

The Mystic and Occult in Max Heindel's Writings

Part 2

IN *THE ROSICRUCIAN MYSTERIES* (*RM*), Max Heindel's fifth book, dictated to a stenographer in 1910, the author gives an extreme definition of *occultist*, perhaps a reflection on his own single-minded pursuit of knowledge that culminated in his acquiring the teachings embodied in the *Cosmo*: An occultist is one who "pursue[s] the path of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, considering that an end in itself" (14). According to this definition, the occultist is perilously close to a black magician because his motive for gaining supersensible knowledge is not selfless. Mystics, on the other hand, "do not care for knowledge" but eventually obtain it as a result of their "inner urge Godward," which causes them to imitate Christ in all their deeds (14). Though the mystic may err because of ignorance, his love will always mitigate his mistakes and expedite his reformation.

Rosicrucians aim to blend love with a "mystic knowledge." In view of our preceding study, use of the term *mystic* in this construction is confusing because it is really employed as a synonym for "occult." The Rosicrucian path, if it aims to blend heart and head, does not blend love and devotional knowledge (an oxymoron, to say the least). It blends love and occult/supersensible knowledge. In this instance, moved by a concern for protecting seekers from a misuse of his legacy of occult knowledge, and to "make the possession of higher powers safe" (15) through the inculcation of virtues traditionally associated with the mystic path, Heindel eliminates reference to the occult. We shall see this tendency arise from time to time

and it does admittedly cause some ambiguity, because the word *mystic* is made to do the work of the word *occult*, as the context in these instances makes clear.

Heindel repeats an expression that first appears in the *Christianity Lectures* (pp. 20, 236): ignorance "is the only sin," while applied knowledge is salvation (*RM* 26). A traditional Christian would be perplexed, if not alarmed, upon encountering this assertion. For by knowledge Heindel means *occult* knowledge, just as the title of the book *Occult Principles of Health and Healing* could not be changed to *Mystic Principles of Health and Healing*. In fact, what makes the *Christianity Lectures* "Rosicrucian"? *Occult* knowledge. Christian Rosenkreuz founded the Order of the Rosicrucians "with the object of throwing occult light on the misunderstood Christian Religion" (*RCC* p. 517).

Traditional Christianity designates the heart path of soul development and appeals to the mystic believer who gives assent to dogma based on faith and authority. Rosicrucian teachings provide occult facts that enable the mind to participate in the affirmation of religious doctrine because the intellect has been engaged. By the same token, to describe the Rosicrucian Fellowship as "An association of Christian Mystics" is to say it is an association of Christian Christians, or faith-based Christians. What distinguishes the traditional Christian from the Rosicrucian Christian is *occult* knowledge, not mystic belief, for that is precisely their ground for their differences. Belief does not suffice. The Rosicrucian student must *know*.

to make facts and truths “perfectly clear.” In contexts similar to the foregoing the normative term is usually provided: (1) “to the occultist the matter is plain” (*IQ&A* 193); (2) “a fact which is patent to the occultist” (*ibid* 205); (3) the writer intends to “turn the light of occultism and reason” on the doctrine of the cleansing blood” (*RCL* 242).

One further example of an ambivalent use of *mystic* in *Rosicrucian Mysteries* occurs in the phrase “horoscopic figure in mystic script” (141). Astrology, in Heindel’s own words is “an absolutely true science” (*RCL* 166), which makes scientific astrodiagnosis possible. Astrology is an *occult* science par excellence. A mystic science is a contradiction in terms. The use of symbols for planets and constellations no more makes them mystic than does assigning letters for elements in the Period Table of Elements, or Greek symbols (letters) for mathematical relationships, such as π (pi).

A stage in Rosicrucian initiation involves learning the supersensible occult script, comprised of symbols—such as the two nontouching spirals in the correctly drawn Cancer glyph, which indicate the dying and new coming-into-being of plants, cycles of time, etc—that are connected with nature’s secrets. Referring to the caduceus or “staff of Mercury,” Heindel writes: “this occult symbol indicates the path of initiation” (*Cosmo* 412). The symbolic drawings and diagrams designed by initiates of occult science translate the realities of the higher worlds into forms that can speak to the human intellect and intuition.

Astrology for Heindel was a rich lode of occult information. It is also eminently an intellectual discipline (though certainly requiring a highly developed intuitive sense), assuming knowledge of astronomy, some basic understanding of the geometry of angles and logarithms (if one wants exact results and doesn’t have a computer program!). Astrology will become an accepted and routinely used science in the Aquarian Age. One appeals to the Aquarian by addressing his reason, not his emotions.

“The Rosicrucian Fellowship advocates the study of astrology...by all its members (*TI* 128). If “the child is a mystery” (*RM* 142), astrology, the “stellar science,” helps to unravel much of that

mystery. Parents “may obtain a guide to the hidden side of a child’s nature” through astrology, which reveals what is occult or normally concealed. “A good and careful astrologer will be able to reveal the character of a person accurately in 99 percent of all cases” (*RCL* 119).

Let us recall that the mystic is “usually devoid of intellectual knowledge” (*Cosmo* 520) and would have little or no interest in learning an occult script in order to practice the science of astrology. The author of the *Rosicrucian Christianity Lectures* avers that “astrology is an absolutely true science” (*RCL* 166). Science studies the form and action of substances composing various worlds, sensible and supersensible. There is the mundane astrologer, whose calculations and interpretations do not require occult knowledge, and there is the “esoteric astrologer” (*OPHH* 30), who has occult knowledge and uses it in medical diagnosis, prognosis, prescription, and counseling.

Since the time of their inception Rosicrucians have had two purposes—those enjoined by Christ: to teach the Gospel of the New Age and to heal the sick. They can do both more effectively and scientifically because they are in possession of occult facts which connect material effects with their spiritual causes, thus enabling a true (spiritual) etiology of disease. To assist in that purpose the initiate founder of the Rosicrucian Fellowship employed the science of astrology. In fact, Heindel wrote in Probationer Letter No. 16 that “this science is the backbone of our teaching.” Such a teaching cannot be called mysticism, not if it purports to be scientifically based. And if the Rosicrucian Mystery Teachings aim to correlate scientific facts to spiritual verities” (*Cosmo* 521), those Teachings are no longer mysterious but intellectually cognizable facts, be they occult facts.

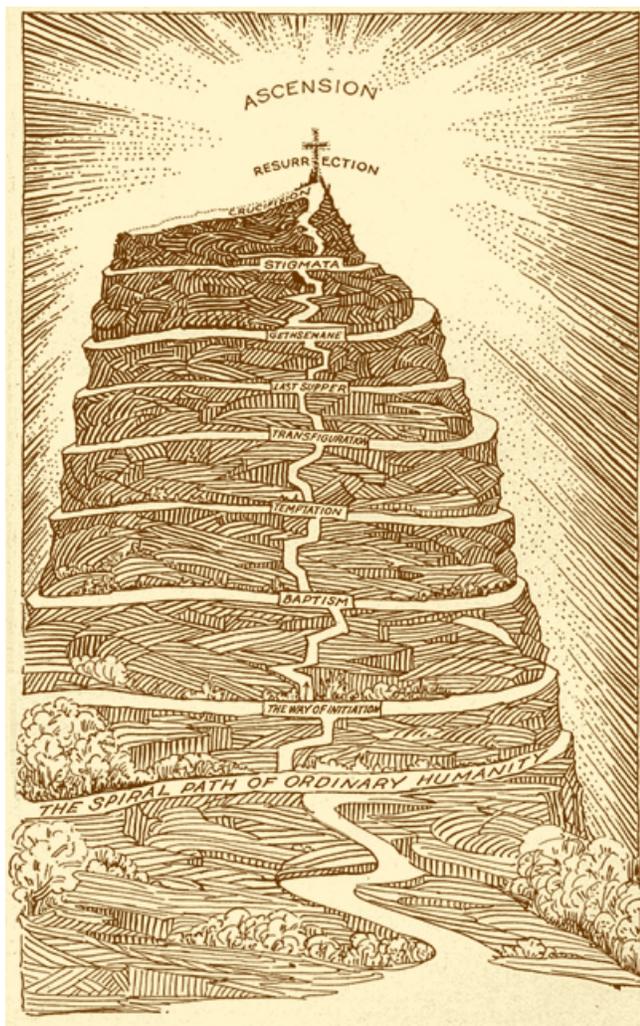
As an interjection, we make bold to characterize the course of this study as conforming to Heindel’s counsel which appears in multiple phrasings, particularly in the preface to the *Cosmo* and in the *Rosicrucian Mysteries*: The writer “would advise the student to accept nothing from the author’s pen without reasoning it out for himself” (*RM* 21). In addition we take seriously and are applying the epigraph that appears on the title page of the first

two editions of the *Cosmo*, Paul's injunction to "prove all things."

In an addendum to the *Rosicrucian Mysteries*, written in 1921, most likely by Mrs. Heindel, the Rosicrucian Philosophy is called "Christian Mysticism." This it is *not*, as a later passage regarding the correspondence courses implies: "Christ taught the multitude in *parables*, but explained the *mysteries* to His disciples" (153). This meat or "deeper teaching" is the occult knowledge contained in the *Cosmo*. Quite simply, mystical truth cannot be directly taught, it must be intuited. Further substantiation of this distinction made by Heindel will follow.

The text of *Occult Principles of Health and Healing (OPHH)* was based, according to its Forward, on investigation of the superphysical worlds by a "trained clairvoyant" to determine "the real causes of physical and mental disorders." The health and healing of the human organism is considered "from the occult viewpoint" (*ibid*). The first sentence in the main text begins with the words, "Occult science teaches that man is a complex being...." The health and sickness of that complex being, occultly considered, is the subject of this book's study. The science of physical medicine also studies human health and sickness, but with limited means. Occult science is more scientific, more logical than material sciences. Why? "Science merely states the fact, the occult scientist gives the [occult] reason" for the fact (*Cosmo* 356).

Heindel's *Ancient and Modern Initiation (AMI)* gives an emphatic and unequivocal assertion on the "radical" (114) difference between the Christian mystic and the Rosicrucian occult forms of initiation: "[T]he Christian Mystic Initiation differs radically from the processes in vogue among the Rosicrucians, in which an *understanding* upon the part of the candidate of that which is to take place is considered indispensable" (108). However, at Gethsemane, the mystic also realizes the path that is before him. As a prelude to this distinction, Heindel describes the old initiations (both Atlantean/Semitic and devotional Christian), making liberal use of the word *mystic* as a synonym for *metaphorical* or *figurative*, as in "mystic manna"



The Mountain of Initiation

The names and nature of the stages of Rosicrucian initiation differ from, and to some extent assume those of, the Christian mystic initiation. Both paths are "strait and narrow" ascents.

and "mystic doctrine" (41), "mystic blood" and "mystic birth" (52), "mystic light" (56), and "mystic magnificence" (64). In the phrase "mystic but unmistakable language," *mystic* means veiled or shrouded in mystery; therefore Heindel opposes the qualifying phrase "but unmistakable" to nullify the impression created by the first term. In other words, the sense is clear to those who already know. When Christ uses the mystic or analogic term *living bread* to describe Himself, He is referring to the Ego (41). Why does He not simply say what He means? Because His disciples are not in possession of all the occult facts that would make a direct scientific statement meaningful.

In this book (*AMI*), among other texts, we

encounter the key statement: “All occult development begins with the vital body” (55). Note Heindel does not say all mystic development begins with the vital body—because that would not be correct. The following critical passage explains:

The Christian mystic form of Initiation differs radically from the Rosicrucian method, which aims to bring the candidate to compassion through knowledge, and therefore seeks to cultivate in him the latent faculties of spiritual sight and hearing at the very start of his career as an aspirant to the higher life. It teaches him to know the hidden [occult] mysteries of being and to perceive intellectually the unity of each with all so that at last through this knowledge there is awakened within him the feeling that makes him truly realize his oneness with all that lives and moves [italics added],

so that he may become “a true helper and worker in the divine kingdom of evolution” (67). If the student is taught to know the hidden mysteries, they are no longer hidden, nor are they mysterious. It is a desire for more knowledge which brings most of the pupils to the Rosicrucian School (68).

Jacob Böhme and Thomas à Kempis followed the mystic path (68). Love is the governing principle of the mystic’s life, and thus all-embracing love “eventually generates in them a knowledge which the writer [Heindel] believes far superior to that attained by any other method,” evidently including the Rosicrucian (68). With respect to initiation, the mystic “is usually unconscious of trying to attain any definite object” (68).

We may understand Heindel’s typical use of the word “mystic” to mean *parallel* or *like*, but not identical with. This is because “in the spiritual worlds there is a different standard of reality” than in the physical world. So we use worldly terms (light, bread, blood) qualified by the word *mystic* to indicate similarity, but not identity.

“The Christian mystic...has no reason, but he has a much safer guide”—the interior voice (*AMI* 89), which is the gift of grace. But there are many kinds of voices. What is the identity of the voice one hears? Is it reliable? There are “seducing spir-

its” (1Tim 4:1). There is a “spirit of error” (1Jo 4:6). John the Evangelist admonishes, “believe not every spirit but try the spirits” (1Jo 4:1). The Christian mystic, through the Holy Spirit (Jehovah), eventually “attains to whole wisdom of the world without the necessity of laboring for it intellectually” (99). But he must in time “learn how to acquire knowledge *by his own efforts* without drawing upon the universal source of all wisdom” (100, italics added).

For all the apparent appeal of the Christian Mystic Initiation to Max Heindel, he was unable to tread that path. He was something of a Christian mystic manqué. His sympathies lay with the mystic, the heart man, but he aspired to, he required, knowledge. His mind demanded it, with an intensity characterized in the story of the sage and his pupil in the *Cosmo*’s Introduction. And in fact, it was this “burning thirst for wisdom,” the “central requisite” which must be possessed by the aspirant to knowledge, which summoned the Elder Brother.

In *Ancient and Modern Initiation* Heindel provides the occult keys that open the understanding to the Christian mysteries. The “underlying mystical facts” of the stigmata are “as plain as daylight to those [like Heindel] who know” (117). The occult schools concentrate their efforts upon severing the connection between the dense physical and upper etheric bodies at the stigmatic points without producing the exterior manifestation that the Christian mystic cannot prevent because he lacks the requisite knowledge (118).

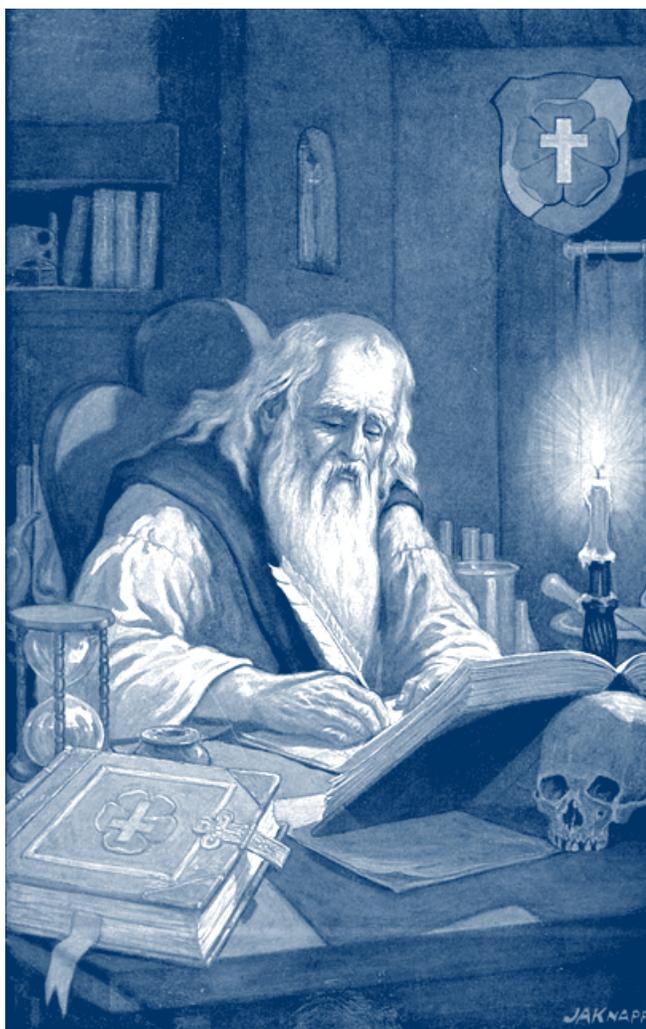
Another “occult key” to “the mystery of the crucifixion” is given by the initials INRI, “the symbol of the crucified candidate” (121). The mystic imitates the life of Jesus “who is his Teacher and guide to the Kingdom of Christ” (123). The Rosicrucian occultist is, at his peril, as a son of Cain and his progenitor, Lucifer, more independent and individual in his pursuit of the Kingdom. He seeks directly to conceive and nurture the Christ within through enlightened selfless service, using occult knowledge to improve the lot of his brothers and sisters.

How is the Rosicrucian occultist a son of Cain? Heindel traces the lineage of Christian Rose Cross through Lazarus to Hiram Abiff to Cain. The

Masons also cite Hiram Abiff, the builder of Solomon's Temple, as their spiritual ancestor. In fact, Heindel, though not a practicing Mason, described himself as "a Mason at heart and therefore frankly opposed to Catholicism" (*Freemasonry and Catholicism, F&C*, p 6). Why? "Catholicism is an activity of the *Hierarchs of Water* [who seek] to quench the spirits seeking [spiritual] light and [occult] knowledge and to inculcate faith in Jehovah" (11). Freemasonry "is an attempt by the Hierarchs of Fire, the Lucifer Spirits, to bring us the imprisoned spirit 'light,' that we may see and know" (11). To be sure, this is not the mystic's objective. He seeks God directly through faith and has no desire for knowledge *per se*.

Heindel spiritually opposes Catholicism with the "weapon of the Spirit—Reason" and "firmly believe[s] it to be for the everlasting good of mankind that the Masons should win ['the battle for the souls of men'—p 5]" (6). This is strong language. Given this assertion, it is disconcerting that Heindel should characterize Masonry as "mystic" (pp 5, 7, 8) and call it a "mystic movement" (14). This is a curious conjunction of terms because the "mystic Mason" endeavors to work on the temple of humanity at large and "he aims also to cultivate his own spiritual powers" (29-30). He strives for "positive Mastership through individual effort" (32), following the path of his ancestor Cain, who was governed by "divine ambition." In him burned "the divine incentive to original effort" (36). Members of "mystic masonry" are those "who have the indomitable courage to dare, the unflagging energy to do and the diplomatic discrimination to be silent" (13). The traditional mystic can in no way be so characterized; in fact, he would be appalled to be described in these terms. From traditional quarters such "pretensions" might elicit the same term applied by some to occult pursuits—*diabolical*.

Since the mystic Catholic is counterpoised against the Mason, to call the Mason a *mystic* poses real semantic problems unless we know what Heindel intends. And for his meaning to be clear, the term must, as previously defined, mean *metaphorical*, or *analogical*. The Mason is not a literal builder but a figurative, a mystic, builder.



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The Rosicrucian Philosopher

The enlightened mind (candle) of the occult scientist can read the book of Nature and decipher its secrets. Death (the skull) does not intimidate or constrain him. He uses it to serve his purposes. In time (hourglass) all shall be revealed.

He is an architect of supersensible structures comprised of materials of ether, soul (desire) and spirit (thought) substance. He is making a temple for the spirit, a temple not made with hands. Yet it is related to good deeds because from them the soul body is created. Christian Rosenkreuz "founded the Order of Temple-Builders" to teach the aspiring soul how to make the "white stone" (41) by applying occult knowledge to human affairs. Or, as expressed in *Mysteries of the Great Operas*, "It is exactly the mission of the Rosicrucian Order, working through the Rosicrucian Fellowship, to promulgate a scientific method of development suited particularly to the Western people whereby this

Wedding Garment [the soul body, Paul's *soma psuchicon*—1 Cor 15:44] may be wrought" (124).

While the Sons of Seth purge themselves of the curse of selfishness through faith in Christ Jesus and by imitating his life (56), the Sons of Cain were given the Rose and the Cross to teach them to make the Philosopher's Stone. They believe more in works than in faith (56).

Moreover, there is a tendency of the typical mystic to devalue the physical world and to disparage the human physical body. He often seeks to deprive or severely limit it through harsh ascetic practices, and to escape it by cultivating states of heightened subjectivity, or ecstasy (*ecstasis*, literally, to stand beside or outside oneself). The occultist realizes that he has much to learn from being in the body and that it is to be transmuted into the soul body, which truly becomes the temple of the soul. This was the objective of the Rosicrucian alchemists, "deep students of the higher occult science" (*Cosmo* 438). Therefore, occultism does not disdain physical existence but seeks rather to understand and master it, even as did the master occultist and architect of the spirit, Hiram Abiff.

Man's pilgrimage through matter has been undertaken "for the purpose of making him an independent creative intelligence." The Rosicrucian is a pioneer in this respect because he uses his intelligence to advance his independence and creativity (*RM* 68). We recall Heindel's quote from St. Paul framing the text of the first two editions of the *Cosmo*—to "prove all things" by the light of reason (obviously including Heindel's *Cosmo*, since that was his intention for citing the passage) and to "hold fast to that which is good." Reason and mysticism are immiscible because they operate on contrary premises, according to different principles, and for different results.

We must conclude that the term *mystic*, as used by Heindel to qualify *mason* and *masonry*, is a synonym for *occult* and is not intended to equate the occultist with the heart-centered, faith-led mystic of orthodox Christianity. This conclusion is confirmed by Heindel when he states that "Christian Rosenkreuz was given charge of the Sons of Cain who seek the light of knowledge at

the sacred fires of the Mystic Shrine" (97). *Mystic* here means invisible or occult. And the author has given us, according to this book's (*F&C*) subtitle, "an exposition of the cosmic facts underlying these two great institutions, as determined by occult [not mystic] investigation."

The distinction we have discerned may become blurred unless we keep in mind Heindel's dual use of the word *mystic*. *Mystic* employed as a noun refers to the faith-based aspirant on the heart path of love. Employed as an adjective, it designates a spiritual substance that is suggested by or bears some resemblance to a physical form or fact. While the candidate on the "head path" works out his own salvation through tribulation and "engage[s] in Mystic Masonry to consciously build this Temple of the soul," the soul body (98), his "weaker brothers," who commit to the "heart path" of mystic Christianity, rely as "an absolute necessity" on the cleansing blood of Jesus (98). In this passage, *mystic* carries a double meaning: Referring to the nature of the *activity* of the Masons, it means occult; referring to the *kind* of mason, *mystic* means *symbolic*. The builders signified are working with materials and forces related to the superphysical worlds, not with bricks and mortar.

Again, both the path (walked by the Sons of Seth) of simple helpfulness and prayer and the path marked out by "specific exercises given by the Rosicrucians" (94) can develop ability "to walk the skies with winged feet," but they are distinctly different paths and Heindel has most consistently denominated them as the *mystic* and the *occult* paths.

This distinction is implicit in the following two sentences: "The Biblical and occult traditions agree with science" about original darkness (90) and; the Bible "agrees with the occult traditions in the main points" (92). The Bible presents spiritual truths in a mystical form; that is, metaphorically. The reader intuits the meaning as best he can. Occult science can more fully and specifically explain the Bible because it is in possession of supersensible knowledge that the human intellect can grasp. (Continued) □

—C.W.