

Rosicrucian Society Essay

THE FRATERNITY OF THE ROSE CROSS, PART III

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In part I of this paper we posed questions concerning the origin, nature, activities and beliefs of the Rosicrucians. These also questioned the relation to Medieval Freemasonry and also to the present day. Due to the inadequacy of historical documentation only theories can be presented, four of which are most prevalent. The first assumed that the Rosicrucian Order historically was formed and a description of its activities published in its manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, in 1610. A reformation of the intellectual and spiritual climate of the time was necessary and the Rosicrucian Order of philosophers had been selected for this purpose. To bring about this reformation, a mysterious person called "The Highly Illuminated Father C.R.C.", a German of a noble family, but himself poor, instituted the "Secret Society of the Rose Cross."

The second theory by Masonic investigators of this subject accepts the historical existence of the "Brotherhood of the Rose Cross" but differ concerning the origin of the Order. One group, led by Robert Macoy 33°, believes the society originated in medieval Europe as an outgrowth of alchemical speculation and Johann Valentin Andreae, a German theologian, was the founder. Further, he felt it possible, that Andreae actually may have modified and expanded an existing society founded by Sir Henry Cornelius Agrippa. While others opined that the "Society of the Rose Cross" was founded in Egypt during its philosophic peak, and perpetuated the Mysteries of ancient Persia and Chaldea.

THE THIRD POSTULATE

The third theory denies the existence of Rosicrucianism, asserting that the original Order never had any basis in fact but was entirely a figment of imagination. This theory is based on a number of unanswered questions still being asked by researchers of this elusive group of metaphysicians.

1. Was the "Brotherhood of the Rose Cross" merely a mythical institution created in the fertile mind of some literary cynic for the purpose of deriding the alchemical and Hermetic sciences?
2. Did the "House of the Holy Spirit" ever exist outside the imagination of some medieval mystic?

3. Was the whole Rosicrucian story a satire to ridicule the gullibility of scholastic Europe?
4. Was the mysterious Father C.R.C. a product of the literary genius of Johann Valentin Andreae, or another of similar mind, who attempting to score alchemical and Hermetic philosophy, unwittingly became a great power in furthering the cause of its promulgation?

There is little doubt that one of the early documents of the Rosicrucians was written by Andreae, but for what purpose is still a matter of speculation. And did he receive from some unknown source instructions to be carried out? For when he wrote the *Chymical Nuptials of Christian Rosencreutz*¹ he would have only been fifteen years old, so was he assisted in the preparation of the book?

To these vital questions no answers are forthcoming. Andreae's impressive reputation lent truth to his writings. As a consequence numerous pseudo-societies sprang up, each asserting that it was the organization cited in the *Fama Fraternitatis* and the *Confessio Fraternitatis*. Without doubt there are numerous spurious orders in existence today, but few of them can validly trace their history back farther than the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The mystery surrounding the Rosicrucian Fraternity has resulted in much controversy. Many notable minds among them Eugenius Philalethes², Michael Maier³, John Heydon⁴, and Robert Fludd⁵ defended the existence of "The Society of Unknown Philosophers." Others equally qualified asserted it to be a fraud and of doubtful existence. Philalethes while dedicating books to the Order, writing expositions of its principles, conceded he had no personal connection with it as did others.

Some investigators are of the opinion that Sir Francis Bacon had a hand in the writing of the *Fama and Confessio* as the style of these works is similar to his *New Atlantis*. This is further evidenced by the fact that parts of this work show an acquaintance with Rosicrucian symbology. Their elusiveness has caused them to be a favorite subject of literary speculation. Outstanding among the romances written around them is *Zanoni*⁶, by Lord Bulwer Lytton⁷, who some say was a member of the Order, while others say he applied for membership and was rejected.

Alexander Pope's⁸ *Rape of the Lock*⁹, the *Comte de Gabalis* by Abbe' de Villars¹⁰, and essays by DeQuincey¹¹, and others, are examples of Rosicrucian literature. Although the existence of these medieval Rosicrucians is difficult to prove, there is sufficient evidence to make it very likely that there existed in Germany and later in France, England, Italy, and

other European countries, a secret society of illuminated savants who made contributions of great value to the sum of human knowledge, while maintaining absolute secrecy concerning themselves and their society.

Footnotes:

1. The reference to four red roses and a white cross in the *Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz* identified Johann Valentin Andreae as its author, for his family crest consisted of four red roses and a white cross.
2. Eugenius Philalethes, a pseudonym for Thomas Vaughan a Philosopher. Thomas Vaughan was a Welsh philosopher and alchemist, who wrote in English. He is now remembered for his work in the field of natural magic. Although he did not practice medicine, Vaughan sought to apply his chemical skills to preparing medicines in the manner recommended by Paracelsus.
3. Michael Maier (1568–1622) was a German physician and counsellor to Rudolf II Habsburg. He was a learned alchemist, epigramist and amateur composer.
4. John Heydon (10 September 1629 – c. 1667) was an English Neoplatonist occult philosopher, Rosicrucian, astrologer and attorney.
5. Robert Fludd, also known as Robertus de Fluctibus (17 January 1574 – 8 September 1637), was a prominent English Paracelsian physician with both scientific and occult interests. He is remembered as an astrologer, mathematician, cosmologist, Qabalist and Rosicrucian apologist.
Fludd is best known for his compilations in occult philosophy. He had a celebrated exchange of views with Johannes Kepler concerning the scientific and hermetic approaches to knowledge.
6. Zanon is an 1842 novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a story of love and occult aspiration. By way of introduction, the author confesses: "... It so chanced that some years ago, in my younger days, whether of authorship or life, I felt the desire to make myself acquainted with the true origins and tenets of the singular sect known by the name of Rosicrucians." A manuscript came into his hands written in the most unintelligible cipher, a manuscript which through the author's own interpretation became Zanon.
7. Edward George Earle **Bulwer-Lytton**, 1st Baron **Lytton**, British politician, poet, and critic, chiefly remembered, however, as a prolific novelist. His books, though dated, remain immensely readable, and his experiences lend his work an unusual historical interest.
8. Alexander Pope (21 May 1688 – 30 May 1744) is regarded as one of the greatest English poets, and the foremost poet of the early eighteenth century. He is best known for his satirical and discursive poetry, including *The Rape of the Lock*.
9. *The Rape of the Lock* is a mock-heroic narrative poem written by Alexander Pope. One of the most commonly cited examples of high burlesque. **The Rape of the Lock** looks at tempests in teapots from a uniquely double perspective. On the one hand, the poem recognizes that for some people, an event so slight as the loss of a piece of hair can be a Big Freaking Deal. And that's understandable if you look at it from their point of view.

10. Comte de Gabalis is a 17th-century French text by Abbé Nicolas-Pierre-Henri de Montfaucon de Villars. The titular "Comte de Gabalis" is an occultist who explains the mysteries of the world to the author. It first appeared in Paris in 1670, anonymously, though the identity of the author came to be known.
11. Thomas Penson De Quincey was an English essayist, best known for his Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (1821). Many scholars suggest that in publishing this work De Quincey inaugurated the tradition of addiction literature in the West.

References:

The Secret Teachings of All Ages by Manly P. Hall