

1. THE ROSICRUCIANS AND THE GREAT CONJUNCTIONS

The Rosicrucian manifestoes were published at Kassel in 1614, and there is controversy about their authorship. This chapter will explore some of the personalities known to be involved in one way or another, and bring out some of the intended meanings of the millenarian symbolism used in them. It shows that astronomical/astrological calculations based on several major conjunctions of the stars and planets were an important part of millenarian symbolism.

The first of the manifestoes was *Fama Fraternitatis Roseae Crucis*, which describes the recent discovery of the grave of Christian Rosencreutz, a fourteenth-century knight who traveled to the Middle East and there gained wisdom in magic, kabbalah, and astrology. On return to Germany he founded a brotherhood to guard the knowledge he brought home. The *Fama* now announces that the brotherhood has come into the open to let it be known that a new age of reformation of all the arts is to begin. It calls for others to come forth in print to let themselves be known to the brotherhood.

The second manifesto, *Confessio Fraternitatis Roseae Crucis*, is addressed to all the learned of Europe and is even more apocalyptic in tone. It begins with the statement that it is now possible to securely name the Pope as Antichrist, and goes on:

It is Jehova who, seeing how the world is falling to decay, / and near its end, doth hasten it again to its beginning, / inverting the course of Nature, and so what heretofore / hath been sought with great pains and daily labour He doth / lay open now to those thinking of no such thing, offering / it to the willing and thrusting it upon the reluctant, that it / may become the good that which will smooth the troubles of human / life and break the violence of the unexpected blows of Fortune

The *Confessio* states that the trumpet shall sound since it has become manifest to many learned men in Germany that the Pope shall be trodden under foot and “a final groan shall end his Ass’s braying.” This will lead to much commotion but “our treasures shall remain untouched, till the Lion shall

arise and exact them as his right, receive and employ them for the establishment of his kingdom.” The Lion here introduced is almost certainly a reference to the Paracelsian Lion prophecy. Its renewed use in Germany can be traced back to at least 1598. A first part was culled from Paracelsus’s *Liber Mineralibus* (ca. 1540), republished in his collected works at Basel in 1588. Also, Paracelsus had published a shorter prophecy in 1530 that was republished at Strassburg in 1616. Paracelsus stated that after a great and fearful solar eclipse there will be revolts, riots, and wars, whereupon:

The Lion having Blue and White for associates will march in a high manner An Old Lion will be bound and a young Lion will become free. He will please all those animals that the old had vexed Then shall the Pearl, so long lost, be found by one of humble estate, and will be set as a jewel in gold. It will be given to the Prince of all beasts, that is, to the right Lion. He will hang it about his neck, and wear it with honour. He will resist the Bear and the Wolf, and rend them asunder; so that the Beasts of the forest shall be safe. Then will the Old Art flourish and no heed will be given to the New. Then will the New World begin and the White and the Black shall disappear¹

This prophecy circulated in manuscript, and in the form finally published as *De Tinctura Physicorum* (1619) the prophecy brings together some new elements. The prophecy now involves three precious treasures buried in Europe and the coming of *der Löwe aus Mitternacht* (The Lion of the North). While the first part was written by Paracelsus, the second part on the Lion was added by someone else.

The northern Lion as an emblematic savior is found in several places in the Bible; for instance, as the Swedish Rosicrucian Johannes Bureus showed, in *Amos* 3:8 and in *Revelation* 5:5. It worked as a forceful emblem for psychological resistance and popular messianism. It was later used in the Thirty Years War, first in 1624 through a series of pamphlets speaking in a nondescript way of the rise of a German Lion and then in 1626 in a document written by a Rosicrucian from Rostock, Anastasius Philareta Cosmopolita or Joachim Morsius, which called for the intervention of the Danes in the German war. In 1631, the Lion of the North was used massively in pamphlets to prepare the Swedish invasion of Germany. Its occurrence in the *Confessio* has stirred Frances Yates’s speculation that in 1614 it designated the Palatine Prince Fredrick V of Württemberg, later King of Bohemia, who lost his realm shortly thereafter at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1618.

The *Confessio* continues:

God hath already sent messengers which should testify His will, some new stars which have appeared in Serpentarius and Cygnus the which powerful signs of a great council shew forth how for all things which human ingenuity discovers, God calls upon his hidden knowledge, as likewise the Book of

Nature, though it stands open truly before all eyes, can be read or understood by only a few.

The stars can be taken together with the assertion in the *Fama* there has been a showing of “the uppermost point in *Trygono igneo*, whose flame should now be more and more bright, and shall undoubtedly give to the world the last light.” This is a reference to the recent cycle of conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in the fiery trigon that play a hidden role in the Rosicrucian texts. Thus, it may seem unenlightening to be informed that Christian Rosencreutz was born in 1378 and lived 106 years. In the *Fama*, we are told of the rediscovery of his grave, as he had predicted, 120 years after his death in 1484, i.e., as the *Confessio* states – in the year of the new star of 1604. Yet, readers are no doubt supposed to know that the birth of the knight coincides with the end of the Great Papal Schism in 1378, while his death concurs with the birth of Martin Luther in 1484; a year in which a conjunction between the planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars appeared in the zodiac sign of Scorpio.

Indeed, the *Fama* was likely to be understood only by readers conversant with certain themes in Arabic astrology. The doctrine of the great conjunctions was described in detail by the ninth century astronomer of eastern Khurashan, Abu Ma’shar al-Balki, who argued that a great prophet who would supercede Mohammed would appear when these planets meet in Scorpio, as they did in 1484.²

The impact of the conjunctions had been debated in Germany for some time. In his treatise *Mysterium Cosmographicum* (Tübingen, 1596), Johannes Kepler studied records from Johannes Regiomontanus on the great conjunctions between Jupiter and Saturn and found how each conjunction “occur[s] successively eight zodiacal signs later, how they gradually pass from one trine to another,” and in particular now generating conjunctions in the fiery trigon of Aries (1583), Sagittarius (1603), and Leo (1623), all dates significant in Rosicrucian calculations.

The astronomical debate intensified after the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 1603/04. In 1605, Kepler and the Paracelsian astronomer Helisaeus Roeslin appeared together as commentators on the new star in *Serpentario* that appeared just above this conjunction. A year later, Kepler shifted grounds and wrote a thesis dedicated to Rudolph II, *De nova Stella visitatu in pede Serpentario* (Prague, 1606), in which he agreed with Roeslin that there would be further wars of religion even after the truce of Duke Matthias and the Turks in Hungary, but he also smugly mocked Roeslin’s prediction of a great catastrophe after 1604. Kepler instead briefly warns of the advent of a new union and sect to which both Turks and Christians will be admitted, a remark that could well be a reference to Guillaume Postel’s mystical tract *Panthenousia* (Venice, 1547), which argued for a future concordance between messianic religious groups whether Hebrew, Christian, or Ishmaelite. Kepler then quickly invokes the silence of Harpocrates and asserts that no punishment is severe enough for those who allow it to be breached.³

As the *Confessio* states, it was the comet in the (cross-shaped) sign of Cygnus

or the Swan and the little nova in Serpentario (1603/4) that triggered the Rosicrucian movement. The deeper reason for this enthusiasm was that the nova of 1603/4 appeared in the sky a little above the great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Sagittarius, being part of a sequence of conjunctions in the fiery trigon so rare that in Arabo-Latin astronomy it was taken to mark the coming of a new age, a circumstance explained by Robert Fludd in his *Apology* for the Rosicrucians in 1616. Celestial signs were taken to be crucial for marking the new era, and the appearance of the two stars in the *Confessio* (Kassel, 1614), and then again on the famous image of the Rosicrucian tract *Speculum sophericum rhodo-stauroticon* (Frankfurt, 1618) by Theophil Schweighardt (Daniel Mögling), shows that the Roeslin/Kepler discussion of astronomical phenomena was central to the Rosicrucians.⁴

There is the possibility that the Lion referred to in the *Confessio* is the sign for the awaited Great Conjunction in the fiery trigon, that of Leo in 1623, underlined by such writings as Paul Nagel's *Cursus Quinquenali Mundi oder Wundergeheime Offenbarung* (Halle, Saxonia, 1620) which stated that the whole course of history would repeat itself within the course of four years before the bitter end: "1624 nec plus ultra." Of course, Nagel was immediately attacked by a Jesuit author claiming that his doctrine of compressed repetition was a mere stage-play, falsely transposed to the scene of reality.

The *Fama* and the *Confessio* were published at Kassel in 1614, but were written in 1609/10 in Tübingen in the circle of Johannes Valentin Andreae, a student of theology. Investigations of the Tübingen scene show that Andreae was influenced by Tobias Hess, a millenarian and Christoph Besold, a learned Doctor of Jurisprudence.

Recently formulated doubts on Andreae's authorship of the *Fama* stem from his own disavowal of the movement. In a later phase, he dismissed the Rosicrucian fiction as a joke, a "ludibrium." Also, in his extant writings, there is no unambiguous reference to his authorship of the tracts. He instead shows a polemical attitude, and in 1617 he ridicules predictive astronomy and Rosicrucian ideas in his plays, *Menippus* and *Turbo*. Moreover, in *Mythologiae Christianae* of 1619, Andreae lists a number of apocalyptic authors whom he regards as deluded, including the spectacular apocalypticists Paul Lautensack, Guillaume Postel, Jacob Brocardo, Aegidius Gutman, Simon Studion, and even his former friend Tobias Hess. This is notwithstanding that they all appear to have been part of the tradition that sets the millenarian tone of the Rosicrucian pamphlets.

The influences on the writer of the *Fama* are laid out in the research of Will-Erich Peuckert. Peuckert saw the Rosicrucians somewhat vaguely as an offshoot of a larger school of Pansophism, but he also provided new material on the background of the millenarian calculations of the Second Coming of Christ in Simon Studion's manuscript *Naometria sive nuda et prima libri intus et foris scripti per clavem Davidis et calamum virgae similem apertio*, begun according to Studion's own account in Tübingen in 1592 and given in complete form to Duke Fredrik IV of Württemberg in 1604. Studion (1543–1606) worked as a Lutheran pastor at Marbach outside Stuttgart. Few details are known about

his life, but he studied history with Martin Crusius (1526–1607) at Tübingen and he continued to have contacts there, particularly with Tobias Hess. Crusius was in any case pleased to see the young brothers Andreae in his class; in 1603 he records that Johan Valentin visited his class on Cicero. In 1597, another student of Crusius, Tobias Hess, read Studion's *Naometria* in manuscript and started to develop his own apocalyptic predictions. Hess searched for further details in the millenarian commentaries on Genesis and the Song of Songs by the Italian unionist Jacob Brocardo. It was through Hess that Andreae learned of Studion's ideas.⁵

Naometria means "the measurement of the holy place." In it, Studion works out a chronology for the rebuilding of the Temple and calculates the time of the Second Coming. In an important analysis, Robin Bruce Barnes has shown that Studion partly relies on the mystical number reckoning of Eustachius Poyssel, whose *Der Schlüssel David, Esaie: 22. Apocalip: 3.* (n. p. 1594) focuses on the recent Calvinist takeover in Saxony and the threatened fate of Lutheranism in the Palatine realm of Frederick IV. Describing the Teutonic Order during the mid-medieval reign of the millenarian Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (declared anathema in 1240), Studion aggressively predicts the crucifying of the Pope in 1620 (punning on 1260 as a failed Joachimite prediction for the millennium). As with Poyssel, Studion locates the Second Advent to 1623.

The reckoning is laboriously subtle and each of Studion's two manuscripts counts to over a thousand pages of biblical commentary and prophecy on the turn of events after the rise of Luther and Zwingli in 1521 and 1528. The reformist activity of Luther's protector, Duke Frederick of Saxony (d. 1525), is coordinated with the apocalyptic rider of the White Horse. Conclusions are drawn on the rise of Henry of Navarre and Emperor Rudolph II. In a central and much debated phrase, Studion states that negotiations for an evangelical union among Protestant princes and electors took place at Lüneburg in July 1586 with diplomatic representatives from France, Britain, and Denmark.

Subtle calculations are given by hand that the year 1590 will emerge as a decisive historical turning point, a year of mutation. In particular, Studion offers a significant numerical computation based on the Hebrew words for Rose and Lily (in Hebrew "hebsaleh" and "shushanna"), yielding 530 + 661, adding up to 1191, the year of the founding of the Teutonic Order. Similarly, Studion's *militia evangelica* dwells *sub rosa et lilio*. One image in the text can be interpreted as a protean Rose Cross: a round black cross is set within seven concentric circles overlaid by petal-shaped markings for numerical figures, thus forming a rose. Studion calls it the entrance of the four archangels to the Temple.⁶ Studion's proto-Rosicrucian ideas thus are firmly linked to the Teutonic Order and to Frederick of Saxony as the protector of the Lutheran reform.

Studion now mixes the quest for the New Jerusalem with suggestions for a historically determined political alliance. An appendix to the 1604 edition, titled *Hieroglyphica Simone Studionis*, delivers political instructions in a six part motet set to horns, strings, and the human voice and written by Johannes Brauhart, a cantor at Marbach. The song expresses hopes that Henry IV of

Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern
European Culture Volume IV
Continental Millenarians: Protestants, Catholics,
Heretics

Laursen, J.C.; Popkin, R.H. (Eds.)

2001, XX, 126 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-0-7923-6847-2