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Confessio Fraternitatis

[The original edition of the Confessio Fraternitatis appeared in the year 1615 in a Latin work entitled "Secretioris Philosophiae Consideratio Brevis a Philippo a Gabella, Philosophiae studioso, conscripta; et nunc primum una cum Confessione Fraternitatis R.C." The following translation, taken from A.E. Waite's edition, is accredited to Thomas Vaughan (Eugenius Philalethes) and was made from the later German version of the manifesto.]

Preface

Here, gentle reader, you shall finde incorporated in our Confession thirty-seven reasons of purpose and intention, the which according to thy pleasure thou mayst seek out and compare together, considering within thyself if they be sufficient to allure thee. Verily, it requires no small pains to induce any one to believe what doth not yet appear, but when it shall be revealed in the full blaze of day, I suppose we should be ashamed of such questionings. And as we do now securely call the Pope Antichrist, which was formerly a capital offence in every place, so we know certainly that what we here keep secret we shall in the future thunder forth with uplifted voice, the which, reader, with us desire with all thy heart that it may happen most speedily.

"Fratres R.C."

Confessio Fraternitatis R.C. ad Eruditos Europae.

Chapter I.

Whatsoever you have heard, O mortals, concerning our Fraternity by the trumpet sound of the Fama R.C., do not either believe it hastily, or willfully suspect it. It is Jehovah 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 dayly 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 to the good that which will smooth the troubles of human life and break the violence of unexpected blows of Fortune, but to the ungodly that which will augment their sins and their punishments.

Although we believe ourselves to have sufficiently unfolded to you in the *Fama* the nature of our Order, wherein we follow the will of our most excellent Father, nor can by any be suspected of heresy, nor of any attempt against the commonwealth, we hereby do condemn the East and the West (meaning the Pope and Mahomet) for their blasphemies against our Lord Jesus Christ, and offer to the chief head of the Roman Empire our prayers, secrets, and great treasures of gold. Yet we have thought good for the sake of the learned to add somewhat more to this, and make a better explanation, if there be anything too deep, hidden, and set down over dark, in the *Fama*, or for certain reasons altogether omitted, whereby we hope the learned will be more addicted unto us, and easier to approve our counsel.

Chapter II.

Concerning the amendment of philosophy, we have (as much as at present is needful) declared that the same is altogether weak and faulty; nay, whilst many (I know not how) allege that she is sound and strong, to us it is certain that she fetches her last breath.

But as commonly even in the same place where there breaketh forth a new disease, nature discovereth a remedy against the same, so amidst so many infirmities of philosophy there do appear the right means, and unto our Fatherland sufficiently offered, whereby she may become sound again, and new or renovated may appear to a renovated world.

No other philosophy we have then that which is the head of all the faculties, sciences and arts, the which (if we behold our age) containeth much of Theology and Medicine, but little of Jurisprudence; which searcheth heaven and earth with exquisite analysis, or, to speak briefly thereof, which doth sufficiently manifest the Microcosmus man, whereof if some of the more orderly in the number of the learned shall respond to our fraternal invitation, they shall find among us far other and greater wonders than those they heretofore did believe, marvel at, and profess.

Chapter III.

Wherefore, to declare briefly our meaning hereof, it becomes us to labour carefully that the surprise of our challenge may be taken from you, to shew plainly that such secrets are not lightly esteemed by us, and not to spread an opinion abroad among the vulgar that the story concerning them is a foolish thing. For it is not absurd to suppose many are overwhelmed with the conflict of thought which is occasioned by our unhopd graciousness, unto whom (as yet) be unknown the wonders of the sixth age, or who, by reason of the course of the world, esteem the things to come like unto the present and, hindered by the obstacles of their age, live no other wise in she world than as men blind, who, in the light of noon, discern nothing only by feeling.

Chapter IV.

Now concerning the first part, we hold that the meditations of our Christian father on all subjects which from the creation of the world have been invented, brought forth, and propagated by human ingenuity, through God's revelation, or through the service of Angels or spirits, or through the sagacity of understanding, or through the experience of long observation, are so great, that if all books should perish, and by God's almighty sufferance all writings and all learning should be lost, yet posterity will be able thereby to lay a new foundation of sciences, and to erect a new citadel of truth; the which perhaps would not be so hard to do as if one should begin to pull down and destroy the old, ruinous building, then enlarge the fore-court, afterwards bring light into the private chambers, and then change the doors, staples, and other things according to our intention.

Therefore it must not be expected that newcomers shall attain at once all our mighty secrets. They must proceed step by step from the smaller to the greater, and must not be retarded by difficulties.

Wherefore should we not freely acquiesce in the only truth then seek through so many windings and labyrinths, if only it had pleased God to lighten unto us the sixth Candelabrum? Were it not sufficient for us to fear neither hunger, poverty, diseases, nor age? Were it not an excellent thing to live always so as if you had lived from the beginning of the world, and should still live to the end thereof? So to live in one place that neither the people which dwell beyond the Ganges could hide anything, nor those which live in Peru might be able to keep secret their counsels from thee? So to read in one only book as to discern, understand, and remember whatsoever in all other books (which heretofore have been, are now, and hereafter shall come out) hath been, is, and shall be learned out of them? So to sing and play that instead of stony rocks you could draw pearls, instead of wild beasts, spirits, and instead of Pluto you could soften the mighty princes of the world? O mortals, diverse is the counsel of God and your convenience, Who hath decreed at this time to increase and enlarge the number of our Fraternity, the which we with such joy have undertaken, as we have heretofore obtained this great treasure without our merits, yea, without any hope or expectation; the same we purpose with such fidelity to put in practice, that neither compassion nor pity for our own children (which some of us in the Fraternity have) shall move us, since we know that these unhopd for good things cannot be inherited, nor conferred promiscuously.

Chapter V.

If there be any body now which on the other side will complain of our discretion, that we offer our treasures so freely and indiscriminately, and do not rather regard more the godly, wise, or princely persons than the common people, with him we are in nowise angry (for the accusation is not without moment), but withal we affirm that we have by no means made common property of our arcana, albeit they resound in five languages within the ears of the vulgar, both because, as we well know, they will not move gross wits, and because the worth of those who shall be accepted into our Fraternity will not be measured by their curiosity, but by the rule and pattern of our revelations. A thousand times the unworthy may clamour, a thousand times present themselves, yet God hath commanded our ears that they should hear none of them, and hath so compassed us about with His clouds that unto us, His servants, no violence can be done; wherefore now no longer are we beheld by human eyes unless they have received strength borrowed from the eagle.

For the rest, it hath been necessary that the Fama should be set forth in everyone's mother tongue, lest those should not be defrauded of the knowledge thereof, whom (although they be unlearned) God hath not excluded from the happiness of this Fraternity, which is divided into degrees; as those which dwell at Damcar, who have a far different politick order from the other Arabians; for there do govern only understanding men, who, by the king's permission, make particular laws, according to which example the government shall also be instituted in Europe (according to the description set down by our Christianly Father), when that shall come to pass which must precede, when our Trumpet shall resound with full voice and with no prevarications of meaning, when, namely, those things of which a few now whisper and darken with enigmas, shall openly fill the earth, even as after many secret chafings of pious people against the pope's tyranny, and after timid reproof, he with great violence and by a great onset was cast down from his seat and abundantly trodden under foot, whose final fall is reserved for an age when he shall be torn to pieces with nails, and a final groan shall end his ass's braying, the which, as we know, is already manifest to many learned men in Germany, as their tokens and secret congratulations bear witness.

Chapter VI.

We could here relate and declare what all the time from the year 1378 (when our Christian Father was born) till now hath happened, what alterations in the world he hath seen these one hundred and six years of his life, what he left to be attempted after his happy death by our Fathers and by us, but brevity, which we do observe, will not permit at this present to make rehearsal of it; it is enough for those who do not despise our declaration to have touched upon it, thereby to prepare the way for their more close association and union with us. Truly, to whom it is permitted to behold, read, and thenceforward teach himself those great characters which the Lord God hath inscribed upon the world's mechanism, and which He repeats through the mutations of Empires, such an one is already ours, though as yet unknown to himself; and as we know he will not neglect our invitation, so, in like manner, we abjure all deceit for we promise that no man's uprightness and hopes shall deceive him who shall make himself known to us under the seal of secrecy and desire our familiarity. But to the false and to impostors, and to those who seek other things than wisdom, we witness by these presents publicly, we cannot be betrayed unto them to our hurt, nor be known to them without the will of God, but they shall certainly be partakers of that terrible commination spoken of in our Fama, and their impious designs shall fall back upon their own heads, while 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.

Chapter VII.

One thing should here, O mortals, be established by us, that God hath decreed to the world before her end, which presently thereupon shall ensue, an influx of truth, light, and grandeur, such as He commanded should accompany Adam from Paradise, and sweeten the misery of man: Wherefore there shall cease all falsehood, darkness, and bondage, which little by little, with the great globe's revolution, hath crept into the arts, works, and governments of men, darkening the greater part of them. Thence hath proceeded that innumerable diversity of persuasions, falsehoods, and heresies, which make choice difficult to the wisest men, seeing on the one part they were hindered by the reputation of philosophers and on the other by the facts of experience, which if (as we trust) it can be once

removed, and instead thereof a single and self-same rule be instituted, then there will indeed remain thanks unto them which have taken pains therein, but the sum of so great a work shall be attributed to the blessedness of our age.

As we now confess that many high intelligences by their writings will be a great furtherance unto this Reformation which is to come, so do we by no means arrogate to ourselves this glory, as if such a work were only imposed on us, but we testify with our Saviour Christ that sooner shall the stones rise up and offer their service, then there shall be any want of executors of God's counsel.

Chapter VIII.

God, indeed, hath already sent messengers which should testify His will, to wit 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 very few.

As in the human head there are two organs of hearing, two of sight, and two of smell but only one of speech, and it were vain to expect speech from the ears, or hearing from the eyes, so there have been ages which have seen, others which have heard, others again that have smelt and tasted. Now, there remains that in a short and swiftly approaching time honour should likewise be given to the tongue, that what formerly saw, heard, and smelt shall finally speak, after the world shall have slept away the intoxication of her poisoned and stupefying chalice, and with an open heart, bare head, and naked feet shall merrily and joyfully go forth to meet the sun rising in the morning.

Chapter IX.

These characters and letters, as God hath here and there incorporated them in the Sacred Scriptures, so hath He imprinted them most manifestly on the wonderful work of creation, on the heavens, on the earth, and on all beasts, so that as the mathematician predicts eclipses, so we prognosticate the obscurations of the church, and how long they shall last. From these letters we have borrowed our magic writing, and thence made for ourselves a new language, in which the nature of things is expressed, so that it is no wonder that we are not so eloquent in other tongues, least of all in this Latin, which we know to be by no means in agreement with that of Adam and Enoch, but to have been contaminated by the confusion of Babel.

Chapter X.

But this also must by no means be omitted, that, while there are yet some eagle's feathers in our way, the which do hinder our purpose, we do exhort to the sole, only, assiduous, and continual study of the Sacred Scriptures, for he that taketh all his pleasure therein shall know that he hath prepared for himself an excellent way to come into our Fraternity, for this the whole sum of our Laws, that as there is not a character in that great miracle of the world which has not a claim on the memory, so those are nearest and likest unto us who do make the Bible the rule of their life, the end of all their studies, and the compendium of the universal world, from whom we require not that it should be continually in their mouth, but that they should appropriately apply its true interpretation to all ages of the world, for it is not our custom so to debase the divine oracle, that while there are innumerable expounders of the same, some adhere to the opinions of their party, some make sport of Scripture as if it were a tablet of wax to be indifferently made use of by theologians, philosophers, doctors, and mathematicians. Be it ours rather to bear witness, that from the beginning of the world there hath not been given to man a more excellent admirable, and wholesome book than the Holy Bible; Blessed is he who possesseth it, more blessed is he who reads it, most blessed of all is he who truly understandeth it, while he is most like to God who both understands and obeys it.

Chapter XI.

Now, whatsoever hath been said in the Fama, through hatred of impostors, against the transmutation of metals and the supreme medicine of the world, we desire to be so understood, that this so great gift of God we do in no manner set at naught, but as it bringeth not always with it the knowledge of Nature, while this knowledge bringeth forth both that and an infinite number of other natural miracles, it is right that we be rather earnest to attain to the knowledge of philosophy, nor tempt excellent wits to the tincture of metals sooner than to the observation of Nature. He must needs be insatiable to whom neither poverty, disease, nor danger can any longer reach, who, as one raised above all men, hath rule over that which doth anguish, afflict, and pain others, yet will give himself again to idle things, will build, make wars, and domineer, because he hath gold sufficient, and of silver an inexhaustible fountain. God judgeth far otherwise, who exalteth the lowly, and casteth the proud into obscurity; to the silent he sendeth his angels to hold speech with them, but the babblers he driveth into the wilderness, which is the judgment due to the Roman impostor who now poureth his blasphemies with open mouth against Christ, nor yet in the full light, by which Germany hath detected his caves and subterranean passages, will abstain from lying, that thereby he may fulfill the measure of his sin, and be found worthy of the axe. Therefore, one day it will come to pass, that the mouth of this viper shall be stopped, and his triple crown shall be brought to naught of which things more fully when we shall have met together.

Chapter XII.

For conclusion of our Confession we must earnestly admonish you, that you cast away, if not all yet most of the worthless books of pseudo chymists, to whom it is a jest to apply the Most Holy Trinity to vain things, or to deceive men with monstrous symbols and enigmas, or to profit by the curiosity of the credulous; our age doth produce many such, one of the greatest being a stage-player, a man with sufficient ingenuity for imposition; such doth the enemy of human welfare mingle among the good seed, thereby to make the truth more difficult to be believed, which in herself is simple and naked, while falsehood is proud, haughty, and coloured with a lustre of seeming godly and human wisdom. Ye that are wise eschew such books, and have recourse to us, who seek not your moneys, but offer unto you most willingly our great treasures. We hunt not after your goods with invented lying tinctures, but desire to make you partakers of our goods. We do not reject parables, but invite you to the clear and simple explanation of all secrets; we seek not to be received by you, but call you unto our more than kingly houses and palaces, by no motion of our own, but (lest you be ignorant of it) as forced thereto by the Spirit of God, commanded by the testament of our most excellent Father, and impelled by the occasion of this present time.

Chapter XIII.

What think you, therefore, O mortals, seeing that we sincerely confess Christ, execrate the pope, addict ourselves to the true philosophy, lead a worthy life, and daily call, intreat, and invite many more unto our Fraternity, unto whom the same Light of God likewise appeareth? Consider you not that, having pondered the gifts which are in you, having measured your understanding in the Word of God, and having weighed the imperfections and inconsistencies of all the arts, you may at length in the future deliberate with us upon their remedy, cooperate in the work of God, and be serviceable to the constitution of your time? On which work these profits will follow, that all those goods which Nature hath disposed in every part of the earth shall at one time and altogether be given to you, *tanquam in centro solis et lunae*. Then shall you be able to expel from the world all those things which darken human knowledge and hinder action, such as the vain (astronomical) epicycles and eccentric circles.

Chapter XIV.

You, however, for whom it is enough to be serviceable out of curiosity to any ordinance, or who are dazzled by the glistening of gold, or who, though now upright, might be led away by such unexpected great riches into an effeminate, idle, luxurious, and pompous life, do not disturb our sacred silence by your clamour, but think that although there be a medicine which might fully cure all diseases, yet those whom God wishes to try or chastise shall not be abetted by such an opportunity, so that if we were able to enrich and instruct the whole world, and liberate it from innumerable hardships, yet we shall never be manifested unto any man unless God should favour it, yea, it shall be so far from him who thinks to be a partaker of our riches against the will of God that he shall sooner lose his life in seeking us, than attain happiness by finding us.

Fraternitas R.C.

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