

THE RATIONALE OF ROSICRUCIANISM

The Status of the Fraternity as Opposed to Conflicting Claims of Pseudo-Rosicrucian Bodies

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The foregoing article, by Dr. Plummer, substantially as it appears was first printed in the "Trestle Board" of San Francisco, Cal. It attracted wide attention and it was therefore deemed advisable to give it an eastern publication for the benefit of the Rosicrucian Fraternity itself. It is reprinted by kind permission of Bro. Jos. F. Morcombe, Editor of the 'Trest/e Board.'

It is well known that at the present time both in Europe and in America there is marked interest displayed in the presentation of what is called the "Rosicrucian Teaching," an interest common to students of Freemasonry, symbolism and esotericism alike. The question is, "How much of this alleged teaching is genuine and which, if any, of the several Rosicrucian organizations extant in the United States bears the imprint of legitimacy", In other words, "What is the legitimate Rosicrucian order?"

This question can be answered by applying the same rule that applies to Freemasonry, for in many respects the two fraternities are analogous. In Freemasonry, a legitimate lodge is one, which holds a charter or dispensation from some Grand Body of competent jurisdiction, empowering it to work. — The same rule and landmark holds good regarding a Rosicrucian body. A genuine college of Rosicrucians must hold a charter or dispensation from some Grand Body of competent jurisdiction, empowering it to work. Ignoring the various controversies among Masonic scholars regarding the origin and antiquity of Freemasonry, it is quite agreed that the craft in its present form assumed definite jurisdictional powers and privileges in approximately 1717, based upon the coherence of various craft guilds extant prior to that time and having enjoyed a more or less unorganized development through these guilds for a very long period.

The same holds true in regard to Rosicrucianism. There are Masonic traditions which, in the minds of some scholars, would seem to indicate the origin of Freemasonry as coeval with the time of Noah, but this is tradition only, and no Masonic scholar will assume for one moment that the tradition can be substantiated by tangible evidence in the form of charters handed down in unbroken accession from the Noachite period. Again, the same ruling applies to Rosicrucianism.

Among the Rosicrucian students and scholars there is a tradition that the fraternity dates from Egyptian sources and some even go so far as to see in the fraternity a perpetuation of the ancient, prediluvian Atlantean wisdom religion. But no Rosicrucian scholar worthy of the name will assume for one moment that such tradition can be substantiated by a continuous succession of authority based upon the tangible evidence of authenticated history or records of clear and indubitable testimony. It is a matter of tradition in both cases. Where there is smoke there is *some* fire, and where there is tradition, or mythos, there is some base upon which the tradition or

mythos was originally founded, but the lapse of ages has in both cases obscured this origin until it is almost hopeless to expect to recover the original truth in its entirety. Let the traditions in each case stand for what they are worth. We are concerned only with present organizations and their *results*, for by results we are entitled to judge men and organizations.

It is understood by all scholars of comparative religion that the revelations constituting the “Sacred Scriptures” of the various root religions of the world have always been hieratic, i. e. with double meaning; exoteric and esoteric. The doctrines formulated to express a given religion to the people have been exoteric. History affirms that in every age there have been organizations or sodalities which have broken away from orthodoxy in order to investigate, study and practice the purely esoteric principles of the prevailing religion and which, by so doing, have found in the central truths which they discovered a common bond of unity. Thus we find from the later dynasties of Egypt, on through the Apostolic, post-Apostolic, early Christian and medieval periods, cults of mystics engaged first in the study of Egyptian esotericism, then through the transition period the Christian mysteries, and in all cases these cults were formed principally from the trained clerical students and initiates of the times.

From a careful study of the teachings of the Essenes, Mithraics, Gnostics and others, we find common principles, usages and practices in historical record, bearing the same names and subject to the same conditions as were later embodied in the work of the Great Organizer of what has since become known as “Rosicrucianism.”

Of the Master Jesus it is written that he “came not to *change* the law, but to fulfill the law.” He did not personally *found* the Christian religion. The Christian religion was founded and definitely formulated as the new dispensation some time after his crucifixion. Similarly with Rosicrucianism, the Great Organizer, known exoterically as Christian Rosencreutz, was not the founder of Rosicrucianism as is erroneously assumed and taught by well-meaning students. This initiate gathered up the common points of unity among the Christian mystics and esoterists of preceding ages and welded them into a definite code of practice, and the resultant organization devoted to this practice and personal demonstration has since been that known as the Rosicrucian fraternity. His birth occurred in 1378 and the two circles organized by him date respectively 1407 and 1415. In 1484 Christian Rosencreutz died and the “vault was closed.”

Here again we are confronted with the marked analogies to Masonic tradition. H.A. the Widow’s Son was a celibate, died, and after a symbolic period was “raised” by the power of a principle since lost to a materialistic world. Christian Rosencreutz was a celibate monk (as were also his coworkers). He died, and after the symbolic period the vault was discovered, opened, and he, too, was “raised” by the power of the same mighty principle, also lost to those too deeply crystallized in materialism.

Freemasonry is engaged in the building of a temple, a temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and Masons are instructed to fit their minds as living stones for that eternal temple. Rosicrucians likewise are engaged in the work of building the same temple, for truth is the same, and its temple is the same, regardless of the name by which the workmen engaged upon it may be known, but right here there is a radical point of departure between the two fraternities. Masonry actually teaches that it is “speculative.” Rosicrucianism is decidedly “operative.” Masonry teaches its brethren to fit their minds as living stones. Rosicrucianism makes imperative a definite, practical method of living, which shall not only fit the mind properly, but prepare the *body* to be a responsive vehicle through which the mind can function. Every true member or frater of the Rosicrucian fraternity is obligated to live a definite life of well-regulated dietics, exercise, rest and ethical practice, together with special development of

the mental, psycho intellectual faculties and the spiritual nature, in order that he may actually build in this physical world the archetype of his portion of that temple eternal in the heavens.

In Freemasonry the lecture of the Fellowcraft Degree gives a resume only, of what once constituted the mysteries of ancient initiation, and which the ancient candidate actually had to study and practice to a reasonable degree of accomplishment. Rosicrucianism, knowing that the principles just referred to are the common rudiments of education, taught in all well-regulated schools, does not concern itself with them and instead teaches its fraters the component elements of man; his threefold body, physical, etheric and astral; his threefold spirit, human, life and divine; and finally his threefold soul, conscious, emotional and intellectual, showing him also how to adjust himself to the vibrations of higher planes of consciousness and develop each of these vehicles, as they are called, to the maximum of efficiency.

There is no supernaturalism in this. Rosicrucianism does not engage itself in the study of medium ship or psychical research, and in fact is quite opposed to the former under subjective or obsessional conditions as detrimental to the human intellect and the development of true spiritual perception. *It does* teach constructive, independent seer ship, and the exercise of one's own spiritual faculties. There is a vast mass of phenomena both above and below the vibratory waves ordinarily cognized by our sensory faculties. The sea captain can discern accurately a given liner and state the name thereof, while to the ordinary passenger the ship is invisible. He is clairvoyant, that is, he *sees clear* but there is nothing phenomenal or supernatural about it. The North American Indian can put his ear to the ground and divine the approach of another an incredible distance away. There is nothing supernatural about that either. He is clairaudient, i. e., *he hears clear*. And the only phenomenal condition about either of these two illustrations is really a matter of relativity; the contrast between the eye and ear attuned to nature's vibrations as compared with those that have lost their sensitivity by existence under conditions nature never intended.

Rosicrucianism teaches its fraters the relative association of man's vehicles, each with its appropriate inner world region or state of vibration. This in reality constitutes the true study of occultism, for the word "occult" is erroneously associated with all sorts of legerdemain and fraud. In reality it is simply the hidden truth. In practice the occult student seeks the *invisible cause* of all *visible effects* and in this sense such a student is a true scientist and also, in the same sense, every scientist is an occult student, for the academic scientist is simply seeking the invisible causes of natural phenomena and the laws by which they operate.

It is absurd to imagine that Rosicrucians and Hermetists are seeking the formula for transmuting base metals into gold in the ordinary sense. That such has actually been accomplished, that is, the transmutation of lower metals into higher, is a matter of scientific record, the result of laboratory researches of eminent English and European scientists. It is a result quite in line with the marvelous success in exploding or dissociating the component parts of the atom, hitherto considered indivisible. The Rosicrucian and Hermetic scientists seek the transmutation of the lower self into the higher by the application of natural laws, which, if they inhere in one department of nature, must logically inhere in all.

Rosicrucianism is in exactly the same status with Freemasonry. Since 1717 the latter fraternity has been undergoing a process of perfecting its organization throughout the civilized world, attracting worthy men from all walks of life through a sincere esteem of the ancient and honorable institution. The same is true of Rosicrucianism. Neither fraternity seeks members. Both are sought by applicants who must prove that they are worthy and well qualified.

Neither fraternity approves or permits advertising propaganda for membership. The

foolish, absurd and stupid claims that the Rosicrucian fraternity numbers millions of adherents in all walks of life, from emperors and potentates down to the humblest, only cause those who really *know* to smile in pity. It is more than probable that in all the years of its existence Rosicrucianism has never numbered a total of more than a possible 10,000 and even this is an extremely generous estimate, for it is a work that does not readily attract the man satisfied with orthodoxy and content to take things as they are. Equally ludicrous is the attempt to build an organization upon the assumed efficacy of a scarab or cartouche, the duplicates of which can be bought by the pound by any traveler to Cairo, or found in antique shops in most of our cities. Rosicrucianism has never been a vehicle for the exploitation of formidable and glittering but meaningless titles; jewels, amulets or imposing manifestos. These are silly in the extreme.

Of the bodies in the United States today whose origin entitles them to some consideration we may mention: The Anthroposophical Society, whose head is Dr. Rudolph Steiner, now of Dornach. Dr. Steiner was formerly a Rosicrucian exponent, later a theosophical secretary, and at present an exponent of the Goethean mysticism. It is a purely modern foundation with no impossible claims to an impossible lineage.

Next there is the so-called "A.O." a foundation by the late MacGregor Mathers of Paris. Mathers was formerly a member of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia and became an eminent Kabalist, author of *the Kabala Unveiled*, which is of great value and now, unfortunately, out of print. The letters "A.O." stand for the Greek equivalents of the Golden Dawn, the beginning and the ending. Mathers, we are advised by the late Secretary-General of the English Rosicrucian Society, was dropped from that body many years ago, and while he had therefore been a member of a legitimate body, he was not authorized or in a position to institute a body himself.

About 1860 the "Brotherhood of Rosicrucians" was organized in New England by Pascal Beverly Randolph, a man of remarkable powers, and several branches were established in the South and West. From this was developed the "Temple of the Rosy Cross," a legitimate organization, for Randolph received his degrees and authority from the Count A.de Gianotti, Magus of Hungarian Rosicrucians. Randolph was succeeded by Freeman B. Dowd, who wrote several books of merit, and Dowd was in turn succeeded as Grand Master by Edward II. Brown, late of Salem, Mass. We understand the latter is succeeded by his son, but we have no official communication as yet.

The Societas Rosicruciana in Canadensis was warranted in 1876 by Prince Rhodocanakis, IX, Supreme Magus of Greece, and in the following year the warrant was confirmed by the Rosicrucian Society of England.

Colleges were established in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland and Vermont in 1879-80; and in 1889 the high Council for this body was proclaimed by warrant *from* the High Council of Scotia, with Charles B. Meyer as the first Supreme Magus. It was shortly thereafter recognized by the High Council of Anglia.

The colleges of the last mentioned group in the United States have become practically inoperative, although at the present time there are a few which meet quarterly, with a banquet followed by the reading of some paper of Masonic antiquarian interest.

In 1910 the Societas Rosicruciana in America was organized with its High Council, deriving from Frater Sylvester C. Gould of Manchester, New Hampshire, who was dissatisfied with the merely literary nature of the former colleges and who desired the institution of the actual ceremonial and symbolic work. Frater Gould was a Provincial Magus of the Societas Rosicruciana in the United States and had further received the final degrees in Europe, attaining the rank of Magus, and in good standing at the time officially, so that he was duly qualified to

organize and institute a legitimate body. Under the new High Council there are ten colleges, with a large membership in the “Congregation of the Outer” and several “Study Group Centers” throughout the United States, and the organization is strong, healthy and progressive.

It will be seen that the mother of all these American bodies is the Rosicrucian Society of England, the French organization never having been duly recognized, for French Rosicrucianism is much on the same par with French Masonry, and it has a total lack of authority. What is more, according to Rosicrucian jurisprudence, it could never grant a charter legitimately to any body in America while duly constituted bodies were already at work here.

In 1616 Robert Fludd (Robertus de Fluctibus) began his Rosicrucian writings in England, and in 1620 the fraternity was formally introduced in that country by Michael Maier, a noted physician. Fludd and Maier had studied together on the Continent and this was the beginning of English Rosicrucianism. In 1629 John Heydon published his Rosicrucian writings, and in 1646 we find the society directed by such men as Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, Thomas Wharton, George Wharton and others of equal caliber. In 1745 we have record of the Society meeting near St. Paul’s cathedral, London, and in 1866 the society was reorganized by Robert Wentworth Little, Fraters Hughan, Little and others. Frater Little died April 12, 1878, and was succeeded as Supreme Magus by Frater William Robert Woodman. Frater Woodman died December 20, 1892, and was succeeded by Dr. William Wynn Westcott, an eminent English Freemason.

The English society, both in its original and reconstructed form, therefore, has a succession from Continental sources hailing from the Hungarian body, the parent of modern Rosicrucianism, and the Societatis Rosicrucianae in the United States and the Societas Rosicruciana in America obviously enjoy participation in this lineage. This lineage is a matter of documentary evidence. But lineage in itself is worthless unless it perpetuates the intent of the original source in all purity. “Blue blood” is simply blood that has run its course so long that it needs a generous admixture of red corpuscles—Lineage, when it runs off the track or permits the original vision to be obliterated, is of little account.

Of the various other alleged Rosicrucian bodies extant in this country at the present time the least said the better. The impossible, preposterous statements and absurd claims, the blatant propaganda and noisy pretensions to be the “only true order” are beneath comment. Truth does not need to proclaim itself as such; an imposture only proves its identity by the force of its insistence.

Many writers, Masonic and Rosicrucian, see in the latter organization the parent of Freemasonry, for there is a mass of Masonic teaching inextricably interwoven with the Rosicrucian philosophy. With this controversy this paper has naught to do. Encyclopedists are divided and there is little likelihood that it will ever be other than a moot question. It makes little difference, for the important point is that having so much in common proves a close connection somewhere down the line of the ages, and the obvious fact is that both fraternities should know each other better today, work in closer harmony and connection and cooperate for the good of humanity if each is, in truth, engaged in the sublime work of building the temple greater than that of Sol-Om-On, and sincere in its teachings that all things work together for good, to those who really seek light, more light, and further light.

This paper deals primarily with Rosicrucianism in the United States (but by way of explanation in passing and in answer to many queries from Masons, we may say that Rosicrucianism in Europe, outside of England, is in a quasi condition. The French bodies are, generally speaking, unauthorized and irresponsible followings of various individuals and the connection seems to have been lost since the establishment of the republic. In Germany the great

war has had the effect of stagnating esoteric study along the Rosicrucian lines and we are not advised that the former Rosicrucian establishments have cohered in any well defined lines of reconstruction. Of late there has been an attempt to establish a "Societas Rosicruciana in Germany," but needless to say this is not in any sort of affiliation with the English-speaking bodies, and appears to be but a camouflage to give verisimilitude and apparent authority to spurious and clandestine bodies in the United States which advertise their affiliation therewith.

In Russia, Rosicrucianism has suffered most. Former legitimate bodies which because of their liberal teachings attracted wrong material of the so-called highly "individualistic" class, have been absorbed by bolshevist forces and made the propagandive agency of philosophy totally foreign to Rosicrucianism, and have therefore alienated themselves from the fabric of the fraternity, for Rosicrucianism, like Freemasonry, is intensely devoted to the maintenance of the State and the preservation of law and order and gives no countenance to the manifold whims, fads and radical tendencies of the day.

Foolish claims have been made to impress the uninformed as to powers alleged to have been received from some sort of Supreme Central Council of the Rosicrucian Order for the World. This is tommyrot. There never has been such a thing as a Supreme Council for the World and in the very nature of things there never can be. The policy and jurisprudence of Rosicrucianism are identical with that of Freemasonry; in fact the principal landmarks are much alike. Each High Council is an independent body, exactly as each Masonic Grand Lodge is an independent body, and functions only in its own national territory.

Equally absurd and silly is the attempt made in a brochure now being circulated, to give a semblance of legitimacy to a spurious organization by intimating its connection with and continuity from the Early German Pietists of Pennsylvania. There was an undoubtedly genuine group of Rosicrucians who came to America in 1694 and ultimately settled in Germantown, establishing a monastery on the banks of the Wissahickon. The ruins could be seen to a late date and are possibly still extant. The leader was Father Kelpius and the last survivor was Dr. Christopher Witt, who passed to the higher life, January 1765. The account has been published in Mercury, Vol. 2, No. 12, and the complete history is the splendid work of the late Julius Sachse, of Philadelphia, Grand Librarian of the Grand Lodge F. & A. M. Needless to say, there is absolutely no connection whatever, near or remote, direct or indirect, between these worthy pioneers and any existing organization in the United States, today.

There are colleges of the fraternity in South America and Australia under the allegiance of the Anglian High Council. The Societatis Rosicrucianae in the United States, such of it as is still alive in a minor degree, limits its membership to Masons only. The Societas Rosicruciana in America opens its membership to men and women alike, but according to its constitution the High Council must be composed of Masons exclusively, and not only that, the High Council members must be brethren of all degrees of both York and Scottish Rites in good standing, and the fraternity is as much opposed to clandestine Masonry as is genuine Masonry itself.

Rosicrucianism is vastly more than the mere study of the Kabala, the Tarot and kindred divisions of occult science, attractive as those divisions may be. We have no authentic information that Rosencruetz ever devoted his energies to any such work. The Rosencruetz legend is replete with symbolism, much of it in the original Latin, decipherable only by anagrammatic process, wonderful progress in this specialized work having been accomplished by Frater Mayer of Philadelphia. Most of the works on Rosicrucianism by modern writers have been in the nature of the apologetic, written without actual personal knowledge or contact with the fraternity itself, and therefore subject to misinterpretation. A study and analysis of the work

of Rosencreutz and his immediate followers will reveal the close analogy of the life, work and teaching of the Master Jesus, and Rosicrucianism is therefore, more than anything else a school of Christian mysticism, but a mysticism devoid of charlatanry, fraud and psychic humbug that ordinarily attach to all lines of occult study. It means the living of a definite life, if it means anything at all, and for this reason while it is permissible to state that one is a member of the fraternity, no frater worthy of the name will assert that he is for one moment a Rosicrucian.

The charge is often made that, Rosicrucianism being a secret work or body and, according to legend, without visible organization or tangible membership, those who insist that there is such a thing as a visible order must be in error. We may answer that at the time of the renaissance of the fraternity it was a landmark that the existence of the fraternity' should be kept secret for "one hundred years." While there is, of course, an esoteric interpretation to this landmark, it is also obvious that the one hundred years are long since ended and the same reasons for secrecy, namely the persecutions of the ecclesiastical hierarchies, no longer exist. As far as the visibility of the organization is concerned, it means simply that although in the world, the fraternity, in accordance with scriptural teachings, strives to be not *of* the world.

The object of this article has been, not to stir up controversy but to answer many questions which have arisen among Masons regarding the Rosicrucian fraternity, which has no connection whatever with the Rose Croix degrees of the Scottish Rite; to correct false impressions created by clandestine bodies and many misconceptions which have arisen otherwise. Let us hope that a better understanding may develop between the two fraternities, — neither of which encroaches whatsoever upon the work of the other, but instead, should cooperate to the fullest extent.