

THE TEMPLE OF WISDOM

Introduction to Hermetism

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[The Temple of Wisdom](#)

[PREFACE.](#)

[Chapter One INTRODUCTION.](#)

[Chapter Two. THE HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY.](#)

[Chapter Three MEDIAEVAL PHILOSOPHERS.](#)

[Chapter Four. AMONG THE "ADEPTS."](#)

[Chapter Five THE ROSICRUCIAN "ORDERS."](#)

[Chapter Six. PSEUDO-ROSICRUCIANS—IMPOSTORS
AND FOOLS.](#)

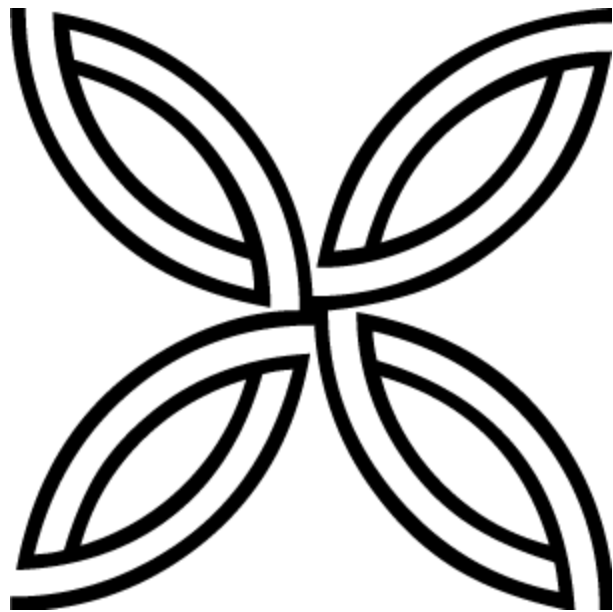
[APPENDIX. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE YOGA-
PHILOSOPHY OF THE ROSICRUCIANS AND
ALCHEMISTS.](#)

[Chapter Eight. ALCHEMY.](#)

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PREFACE.

QUITE a number of books dealing with the "History of the Rosicrucians" have appeared of late for the purpose of amusing and gratifying the curiosity of the mystery-loving reader; but it does not appear that they have proved to be very instructive, or that they have succeeded in throwing much light upon this perplexing subject; neither is it to be desired that the Rosicrucian mysteries should be publicly bawled out and exposed to the view of the vulgar; because they belong to that which is most holy and sacred in the constitution of man.

Books on true occultism are on the whole very useless things; because those who are in possession of occult knowledge will not require them; while those who have no such knowledge will not understand them; neither will they receive much benefit from such literature; because real spiritual knowledge must be found within one's own soul; it cannot be learned from books. The scientist, rationalist, and speculative philosopher deals only with, so to say, the candlesticks bearing the candles from which is emanating the light which they cannot see, neither can they see the candle; for the latter is representing the soul, whose light is the spirit.

Truly occult and Theosophical books ought to be prayers and poems; calculated to lift the heart and the mind of the reader up to the highest regions of thought, and aiding him to descend into the innermost sanctuary of his own being; so that he may become able to open the senses of his interior perception and grasp himself those divine ideals

which are beyond the understanding of the semi-animal intellect; for spiritual truth cannot be brought down to that level; it requires, for its recognition, the rising up in the spirit to its own plane; neither can any man reveal to another the light, if the light does not reveal its presence to the investigator; all that a book can do is to aid the reader in opening his own eyes.

Little would it benefit us if we knew of the existence of sunlight only from reading about it in books, and were incapable to see the light and to enjoy the rays of the sun. What would it serve us if we theoretically knew all about the constitution of the terrestrial sun if we were encompassed by darkness? What good would it do to us to be informed about all the qualities of the divine powers of God, if we could recognise nothing divine within our own selves?

No man can show to another the light if the latter is incapable to see it himself; but the light is everywhere; there is nothing to hinder a person to see it, except his love for the darkness. His love for the illusions of his terrestrial phase of existence causes him to regard these illusions as real, and to relegate the Real to the realm of fancy and dream. Nevertheless, that which seems now the true light to him will be as darkness when his consciousness awakens to the perception of the light of the spirit.

As light is incomprehensible except by its contrast to darkness, I have not only selected some of the best portions of the writings of the ancient hermetic philosophers and mediæval "Rosicrucians"; but I have also taken the trouble to collect a few facts from the great storehouse of human follies to be found in the fools' paradise of the visionary and

dreamer; but for those who earnestly wish to enter the path and to follow the Light, I have added some of the most precious gems; taken from the books of the sages; whose meaning will be incomprehensible to the would-be wise; while those who are unsophisticated will find therein a great deal of wisdom.

Chapter One INTRODUCTION.

IN the popular books of to-day, dealing with the origin of religion, we find it stated that they originated from fear. It is described how our ancestors, while in a savage state, and being unacquainted with the revelations made by modern science, saw the lightning flash, and heard the noise of thunder and watched other natural phenomena, whose origin they could not explain, and how they came to the logical conclusion that such things must be produced by some extra cosmic supernatural and intellectual power, which might some day take a notion to destroy their possessions; and which must, therefore, be flattered and propitiated so that it might be kept in a good humour.

Such a scientific explanation of the origin of religion and the belief in God may satisfy the speculating brain of the rationalist and thinker, who, living entirely in the moonshine of his own imagination has no perception for the light of that knowledge which belongs to the spirit of man; but such a theory will not satisfy the heart in which there is still a spark of the divine life, and which, therefore, feels the presence of a universal and higher power that is not a product of nature, but superior to her. A religion having such a merely logical origin would be truly the religion of the devil, because it would be thoroughly false. It would be merely a system teaching how God may be cheated and eternal justice be made to come to naught. True religion has nothing to do with fear nor with logical speculation, and its true origin rests in the fundamental relation which the human soul bears to the divine origin of the spiritual power by which she is inhabited. It is the divine spirit in man itself, recognising and through the instrumentality of

man the presence of the universal spirit in nature. This divine power is truly "occult," because it cannot be perceived by any external means, neither can its existence be logically proved to those who are not capable to feel it; it will for ever remain a mystery to the "Adam" of earth; because it is divine and can therefore be intellectually known to man only when he has entered into a state of divinity.

Nevertheless, it is a quality inherent in the nature of man that he wishes to know intellectually that whose presence he intuitively feels, and there have, therefore, at all times been men curious to know the nature of God, and attempted to break by their intellectual efforts a hole through the veil that covers the sanctuary of the great mystery, so that they may peep through it, and gratify their curiosity. From the vagaries of such speculators, visionaries and pseudo-philosophers has originated a false system of theology, mysticism, and superstition, which is even to-day often regarded as being Occultism and Theosophy.

The soul of man stands in the same relation to that spiritual power that fills the universe, as the flowers of the field to the light of the terrestrial sun. A plant deprived of life will sicken and die, and a soul in which the spirit of holiness does not exist will become degraded lower than the soul of the animals; because animals are not given to arguing; they act according to the laws of their nature, while the possession of an intellect enables man to act unnaturally, and in opposition to divine law.

But there have also been other men, who, by remaining natural and obedient to divine law, have grown into a state

of spirituality superior to the merely intellectual state, and in the course of their interior enfoldment, their inner senses have become opened, so that they could not only intuitively feel, but also spiritually perceive this light of the spirit. Such men are the true Mystics, Rosicrucians, and Adepts, and with them the historian and antiquarian has nothing to do; because they are beyond his reach of investigation. A "History of Rosicrucians" could, at best, be a history of certain persons who "were supposed to have been spiritually enlightened." It would have to remain for ever uncertain whether a person mentioned in such a "history" had really been a Rosicrucian or not; because that which constitutes a man a saint and a sage does not belong to this earth and cannot be examined by mortal men; it is that part of man of which the Bible speaks when it is written, "We live upon the earth; but our soul is in heaven."

External investigation can only deal with external things; that whose existence depends on a form can deal only with forms; but all forms are merely fictitious to him who recognises by the power of his spiritual perception the truth which the form represents. The whole of nature is an expression of truth; but there are few who can realize the truth expressed in nature. We are all more or less caricatured images of the truth which we are originally intended to represent. As long as we have ourselves merely a fictitious existence, owing to the non-recognition of the truth within our own selves, we merely know the caricature which we represent, but not our true, real self.

Wisdom, as a principle, is inconceivable unless it becomes manifest in the wise, and only the wise are capable to recognise it. A man without knowledge knows nothing. It is not man in his aspect as a being without any principle who can know any principle whatever; it is always the principle

itself that recognises itself in other forms. Thus, if a person wants to know the truth, the truth must be alive in him; if there is no truth in him, he can perceive no truth, neither within himself nor in external nature. For ever the truth is crucified between two "thieves" called "superstition" and "scepticism," and if we see only one of the crucified thieves, we are liable to mistake him for the truth; but the two forms of the thieves are distorted, or, to express it more correctly, the truth is distorted in them. Only when we are capable to recognise the straight form of the Saviour hanging between the two distorted thieves, will we see the difference and know where to search for the Redeemer.

For those in whom the truth has not yet become a living power, fictitious forms are necessary to show them the way, but the majority of the ignorant see only the fiction; there being no truth within themselves, there is nothing to perceive the truth in the form. For this reason the "Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians" will for ever remain "secret" to all who have not the living truth within their own hearts, and they will not comprehend them, in spite of all the explanations produced. These, however, in whom the truth struggles to become alive and who are striving not merely for the gratification of their curiosity, but who love the truth for its own sake and without any personal consideration, may be aided a great deal by the study of the books of the Rosicrucians and their secret symbols, in the same way as a traveller in a foreign country may be aided by those who have travelled there before him and know the way. They can indicate to him the road through the desert and the places where sweet water may be found, but they cannot carry him, he is to do the walking himself.

Divine wisdom is not of man's making, neither is it invented

by him. There is no other way to obtain it than by receiving it willingly within one's own heart. If it enters there, then will the storm of contending opinions subside, and the sea of thought be as clear as a mirror in which we may see the truth. Then will the truth itself become strong in ourselves, and we shall know God, not by reading a description of Him in books but in and through His own power, or, to express it in the words of the Bible, we shall attain knowledge of Him "by worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth."

Like the allegorical language of the Bible and other religious books, the Rosicrucian writings are utter nonsense and incomprehensible, if taken in an external sense and applied from a material point of view. Merely external reasoning, far from being an aid in their understanding, is rather an obstacle in the way; but to him who looks at them with the understanding that comes from the spirit, they are full of divine wisdom.

The Rosicrucians say, "A person who knows Divine truth has attained the highest and desires nothing more; for there can be nothing higher than the attainment of the truth. In comparison with this treasure, worldly possessions sink into insignificance: for he who possesses the highest has no desire for that which is low; he who knows the reality does not care for illusions. Scientific and philosophical speculations in regard to what may possibly be true are useless to him who feels and perceives the truth; he does not need to speculate about that which he already sees and knows. He does not require great riches, for the wants of his physical form are few and simple, and moreover, by the action of the spirit within, radiating in an outward direction, the material principles composing his physical form become more and more sublimated and

etherealized, and independent of the necessities of the material plane; until at last, having stripped off the last sheath of the gross and visible form, and having made that principle conscious which gives life within the visible inner body, he may live entirely in the latter, invisible to mortal eyes, independent of material conditions, an ethereal spirit surrounded by indescribable beauties, in possession of powers of whose existence mortal man does not dream—an ethereal spirit, but nevertheless a real and living man." (1.)

And, again, the Rosicrucians say of him who has tasted of the living water of truth, the true "Elixir of Life":

"Blessed is he who is above want and poverty, above disease and death, who Cannot be touched by that which gives pain, who does not require another roof over his head than the sky, no other bed than the earth, no other nutriment than the air, and who is above all those wants for which mortals are craving." (2.)

"God humiliates the vain and exalts the humble. He punishes the proud with contempt; but to the modest He sends His angels with consolation. He throws the evil disposed into a wilderness; but to the kind-hearted He opens the portals of heaven." (3.)

"Avoid the books of the Sophists; they are full of errors; for the foundation upon which their knowledge rests is their fancy. Enter the realm of the real, and divide with us the treasures which we possess. We invite you, not by our own choice, but by the power of the Divine Spirit whose servants we are." (4.)

"What does the animal know about intellectual pleasures? what does the Sophist know about the joys of the spirit? Would it not be a precious thing if we could live and think and feel as if we had been living and thinking and feeling ever since the beginning of the world, and were to continue thus unto its end? Would it not be delightful to know all the secrets of Nature and to read that book in which is recorded everything that has happened in the past, or which will exist in the future? Would you not rejoice to possess the power to attract the highest instead of being attracted by that which is low, and to have pure spirits instead of animals assembling around you?" (5.)

Are such powers attainable by man? It would be useless to attempt to prove it to those who have no desire to attain them; and even if it were proved, what would it benefit those who are poor to prove to them that there are others in possession of treasures which for the former do not exist? Can the existence of powers be proved to one who has no capacity for their perception or comprehension? Even a miracle would prove nothing except that something unusual and unexplained had occurred.

The Fama Fraternitatis says: "The impossibility to reveal such secrets to those who are not sufficiently spiritually developed to receive them is the cause that many misconceptions and prejudices have existed among the public in regard to the Rosicrucians. Grotesque and fabulous stories, whose origin can only be traced to the ignorance or malice of those who invented them, have been circulated and grown in intensity and absurdity as they travelled through the ranks of the gossippers. Falsehoods

cannot be eradicated without injuring the roots of the truth, and evil intentions grow useful to contradict the false statements made by the ignorant or wilful deceiver; but what is the testimony of the blind worth when they speak of what they believe they have seen and what value can be attached to the statements of the deaf when they describe what they believe they have heard? What does the untruthful know of the truth, the godless of God, the foolish of wisdom, and the unbeliever of faith? They may think that they are right, nevertheless they are wrong; they may accuse others of harbouring illusions, while they live in illusions themselves. Envy, hate, jealousy, bigotry and superstition are like coloured glasses, which cause him who looks through them to see nothing in its true aspect, but everything in coloured light."

Thus it appears that the "Rosicrucians," in speaking of their society, means something very different from any terrestrial and external organization of persons calling themselves, for some reason or other, "Rosicrucians"; but of a spiritual union, a harmony of divine and conspritual, but, nevertheless, individual powers, such as the angels are supposed to be, and which are not concerned in any history connected with the tomfooleries of external life.

It is of that spiritual "association" of which they speak when they say:

"Our community has existed ever since the first day of creation, when God spoke the word, 'Let there be light,' and it will continue to exist till the end of time. It is the society of the children of light, whose bodies are formed of light, and who live in the light for ever. In our school we are

instructed by Divine wisdom, the heavenly bride, whose will is free, and who comes to him whom she selects. The mysteries which we know embrace everything that can possibly be known in regard to God, Nature, and Man. Every sage that has ever existed has graduated in our school, in which he could have learned true wisdom. We have among our members such as do not inhabit this globe; our disciples are distributed all over the universe. They all study one book, and follow only one method of studying it. Our place of meeting is the temple of the Holy Spirit pervading all nature, easily to be found by the Elect, but forever hidden from the eyes of the vulgar. Our secrets cannot be sold for money; but they are free to everyone who is capable to receive them. Our secrecy is not caused by an unwillingness to give; but by the incapacity to receive on the part of those that ask for instruction.

"There is only one eternal truth; there is only one fountain of love. Love cannot be given, it must be born in the human heart. Wherever the quickening takes place, we attend to the birth of divine love. We are in possession of a light that illumines the profoundest depths of the darkness and enables us to know the deepest of mysteries. We have a fire by which we are nourished and by which wonders may be performed in nature.

"Everything in this world is subject to our will, because our will is one and identical with the law; nevertheless, our will is free and bound by no law.

"Do you wish to become a member of our society? If so, enter within your own heart and hearken to the voice of the Silence. Seek for the Master within yourself, and listen to

his instructions. Learn to know the Divinity that seeks to manifest itself within your soul. Throw away your imperfections and become perfect in God."

Footnotes

10:1 It will readily be perceived that all this refers to the "Inner Man," and not to his mortal physical frame. It is neither the physical body with its external senses, nor the perishing mind of man which can know divine truth. It is only divine truth in man that can know its own self. No man can attain true knowledge of any spiritual power, unless that power becomes alive in him and he identified with it. Occultism is not a question of what one should know, nor of what one should do; but of what one must be. If the inner man has become truly spiritual, not merely in his imagination, but in his will; then his awakened spirit will penetrate even through the physical form and change its nature in the same sense as darkness is consumed by light.

10:2 All this refers not to the man of terrestrial flesh; but to him who has been regenerated in the life of the spirit. The elementary body of man is not above disease and death; nor above that which gives pain. That body requires to be sheltered against the elements whereof it is made; and needs terrestrial food; but the man of the celestial kingdom is free. His home is as wide as his thoughts can reach, and his nutriment is the "Manna" from heaven.

11:3 "God" (according to Jacob Boehme) is the will of divine wisdom. He who rises up in his self-conceit will fall; because he will be full of his delusive knowledge, and the

will of the Eternal cannot awaken divine wisdom in him. True humility does not consist in abject fear; but in the highest sense of dignity, such as can be felt only by him who feels that God is in and with him.

11:4 The "sophists" are those sceptical inquirers who diligently examine the external shell of the fruit that grows upon the tree of knowledge; without knowing that there is a kernel within the fruit. They persuade themselves that there is no kernel, and imagine that those who are capable to perceive by the power of the spirit the light that shines from the interior fountain, are dreamers; while they themselves little know that their own life is merely a sleep and their fancied knowledge a dream.

11:5 The spirit of man is not of this world; it belongs to eternity. There never was a time when the spirit of man was not; even since the beginning of creation; neither is its presence limited to this planet Earth. He who succeeds in merging his consciousness with that of the divine spirit that overshadows his personality, and which is his own real self, will know his past forms of existence and set the future; but the animal principles in man cannot partake of that state; they die and enter again into the Chao!, the storehouse for the production of forms.