

Exploring the Origins of Rosicrucianism

MANY WRITERS have sought to discover a close connection between the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons, and some, indeed, have advanced the theory that the latter are only the successors of the former. Whether this opinion is correct or not, there are sufficient coincidences of character between the two to render the history of the Rosicrucians highly interesting to the Masonic student.

As there is a widespread desire to know something of the Order of the Rosicrucians and the place which the Brothers of the Rose Cross have in our Western civilization, it may be well to treat this subject from the standpoint of **in Cruce** an ancient writer.

There appeared at Cassel, in the year 1614, a work bearing the long title of *Allegeme und General-Reformation der Fama Fraternitatis des Loblichen Ordens des Rosencreuzes*. A second edition appeared in 1615, and also several subsequent ones. In 1652 it was introduced to the English public in a translation by the celebrated mystic, Thomas Vaughan, under the title of *Fame and Confessions of Rosie-Cross*. This work has been attributed, though not without question, to the philosopher and theologian, John Valentine Andrea, who, it is reported, on the authority of M. C. Hirachen, to have confessed that he, with thirty others in Wurttemberg, had sent forth the *Fama Fraternitatis*; that under this veil they might dis-

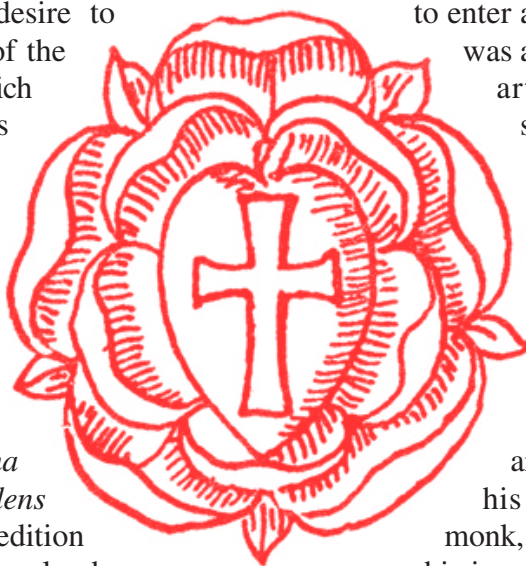
cover who were the true lovers of wisdom, and induce them to come forward.

In this work Andrea gives an account of the life and adventures of Christian Rosenkreuz, a symbolical personage, who is the founder of the Society of Rosicrucians. According to Andrea's story there appeared in thirteenth century Europe an Individuality assuming the name of Christian Rosenkreuz, who was of exceptionally good birth. However, being poor, he was compelled to enter a monastery early in his life. He

was a very apt student in philosophy, art, religion, and the general sciences. He remained in the monastery laboring with occult religion and science, harmonizing and spiritual-

Rosea izing the two. At the age of one hundred years, he started with one of the monks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher. On their arrival at the Island of Cyprus, his friend and companion, the monk, died; but Rosenkreuz proceeded on his journey.

Victoria At Damascus he remained three years, devoting himself to the study of occult sciences taught by the sages of that city. He then sailed for Egypt where he continued his studies, and having traveled the Mediterranean, he at length arrived at Fez in Morocco, as he had been directed by his masters at Damascus. He passed two years in acquiring further information from the philosophers of Africa, and then crossed over into Spain. There, however, he met with unfavorable



reception, and determined to return to Germany and give the benefit of his studies and researches not only to his own countrymen, but eventually to the world, and to establish there a society for the cultivation of the wisdom which he had acquired during his travels.

Accordingly, he selected five of the monks of the old convent in which he had been educated. To these he added seven others of high intelligence, and to them he imparted his knowledge, under the solemn vow of secrecy. He imposed on them the duty of committing his instructions to writings, and forming a magic vocabulary for the benefit of future students. They were also further taught the sciences of religion, art, and medicine; and they prescribed gratuitously for all the sick who applied to them. The number of their patients so increased that it materially interfered with their other labors.

Under the direction of Father Christian, as he was called, he being the Thirteenth, and Head of the Order, they began building a Temple, called "The Temple of the Holy Spirit." When this temple was completed, the Brothers, being now thoroughly instructed in the mysteries and the sciences, agreed to separate. Five of the Brothers were always to remain at the Temple with Father Christian Rosenkreuz, and the other seven were to travel. The travelers were to return to the Temple at the end of each year, or to send an excuse for their absence.

The society thus formed was governed by a code of laws. The code stipulated that they would devote themselves to humanity wherever and whenever occasion required. They were to appear as men among men. They would not distinguish themselves from the rest of the world by any peculiar costume, but would work in their invisible vehicles with, or upon, others as needed. Never were they to influence other people against their will, but let them follow their own desires; yet always strengthening their good aspirations and ambitions. The remaining five Brothers were never to leave the Temple of the Holy Spirit; and were to do their work in the invisible or inner worlds.

The Thirteenth, who is the Head and Founder of the Order of Rosicrucians, is invisible to the outside world, and is the link with a still higher Central Council consisting of the Hierophants of

the Greater Mysteries. His presence is *felt* rather than seen whenever he enters the Temple, and it is the signal for the ceremony to begin. The letters R. C. were to be their watchword and title; and the Brotherhood was to be kept a secret for one hundred years.

At a very advanced age, Father Christian Rosenkreuz left the physical body, and was buried by the five Brothers who had remained with him; but the place of his burial remained a secret to all the rest. The society continued, however, unknown to the world, and always consisting of the twelve members, and the invisible Thirteenth.

There was a tradition among them that at the end of one hundred and twenty years, the grave of Father Rosenkreuz was to be discovered, and that the Brotherhood would no longer remain a secret. Thus, about that time, the Brotherhood began to make alterations in the Temple of the Holy Spirit. They attempted to remove the Memorial Table to a more fitting location, on which had been inscribed the names of the members of the fraternity.

The memorial plate was of brass, and was affixed to the wall by a nail driven through its center; but so firmly was it attached that, in tearing it away, a portion of the plaster came off, thereby exposing a Secret Door. Upon removing the incrustations from the door, there appeared written in large letters the following inscription: POST CXX ANNOS PATERO—(*After One Hundred Twenty Years I Will Appear*).

Waiting for the sunrise of the next morning, they resumed their researches. When they opened the heavy door, they discovered a heptagonal vault. Each of its seven sides, five feet wide by eight feet in height, had well known symbols inscribed on it. The light was received from an artificial sun in the roof, and was almost blinding to the eye.

To their amazement, in the middle of the floor there stood, instead of a tomb, a circular altar, on which was an inscription, saying that the apartment had been erected by Christian Rosenkreuz as a compendium of the universe. Many other inscriptions were seen about the apartment, including: *Jesus Mihi Omnia, Legis jugum, Libertas Evangelii* (*Jesus is my all, The yoke of the Law, The liberty of the Gospel*); all of which indicated



From Manly P. Hall's SECRET TEACHINGS OF ALL AGES

Opening the Tomb of Father C.R.C.

Upon entering the sepulcher made by their Founder, the brothers discovered a circular brass altar with inscriptions, and in the hand of his incorrupt body a book whose text states that C.R.C. "lies hidden here from his own for 120 years." It concludes, "We are born of God; in Jesus we die; and in the Holy Spirit we live again."

the Christian character of the builder.

In each of the seven sides was a door opening into a closet. In these closets they found many rare and valuable articles such as "The History and Life of the Founder"; The Vocabulary of Paracelsus; The Secrets of the Order; together with bells, mirrors, lamps, and various other things.

On removing the altar and the brass plate beneath it, to their surprise, they came upon the body of Christian Rosenkreuz in a perfect state of preservation. Strange as this may seem, such is the sketch of the ancient Rosicrucians as given by Andrea in his famous book, *Fama Fraternitatis*.

It is regarded by some scholars that this story of Andrea's was purely romance. Others generally agree with the theory advanced by Nicolai that Andrea, at the time of the appearance of this book, was a young man full of excitement and ambition, and seeing the defects of theology and the sciences, sought to purify them, and to accomplish this design imaged a union into one body of all those who, like himself, were the admirers of *true virtue*.

Still others contend that he wrote this account of the rise and progress of Rosicrucianism for the purpose of advancing his own peculiar views of morals and religion. Be this as it may, this so-called "fiction" has persisted through the centuries, and has been readily accepted as truth by multitudes of people; so much so, in fact, that the invisible Society of Rosicrucians, founded by that great Being, Christian Rosenkreuz, was sought for with avidity by the many who wished to unite with it.

A great sensation was produced in Germany by Andrea's book, and letters poured in on all sides from those who offered proof of their qualifications, and presented their claims as to their skill in alchemy and kabbalism. Some were bold and became imposters, proclaiming that they had been admitted into the Order. They exercised their frauds upon those who were credulous enough to believe them. There are records that some of these charlatans, extorting money,

were punished for their offenses by the magistrates of Naumburg, Augsburg, and other German cities.

There was, too, in Holland in the year 1722, a society of alchemists, who called themselves Rosicrucians, and who claimed that Christian Rosenkreuz was their founder, and that they had affiliated societies in many of the German cities. Despite the fraudulent societies, the Philosophy took deep root, and gave rise to the modern schools of Rosicrucianism. During the seventeenth century there were many centers in Germany, France, and England. Belonging to these were such men as Michael Maier, Robert Fludd, and

Elias Ashmole. Nicolai even thinks that he has found evidences that the Order furnished the inspiration for Lord Bacon's works. Jacob Boehme, the immortal Goethe, and the sublime Wagner, received their inspiration through Christian Rosenkreuz. Their works are spiritual, uplifting, lasting. And Vaughan says, in his *Hours with a Mystic*, that the name of *Rosicrucianism* became by degrees a generic term, embracing the Philosopher's Stone.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, which was a period of fertile invention, a Masonic Rite was established which assumed the name of Rose Croix Masonry, and adopted the symbol of the Rose and the Cross. Doubtless, the use of this symbol was suggested to the Masonic Order by this philosophic sect, although this association is not readily accepted by the Masons.

The Rosicrucians have a large number of symbols, and some of them are in common with those of Freemasonry. The principal ones are the globe, the circle, the compass, the square, the triangle, the level, and the plummet. These have not the interpretations used by the Masons but are considered as the properties of the Philosopher's Stone. Thus, the twenty-first emblem of Michael Maier's *Alanta Fugiens* (see above) gives the following collection of the most important symbols: A Philosopher is measuring with a pair of compasses a circle which surmounts a triangle. The triangle encloses a square, within which is another circle, and inside of the circle a nude man and woman, representing, it may be sup-

posed, the first step of the experiment. Over all this illustration is the epigraph: *Mare et feminacirculum indequadrangulum hinc triangulum, faccirculum et habebis lapidem Philo- sopherum*, or "Make of man and woman a circle; thence a square; thence a triangle; form a circle and you will have the Philosopher's Stone." But it must be remem-

bered that Hitchcock, and other more recent writers have very satisfactorily proved that the labors of the real Hermetic philosophers (outside of charlatans) were of a spiritual, rather than of a material character, and that their "great work" symbolized not the acquisition of inexhaustible wealth and the infinite prolongation of life, but the regeneration of man, and the immortality of the soul.

As to the etymology of the word *Rosicrucian*, a great many derivations have been given. Both Peter Gassandi and later Mosheim deduced it from two words, *ros*, meaning *dew* and *crux* meaning *cross*, and thus they defined it "Dew Cross." According to the alchemists, *dew* was the most powerful of all substances to dissolve gold; and the cross, in the language of the same philoso-

phers, was identical with light, or *lux*, because the figure of the cross exhibits the three letters of that word. But the word *lux* was referred to as the seed of the Red Dragon, which was that crude and material light that when properly concocted and digested produced gold. "Hence," says Mosheim, "a Rosicrucian is a philosopher who by means of *dew* seeks for Light, that is, for the substance of the Philosopher's Stone." But, notwithstanding the

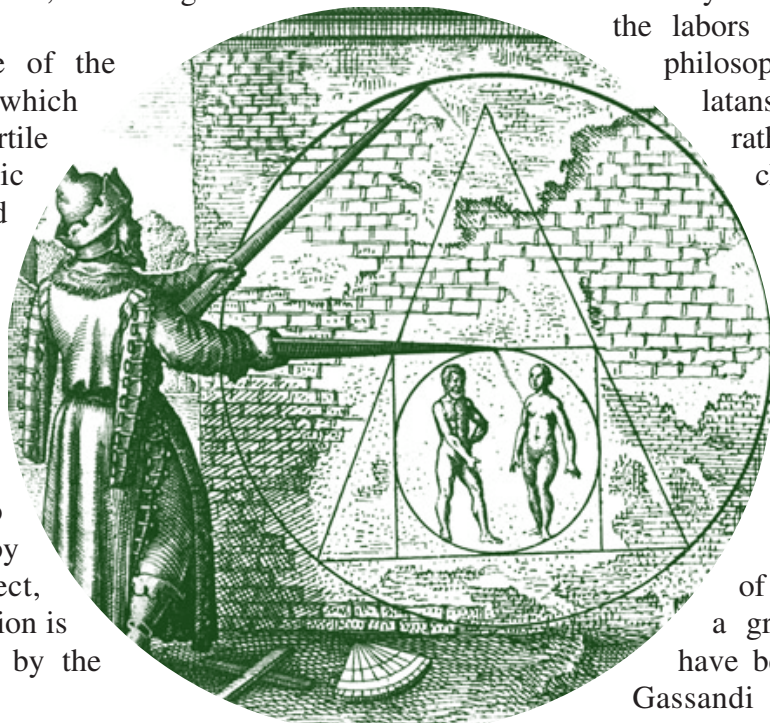


Plate 21 from Michael Maier's *Alanta Fugiens*, Oppenheim, 1618

Geometrical Figures of the Rosicrucians

The Rosicrucians used figures of symbols as formative tools. They were not to be explained or interpreted but actually made and recreated. The student was to experience them with his body; "thereby he learned to know the true and authentic World Geometry, learned to know how forces have been inscribed into the world by divine spiritual beings. Thus he came to understand the forms at work in the objects of the world."

high authority, it is untenable, and altogether at variance with the history of the Order.

Another etymology is from the words *rose* and *cross*. Andrea, in his writings, calls the Order “Fraternitatis Roseas Crucis,” or Fraternity of the Rose Cross. Another interpretation supposes that the word was derived from the Christian cross as symbolical with that assumed by the Rose Crux Order of Masonry; but it does not necessarily mean that the same interpretation was adopted by the Rosicrucians. Others, again, contend that Andrea derived the symbol from his own Coat-of-Arms, which consisted of a St. Andrew’s Cross between four roses, and that Andrea alluded to the well-known lines of Luther, “The Heart of the Christian goes upon the Rose when it stands beneath the Cross.”

All the foregoing etymologies given by so many writers of note have endeavored to strike the true keynote. Some have been near the truth, while others have fallen far short of it.

Let us consider what Max Heindel has to say

about the symbol. To quote: “The Rose, like any other flower, is the generative organ of the plant. Its green stem carries the colorless, passionless plant blood. The blood-red rose shows the passion-filled blood of the human race, but in the rose the vital fluid is not sensuous; it is chaste and pure. Thus it is an excellent symbol of the generative organ in the pure and holy state to which man will attain when he has cleansed and purified his blood from desires, when he has become chaste, pure, and Christlike.

“Therefore, the Rosicrucians look ardently forward to the day when the roses shall bloom upon the cross of humanity; therefore the Elder Brothers greet the aspiring soul with the words of the Rosicrucian Greeting: ‘May the Roses Bloom Upon Your Cross,’ and, therefore the greeting is given in the meetings of the Fellowship Centers by the leader to the assembled students, probationers, and disciples who respond to the greeting by saying, ‘And on yours, also.’” □

—Minnie Hotaling

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