

# Elias the Artist

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*The appearance of Elias the Artist as prophesied by Paracelsus, and his connection with the Rosicrucian fraternity and Francis Bacon.*

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Paracelsus (1493-1541) made a famous prophecy based upon his knowledge of the special planetary conjunctions and configurations that were due to occur in 1603: namely, that they would mark the advent or appearance of Elias Artista (Elias the Artist), an adept of chemical (i.e. alchemical) science and a “great light” who would renovate the arts and sciences, teach the transmutation of all the metals, and reveal many things.

... the Sign and Harbinger of the approaching revolution. ... It is true there is nothing concealed which shall not be revealed, for which cause a marvellous Being [Elias the Artist] shall come after me, who as yet lives not, and who shall reveal many things.<sup>1</sup>

God will permit a discovery of the highest importance to be made; it must be hidden till the advent of Elias the Artist.<sup>2</sup>

There are still many more of these arcana which exhibit transmutations, though they are known to few. And although these may by the Lord God be made manifest to anyone, still, the rumour of this Art does not on that account at once break forth, but the Almighty gives therewith the understanding how to conceal these and other like arts even to the coming of Elias the Artist, at which time there shall be nothing so occult that it shall not be revealed.<sup>3</sup>

The basis of Paracelsus’ prophecy was almost certainly an astronomical calculation that indicated there would be in 1603-4 a great conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the sign of Sagittarius and close to the Galactic Centre. (A great conjunction or *conjunctio magna* is a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter which lasts long enough for Mars, the third of the major planets, to approach closely the other two planets, thereby producing the very conspicuous spectacle of three bright stars shining from the same place in the heavens.) In alchemical lore, a conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars produces enlightenment—Saturn signifying deep thought which on its own is serious and melancholic, Jupiter signifying compassion and joviality, and Mars signifying the vital strength, discipline and determination necessary to rise to the heights of consciousness. The three represent the upper triangle of the “Lesser Adam” (also known as *Microprosopus* or *Zauir Anpin*) in the cabalistic Tree of Life—the triangle of higher human consciousness. In rabbinic and kabbalistic tradition it is said that such a conjunction indicates an appearance (of some kind) of the Messiah; and, if it includes a double or triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, then the messianic appearance or manifestation is significantly stronger. If the conjunction takes place in Pisces, then the manifestation will be the ‘Fish Saviour’ aspect of the Messiah, such as occurred in respect of Jesus of Nazareth. If the conjunction occurs in another sign, the manifestation will relate to the symbolism of that sign.

The great conjunction commenced in December 1603 with a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign and constellation of Sagittarius.<sup>4</sup> This was followed the next year by a dramatic massing of Mars with Saturn and Jupiter, with Saturn and Jupiter lingering on the border of Sagittarius and Scorpio. On 26 September 1604 a Saturn-Mars conjunction took place and on 10 October 1604 a Jupiter-Mars conjunction occurred, both in the sign and constellation of Sagittarius, with all three planets massed together.

This great conjunction was astrologically important because it took place in a constellation (Sagittarius) that is one of the three signs of the Fiery Trigon, with the Saturn-Jupiter conjunction<sup>5</sup> of 1603 followed by the triangular grouping (or massing) of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in Sagittarius in 1604, thereby producing a fiery triangle (i.e. of the three fiery planets) in the Fiery Trigon.<sup>6</sup>

However, what gave this great conjunction additional significance was the fact that it took place together with two “new stars”—a nova in the constellation of Cygnus (the Swan) that was first sighted in 1600 and still shining strongly in 1603-4, and a supernova in the constellation of Ophiuchus-Serpentarius (the Serpent Master) in 1604. The latter (Supernova SN 1604) was observed by Kepler and thus became referred to as “Kepler’s Star”. It was described as being blood-red in colour and appeared between Saturn and Jupiter, in the “right foot” of the “Serpent-Handler” Ophiuchus. Its exact position was in the leg of Ophiuchus at the apex of a tight triangle with Saturn and Mars-conjunct-Jupiter at the base. It was bright enough to be seen during the day for over three weeks and outshone all the stars and planets except Venus in the night sky. It continued to dominate the night sky for 17 months, after which it faded away. “Kepler’s Star” was the last supernova observed in our galaxy up to the present date.

This powerful celestial event caused a great stir throughout Europe. Conjecture likened it to the Bethlehem Star seen by the Magi, which announced the birth of Jesus Christ, and it was even said to be the same as or similar to that which occurred on the Fourth Day of Creation, when the “lights” were created in the heavens (Genesis 1:14). Many people throughout Europe were in expectation of a new world or new era as a result. The Rosicrucians took these stellar phenomena as the sign that they should announce their existence and work to the world. They symbolised this with the allegory of opening the tomb of their “father”, Fra CRC (Christian Rosy Cross), and in doing so associated Fra CRC with Elias the Artist.

Robert Fludd (1574-1637), writing in his *Tractatus Apoligetica* (1617) about the celestial events of 1603-4, linked them with the “new star” (supernova) that had appeared 30 years earlier, in 1572-1574, in the constellation of Cassiopeia (the Heavenly Queen), and which shone brighter than Venus. Whilst the general public across Europe, including Theodore Beza, the Calvinist Biblical scholar, believed that this dramatic stellar manifestation marked the end of the world and that the Second Coming of Christ was about to happen, the sages recognised it as the sign of the birth of a great light in the world, born of the Heavenly Queen. This was associated in a worldly way with the queen of England, Elizabeth I, who from then onwards was referred to publicly as the “Virgin Queen” and likened symbolically to the Heavenly Queen (or Faerie Queen), with a whole cult built up in England around this theme and that of St George and King Arthur. Fludd said that the Cassiopeian star had marked the beginning of the Rosicrucian work, which then continued to be prepared in

secrecy until the 1603-4 stellar event, the latter being a sign to the Brotherhood to emerge into the open, expand their membership and begin the restoration of the world.

Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) had written earlier that the 1572-4 supernova marked the entrance of the world into the seventh revolution that would inaugurate the golden age, adding that "Some great light is now at hand which shall enlighten and by degrees expel the former darkness".<sup>7</sup> He linked this with his forecast of the major conjunction of planets that would occur in 1603 when, he said, the actual prophecies of the star would be released.

Michael Maier (1568–1622), who said that he first heard of the Rosicrucian fraternity when in England (1611-1616), wrote that the 1604 celestial phenomena was a sign to the Rosicrucian brotherhood to emerge from their period of secrecy that had begun in 1572, during which time they had prepared their work, and to expand their membership and begin the restoration of the world.<sup>8</sup> In a manuscript (now lost) that was once kept at the University of Leiden (or Leipzig), Maier is recorded as stating that the "Society of the Golden and Rosy Cross" was founded in 1570 by members of a group whose origins lay in an earlier group led by Sir Thomas More that had been founded in London in 1510 by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, similar to the one Agrippa had previously set up Paris. The society had secret signs of recognition and founded corresponding chapters of their society throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup>

In his *Symbola Aureæ Mensæ*, published in Frankfurt in 1617, as well as in other books of his, Maier explained that the Rosicrucian fraternity was a revival of such philosophical colleges and ancient societies that have always existed among various nations from very ancient times, such as those of the Samothracian Cabiri, the Magi of Persia, the Brahmins of India, the Gymnosophists of Ethiopia, the Pythagoreans of Greece, and the initiates of the Egyptian, Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries. All of these had been instituted not for the teaching of exoteric doctrines but for studying the most arcane mysteries of Nature. Known also as the Brothers of the Golden Rose-Cross, the Rosicrucian fraternity was ruled by a President who was referred to as the "Apollo" of the fraternity. In his *Themis Aurea*, published in Frankfurt in 1618, Maier gave a further clue as to the philosophic, poetic and artistic nature of the Rosicrucians when he wrote: "The Temple of the Rosy Cross is located beside Helicon on double-peaked Parnassus, where Pegasus opened a fountain of perennial water."

Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666), who published in 1652 an English version of the *Fama and Confessio* of the Rosicrucians<sup>10</sup> and is thought to have been the author of several famous alchemical works written under the pseudonym "Eugenius Philaletes", declared Elias the Artist to have already been born into the world and that "the entire Universe is to be transmuted and transfigured by the science of this Artist into the pure mystical gold of the Spiritual City of God, when all currencies have been destroyed."<sup>11</sup>

A further description of Elias the Artist was given in 1891 by the Order Cabbalistic de la Rosecroix in France:-

Elias Artista! Genius Director of the Rose Cross, symbolical personification of the Order, Ambassador of St. Paraclet! Paracelsus the Great has predicted thy coming, O collective breath of generous vindications, Spirit of Liberty, of Science and Love which must regenerate the world.

'Elias' is an alternative form of the name Elijah. In kabbalistic tradition the prophet Elijah is associated with Enoch (known as Idris in Sufi tradition), who is referred to as the Great Teacher. According to this tradition, Enoch was the first human being to attain all the degrees of initiation and ascend bodily into the highest heaven. There he was transformed into the great archangel Metatron, chief of all the Archangels, the Great Angel of the Presence and Guardian of the seven-pillared Temple of Wisdom, an aspect of the Universal Spirit of the Messiah. Given the choice of rising further and reuniting totally with the Godhead (*En Sof*), or remaining with and teaching the rest of humanity, Enoch chose the latter out of his love for humanity. This choice gave him two roles to play: the first to announce and prepare people for the coming of the Messiah in judgement and glory as the "King", and the second to appear as the "King".<sup>12</sup> The first role, in which his spirit is known as Elijah, is described in the last book of the Hebrew Bible (Malachi 4:5-6):-

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The Elijah role is that of opening hearts in love and guiding souls through initiation, preparing them for their initiatory death, resurrection and illumination (when they will see the Messiah in glory), and bearing witness of that light. The role became associated with Elijah the prophet who, like Enoch, ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire. Later the role was associated with John the Baptist, who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." (Luke 1:17.) Imbued with the spirit of Elijah, John prepared the way for the "greater light" of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), names Elias the Artist and Fra. CRC, the "Theophrastian Master"<sup>14</sup> of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, as one particular person who was alive in 1621 and who was not only the quintessence of all wisdom but also the instaurator of all arts and sciences:-

I should here except some Cynics, Menippus, Diogenes, that Theban Crates; or to descend to these times, that omniscious, only wise fraternity of the Rosicrucians, those great theologues, politicians, philosophers, physicians, philologers, artists, &c. of whom Saint Bridget, Albas Joacchimus, Leicenbergius, and such divine spirits have prophesied, and made promise to the world, if at least there be any such..... or an Elias artifex their Theophrastian Master; whom though Libavius and many deride and carp at, yet some will have to be 'the instaurator of all arts and sciences, reformer of the world, and now living,' for so Johannes Montanus Strigoniensis, that great patron of Paracelsus, contends, and certainly avers 'a most divine man,' and the quintessence of wisdom wheresoever he is; for he, his fraternity, friends, &c. are all 'betrothed to wisdom,' if we may believe their disciples and followers.

In this passage Burton provides a very good summary of many of the types of brethren in the Rosicrucian fraternity. He also tells us who Elias the Artist was, because "the instaurator of all arts and sciences" was specifically the description of Francis Bacon, who named his *magnum opus* as "The Great Instauration". Later, in 1660, when the Royal Society was

founded, Bacon was publicly acknowledged as its “Instaurator”. To help explain this reference further, yet still to keep it subtly veiled, Dr. Wilkins, the first Secretary of the Royal Society, referred in his *Mathematical Magick* to Fra. Christian Rosy Cross by his Christian name:–

Such a lamp is likewise related to be seen in the sepulchre of Francis Rosicross, as is more largely expressed in the Confession of that fraternity.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Francis Bacon was known to quite a few people as Elias Artista and Fra CRC, the “Apollo” of the Rosicrucians—the Day Star and leader of the Muses and their disciples. Like Elijah, Bacon saw himself as the “*buccinator novi temporis*”,<sup>16</sup> the trumpeter (i.e. messenger, herald) of a new time—the time of the “last ages”—the time that culminates in a golden age on Earth:–

The beginning is from God: for the business which is in hand, having the character of good so strongly impressed upon it, appears manifestly to proceed from God, who is the author of good, and the Father of Lights. Now in divine operations even the smallest beginnings lead of a certainty to their end. And as it was said of spiritual things, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” so is it in all the greater works of Divine Providence; everything glides on smoothly and noiselessly, and the work is fairly going on before men are aware that it has begun. Nor should the prophecy of Daniel be forgotten, touching the last ages of the world: – “Many shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;” clearly intimating that the thorough passage of the world (which now by so many distant voyages seems to be accomplished, or in course of accomplishment), and the advancement of the sciences, are destined by fate, that is, by Divine Providence, to meet in the same age.<sup>17</sup>

Illustrating the preparatory time inspired by the spirit of Elijah alias Elias the Artist leading up to the golden age, the prophetic quote from Daniel is prominently displayed (in Latin) as “Multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia” on the titlepage of Bacon’s 1620 *Instauratio Magna* (which also acts as the illustrated titlepage to *Novum Organum*), and the 1640 *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*. The *Advancement of Learning* and *New Method (Novum Organum)* are the first two books of the Great Instauration series. The 1627 titlepage of the third book of the series, *Sylva Sylvarum (Pan of the Woods)*, displays the biblical quote, “Et videt Deus lucem quod esset bona” (“And God saw the light, that it was good”).<sup>18</sup> A golden age is filled with the light of God, and such light is love in action or charity, as Bacon pointed out, and this, he emphasised, is the whole purpose and goal of the Great Instauration.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Paracelsus, ‘*De Mineralibus*,’ ch.1, Vol. II, *Opera Opera omnia medico-chemico-chirurgica*, Geneva, 1658.

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<sup>2</sup> Paracelsus, 'De Mineralibus,' ch.8, Vol. II, *Opera Opera omnia medico-chemico-chirurgica*, Geneva, 1658.

<sup>3</sup> Paracelsus, 'Book Concerning the Tincture of Philosophers,' *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus*, Two Volumes, translated by Arthur Edward Waite, London, 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Fludd: "In the year 1603, the 29th of December, following the New Style, at midday, I perceived Saturn enter 8° 39' Sagittarius. Likewise Jupiter nearly at the same time entered the same sign Sagittarius at 8° 39'" (*Tractatus Apologetici*, ch. V, p.I).

<sup>5</sup> Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions occur at 20-year intervals and 117 degrees apart, and shift westward (clockwise) through the signs of a given trigon, remaining within the signs of one trigon for almost 200 years and then shifting into the adjacent trigon. After nearly 800 years (actually 794.4) they begin a new cycle back at nearly their original position as measured with respect to the vernal equinox.

<sup>6</sup> The 12 signs of the zodiac are divided into four trigons, each made of three associated and equally-spaced constellations. Virgo-Taurus-Capricorn are the Earthy Trigon; Pisces-Scorpio-Cancer are the Watery Trigon; Gemini-Aquarius-Libra are the Airy Trigon; Sagittarius-Leo- Aries are the Fiery Trigon.

<sup>7</sup> Tycho Brahe , *Astronomiæ Instauratæ Progymnasmataor* ("Introduction to the New Astronomy"), Vol .1 (1602).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Maier, *Symbola Aureæ Mensæ*, Frankfurt, 1617.

<sup>9</sup> The manuscript is now lost, so it cannot be checked, but it is generally supported by other evidence such as Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564), *Mathematical Preface to Euclide's Geometry* (1570), and *General and rare memorials pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* (1576), and Robert Fludd's comment, in his *Tractatus Apologetica* (1617) defending the Rosicrucians, that the Rosicrucian Brotherhood had begun their work at the time of the supernova in Cassiopeia (1572-4). See Bricaud, Joanny: 'Historique du Movement Rosicrucien,' *Le Voile d'Isis*, Vol. 91, July 1927, pp. 559-574. See also Hereward Tilton: *The Quest for the Phoenix: Spiritual Alchemy and Rosicrucianism in the Work of Count Michael Maier (1569-1622)*.

<sup>10</sup> *Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of the R: C: Commonly, of the Rosie Cross*, published 1652.

<sup>11</sup> *Eugenius Philalethes, Introitus apertus ad oclusum Regis Palatium* ('Entrance opened to the Closed Palace of the King').

<sup>12</sup> See: *The Kabbalistic Tradition: An Anthology of Jewish Mysticism*, edited by Alan Unterman (Penguin UK, 6 Nov 2008); Leonora Leet, *The Universal Kabbalah* (Inner Traditions/Bear & Co, 2004); Angelo S. Rappoport, *Ancient Israel – Myths and Legends*, Vol.3 (Mystic Press, 1987). See also: Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus declared that John the Baptist was Elijah (Matthew 11:7-14) even though John himself, in his humility, publicly denied it (John 1:19-21). The discrepancy is explained because it was not that John the Baptist was a reincarnation of the person, Elijah the prophet, but that he, John the person, was imbued with the messianic spirit of Elijah. John described himself (John 1:23) as the "voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said (Isaiah 40:3)."

<sup>14</sup> "Theophrastian" refers to Paracelsus, whose full name was Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim.

<sup>15</sup> Wilkins, *Mathematical Magick*, Bk 2, ch 10. London, 1648; further editions 1680, 1691 and 1707.

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<sup>16</sup> Francis Bacon, *Valerius Terminus*, I, 580-581. Also:- Bacon, *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum*, IV, 1 (1623): "Ego enim buccinator tantum, pugnam non in eo" ("for I am but a trumpeter, not a combatant").

<sup>17</sup> Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, I.xciii.

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 1: 4.