

FIVE AND FIFTY: A PROPOSED SOLUTION TO “THE VIRGIN” NAME RIDDLE IN THE ROSICRUCIAN DOCUMENT, *THE CHYMICAL WEDDING OF CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ*

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Abstract

The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz is the third Rosicrucian Manifesto, and was written in 1616 CE. A perplexing text riddle is presented in the section titled “The Third Day” of the document. The Author inquires as to the name of his Virgin guide. Her answer is cryptic and requires a mathematical solution. This paper will demonstrate the name of the Virgin is the Latin term “Avidi Via,” through a series of logical deductions based on the riddle text.

CINCO Y CINCUENTA: SE PROPONE UNA SOLUCIÓN A LA ADIVINANZA DEL NOMBRE “LA VIRGEN” EN EL DOCUMENTO ROSACRUZ “LA BODA QUÍMICA DE CRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ”

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Extracto

El tercer Manifiesto Rosacruz es “La Boda Química de Cristian Rosenkreutz”, y fue escrito en 1616 CE. En la sección del documento titulada “El Tercer Día” se presenta una desafiante adivinanza. El autor pregunta el nombre de su guía Virgen. La respuesta de ella es enigmática y requiere una solución matemática. Mediante una serie de deducciones lógicas basadas en la adivinanza del texto, este artículo demostrará que el nombre de la Virgen es el término Latino “Avidi Via,”

CINQ ET CINQUANTE: SOLUTION PROPOSEE POUR L’ENIGME DE “LA VIERGE” DANS LE DOCUMENT ROSICRUCIEN “LES NOCES CHYMIQUES DE CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ”

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Résumé

“Les noces chymiques de Christian Rosenkreutz”, troisième Manifeste Rosicrucien, a été écrit en l’an 1616 de notre ère. Une curieuse énigme est présentée dans la section de ce document intitulée “Le Troisième Jour”. L’auteur s’enquerra du nom de son guide Vierge. La réponse de celle-ci est cryptique et requiert une solution mathématique. Cet essai démontrera à travers une série de déductions logiques basées sur l’énigme du texte que le nom de la Vierge est le terme Latin “Avidi Via”.

FUENF UND FUENFZIG: DER VERSUCH EINER LOESUNG DES RAETZELS DES NAMENS DER JUNGFAEU IN DEM ROSENKREUZDOKUMENT „DIE CHYMISCHE HOCHZEIT DES CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ“

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Zusammenfassung

„Die Chymische Hochzeit des Christian Rosenkreutz“ stammt aus dem Jahre 1616 und ist das dritte rosenkreuzische Manifesto. Im Teil, „Der Dritte Tag“ ist ein verwirrendes Raetzel praesentiert. Der autor fragt nach dem Namen seiner jungfraeulichen Fuehrerin. Ihre Antwort ist raetzelhaft und erforderte eine mathematische Loesung. Diese Schrift zeigt durch eine Kette logischer, auf dem Text des Raetzels beruhender, Deduktionen, dass der name der Jungfrau die lateinische Bezeichnung „Avidi Via“ ist.

CINCO E CINQUENTA: UMA SOLUÇÃO DO ENIGMÁTICO NOME "A VIRGEM" NO DOCUMENTO ROSACRUZ "O CASAMENTO ALQUIMICO DE CHRISTIAN ROSEUKREUTZ"

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Resumo

"O casamento Alquimico de Christian Rosenkreutz" é o terceiro Manifesto e foi escrito em 1616 E.C. Um perplexo enigmático texto é apresentado na seção intitulada "O Terceiro Dia!" do documento. O autor questiona sobre o nome do seu guia virgem. Sua resposta é oculta e requer uma solução matemática. Este texto demonstrará o nome da Virgem é a expressão latina "avidia via" através de uma série de deduções lógicas baseada no texto enigmático.

FIVE AND FIFTY: A PROPOSED SOLUTION TO “THE VIRGIN” NAME RIDDLE IN THE ROSICRUCIAN DOCUMENT, *THE CHYMICAL WEDDING OF CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ*¹

Theodore Trenn Williams

I. Introduction

Esoteric literature intentionally strives to be cryptic and obtuse, as the authors of the genre are acting as guardians of secret or privileged information. These authors face a serious dilemma, however, which is how to covertly convey this information to initiates and subsequent generations. The information must be artfully masked to avoid outright disclosure. The obvious solution to the problem has been through willful obfuscation.

Webster’s Dictionary defines obfuscation as “To darken, or make obscure.”² In a written document, this means utilizing cryptographic, symbolic, mathematical, and metaphorical language or tools to conceal and convey content and meaning. In short, it is an advanced form of secrecy, which scholars have long recognized. Scholar Stanton Tefft suggests that “Secrecy enables certain types of associations to avoid political persecution or destruction; it allows other groups to maintain an exclusive monopoly on esoteric knowledge.”³ The unfortunate aspect of

willful obfuscation is that the intended meaning of symbols or codes used to convey the original message might become lost. History has repeatedly demonstrated this unfortunate dynamic, often through the attrition or persecution of the membership responsible for esoteric composition.

An exemplar of willful obfuscation is the esoteric classic *The Chymical Wedding*. The author plainly reveals the possession of hidden information by stating, “and behold it was a fair and glorious lady, whose garments were all sky-coloured, and curiously (like Heaven) bespangled with golden stars; in her right hand she bore a trumpet of beaten gold, on which a Name was engraved which I could well read but am as yet forbidden to reveal it.”⁴

The Chymical Wedding is a document referred to as The Third Rosicrucian Manifesto, and was written in 1616 CE. It is arguably one of the most willfully obfuscated and symbolic documents ever created. Divided into seven sections (each representing one day), the document follows the experiences of its supposed author, Christian Rosenkreutz, who is led through a myriad of alchemy-themed transformational encounters. As with most apocryphal or esoteric documentation, most of the metaphor and symbols afford the reader potential for diverse interpretations.

II. The Problem

“The Third Day” segment of the document finds the author inquiring as to the name of a mysterious “Virgin” that has served as his guide thus far through the story. Instead of receiving a simple answer, the reader is presented with this vexing puzzle:

“My Name contains five and fifty, and yet hath only eight Letters, the third is the third part of the fifth, which added to the sixth will produce a Number, whose root shall exceed the third it self by just the first, and it is the half of the fourth. Now the fifth and the seventh are equal, the last and the first are also equal, and make with the second as much as the sixth hath, which contains just four more than the third tripled. Now tell me, my Lord, how am I called?”

“The answer was intricate enough to me, yet I left not off so, but said, ‘noble and virtuous Lady, may I not obtain one only Letter?’

“‘Yea (said she) that may well be done.’

“‘What then (replied I again) may the seventh contain?’

“‘It contains (said she) as many as there are Lords here.’”

On first inspection, the above statement seems a muddled equation, but a careful reading does reveal potential solutions.

III. Building The Matrix

Before proceeding, it becomes essential to make some critical observations about *The Chymical Wedding*. Throughout the story, the author observes or receives printed and engraved

messages. These messages are inevitably written in Latin. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the solution to the puzzle will be a Latin construct. Due to the numeric nature of the clues, it is equally reasonable to assume the solution will consist of Roman numerals that are used concurrently as letters to spell out words. The puzzle specifies 8 letters, and it is reasonable to assume that each letter-space should contain a single alphanumeric character. This limits the number of letter positions to 8, and the potential choices of single character Roman numerals (that must also function as letters) from which to choose. The single character Roman numerals that function as both numbers and letters are I (one), V (five), X (ten), L (fifty), C (one hundred), D (500), and M (1000).

To begin the construct, the puzzle states that the name “hath only eight Letters.” Further down the puzzle states, “the fifth and the seventh are equal, the last and the first are also equal.” This information allows the construction of a framework, or matrix, to house the puzzle. The following matrix contains the eight unknown character spaces, represented as stars, with their corresponding numbered positions listed sequentially below. Positions of the puzzle that are noted as equal to one another (position 1=8, 5=7) are listed across the bottom row.

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

IV. Solving the 5th and 7th Letter Positions

Now that the matrix is established, the first clue can be considered.

“The third is the third part of the fifth.”

This is an incredibly clever device. The first occurrence of the term “the third” in the statement is actually referring to a fraction, as in 1/3 (one-third). Thus, if 1/3 is the “third part” of the value, the value must be 1 (one), or 1/3+1/3+1/3. The “fifth” in the above statement is referring to the fifth letter position. Therefore the 5th letter position (and by definition the 7th letter position) would be a 1, or I in Roman numerals.

An additional puzzle statement further identifies the 7th letter position as the Roman numeral I (one).

“Noble and virtuous Lady, may I not obtain one only Letter?”

“Yea (said she) that may well be done.”

“What then (replied I again) may the seventh contain?”

“It contains (said she) as many as there are Lords here.”

The 7th position is occupied by “as many as there are Lords here.” While esoteric, *The Chymical Wedding* is, at its core, a Christian-themed document. Christianity allows for only one Lord. Remember that the 5th and 7th letter positions must be equal. Therefore the 5th and 7th positions may be confidently filled with the Roman numeral I (one). The solution is beginning to take form:

*	*	*	*	I	*	I	*
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

V. Solving the 6th Letter Position

The next pertinent clue is “the fifth, which added to the sixth will produce a Number, whose root shall exceed the third.” The segment states the 5th letter position (already established as the Roman numeral I), when added with the 6th letter position, will yield another number, the root of which will become important in determining other letter positions. Breaking the statement into smaller portions will prove very helpful.

The puzzle language is rather nebulous in the opening segment that states, “The fifth, which added to the sixth will produce a Number.” Notice there are two potential interpretations. The statement might imply the combined letter positions could be read as a Roman numeral, where IV, for instance, would be directly interpreted as 4. However, the statement might alternatively be proposing that the two values could be added together to produce a sum, where IV would instead be interpreted as 1+5, or 6. This is where having a limited field of eligible Roman numerals is invaluable. *All* of the potential outcomes can be easily listed as follows: II (2), IV (4 or 6), IX (9 or 11), IL (49 or 51), IC (99 or 101), ID (499 or 501), IM (999 or 1001)

There is only one possible mathematical solution in this case. Remember that each letter position can only accommodate a single character formed by a Roman numeral. Therefore the root of the number formed by the 5th and 6th letter positions must be a whole number selected from the eligible Roman numeral combinations listed above. This is because the root of the combination must also eventually “exceed the third it self by just the first.” That means the root (square, cube, or any potential mathematical derivative of the term), will be used to directly determine the value of a letter position, and therefore must also be a single Roman numeral selected from eligible characters if it is to effectively function.

The V (Roman numeral 5) is the only possible solution for the 6th letter position. Combined with the one (I) from the 5th letter position it yields the Roman numeral IV (4). It is the *only* value of all available choices capable of meeting the above criteria.

To confirm the selection, the puzzle again offers an additional clue about the 6th letter position, which is, “and make with the second as much as the sixth hath, which contains just four more than the third tripled.” The “third tripled” has already been identified as a device that expressed the Roman numeral I. The 6th letter position will have “four more than the third tripled,” which would be 4+1, or Roman numeral V.

Adding the V to the 6th letter position in the matrix yields the following:

*	*	*	*	I	V	I	*
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

VI. Solving the 3rd Letter Position

The puzzle proceeds to mention that the “root shall exceed the third itself by just the first.” The terminology is quite confusing until specifically delineated. The root of 4 (the established result of the 5th and 6th letter positions) is 2. The term “the third” in the above statement is referring to the third letter position. “The first” referenced in the statement could be referring to the first letter position, but that value is currently unknown. Alternatively, “the first” could also be referring to the first Roman numeral of the 5th and 6th letter position combination, which is the primary subject of this section of the puzzle. If this were true, “the first” in the segment would be referring to Roman numeral I, or the initial character in Roman numeral IV.

Structuring these suspected values, they could be expressed in a simple mathematical equation where the root (2) exceeds the 3rd letter position by “the first” (1). The equation generated would appear as $x + 1 = 2$, where x is the unknown 3rd letter position, 2 is the root, and 1 is the first character from the Roman numeral IV. The solution is obviously $x=1$. As a proof, the value of the root, which is 2, exceeds the third letter position, which is 1, by just the first, which is also 1. The 3rd letter position must be the Roman numeral I.

The addition of the 3rd letter position solution advances the matrix thusly:

*	*	I	*	I	V	I	*
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

VII. Solving the 4th Letter Position

The next phrase in the puzzle states is that the root is also “half of the fourth.” There is a problem, however, in that the 4th letter position cannot equal twice the root. This is because twice the root (2) would equal 4, or IV in Roman numerals. The Roman numeral IV consists of multiple characters and cannot fit into a single letter position.

However, consider applying the placement of alphabet characters as a solution. The root is 2, and the letter B is the second letter of the alphabet. If the root (2) represents half of the solution, the solution would be twice that, or the fourth letter of the Roman alphabet. The fourth letter of the alphabet is D and is the Roman numeral for 500, which also contains the number 50. Therefore filling the 4th letter position with the Roman numeral D meets the puzzle criteria. Adding the new value into the matrix, the following is revealed:

*	*	I	D	I	V	I	*
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

VIII. Solving the 1st, 2nd, and 8th Letter Positions

The next puzzle segment reads, “The last and the first are also equal, and make with the second as much as the sixth hath.” This statement may again be expressed mathematically as: $2x + y = 5$, where X equals the unknown value of 1st and 8th letter positions, and Y equals the unknown value of the 2nd letter position. The value of the sum is V (5), or the 6th letter position, which has already been established. The only combination that allows three Roman numerals, of single characters, to add up to the Roman Numeral V (5) is 0+0+5. Given the 1st and 8th letter positions are equal, this would mean their values must be zero, and therefore the 2nd letter position value must be V (5).

A complete solution for the puzzle now manifests as:

O	V	I	D	I	V	I	O
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

However, there are two problems with this solution. The first is that the Roman numeral system did not contain a zero. The second is that OVIDIVIO does not translate from Latin. It might be construed as “The sheep of God” or “The seeds of God,” or “Way of the Shepherd,” but only if we are willing to completely dismiss Latin tense and declension. Furthermore, the term is distinctly masculine, hardly appropriate for the name of a feminine virgin.

IX. The Solution

To obtain a final and tenable solution, the focus now needs to turn toward language. Notice the reversal of order in the previous statement, “the last and the first are also equal.” Why reverse the words, last and first? The clever manipulation of language has so far been crucial in determining the values of letter positions, so the reversal of these words must have some significance.

Could this be an allusion to Jesus’ words in the New Testament, “I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last” (Rev. 1:8) ? The Greek Alpha and Roman “A,” are the first characters in both respective alphabets. The Greek character for Omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet. In Latin, the Greek character of Omega is transcribed as the Roman letter “O.” Is the clue suggesting the substitution of the Roman equivalent of Omega with the first alphabet character from either alphabet? Following this strategy, and inserting an “A” into the puzzle in place of the O, or transcribed omega, in the 1st and 8th letter positions, the result becomes:

A	V	I	D	I	V	I	A
1=	2	3	4	5=	6	7=	8=
(8)				(7)		(5)	(1)

AVIDI VIA

The Roman letter A does not have a numeric value in Roman numerals. But remember the clue *“the last and the first are also equal, and make with the second as much as the sixth hath.”* The lack of numerical value of the Roman letter A means that it has no numeric relevance, or therefore, a value of zero. Because of this, the above statement still holds true, that the 1st + 2nd + 8th letter positions equals the 6th letter position, or in this case, A (0) + A (0) + V (5) = V (5). By swapping the O with A, the phrase also becomes distinctly feminine in gender. To confirm the AVIDI VIA solution is correct, a test by proof using the entire puzzle text will be helpful before examining the Latin translation and meaning.

XI. Testing by Truths

To test the accuracy of the proposed solution, simply apply the proposed letter position solution against the appropriate puzzle text to determine validity.

“My Name contains five and fifty, and yet hath only eight Letters”
True, 8 total letters, V (5) & D (500) occupy positions, “500” contains “50”

“The third is the third part of the fifth”
True, the 5th position is Roman numeral I, or $1/3+1/3+1/3$

“Which added to the sixth will produce a Number”
True, the 6th position is V, which combined with I is the Roman numeral IV (4).

“Whose root shall exceed the third it self by just the first”
True, 2 is the root of 4, and 2 exceeds the third letter position of I, and the first character in IV by just itself.

“And it is the half of the fourth”
True, the 4th letter position is D, which is fourth in the alphabet, twice that of the root value 2, or B, in alphabet placement.

“Now the fifth and the seventh are equal”
True, both the Roman numeral I

“The last and the first are also equal”
True, but the O is replaced by the A, which becomes numerically irrelevant, or zero.

“And make with the second as much as the sixth hath”
True, $A (0) + A (0) + V (5) = V (5)$

“Which contains just four more than the third tripled”
True, the 6th position is V (5), which equals $4+1/3+1/3+1/3$

“The seventh contains (said she) as many as there are Lords here”
True, there is just one (I) Lord in Christianity

XII. Translation and Conclusion

Avidi is a form of the Latin word Avidus, and means desire, greed, or longing. The tense could be either genitive singular (possessive) or most likely the nominative plural. Avidi can be translated as “The eager ones.”

Via is a Latin word with various meanings and nuances, such as road, street, path, or “the way,” and is presented as either the nominative singular or ablative singular.⁵ The Romans occasionally used the word via metaphorically, as in a spiritual path or way.

Use of the specific combined term of “Avidi Via” can therefore be generally translated as “The path of a person (or men and women) of desire.” This specific phrase was not found in a general survey of Latin literature.⁶ It is important to point out, however, that the Latin construction of names allowed considerable license, and that the term originated in 1616 CE, not in traditionally surveyed classic Latin literature.

The name is consistent with the esoteric image of feminine holy wisdom, or Sophia, as being the guiding path of men and women of desire. “Avidi Via” meets all the mathematical, linguistic, and thematic requirements demanded in the Virgin name puzzle contained in *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. In addition, given the patently esoteric nature of the revelation, the initial reason for willful obfuscation now becomes readily apparent.

NOTES:

¹ Andreae, Johann Valentin, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, 1616 CE. Authorship of *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* is attributed to Johann Valentin Andreae. Rosenkreutz is considered by most scholars (and Rosicrucians) to be a mythic, archetypal figure. Therefore the first-person narrator of *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* is subsequently hereafter referenced as “the author.” (Text available at http://www.rosecroixjournal.org/resources/documents/chymical_wedding.pdf -- ed.)

² *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield MA, G. & C. Merriam Co. 1972).

³ Tefft, Stanton K., *Secrecy, A Cross Cultural Perspective* (New York, NY, Human Sciences Press, 1980), 321.

⁴ Andreae, Johann Valentin, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, 1616 CE, First Day, paragraph 2.

⁵ Latin syntax, usage, and definitions determined online on using The Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University, Gregory Crane, Editor in Chief, accessed on 5/23/2006, available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

⁶ Occurrence of “Avidi Via” in classic Latin works also referenced on The Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University, Gregory Crane, Editor in Chief, accessed on 5/23/2006, available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> .