

## Rosicrucian Society Essay

### THE FRATERNITY OF THE ROSE CROSS, PART II

Harry V. Eisenberg, M.D. VI°

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. This is the second in the series.

#### **THE SECOND POSTULATE**

The Masonic investigators of this subject accept 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. Some believed that Rosicrucianism was actually an invasion of Buddhist and Brahmin culture. 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.

In his book *Anacalypsis*, Godfrey Higgins write: “The Rosicrucians of Germany are quite ignorant of their origin; but by tradition, they suppose themselves descendants of the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Magi and Gymnosophists<sup>1</sup>.” The consensus, however, among the numerous factions is that the story of Father C.R.C., similar to the Masonic legend of Hiram Abif, is an allegory, not to be considered literally, such as is the case of numerous biblical persona.

It is remarkable that the Rosicrucians, as a secret society, with both philosophical and political agendas, with members throughout Europe, was able to maintain absolute secrecy throughout the centuries. Nevertheless, the “Brothers” of the society were able to do this. A great number of scholars and philosophers, among them Sir Francis Bacon and Wolfgang von Goethe, were suspected of being members, but this could never be substantiated. Many Pseudo-Rosicrucians are found throughout the centuries, but the true members, true to their word have remained unknown as members of the “Ancient and Secret Order of the Unknown Philosophers.”

A number of manuscripts appeared during the Middle Ages purporting to be written by members of the Society, many of them spurious, written by self-aggrandizing, unscrupulous persons seeking to use the revered and magic name Rosicrucian, in hope of gaining religious or political power. This has greatly impeded research regarding the Society. One group of pseudo-Rosicrucians went so far as to issue its members a black cord as a means of recognition and with which they would be strangled if they broke their vow of secrecy. Few of the principles of Rosicrucianism appear in the literature as the original members published scant accounts of its activities.

Dr. Franz Hartmann in his book, *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*, described the Fraternity as “A secret society of men possessing superhuman—if not supernatural—powers, able to prophesy future events, to penetrate into the deepest mysteries of nature, to transform iron, copper, lead or mercury into gold, to prepare the *Elixir of Life*, by which they could preserve their youth and manhood; and moreover it was believed they could command the elemental spirits of nature and knew the secret of the *Philosopher’s Stone*, a substance which rendered him who possessed it all powerful, immortal, and supremely wise.” He further defines a Rosicrucian as “A person who by the process of spiritual awakening has attained a practical knowledge of the secret significance of the *Rose and the Cross*. To call a person a Rosicrucian does not make him one, nor does the act of calling a person a Christian make him a Christ. The real Rosicrucian or Mason cannot be made; he must grow to be one by the expansion and unfoldment of the divine power within his own heart. The inattention to this truth is the cause that many churches and secret societies are far from being that which their names express.”

The symbolic principles of Rosicrucianism are so profound that even today they are little appreciated. Their charts and diagrams interpreted with a philosophic understanding of cosmic principles so refreshing when compared to the narrowness of thought of their day. They were bound together by mutual aspirations rather than the laws of fraternity. They lived unobtrusively, labored industriously in trades and professions, disclosing their secret affiliation to no one, including family. After the death of C.R.C., most of the Brethren had no central meeting place. The initiatory ritual of the Order was so closely guarded that it has never been revealed. Efforts to join the Order were futile, for the members chose their own disciples. Having been chosen, communication occurred in various mysterious ways. One might receive an anonymous letter or with a peculiar seal bearing the letters “C.R.C.” or “R.C.” instructing him to go to a certain place at an appointed time. What was disclosed to him was never revealed, although his future writings showed that a new influence had come into his life, deepening his understanding and broadening his intellect.

Alchemists were sometimes visited in their laboratories by mysterious strangers who delivered learned discourses on the secret processes of the Hermetic arts and then disappeared. Others disclosed they were communicated with through dreams and visions receiving Hermetic wisdom while they slept. Having been so instructed, the Brother was bound to secrecy concerning not only the information disclosed to him, but also the manner in which he received it. While these nameless Adepts were assumed to be “Brothers of the Rose Cross”, it could never be proven who they were.

Let’s move on to the subject of the symbolism involved with the Order. Many suspect the Rosicrucian rose to be an adaptation of the Egyptian and Hindu lotus blossom with the same yonic<sup>2</sup> symbolic meaning. The fact that the flower blossoms by unfolding has caused it to be chosen as a symbol of spiritual unfoldment. Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy* shows his familiarity with the theory of Rosicrucianism as explained by Albert Pike in *Morals and Dogma*. He writes “His Hell is but a negative Purgatory. His Heaven is composed of a series of Kabalistic circles, divided by a cross. In the center of the cross blooms a rose, and we see the symbol of the Adepts of the Rose Croix for the first time publicly expounded and almost categorically explained.”

There is some doubt as to whether the name Rosicrucian came from the symbol of the rose and cross or whether this was meant to further conceal the true meaning of the Order. Godfrey Higgins<sup>3</sup> believed the word Rosicrucian was derived, not from the flower but from the word Ros which means dew. Interesting to note, the word Ras means wisdom while Rus is translated concealment. Most likely all three have contributed to Rosicrucian symbolism. A.E. Waite<sup>4</sup> agreed that the process of forming the Philosopher’s Stone with the aid of dew is the secret concealed in the Rosicrucian name. He conjectured the dew was a mysterious substance within the brain, closely resembling the dew referred to by the alchemists which falling from heaven redeemed the earth. The cross is symbolic of the human body, and the two symbols together signify that the soul of man is crucified upon the body.

It is most likely that Rosicrucian symbolism is a perpetuation of that of the Egyptian Hermes, and that the Society of Unknown Philosophers is the true link connecting modern Masonry with its numerous symbols, to ancient Egyptian Hermeticism, the source of those symbols. In his *Doctrine and Literature of the Kabalah*, A.E. Waite makes the observation that there are indications of a link between Masonry and Rosicrucianism, but it is inconclusive. Freemasonry per se, in spite of the affinity with mysticism, has never exhibited any mystic character, nor has it a clear notion how it came by its symbols.

Many men connected with the development of Freemasonry were suspected of being Rosicrucians such as Robert Fludd who wrote a defense of the Organization. Frank C. Higgins, a modern Masonic symbolist, wrote that Doctor Elias Ashmole, a revered Mason, 1646, and one of the Founders of the first Grand Lodge in London, was but one of many intellectual links connecting Rosicrucianism with the genesis of Freemasonry. Papus<sup>5</sup>, founder of the Martinist Order<sup>6</sup>, in his book *Tarot of the Bohemians*, wrote that the Rosicrucians were the actual founders of Freemasonry through Ashmole. If the founders of Freemasonry were initiated into the Great Arcanum of Egypt, and the symbolism of modern Masonry seems to indicate that such was the case, then it is reasonable to suppose that they secured their information from a society whose existence they admired and which was duly qualified to teach them these symbols and allegories.

Another theory concerning the two Orders is that Freemasonry is an outgrowth of Rosicrucianism, meaning that the “Unknown Philosophers” became known through an organization that they created to serve them in the material world. In time the Rosicrucian adepts became dissatisfied with their progeny and silently withdrew from the Masonic hierarchy, leaving behind their symbolism and allegories, but keeping to themselves the secret meaning of the same. Others have speculated that modern Freemasonry has completely absorbed Rosicrucianism and succeeded it as the world’s greatest secret society. Still others of equal repute declare that the Rosicrucian Brotherhood still exists, preserving its identity as a result of having withdrawn from the Masonic Order.

According to many traditionalists the headquarters of the Rosicrucian Order is near Carlsbad, Austria. Another group believes that a mysterious school resembling the Rosicrucian Fraternity and calling themselves “The Bohemian Brothers” maintains itself in the *Schwarzwald* or Black Forest of Germany. One thing, however, is certain, that with the rise of Freemasonry, the Rosicrucian Order in Europe all but disappeared, and notwithstanding statements to the contrary, it is certain that the 18<sup>th</sup> Degree, Knight Rose-Croix, perpetuates many of the symbols of the Rosicrucian Fire Alchemists.

Interestingly, to help sum up some of these theories, we should look at an anonymous, unpublished manuscript dating to the eighteenth century and bearing the earmarks of Rosicrucian Qabbalism which made this statement: “Yet will I now give the over-wise world a paradox to be solved, namely, that some illuminated men have undertaken to found Schools of Wisdom in Europe and these for some peculiar reason have called themselves *Fratres Rosae Crucis*. But soon afterwards came false schools into existence and corrupted the good intentions of these wise men. Therefore, the Order no longer exists as most people would understand existence, and as this Fraternity of the

*Seculo Fili* call themselves, *Brothers of the Rosie Cross*, so also will they in the *Seculo Spiritus Sancti* call themselves *Brothers of the Lilly Cross* and the *Knights of the White Lion*. Then will the School of Wisdom begin again to blossom, but why the first one chose their name and why the others shall also choose theirs, only those can solve who have understanding grounded in Nature.”

Finally, the political aspirations of the Rosicrucians were expressed through the activities of Sir Francis Bacon, the Comte de St. Germain, and the Comte di Cagliostro who was suspected of being an emissary of the Knights Templar, who according to Eliphas Levi were deep into transcendentalism. There is a popular theory that the Rosicrucians were partial instigators of the French Revolution.

To be continued.

#### Footnotes:

1. A name given to the followers of Alexander the Great to a caste of naked Wise Men whom they found meditating along the river banks in India.
2. In Hinduism referring to the female genitalia is therefore associated with generation, fecundity and purity.
3. Godfrey Higgins, 1772-1833, an English magistrate, Freemason, and landowner, prominent advocate for social reform and historian, wrote *Anacalypsis* (1836), an inquiry into the origin of Languages, Nations and Religions.
4. Arthur Edward Waite, 1857-1942, American born British poet and scholarly mystic who wrote extensively on occult and esoteric matters, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*, 1887.
5. Gerard Anaclet Vincent Encausse whose esoteric pseudonym was Papus, was the Spanish born French physician, hypnotist and popularizer of occultism who founded the modern Martinist Order.
6. Martinism is a form of Christian mysticism and esoteric Christianity concerned with the fall of the first man, his state of material privation from his divine source and the process of his return, called Reintegration or Illumination.

#### References:

The Secret Teachings of All Ages by Manly P. Hall