of noble parents) in the fifth year of his age was placed in a cloister, where he had learned indifferently the Greek and Latin tongues, who (upon his earnest desire and request) being yet in his growing years, was associated to a brother, P.A.L., who had determined to go to the Holy Land.

Although this brother died in Cyprus, and so never came to Jerusalem, yet our brother C.R. did not return, but shipped himself over, and went to Damasco, minding from thence to go to Jerusalem; but by reason of the feebleness of his body he remained still there, and by his skill in phisic he obtained much favour with the Turks. In the meantime he became by chance acquainted with the wise men of Damascus in Arabia, and beheld what great wonders they wrought, and how Nature was discovered unto them; hereby was that high and noble spirit of brother C.R. so stirred up, that Jerusalem was not so much now in his mind as Damascus; also he could not bridle his desires any longer, but made a bargain with the Arabians, that they should carry him for a certain sum of money to Damascus; he was but of the age of sixteen years when he came thither, yet of a strong Dutch constitution. There the wise received him (as he himself

witnesseth) not as a stranger, but as one whom they had long expected; they called him by his name, and showed him other secrets out of his cloister, whereat he could not but mightily wonder. He learned there better the Arabian tongue, so that the year following he translated the book M. into good Latin, which he afterwards brought with him. This is the place where he did learn his phisic, and his mathematics, whereof the world hath just cause to rejoice, if there were more love, and less envy. After three years he returned again with good consent, shipped himself over Sinus Arabicus into Egypt, where he remained not long, but only took better notice there of the plants and creatures. He sailed over the whole Mediterranean sea for to come to Fez, where the Arabians had directed him. And it is a great shame unto us, that wise men, so far remote the one from the other, should not only be of one opinion, hating all contentious writings, but also be so willing and ready under the seal of secrecy to impart their secrets to others.

Every year the Arabians and Africans do send one to another, enquiring one of another out of their arts, if happily they had found out some better things, or if experience had weakened their reasons. Yearly there came something to light, whereby the mathematics, phisic, and [magic (for in those are they of Fez most skilful)] were amended. As there is nowadays in Germany no want of learned men, magicians, Cabalists, physicians, and philosophers, were there but more love and kindness among them, or that the most part of them would not keep their secrets close only to themselves. [At Fez he did get acquaintance with those which are commonly called the Elementary Inhabitants, who revealed unto him many of their secrets. As we

Germans likewise might gather together many things, if there were the like unity, the desire of searching out secrets amongst us.]

Of these of Fez he often did confess that their *Magia* was not altogether pure, and also that their *Cabala* was defiled with their religion; but notwithstanding he knew how to make good use of the same, and found still more better grounds for his faith, altogether agreeable with the harmony of the whole world, and wonderfully impressed in all periods of times. And thence proceedeth [that fair concord, that, as in every several kernel is contained a whole good tree or fruit, so likewise is included in the little body of man the whole great world, whose religion, policy, health, members, nature, language, words and works, are agreeing, sympathizing, and in equal tune and melody with god, heaven, and earth.] And that which is disagreeing with them is error, falsehood, and of the Devil, who alone is the first, middle, and last cause of strife, blindness, and darkness in the world. Also, might one examine all and several persons upon the earth, he should find that which is good and right, is always agreeing with itself; but all the rest is spotted with a thousand erroneous conceits.

After two years brother C.R. departed the city of Fez, and sailed with many costly things into Spain, hoping well (that since) he himself had so well and so profitably spent his time in his travel, that the learned in Europe would highly rejoice with him, and begin to rule and order all their studies according to those sound and sure foundations. He therefore conferred with the learned in Spain, showing unto them the errors of our arts, and how they might be corrected, and from whence they should gather the true *Indicia* of the times to

come, and wherein they ought to agree with those things that are past; also how the faults of the Church and the whole *Philosophia Moralis* was to be amended. He showed them new growths, new fruits, and beasts, which did concord with old philosophy, and prescribed them new *Axiomata*, whereby all things might fully be restored. But it was to them a laughing matter; and being a new thing unto them, they feared that their great name should be lessened, if they should now again begin to learn and acknowledge their many years' errors, to which they were accustomed, and wherewith they had gained them enough. [Whoso loveth unquietness, let him be reformed.]

The same song was also sung to him by other nations, the which moved him the more because it happened to him contrary to his expectations, being ready then bountifully to impart all his arts and secrets to the learned, if they would have but undertaken to write the true and infallible *Axiomata*, out of all faculties, sciences, and arts, and whole Nature, as that which he knew would direct them, like a globe or circle, to the only middle point and *Centrum*, and (as is usual among the Arabians) it should only serve to the wise and learned as a rule. [That also there might be a Society in Europe, which might have gold, silver, and precious stones, sufficient for to bestow them on kings, for their necessary uses and lawful purposes; with which such as be governors might be brought up, for to learn all that which God hath suffered man to know, and thereby to be enabled in all times of need to give their counsel unto those that seek it, like the heathen oracles.] Verily we must confess that the world in those days was already big with those great commotions, labouring to be delivered of them; and did bring forth painful, worthy men, who broke with all

force through darkness and barbarism, and left us who succeeded to follow them: and assuredly they have been the uppermost point *in trigono igneo*, whose flame now should be more and more bright, and shall undoubtedly give to the world the last light.

[Such a one likewise hath Theophrastus (Paracelsus) been in vocation and callings, although he was none of our Fraternity, yet nevertheless hath he diligently read over the Book M: whereby his sharp *ingenium* was exalted;] but this man was also hindered in his course by the multitude of the learned and wise-seeming men, that he was never able peacefully to confer with others of his knowledge and understanding he had of Nature. And therefore in his writing he rather mocked these busy bodies, and doth not show them altogether what he was: yet nevertheless there is found with him well grounded the aforementioned *Harmonia*, which without doubt he had imparted to the learned, if he had not found them rather worthy of subtle vexation, than to be instructed in greater arts and sciences; he then with a free and careless life lost his time, and left unto the world their foolish pleasures.

But that we do not forget our loving father, brother C.R., he after many painful travels, and his fruitless true instructions, returned again into Germany, the which he (by reason of the alterations which were shortly to come, and of the strange and dangerous contentions) heartily loved. There, [although he could have bragged with his art, but specially of the transmutations of metals, yet did he esteem more Heaven, and the citizens thereof, Man, than all vain glory and pomp.]

Nevertheless he built a fitting and neat habitation, in which he ruminated his voyage, and philosophy, and reduced them together in

a true memorial. In this house he spent a great time in the mathematics, and made many fine instruments, *ex omnibus hujus artis partibus*, whereof there is but little remaining to us, as hereafter you shall understand. After five years came again into his mind the wished for reformation; and in regard he doubted of the aid and help of others, although he himself was painful, lusty, and unwearying, he undertook, with some few joined with him, to attempt the same. Wherefore he desired to this end, to have out of his first cloister (to the which he bare a great affection) three of his brethren, brother G.V., brother J.A., and brother J.O., who besides that, they had some more knowledge in the arts, than in that time many others had, he did bind those three unto himself, to be faithful, diligent, and secret; as also to commit carefully to writing, all that which he should direct and instruct them in, to the end that those which were to come, and through especial revelation should be received into this Fraternity, might not be deceived of the least syllable and word.

[After this manner began the Fraternity of the Rose Cross; first by four persons only, and by them was made the magical language and writing, with a large dictionary, which we yet daily use to God's praise and glory, and do find great wisdom therein; they made also the first part of the book M.] But in respect that that labour was too heavy, and the unspeakable concourse of the sick hindered them, and also whilst [his new building (called *Sancti spiritus*)] was now finished, they concluded to draw and receive yet others more into their Fraternity: to this end was chosen brother R.C.; his deceased father's brother's son, brother B., a skilful painter; G.; and P.D., their secretary—all Germans except J.A.—so in all they were eight in

number, all bachelors and of vowed virginity; by those was collected a book or volume of all that which man can desire, wish, or hope for.

Although we do now freely confess, that the world is much amended within an hundred years, yet we are assured that our *Axiomata* shall unmovably remain unto the world's end, and also the world in her highest and last age shall not attain to see anything else; for our *Rota* takes her beginning from that day when God spake *Fiat*, and shall end when he shall speak *Pereat*; yet God's clock striketh every minute, where ours scarce striketh perfect hours. We also steadfastly believe, that if our brethren and fathers had lived in this our present and clear light, they would more roughly have handled the Pope, Mahomet, scribes, artists, and sophisters, and had showed themselves more helpful, not simply with sighs, and wishing of their end and consummation.

When now these eight brethren had disposed and ordered all things in such manner, as there was not now need of any great labour, and also that everyone was sufficiently instructed, and able perfectly to discourse of secret and manifest philosophy, they would not remain any longer together, but as in the beginning they had agreed, they separated themselves into several countries, because that not only their *Axiomata* might in secret be more profoundly examined by the learned, but that they themselves, if in some country or other they observed anything, or perceived some error, they might inform one another of it.

[Their agreement was this: First, That none of them should profess any other thing than to cure the sick, and that *gratis*. 2. None of the posterity should be constrained to wear one certain kind of

habit, but therein to follow the custom of the country. 3. That every year upon the day C. they should meet together in the house S. *Spiritus*, or write the cause of his absence. 4. Every brother should look about for a worthy person, who, after his decease, might succeed him. 5. The word R.C. should be their seal, mark, and character. 6. The Fraternity should remain secret one hundred years. These six articles they bound themselves one to another to keep, and five of the brethren departed, only the brethren B. and D. remained with the father, *Fra. R.C.*, a whole year; when these likewise departed. Then remained by him his cousin and brother J.O. so that he hath all the days of his life with him two of his brethren. And although that as yet the Church was not cleansed, nevertheless we know that they did think of her, and what with longing desire they looked for. Every year they assembled together with joy, and made a full resolution of that which they had done; there must certainly have been great pleasure, to hear truly and without invention related and rehearsed all the wonders which God had poured out here and there through the world. Everyone may hold it out for certain, that such persons as were sent, and joined together by God, and the heavens, and chosen out of the wisest of men, as have lived in many ages, did live together above all others in highest unity, greatest secrecy, and most kindness one towards another.

After such a most laudable sort they did spend their lives, and although they were free from all diseases and pain, yet notwithstanding they could not live and pass their time appointed of God. The first of this Fraternity which died, and that in England, was J.O., as brother C. long before had foretold him; he was very expert, and well