

# Christian Rosenkreuz and the Rosicrucians

BY

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# The Platonic Philosopher's Creed

BY

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## CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUZ AND THE ROSICRUCIANS.

By W. WYNN WESTCOTT.

THE Rosicrucians of mediæval Germany formed a group of mystic philosophers, assembling, studying and teaching in private the esoteric doctrines of religion, philosophy and occult science, which their founder, Christian Rosenkreuz, had learned from the Arabian sages, who were in their turn the inheritors of the culture of Alexandria. This great city of Egypt, a chief emporium of commerce and a centre of intellectual learning, flourished before the rise of the Imperial power of Rome, falling at length before the martial prowess of the Romans, who, having conquered, took great pains to destroy the arts and sciences of the Egypt they had overrun and subdued; for they seem to have had a wholesome fear of those magical arts, which, as tradition had informed them, flourished in the Nile Valley; which same tradition is also familiar to English people through our acquaintance with the book of Genesis, whose reputed author was taught in Egypt all the science and arts he possessed, even as the Bible itself tells us, although the orthodox are apt to slur over this assertion of the Old Testament narrative.

Our present world has taken almost no notice of the Rosicrucian philosophy, nor until the last twenty years of any mysticism, and when it does condescend to stoop from its utilitarian and money-making occupations, it is only to condemn all such studies, root and branch, as waste of time and loss of energy. The very name of "Christian Rosenkreuz," the founder of Rosicrucianism, would meet with hardly any sign of recognition in the best social or the literary circles of this country; and yet the mere publication in 1614 of a little pamphlet in Germany, narrating the mode of foundation and the aims of the Rosicrucian Order, made such a stir throughout Europe, that even to-day there are extant six hundred tracts for and against the reality and the *bonâ fides* of the doctrines of the Order; which tracts were written and printed in Germany and France alone, within a hundred years of the issue of the original *Fama Fraternitatis*, or narrative of the establishment of the society of C.R.

In estimating the relative importance of so voluminous a literature, we must remember that the era 1600-1700 was far different from the age in which we live. The printing press, although available to the few and rich, was still a rarity, and the daily newspaper had not been thought of,

Certainly no book that has been printed within the last fifty years has created one tithe of the flutter, in the world of the learned, that was caused by this thirty-three page Latin pamphlet, published in Germany in 1614.

The Reformation, we must remember, had just become an accomplished fact; it was a sweeping change that had affected a vast tract of semi-civilised country, and perhaps some explanation of the outcry against Rosy Cross was a form of protest against another possible attempt at the conversion of men, like the Reformation of Catholicism which had preceded it, and had, while making great improvements, greatly unsettled men's minds, and had shaken European religious and social life to its foundations. The narrative, then, of Christian Rosenkreuz created a veritable intellectual panic among the learned, and it was a ferment which did not complete its work for several generations. That its effect was on the whole a good one, need not be doubted by us, for whatever may be the merits or demerits of Rosicrucianism as a system of philosophy or ethics, its promulgation certainly tended to widen men's intellectual conceptions, to show that the prevailing standards and forms of religion were not the only possible forms of high spiritual thought and aspiration, and that even the time-expired formulæ of Egyptian culture were susceptible of a later development not wholly unsuitable, and not unworthy of the attention of a later age. Why indeed should it not have been so, seeing that for 1500 years in Europe the nations had reposed in a state of apathy without culture, had made almost no progress, and had been hide-bound by the fetters of a religious-establishment which boasted itself upon its exclusiveness, its control of all that God gave or man could receive, and formulated and practised the dogma that there was no revelation but one—the Bible—and that the Bible was unsuitable to the people, whose sole duty was to support a priesthood, from whose personal attention and propitiation alone was any good to be obtained.

So long as vast nations were taught that neither mind, nor intellect, nor man's spiritual soul required any further culture, nor any further enlightenment than could be obtained from listening to the reading of the only infallible book in a language not understood of the people; it is easy to perceive why Germany in 1600 was behind Alexandria of the year 1, alike in culture, in science and in art.

Reform of any sort, new presentments of truth of any kind, always stink in the nostrils of men who have a vested interest in maintaining things as they are: and history has repeatedly shown that even beneficed ministers will stoop to misrepresentation and falsehood in order to sustain their own interests and God given rights, in their minds consonant with the right divine of Kings,—another now exploded superstition. Small wonder then that the *Fama Fraternitatis-Crucis* raised up a storm of passion, and that its followers

were assailed by every form of abuse and by every vile epithet that the Billingsgate of clerical intolerance of that day could supply. For the clergy, be it remembered, with the pupils of the clergy, were alone able to read and write, and it was but the one man in a thousand who, having received education from orthodox sources, dared to express an opinion of his own. Of such a sort were the few defenders of Rosenkreuz, and their pamphlets are mostly anonymous, to avoid open persecution, while the authors who wrote in condemnation signed their names in full with many ecclesiastic titles. None of the minor clergy, whatever they thought or felt in private, dared publish any defence of a teacher or school which conflicted with the dominant faith: a few exalted clerics, Priors and Abbots, did, as I shall no doubt be reminded, both profess and practise Hermetic science and alchemy; but then an Abbot—as he of Spanheim, I mean the notable Trithemius; or a Prior like Valentine; or a Bishop, like he of Ratisbon, Albertus Magnus, were living in safety among a crowd of retainers, and the Holy Father's arm was a long way off, and he did not unnecessarily degrade a priest of *high* rank unless for contumacy to some personal order,—while on the other hand each one of ten thousand common parish priests could easily be cajoled into a visit to a neighbouring monastery and there retained until released by a merciful Karma.

It seems to me that there is a parallelism, and I hope to be able to show to you that there is an analogy, and some points of resemblance between the appearance of Christian Rosenkreuz in Germany, and the coming of your own H.P.B. as a teacher bearing witness to the light within her, and being inspired by knowledge gained in the East by travel and initiation there: the differences being that in the former case the few thousand learned of all Europe were alone approached by a printed manifesto,—while in our time the whole nation is approached by personal teaching, supplemented by the use of the press.

Let us see then shortly what is known historically of this Rose Cross Order, whose manifesto excited so great an interest.

The book *Fama Fraternalitatis* narrates that about the years 1375-1450, there flourished a very learned man, who, having spent many years in travel through the East,—Asia Minor, Chaldea, Arabia and Fez,—came again to Europe, and after a residence among the Moors in Spain, returned to his native State in Germany, full-filled with the Hermetic Sciences and capable in magical arts, which knowledge he had acquired by many initiations in Eastern lands. He adopted a covered mystic name, as mediæval teachers mostly did; the name he took was “Christian Rosenkreuz,” or Christian Rosy Cross, or shortly C. R., with a Signum or Seal of a Rose on a cross formed of six squares, such a cross as if closed up would form a cube.

He settled in a certain retired place and drew around him a select

circle of friends and pupils who were ultimately, after training, received by him into the grades of mystic initiation which he had himself collected.

After some years of tuition and elementary practice these initiates set to work and built, or caused to be built for themselves, a Temple or Lodge House, or Home; they called it "*Domus Sancti Spiritus*," the House of the divine spirit. Here they settled and this was their abode, study and laboratory; from thence they issued forth in turn on deeds of mercy and of healing, and of teaching, and of observation. From this first circle there were formed other circles in succession, the elders teaching the juniors, and so was the secret knowledge both preserved and extended. C. R. lived to a very advanced age, 106 years, and dying at last was buried, as had been arranged by him and the members of his inner circle, in a special vault within their *domus* or secret dwelling. Some form of embalming was used, and the vault was decorated with grand and beautiful emblems, designs and implements. The Magus was enclosed in a specially prepared tomb, and was laid to rest with his own special consecrated insignia. The vault was closed, and upon the door was fixed a brazen plate, upon which was engraved an inscription of a prophetic exclamation of his own, that in 120 years after his death his tomb should be re-opened and his doctrines, in a modified form, once more made public, and not only to a few, but to the learned in general: this plate was then covered up and the presence of the vault quite masked.

The members of C. R.'s inner circle appear to have died off each in his turn, until at last there remained no one who could tell the secret of where the great Instructor lay, and where was the secret chamber of which all had heard, and which all were forbidden to seek. The brothers were content to refrain from seeking; trusting in the promise that a time should come when, in the natural course of events, C. R. should rise again, or at least in the spirit, *i.e.*, his doctrines and fame should be published. The 120 years passed away, and the order still flourished; faithful initiates still studied, watched and waited, until the fateful hour was struck on the clock of time, and in 1584 the secret was discovered.

I will read from the original work, in its earliest English translation by Eugenius Philalethes, that is, Thomas Vaughan, printed in London, 1652:—

"The year following, after N. N. had performed his school right, and was minded now to travel, being for that purpose sufficiently provided with Fortunatus' purse, he thought (being a good Architect) to alter something of this building, and to make it more fit: in such renewing he lighted upon the Memorial Table, which was cast of brass, and containeth all the names of the brethren, with some few other things; this he would transfer in another more fitting vault, for where or when Fra R. C. died, or in what country he was buried, was by our predecessors concealed and unknown to

us. In this Tablet stuck a great nail somewhat strong, so that when he was with force drawn out, he took with him an indifferent big stone out of the thin wall; or plaster of the hidden door, and so unlooked for, uncovered the door, wherefore we did with joy and longing throw down the rest of the wall, and cleared the door, upon which that was written in great letters, '*Post cxx. Annos patebo,*' with the year of the Lord under it; therefore we gave God thanks, and let it rest that same night because first we would overlook our Rotam.

"In the morning following we opened the door and there appeared to our sight a vault of seven sides and corners, every side five feet broad and the height of eight feet. Although the Sun never shined in this Vault, nevertheless it was enlightened by another sun, which had learned this from the Sun, and was situated in the upper part in the centre of the ceiling; in the midst, instead of a tomb stone, was a round altar covered over with a plate of brass, and thereon this engraven:—

*A.C.R.C. Hoc universi compendium unius mihi sepulchrum feci.*

"Round about the first circle or brim stood

*Jesus mihi omnia.*

"In the middle were four figures, enclosed in circles, whose circumscription was:—

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Nequaquam vacuum.</i>   | No void exists.              |
| 2. <i>Legis Jugum.</i>        | The yoke of the law,         |
| 2. <i>Libertas Evangelii.</i> | The liberty of the doctrine. |
| 4. <i>Dei gloria intacta.</i> | The unsullied glory divine.  |

"This is all clear and bright, as also the seventh side and the two Heptagoni, so we kneeled altogether down, and gave thanks to the sole wise, sole mighty, and sole eternal God, Who hath taught us more than all men's wit could have found out, praised be His Holy Name. The Vault was parted in three parts: the upper part or ceiling, the wall or side, the ground or floor.

"Of the upper part, you shall understand no more of it, at this time; but that it was divided according to the seven sides in the triangle, which was in the bright centre; but what therein is contained, you shall (God willing), (that are desirous of our society) behold the same with your own eyes, but every side or wall is parted into ten squares; every one with their several figures and sentences, as they are truly showed and set forth *concentratum* here in our book. Now as yet we had not seen the dead body of our careful and wise father; we therefore removed the altar aside, there we lifted up a strong plate of brass, and found a fair and worthy body, whole and unconsumed, as the same is here lively counterfeited with all the ornaments and attires; in his hand he held a parchment book, called T, the which, next unto the Bible, is our greatest treasure, which ought to be delivered to the censure of the world. At the end of this book standeth this elogium, which then follows in Latin—it may be shortly translated thus:—

"A seed sown in the breast of Ihesus.

"Christian Rose Cross, sprung from a noble and famous German family: The man of his age for the most subtle imaginations and divine revelations, and one of unwearied labour in the search for heaven's mysteries and those also of humanity; he was secretly admitted to a more than Regal or Imperial Gaza (or treasure house) during his journeys in Arabia and Africa: he instituted and became the custodian for posterity of these arts: he

formed the *Minutum Mundum*, which related the past, present and future. He lived more than a century, and passed away, not of disease, but at the call of God; away from the embrace and last kiss of his brethren, and so returned to divinity.

“He was a beloved father, a very dear brother, a most faithful teacher, and the most enduring friend.

“He lies concealed here for 120 years.”

“Underneath this inscription there were five signatures of members of the First Circle, and three of the Second Circle.”

I am not of those who scoff at all that seems at first sight improbable, and to me this does seem a very impressive narrative. Many of you as Theosophists must see nothing wildly improbable about it; and it may seem to you within the range of things possible; but I admit that the truth of the narrative is not proven. No person as an entire outsider has ever seen this embalmed body, or this vault, or this *Domus sancti spiritus*, which was built about 1460 and opened about 1584; or at any rate no notable man has asserted in print that he has seen it.

But would such an outsider be at all likely to see it?—at least not without first martyring the Fratres of the Order.

Be just to Rosicrucianism and its origin, and history; ask yourselves what absolute proof you have of the fact of many *other* historical events; proof I mean independent of the evidence of those who had already convinced themselves and of those who have a personal object to serve in establishing the truth of any alleged occurrence—such as the death of Jesus by crucifixion, the Trojan War, or of the striking incident in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, or of the former existence of the Pharos of Alexandria.

And, on the other hand, of what value is negative evidence in such a discussion. The fact that the works of Josephus have no mention of Jesus which is not a forgery, is no proof that a gentle, wise and revered spiritual divine teacher did not preach in the time of the Emperor Tiberius, in Jerusalem; nor is the fact that neither Lord Bacon, nor Frederick the Great, nor Pope Pio Nono, nor Spinoza, nor Huxley, has ever asserted that he has seen the Vault of Christian Rosenkreuz any reason for denying its existence in 1484 or 1600, or at any time since then.

I would undertake to obtain in a week, in any large town in England, a thousand signatures to a document attesting that no living Theosophist had ever been seen by them, or to a document testifying that no evidence existed which went to show that the Theosophists had a Sanctum in which rested the ashes of their late revered teacher, in a room suffused with the peace which now at length dwells over the memory of her character, at once so enthusiastic and so contemplative—and of her personality, at once so aggressive and so endearing.

Thousands of persons of culture, and hundreds of occultists and pseudo-occultists, could be found willing to testify that they were not in possession of any evidence that successors of "Rosy Cross the Adept" still exist in England; or that any such a vault exists here or anywhere else in Europe. Yet that need not upset my belief, or your belief, if you hold it, that Adept Rosicrucians do still exist; nor will it upset the fact that I have met a person in this very Blavatsky Lodge (who was known to most of the elders in Theosophy among you) who assured me of the truth of these assertions, and who claimed to have seen such a vault. Not that I am weak enough, or so ignorant of human nature as to suppose, that any statement of mine would make you believe, nor do I want you to believe this. Seeing is believing, and if you cannot see, you are not to be blamed, *BY ME*, for not believing: but take my former case as to the Theosophical Headquarters, of this assertion there are many of you here present who, having seen, could testify to its truth, and so, I suppose, do believe, and so the gist of my argument may come home to such of you. So much then for the History of the Order of the C. R., first issued in 1610, and printed again and distributed in considerable numbers in 1614. A great outcry arose at once, and it is to be observed that the *Fama* issued alone in 1610, was, when issued in 1614 in a revised form, bound up with a second tract, the *Confessio Fraternitatis*. This is important, because the two works vary exceedingly as to matter and manner.

The former treats of the 1450-80 period of Europe, when Roman Catholicism was unchallenged except by Mohammedanism, and by a few remaining descendants of the pagan philosophers, and by Hermetic pupils: while the *Confessio*, issued in 1614, and no doubt then written—but it is anonymous,—appeared after the throes of the Reformation, and it is tintured deeply with the notions of Luther, and with Protestant crudities: and so differs widely from the purely Hermetico-philosophic or Gnostic-Christian form of the earlier work.

I have no objection to urge against the notion which has been formulated by Edward Macbean among others, that the *Fama* was written by a true follower of Christian Rosenkreuz's original Order, and that the latter was written by Valentine Andrea, a well-known German theologian and mystic who flourished at that time. He may have been a low grade initiate of the Rosicrucian Order and have been ordered to publish this *Confessio* to temper the storm which had been set up by the first tract. This effect, however, did not follow, and the polemic fury of the *literati* continued in full force for many, many years.

Many modern critics have accepted this suggestion that Andrea wrote the *Confessio*; but they err from want of study, who say that both are from the same hand; as well say that Jeremiah wrote the Book of Esther, so

much also do they differ in style, and in that case too, one is apologetic, and the other is history or fable,—at least a narrative.

So much for the history of the founding of the Order, now what is stated of the tenets? We must presume that an Order founded on a basis of philosophy gathered in Arabia and Africa was not simply a Christian one. The claim also to magical power negatives the idea that the doctrines were orthodox; and yet we find a profession of Christianity running through the volume. We must remember that C. R. began life as a pupil in a cloister, and was the associate in early life of monks: we must bear in mind that out of Europe, in the East, Christianity was Gnostic, and that the Gnostics and Neo-Platonists, although to a Roman Catholic or Protestant decidedly heretical, were yet inspired by Christian ideals—although they could not realize the accepted admixture of the God and Man in Christ, yet insisted on the Christ teaching of the Man Jesus.

Similarly so we to-day, having mostly entered upon the Eastern Theosophy from a Christian education, still are largely tintured by our basic theology and still use Christian language and types and symbols in our new ideals of the higher principles of man and humanity. For example, read the Theosophic works of Brothers Kingsland and Brodie Innes. For this reason, it seems to me, that this book, explanatory of an Eastern occultism yet using frequently Christian terms, must be read as though the Christian allusions were to a Gnostic and not to a Catholic Christ spirit and man Jesus; for Jesus to the Hermetist is the shortened form of Yehoshua, which title is formed of the letters of the Kabalistic Yod, Heh, Van, Heh, having interposed the letter Shin, the emblem of the spark of the Divine overshadowing each human soul. This Yod Heh Van He, the incommunicable Name, being the origin of the common God Name Jehovah, but to the Kabalist was not the jealous God of the Jewish nation, but a glyph of the divine creative forces which emanate from the highest God ideal, yet unmanifested and certainly not individualised.

As to the tenets of the Order then. The *Fama* begins with a tribute to the mercy and goodness of the Wise and Merciful God, by which a more perfect knowledge of two subjects is obtained—Jesus Christ and Nature note these two—as of equal importance. God is then thanked for the raising of some men who are able to bring Arts to perfection; and then finally that man might understand his own nobleness and worth, and why he is called Microcosmos—that is, I take it, man's unlimited range of improvement and that he is a mirrored reflection of the Macrocosm, the Divine Universe of Manifestation.

Men are chided for adhering to short-sighted doctrines, as of Aristotle and Galen, when the greater Truth lies before them; of those teachers it is added, that had they but been offered the knowledge

of the Rosicrucian initiation they would have accepted it with much joy.

It is then explained that Christian Rosenkreuz on his return from his travels, offered to the learned the elements of his Eastern lore ; he showed them the errors of their church and how the whole *Philosophia Moralis* might be amended. But it is added—"these things were to them a laughing matter, for being a new thing unto them they feared that their Great Name should be lessened, if they should now begin to acknowledge their many years' errors, to which they had grown accustomed, and wherewith they had gained them enough."

That was the secret, the secret of the failure of Christian Rosenkreuz to become a public teacher, and such the reason why the idea occurred to him of founding a new Order who should work for a General Reformation in silence and secrecy, and undisturbed by the scoffs of a world either too ignorant or too self-seeking to be taught.

Some pages further on the general agreement of the members is given.

1. That no public profession of any superior knowledge should be made ; but that members should when able endeavour to cure the sick, and that gratis.

2. That they should not make themselves conspicuous by any special garment or insignia, to the world.

3. That they should yearly meet in assembly and mutually instruct each other in the knowledge gained since last they met.

4. That every member should select a worthy person to succeed him as pupil.

5. That the letters C. R. should be their mark, seal and character, ever keeping them in mind of their Founder, and of the Christ spirit, and of the Rose of silence.

6. To keep the Society secret at least 100 years.

This point was certainly well kept ; but after that time many members did write themselves, no doubt by permission, as Frater R. C.

Other references to their ideas and habits and unusual powers abound in the *Fama*. For instance, it is said, although they could not live longer than the time appointed by God, yet were they free from disease and pain. That Frater J. O. was very expert in the Kabala, the mystic philosophy of the Chaldee and Hebrew initiates. That their burial places should all be kept secret, and they claimed the possession of the art of embalming.

They claim the knowledge of the secret of the Ever-burning Lamp, which is so often referred to in the mediæval occult authors.

The power of foresight, as shown by the inscription on the Vault door.

In the Vault were found, *inter alia*, "wonderful artificial Songs;" these we may take to be what the Eastern adepts called Mantrams, that is,

portions of language in a certain rhythm for recitation in magical ceremonies.

They condemned gold-making for profit and luxury as accursed, calling transmutation but a Parergon or side work.

And lastly we read in the *Fama* :—

“ Our philosophy is not a new invention, but as Adam after his Fall received it, and as Moses and Solomon used it, also she ought not to be much doubted of or contradicted by other opinions or meanings ; but seeing that Truth is always peaceful and brief and always like herself and especially accorded by with Jesus *in omni parte* and all members. And as he is the true Image of the Father, so is she his image. It shall not be said that this is true only of philosophy, but true according to Theology. And wherein Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and others did hit the mark, and wherein Moses, Enoch and Solomon did excel, but especially in what that wonderful book the Bible agreeth. All that same concurrereth and makes a sphere or globe whose total parts are equidistant from the centre.”

There follows the *Confessio Fraternalitatis*, written to the learned in Europe, and which is said to contain thirty-seven reasons of the purpose and intention of the Society. Curiously enough, that tract does not contain any series of thirty-seven reasons, or thirty-seven paragraphs, but is a very discursive relation of the doctrines of the Fratres. As a whole its tenets differ from those of the *Fama*, and are plainly tintured with Post-Reformation ideas, indeed we find the Pope called Antichrist. So that it seems safe to decide that this tract is rather by Valentine Andrea, the Protestant Theologian, than by men deeply inspired by the mysticism and magic of a man raised to Adeptship by Oriental Sages.

Time will not permit of any review of the *Confessio*, nor of any glance at the lives and works of those philosophers who have since styled themselves Fratres of R. C., so I hasten to conclude with a short summary, and with the analogies between the origin of the Order of R. C. and the Theosophical Society.

As a critic, then, of the Rosicrucians, viewed from the standpoint of the *Fama Fraternalitatis*—their own manifesto to the world, it seems that the Order was essentially a brotherhood of philosophers living in a Christian country, and professing a nominal Christianity of Gnostic type, yet essentially a band of students of Oriental lore and Eastern magical arts, professing and practising Kabalah divination and the knowledge of the ultra-natural planes of being.

As such they had to encounter the rampant hostility of the orthodoxy of their time, and hence needed to shroud themselves under an impenetrable veil of seclusion ; they only appeared in public singly, and without any mark of their character ; and lastly, when abroad they devoted themselves first to charity and healing, and then to the acquisition of more extended knowledge by observation and experiment.

I am now to point out certain resemblances, possibly entirely superficial, which seem to me to exist between the narrative of Christian Rosenkreuz and the origin of the Theosophic propaganda.

Let no error be made by you as to what is here said: the Rosicrucian establishment, admitting of no demonstration, may be, if it seem good to you, regarded as a myth. Theosophy is to us a great fact. But for myself I studied Western mysticism twenty years before I became a pupil of this school, and I esteem it highly, and so for me it is no slight to Theosophy to compare it to the work of Christian Rosenkreuz. I admit that the present work of the Theosophical Society is exalted in its aim, and is becoming universal in its distribution, and so far excels the *role* of the ideal Rosicrucian, whose zeal was much more turned to personal development; as such, however, I am prepared to contend for the value of Hermetic initiation; but that is not before you this evening.

My intention is the more admissible because H. P. B. ever declared that the school of learned men who instructed her to promulgate their doctrines, has been in continuous existence for ages; and that they have at several times, notably in the closing twenty-five years of each century, authorised and guided some effort at the spread of true occult philosophy. Until the contrary is proved, it is admissible to argue that the legend of Christian Rosenkreuz narrates a minor display of this principle and practice; that the attempt was a failure is no proof of its unworthiness, for H. P. B. repeatedly said that her own promulgation of faith might easily subside into failure and insignificance, unless some great-hearted souls and enthusiastic pupils were strong enough to carry it over the period of natural decadence.

I have here to ask to be allowed to say a few words of explanation. I have not come here to-night *because* I am a Theosophist; but on the contrary, I have been asked to speak upon the Rosicrucians, because I have the pleasure to hold a high office in the Rosicrucian Society of England, and so might reasonably be supposed to have studied the history of that Order. But to avoid misconception, I wish to say that the Society of Rosicrucians in Anglia is a Masonic Body—it is composed of Freemasons who have gathered themselves together to study the old Rosicrucian books in the light of history, and to trace the connection between Rosicrucianism and the origins of Freemasonry, a connection which has been alleged to exist by many historians belonging to the outer world.

The members of this Order, as such, make no claim to be in possession of the secret wisdom of the pupils of Christian Rosenkreuz, and I am very desirous that no one should leave with the impression that I speak as anything more than a critic of history, or with the notion that I have any part or lot in a personal claim to magic arts.

I ask this favour of you all as referring to this lecture in conversation,

because even if I were a member of the old Society, and had any powers beyond those you possess, I should not make public a claim to the possession of them; because I hold it at all times absurd for anyone to lay claim to the possession of any abnormal powers which he is not willing to demonstrate, or is not able to show to the public, or at least to all who ask; so that seeing they might believe, and believing understand.

May we not then observe a parallel between the promulgation of the doctrines of Christian Rosenkreuz and the establishment of the Theosophical Society and H.P.B.'s inner group of students?

In each case the instruction in Mystic Philosophy came from the East: in the former case from Asia Minor, Arabia, Africa, and notably Fez; in the latter from India, Tibet, and Egypt.

In each case the inspiration and actual founding of the Order is really due to one alone: in the former case by a man, in the latter by a woman.

In each case the Order appears to have been founded in the closing quarter of a century.

In each case the Initiator laid some part of his or her store of learning before the world, and in each case the learning was a "laughing matter unto them," and the teacher was a butt for scorn and ridicule.

In each case the teaching is based upon a foundation of Ethics and a high standard of morality, and the suggestion is made that such a course of life *may* lead to abnormal or magical powers. In each case, the teacher, disgusted with a vain-glorious and hypocritical world, fell back upon the formation of a select band of pupils bound together by solemn contract, and stimulated by enthusiasm.

In each case, an early step was the foundation of a home and special dwelling set apart for work, study and contemplation.

In each case, the founder passes away and is regarded by sorrowing pupils as dearest friend, most learned teacher, and beloved chief.

In one case we find the expenditure of loving care and skill in preserving the remains of the Master; and in the other we find an Urn of Ashes preserved by loving hands and placed in respectful privacy in her own chamber; and lastly, as Christian Rosenkreuz left the prophetic, and perhaps allegorical assertion, to be found by his successors of the third generation, that he, or his name and doctrine, should re-appear: even so did H. P. B., as I understand, affirm that she would return, in another form indeed, but still the same Ego, and individual, in a stage still farther on in the path to full Adeptship.

You will all, as Theosophists struggling to the light, hope that even as we read that the pupils of Rosy Cross, 120 years after his death, shewed the vitality of their Order, so may this Lodge founded by your great inspirer, H. P. Blavatsky, continue to flourish and extend until time shall be no more with you.

W. W. W.

## THE PLATONIC PHILOSOPHER'S CREED.

BY THOMAS TAYLOR.

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1. I BELIEVE in one first cause of all things, whose nature is so immensely transcendent, that it is even super-essential; and that in consequence of this it cannot properly either be named, or spoken of, or conceived by opinion, or be known, or perceived by any being.

2. I believe, however, that if it be lawful to give a name to that which is truly ineffable, the appellations of *the one* and *the good* are of all others the most adapted to it; the former of these names indicating that it is the principle of all things, and the latter that it is the ultimate object of desire to all things.

3. I believe that this immense principle produced such things as are first and proximate to itself, most similar to itself; just as the heat *immediately* proceeding from fire is most similar to the heat in the fire; and the light *immediately* emanating from the sun, to that which the sun essentially contains. Hence, this principle produces many principles proximately from itself.

4. I likewise believe that since all things differ from each other, and are multiplied with their proper differences, each of these multitudes is suspended from its one proper principle. That, in consequence of this, all beautiful things, whether in souls or in bodies, are suspended from one fountain of beauty. That whatever possesses symmetry, and whatever is true, and all principles are in a certain respect connate with the first principle, so far as they are principles, with an appropriate subjection and analogy. That all other principles are comprehended in this first principle, not with interval and multitude, but as parts in the whole, and number in the monad. That it is not a certain principle like each of the rest; for of these, one is the principle of beauty, another of truth, and another of something else, but it is *simply principle*. Nor is it simply the *principle of beings*, but it is the *principle of principles*; it being necessary that the characteristic property of principle after the same manner as other things, should not begin from multitude, but should be collected into one monad as a summit, and which is the principle of principles.

5. I believe, therefore, that such things as are produced by the first good in consequence of being connascent with it, do not recede from essential goodness, since they are immoveable and unchanged, and are eternally established in the same blessedness. All other natures, however, being produced by the one good, and many goodnesses, since they fall off from

essential goodness, and are not immovably established in the nature of divine goodness, possess on this account the good according to participation.

6. I believe that as all things considered as subsisting *causally* in this immense principle, are transcendently more excellent than they are when considered as effects proceeding from him; this principle is very properly said to be all things, *prior* to all; *priority* denoting exempt transcendency. Just as number may be considered as subsisting *occultly* in the monad, and the circle in the centre; this *occult* being the same in each with *causal* subsistence.

7. I believe that the most proper mode of venerating this great principle of principles is to extend in silence the ineffable parturitions of the soul to its ineffable co-sensation; and that if it be at all lawful to celebrate it, it is to be celebrated as a thrice unknown darkness, as the god of all gods, and the unity of all unities, as more ineffable than all silence, and more occult than all essence, as holy among the holies, and concealed in its first progeny, the intelligible gods.

8. I believe that self-subsistent natures are the immediate offspring of this principle, if it be lawful thus to denominate things which ought rather to be called ineffable unfoldings into light from the ineffable.

9. I believe that incorporeal forms or ideas resident in a divine intellect, are the paradigms or models of every thing which has a perpetual subsistence according to nature. That these ideas subsist primarily in the highest intellects, secondarily in souls, and ultimately in sensible natures; and that they subsist in each, characterized by the essential properties of the beings in which they are contained. That they possess a *paternal, producing, guardian, connecting, perfective, and uniting* power. That in *divine beings* they possess a power fabricative and gnostic; in *nature* a power fabricative but not gnostic; and in *human souls* in their present condition through a degradation of intellect, a power gnostic, but not fabricative.

10. I believe that this world, depending on its divine artificer, who is himself an intelligible world, replete with the archetypal ideas of all things, is perpetually flowing, and perpetually advancing to being, and, compared with its paradigm, has no stability, or reality of being. That considered, however, as animated by a divine soul, and as being the receptacle of divinities from whom bodies are suspended, it is justly called by Plato, a blessed god.

11. I believe that the great body of this world, which subsists in a perpetual dispersion of temporal extension, may be properly called a *whole, with a total subsistence, or a whole of wholes,\** on account of the perpetuity of

\* As little as the eye of a fly at the bottom of the largest of the Egyptian pyramids sees of the whole of that pyramid, compared with what is seen of it by the eye of a man, so

its duration, though this is nothing more than a flowing eternity. That the other wholes which it contains are the celestial spheres, the sphere of æther, the whole of air considered as one great orb, the whole earth, and the whole sea. That these spheres are *parts with a total subsistence*, and through this subsistence are perpetual.

12. I believe that all the parts of the universe are unable to participate of the providence of divinity in a similar manner, but some of its parts enjoy this eternally, and others temporarily; some in a primary and others in a secondary degree; for the universe being a perfect whole, must have a first, a middle, and a last part. But its first parts, as having the most excellent subsistence, must always exist according to nature; and its last parts must sometimes exist according to, and sometimes contrary to, nature. Hence, the celestial bodies, which are the first parts of the universe, perpetually subsist according to nature, but the whole spheres, and the multitude co-ordinate to these wholes; and the only alteration which they experience is a mutation of figure, and variation of light at different periods; but in the sublunary region, while the spheres of the elements remain on account of their subsistence, as wholes, always according to nature; the parts of the wholes have sometimes a natural, and sometimes an unnatural subsistence: for thus alone can the circle of generation unfold all the variety which it contains. I believe, therefore, that the different periods in which these mutations happen, are with great propriety called by Plato, periods of *fertility*† and *sterility*: for in these periods a fertility or sterility of men, animals, and plants takes place: so that in fertile periods mankind will be both more numerous, and upon the whole superior in mental and bodily endowments to the men of a barren period. And that a similar reasoning must be extended to irrational animals and plants. I also believe that the most dreadful consequences, attending a barren period with respect to mankind is this, that in such a period they have no scientific theology, and deny the existence of the immediate progeny of the ineffable cause of all things.

13. I believe that as the divinities are eternally good and profitable, but are never noxious, and ever subsist in the same uniform mode of being, that we are conjoined with them through similitude when we are virtuous, but separated from them through dissimilitude when we are vicious. That while we live according to virtue we partake of the gods, but cause them to be our enemies when we become evil; not that they are angry (for anger is a passion, and they are impassive), but because guilt prevents little does the greatest experimentalist see of the whole of things, compared with what Plato and Aristotle saw of it, through scientific reasoning founded on self-evident principles.

† The so much celebrated *heroic age* was the result of one of these fertile periods, in which men, transcending the herd of mankind both in *practical* and *intellectual* virtue abounded on the earth.

sists, is of a self-motive nature, and that it subsists between intellect, which is immoveable both in essence and energy, and nature, which both moves and is moved.

20. I believe that the human as well as every mundane soul, uses periods and restitutions of its proper life. For in consequence of being measured by time, it energizes transitively, and possesses a proper motion. But every thing which is moved perpetually, and participates of time, revolves periodically, and proceeds from the same to the same.

21. I also believe that as the human soul ranks among the number of those souls that *sometimes* follow the mundane divinities, in consequence of subsisting immediately after dæmons and heroes the *perpetual* attendants of the gods, it possesses a power of descending infinitely into the sublunary region, and of ascending from thence to real being. That in consequence of this, the soul while an inhabitant of earth is in a fallen condition, an apostate from deity, an exile from the orb of light. That she can only be restored while on earth to the divine likeness, and be able after death to reascend to the intelligible world, by the exercise of the *cathartic* and *theoretic* virtues; the former purifying her from the defilements of a mortal nature, and the latter elevating her to the vision of true being. And that such a soul returns after death to her kindred star from which she fell, and enjoys a blessed life.

22. I believe that the human soul essentially contains all knowledge, and that whatever knowledge she acquires in the present life, is nothing more than a recovery of what she once possessed; and which discipline evocates from its dormant retreats.

23. I also believe that the soul is punished in a future for the crimes she has committed in the present life; but that this punishment is proportioned to the crimes, and is not perpetual; divinity punishing, not from anger or revenge, but in order to purify the guilty soul, and restore her to the proper perfection of her nature.

24. I also believe that the human soul on its departure from the present life, will, if not properly purified, pass into other terrene bodies; and that if it passes into a human body, it becomes the soul of that body; but if into the body of a brute, it does not become the soul of the brute, but is externally connected with the brutal soul in the same manner as presiding dæmons are connected in their beneficent operations with mankind; for the rational part never becomes the soul of the irrational nature.

25. Lastly, I believe that souls that live according to virtue, shall in other respects be happy; and when separated from the irrational nature, and purified from all body, shall be conjoined with the gods, and govern the whole world, together with the deities by whom it was produced.