

WHAT'S SO NEW ABOUT THE 'NEW AGE MOVEMENT'?

Reverend Dr. L. Rumble, M.S.C.

INTRODUCTION

I recently had put into my hands a most attractively produced and fascinating booklet entitled, "Who and What Are the Rosicrucians?" In a sub-title, the booklet offers to place "Facts at Your Fingertips." And, on the inside of the cover, we are told, "This Is a Reference Work for Editors, Authors, Publishers, and Research Workers." Additional authority is lent to this little work by the statement that it was printed by the "Rosicrucian Press, Inc., San Jose, California," and that it is "Issued by Permission of the Department of Publications, Supreme Grand Lodge, A.M.O.R.C." [the so-called 'Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosy Cross', or Rosicrucians.]

A first glance through the pamphlet left me deeply impressed by the quality of the production. I was filled with admiration of the orderly and telling way in which Rosicrucians introduce themselves to all its readers. And I was duly astonished by the profuse and beautiful illustrations of their plant and its many departments at their San Jose Headquarters, in California.

It was impossible not to feel the appeal such a booklet would have for multitudes of people, quite apart from the lavish promises and reassurances contained in the text itself.

ASTOUNDING STATISTICS

How widespread has been the success of that appeal is evident from the really remarkable statistics, showing the extent of the Rosicrucian Foundation's activities.

We are told that "the number of readers of magazines and newspapers in which AMORC advertisements appear monthly equals the entire population of Turkey, or over 17,500,000 persons."

As a result, incoming letters provide 7,000,000 words to be carefully scrutinized by the Reading Mail Department; bring more foreign money orders than are received "by any other institution between San Francisco and Los Angeles"; require in reply "7,120,000 sheets of letter-size stationery" which, if laid end to end, "would form a path of paper from New York City to Kansas City, or 1,236 miles"; involve a "postage expenditure amounting to more than \$50,000 annually." Moreover, "AMORC forwards a greater number of packages, via Railway Express, than any other organization in Santa Clara Valley," whilst "over 6,000,000 pieces of literature are mailed to all parts of the world annually."

All that is both arresting and stimulating. The figures are almost astronomical. One may not think that references to "the entire population of Turkey," or to "a path of paper from New York City to Kansas City, or 1,236 miles," afford any particular reason for confidence in Rosicrucianism. But they do impress the imagination, and suggest that it might be worth one's while to look into the teachings, and the claims, and the promises of so remarkable an organization.

"SEE LIFE AS IT IS!"

Before looking more closely at the "Who and What" pamphlet, let us glance at some samples of the Rosicrucian advertisements which appear in magazines and newspapers read by "over 17,500,000 people monthly."

In Sydney, Australia, where the writer of this booklet lives, the prominent headlines "SEE LIFE AS IT IS" appeared in one of the Sunday newspapers.

Cleverly, the advertisement began by hinting that the reader of it had hitherto been deprived of information which should have been his. "The popular teachings of schools and churches colour your vision. The truth is concealed." To suggest hunger is to create an appetite! Then an appeal is made to every man's innate desire of privilege and superiority. "Real possibilities for your advancement in life are kept for the few. A power great enough to change your whole life is available, if you find the key."

Who, on reading that, would not wish to find the key? But no intense and prolonged search is necessary. "The

Rosicrucian secret writings will give you the true picture of life, and the mysterious forces that await your command.”

It is difficult to assess the concentrated allurements of those few words. To be spared all effort, to be let into a great and precious secret, to be granted access to mysterious realms where there are hitherto unknown forces which will be at your command as surely as if you had been presented with Aladdin’s Lamp must prove irresistible to multitudes of readers. Think of what it means. “You will find a different key to your personal problems, and a simple way to more abundant realization of your desires.” Is it all a dream? No. “For many centuries the Rosicrucian system has created a new life with new possibilities for multitudes who are now happy and contented.”

These last words may leave a little uneasy those who vaguely remember the declaration of the Divine Master, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Are the Rosicrucians, with their offer of a new life, offering a new religion? Be reassured! The advertisement concludes with the emphatic assertion, “The Rosicrucians are NOT a religious organization.” It is all perfectly good, and perfectly harmless - granted its truth.

UNSEEN POWERS

In a rival Sunday newspaper there was another advertisement, with a picture of the heavens and the planets, and the challenging question, “Do Unseen Powers Direct Our Lives?”

This advertisement is an appeal to our sense of the weird and of the uncanny. There are queer things that do make one wonder. So the Rosicrucians offer us a few leading questions along the lines of the occult and mysterious forces which seem to shape our lives, yet baffle us. “Are the tales of strange human powers false? Can the mysterious feats performed by the mystics of the Orient be explained away as only illusions? Is there an intangible bond with the universe beyond, which draws mankind on? Does a mighty Cosmic intelligence from the reaches of space ebb and flow through the deep recesses of the mind, forming a river of wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement?”

The answer being taken for granted, the reader is asked forthwith, “Have You Had These Experiences . . . that unmistakable feeling that you have taken the wrong course of action; that you have violated some inner, unexpressed, better judgement the sudden realization that the silent whisperings of self are cautioning you to keep your own counsel - not to speak words on the tip of your tongue in the presence of others that something which pushes you forward when you hesitate, or restrains you when you are apt to make a wrong move. . . ?”

Now is there anyone who has not had such experiences? The diagnosis fits everybody. The symptoms are such that all can recognize them. They are the common lot of every mutable, sensitive, thinking human being. Any movements of doubt or hesitancy, any vague fears, regrets, or impulses will enable you to admit that your case is exactly that!

Listen, then, to the startling revelation. “These urges are the subtle influence which, when understood and directed, has made thousands of men and women masters of their lives. There IS a source of intelligence within you as natural as your senses of sight and hearing, and more dependable, which you are NOT using now!”

But surely every human being knows that, over and above the senses of sight and hearing, he has an intelligence! And one is using his intelligence whilst reading this very advertisement of the Rosicrucians, or the words themselves would be meaningless. But more than that is intended.

COSMIC MIND

“Challenge This Statement!” we are urged. “Dare the Rosicrucians to reveal the functions of this Cosmic mind and its great possibilities to you. Take this infinite power into your partnership. You can use it in a rational and practical way without interference with your religious beliefs or personal affairs.”

So the Rosicrucians believe in a “Cosmic mind of infinite power” . . . a “mighty Cosmic intelligence from the reaches of space which ebbs and flows through the deep recesses of the human mind, forming a wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement!” That’s pantheism, or it’s nothing. It implies a god to be identified with the universe, occupying space. and reduced to an ebbing and flowing physical or psychic force on a level with all other forces of natural creation.

Yet again we are assured that we can be put in touch with this pantheistic god of the Rosicrucians without any interference with our present religious beliefs! But what if we believe in the One True God? What if we are

Christians? The Rosicrucians must surely hope that we won't think of that; or that we are so ignorant of our own religion that we don't know what it means! One thing is certain. No one who is really a Christian could possibly accept Rosicrucianism. To do so is to abandon Christianity for another and different religion altogether. That will become clear beyond doubt from a study of the Rosicrucian Movement in itself.

WHAT ARE THE ROSICRUCIANS?

The Rosicrucians describe themselves as "The Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosy Cross," of which the initial letters A.M.O.R.C. are used as an abbreviation.

They claim to be a world-wide fraternal organization, devoted to the exposition of "a system of mystical and metaphysical philosophy, intended to guide the development of the inner consciousness."

One who becomes a member is taught "the significance and application of the Cosmic and natural laws in the universe around him, and in himself. It unites into one liveable philosophy, metaphysical idealism, and such practical sciences as physics, chemistry, biology, physiology, and psychology. It also seeks, by its educational campaigns to rid society of the enslaving influence of superstition."

So we are told in the splendidly produced prospectus, "Who and What Are the Rosicrucians." But the claims are preposterous. and calculated to appeal only to the credulous; whilst the professed aim to eliminate superstition is brazen insincerity in an organization which would collapse completely were it not for the superstition of those who adopt and support its teachings.

On a par with its repudiation of superstition is its claim to be non-religious, and to conflict in no way with the principles of the Christian religion. No one who has an elementary knowledge of either Rosicrucianism or of the Christian religion could possibly be so deceived. Rosicrucianism is essentially religious, as we shall see. And it is utterly opposed to the Christian religion.

EGYPTIAN BACKGROUND

The official brochure tells us that "Traditionally, the Rosicrucian Order traces its origin to the Mystery Schools, or secret schools of learning established during the reign of Thutmose III, about 1500 B.C., in Egypt. Though he devoted himself to an investigation of 'the mysteries' - in other words, natural phenomena - Thutmose III still clung to the ancient religions of the period. His descendant, Amenhotep IV, 1355, B.C., known as the heretic king, also became leader of the mystery schools; but, being extremely progressive, he abolished the polytheistic religions of the time to advance in their stead the world's first doctrine of monotheism. The Rosicrucians look upon Amenhotep IV as their traditional Grand Master." p. 8.

Now all that is not historically accurate. The ancient Egyptian "mysteries" were not merely a study of natural phenomena. Nor did the world's first devotion to a doctrine of monotheism originate with Amenhotep IV. But that is by the way. The important thing is the admission that Rosicrucianism claims to trace its teachings back to the ancient mystery schools, which were the product of Egypt's pagan mythology.

"From Egypt," continues our prospectus, "the secret teachings of the brotherhood spread into Greece, and thence into Rome. During the Middle Ages they were concealed under a variety of different names."

It is true, of course, that the pagan mystery religions of ancient Greece and Rome absorbed and incorporated many ideas from the mythologies of both Persia and Egypt. And it is significant that the Rosicrucians have to admit that, in Christian times, those who held to such pagan superstitions had to conceal their opinions, and practise their fantastic and un-Christian rites in secret. If, therefore, these are the "secret mysteries" Rosicrucians want to revive in these modern times, they stand self-condemned in the sight of all who retain any Christian beliefs at all!

But let us leave this remote source of their teachings, and turn to the historical origin of the Rosicrucian Order.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN

"Chronologically," the "Who and What" booklet tells us, "the Order is mentioned as far back as A.D. 1115, in a book of the collection of Brother 'Omnis Mariar' in Germany. It rose to considerable prominence during the sixteenth century when, following the invention of the printing press, a small pamphlet entitled 'The Fama Fraternitatis' [the

Fama (or Tradition of the) Fraternity or Brotherhood'] was issued, and given wide circulation. It was said to have been written by a (Lutheran) theologian, Johann Valentine Andrea (1586-1654). The pamphlets were part of a campaign for its revival.”

Now in every age there have been secret societies. But the Rosicrucian Brotherhood cannot be traced back historically beyond Johann Valentine Andrea, even nominally. I say even nominally, for the modern Rosicrucian Order has no continuity as an organization with Andrea's Fraternity. It is an independent Society, founded centuries later, and claiming only to possess similar secret and mysterious teachings.

There is a legend that a certain German nobleman named Christian Rosenkreuz (1378-1484), when travelling in the Middle East, was there initiated into Arabian magic and other Oriental mysteries, which he determined to blend with the Christian religion. On his return to Germany, he is said to have founded in 1408 a “Fraternity of the Rosy Cross,” the members of which were to devote themselves to the study of the deepest forces of nature in profound secrecy. All that is sheer legend. There is no proof that Christian Rosenkreuz ever existed. All we know is that, in 1614, a pamphlet entitled “Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis” was published at Cassel, in Germany, by Johann Valentine Andrea. He claimed that the secret wisdom of Christian Rosenkreuz had been transmitted by an anonymous Fraternity or Brotherhood for some two hundred years, and that he was the first to make the Fraternity known by his pamphlet. The Rose and the Cross were chosen as symbols because they were ancient symbols of occult societies, and because they were included in the family arms of the Andrea household.

The publication of the “Fama” was an open invitation to chosen souls to join the Fraternity, but under the penalty of death for any disclosure of its secrets and activities. The morbid propensity of the age for magic, weird and mysterious rituals, and secret societies led to an extensive membership, and the influence of Andrea's Fraternity became very considerable. Andrea himself ultimately renounced Rosicrucianism, and frequently denounced it as ridiculous comedy and folly. But he had started something which he could not stop. When Freemasonry was founded as another secret society in 1717, it borrowed much from the Rosicrucians, above all from their ritual; and to this day there is, in the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, a symbolic degree known as the “Rosicrucian Degree.” But what is known as the “Rosicrucian Order” has no connection with Freemasonry. It is a modern, independent organization, having a secret philosophy and ritual of its own, modelled on those of Andrea's Fraternity. AMORC itself was founded in 1915.

The Foundation at Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California, claims that the Order was first introduced into America in 1694, with a location at what is now Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

IS IT A RELIGION?

Under the above heading, the “Who and What” booklet says, “The Rosicrucian Order is absolutely NOT a religious movement or sect. It is non-sectarian in every respect. As its membership is world-wide, it of course includes persons of every creed and denomination, as does any other world-wide fraternity of a cultural nature. Many leading clergymen of Protestant denominations, rabbis, and priests are members; but the Order itself, in the past and at present, is free of religious alliances. Although its ethics adhere to the principles of Christianity, it must not be considered a religious movement or a Christian sect. The teachings and philosophical doctrines of the Order do not interfere with the religious freedom of its members.” p. 5.

So it is that people with religious scruples are disarmed, and the simple deceived. For the truth is far otherwise than stated. The Rosicrucian Order is a religious movement. It is not non-sectarian in every respect, for it is itself a sect, thriving like a parasite on a membership drawn from other sects. It is sheer pretence to suggest that it is no more than a fraternity of a merely cultural nature; and whilst it may be true that Protestant clergymen and Jewish rabbis have been deceived into becoming Rosicrucians, it is certainly not true that any Catholic priests in good standing with their Church are in any way associated with them.

As for its being “free of religious alliances,” that merely means that it is an independent religious organization. If it does not ask its recruits to break with other religious bodies to which they already belong, it is surely not unaware that eventually they will more and more lose such faith as they have in other religions as they progress in Rosicrucian teachings and practices. The claim that its ethics adhere to the principles of Christianity is negated by its

fundamental disregard of the requirements of veracity.

In the “Who and What” propaganda booklet we are told, “The Rosicrucian Order is absolutely NOT a religious movement or sect.” But in the “Encyclopaedia Britannica,” in his article on “Rosicrucianism,” the Emperor himself, Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, (the founder of AMORC in 1915) writes, “It is non-sectarian, and in a broad sense, non-religious, inasmuch as its teachings include the practical sciences to a greater extent than principles of religious thought.”

So it is not non-religious after all, save only in a “broad sense”; and that, not because it omits religious teachings, but only because it includes other matter in addition to such teachings! Why this modification of the Rosicrucian attitude to religion? Is it that the “Facts Put at Our Fingertips” by the propaganda booklet are not sufficiently reliable for inclusion in the “Encyclopaedia Britannica”? If so, how can such dishonesty be reconciled with the ethics of Christianity?

The truth is that Rosicrucianism is the revival of an ancient heresy against which the early Christian Church fought for its very life. This was the heresy of the Gnostics, who also sought to blend pagan mythology with Christian doctrines, under the pretence of attaining to a higher, secret, and mysterious wisdom, not to be gained from the ordinary teachings of the Church. But the Church knew that their system meant the corruption of the Christian revelation. Let us consider this aspect of the subject a little more deeply.

AN ANCIENT HERESY

The pagan world, into which Christianity was born, was rife with all kinds of superstitious cults, philosophies, and mythologies. And there was in existence a “secret confraternity of knowing ones,” called the “Gnostics,” who had built up a mysterious system of doctrines selected from all the current religions and philosophical theories of the East, ranging from the Mazdeism of Persia and the legends of the gods of Greece and Rome, through to the astrology and necromancy of Egypt.

There was an incessant groping and research into the chaotic wilderness of “ancient wisdom,” to find the real secrets of the universe; and the Gnostics claimed to have discovered the treasure, and to be in possession of a secret knowledge and understanding of mysteries hidden from the ignorant. Their system consisted of all kinds of abstruse and fantastic notions concerning the nature of the universe, and the destiny of the human soul; and, on the practical side, of mysterious spells and rites of magic by which they said that the initiated could win power and immortality. Astrology, necromancy, occultism, superstitious incantations, and all the other sorry products of the immature mind were included in the Gnostic programme.

They were, of course, right in declaring their doctrines to be hidden and mysterious, for their doctrines were undoubtedly incomprehensible to people with no more than sound common sense in their heads. But there was a fascination in the secrecy, and a subtle appeal to the overweening pride of intellectuals in the claim to higher enlightenment. As a result, most intelligent pagans yielded to the Gnostic delusion, and loved to hint, in cryptic ways, that they knew more than they could say.

When Christianity came on the scene, the Gnostics relished the prospect of delving into yet another religion, which talked of God and man, and of a world beyond this. Who knows what new treasures of knowledge they might not gain from this Christian system, to add to their store of hidden knowledge? Many of them, therefore, became Christians. But their conversion could not be called more than nominal. From the moment of their baptism, they claimed to know more about Christ than the Christians whose ranks they had joined. They scoffed at the idea that He had been a real man in Galilee. He had been, and was still a god, they claimed; but at most He had taken on the semblance of a man. He had staged a series of apparitions solely in order to manifest the hidden mysteries of the Beyond; and once this purpose was accomplished, He had ceased to manifest Himself on earth.

So these Gnostics turned the Master’s sayings inside out, seeking ever deeper and more startling secrets within them. They read into them whatever their fertile imaginations wished to find in them, and ridiculed the ordinary teachings of the Christian Church. They formed inner circles within the Church to cherish and preserve the “secrets” they claimed to have discovered, and allowed a chosen elite to be initiated very solemnly into small esoteric groups, and to take part in conferences and mysterious rites, concerning which only faint rumours reached the outside world.

Within these groups there were degrees and passwords and signs and emblems - all the trappings which fascinate the ungrown mind to this day.

CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION

The Church was not slow to detect the danger of the Gnostic movement within the ranks of Christians themselves. From the very beginning Christianity had inculcated a horror of pagan religions, and the Apostles had refused to allow anyone associating with pagan religious rites to go on partaking of the Table of the Lord. There was felt to be an immeasurable gulf between the doctrines, liturgy, worship, secrets, and ceremonies of occult mythologies, and the religion of Christ.

Moreover, Christ came to offer, not secrets and esoteric doctrines for a select few, but a Gospel to be preached and taught to all nations in its full integrity, just as He had taught it to the Apostles. He had bidden them to go, and to teach all nations "all things whatsoever I have made known to you." So the Church, from the very beginning, condemned and excommunicated the Gnostics, branding them as heretics, corrupters of the revealed truth, and enemies of Christ.

Yet, writes Lewis Browne, in his book "Since Calvary," "one finds such things still being taught with flamboyant secretiveness by people who call themselves Rosicrucians, or Speculative Freemasons, or even Theosophists. Usually there is a queer gleam in the eyes of such people, a gleam which is said to be the light of esoteric wisdom, though it may really be the glint of paranoia. In our day, however, it requires a somewhat maimed intelligence to believe that some secret fraternity of illuminati is in possession of an ancient and mysterious 'inner Knowledge' as to the Beyond." p. 63.

ROSICRUCIAN TEACHINGS

The official, but deceptive booklet we have been considering tells us that, as regards the teachings of Rosicrucianism, "An individual listing of the subjects included in the membership curriculum would be too lengthy for the space provided here."

But it generously gives some clue to them. "In the main," it continues, "it includes such topics as the mysteries of time and space; the human consciousness; the nature of matter; perfecting the physical body; the effect of light, colour, and sound upon the mind; the ancient philosophies; the development of will; human emotions, instincts, and their relation to personality; important discoveries in Rosicrucian chemistry and physics; explanation of the phenomena of intuition, etc."

No hint is given that the treatment of this galaxy of subjects must necessarily trespass on the field of religion, and colour or even distort one's understanding of Christian doctrines. But, aware of the high-sounding nature of such extravagant claims, the booklet contents itself with saying, "Highly speculative, fantastic, or improbable matter is not included in the teachings of the Rosicrucians."

One can't help feeling that a guilty conscience dictated that last sentence. For it is very difficult to believe that the Rosicrucian officials do not know their doctrine to be just what they have pretended to exclude, "highly speculative, fantastic, and improbable" guesswork. What reputable scientist would incorporate in any text-book the "important discoveries of Rosicrucian chemistry and physics?"

But let us turn to the impact of Rosicrucianism upon religious teachings, an aspect of the subject which this booklet, "Who and What" omits to mention.

I have before me a book entitled, "The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception," or "Mystic Christianity." It is described in a sub-title as, "An Elementary Treatise upon Man's Past Evolution, Present Constitution, and Future Development." The author is Max Heindel; and the book was published in 1920 by the International Headquarters of the Rosicrucian Fellowship at Mount Ecclesia, Oceanside, California.

It may be, of course, that the Mount Ecclesia Rosicrucians are a rival body to the San Jose Rosicrucians. AMORC may regard Max Heindel (1865-1919) as a schismatic because he won't throw in his lot with them; or even perhaps as a heretic (since his group traces its origins to 1908). But that is not very important for the purposes of this discussion. The point is that both organizations claim possession of the Rosicrucian "Secrets"; and Max Heindel has been led by Rosicrucian principles to an interpretation of Christianity which is utterly un-Christian.

MYTHICAL NONSENSE

In dealing with God, Max Heindel speaks of a "Cosmic Root Substance," and tells us that "From the Root of Existence -The Absolute - proceeds the Supreme Being, at the dawn of manifestation. This is THE ONE." p. 181. Apart from the innate absurdities of such a statement, it involves sheer pantheism. It makes God an evolving part of the created universe. In fact, earlier, on p. 180, we are told, "God is found in the highest division of the seventh Cosmic Plane!" No Christian for a moment could accept such teaching.

When discussing "Christ and His Mission," Max Heindel says, "In the Christian Creed occurs this sentence: 'Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.' This is generally understood to mean that a certain person who appeared in Palestine about 2,000 years ago, who is spoken of as Jesus Christ - one separate individual - was the only-begotten Son of God. This is a great mistake." p. 374.

Max Heindel then gives us as the truth the strange doctrine that Christ and Jesus were separate and distinct individuals; that Jesus was an ordinary man who had lived in different circumstances, under various names, in different embodiments. In his present stage, he had been educated by the Essenes. But the great Sun-spirit, Christ, entered into the then body of Jesus with the latter's full and free consent, in order to make initiation into the Rosicrucian mysteries possible for all men! On the death of Jesus, the great Sun-spirit, Christ, secured admission to the earth itself, and since that moment has been its Regent! pp. 367-410.

This is no mystical interpretation of Christianity. It is mythical nonsense which, in the eyes of all well-instructed Christians, amounts to sheer blasphemy.

On p. 403, Max Heindel refers to "Christ's younger brothers, the Archangels"; and elsewhere tells us that "Angels are highly evolved human beings!"

Human beings themselves he declares to be subject to the "Law of Consequence." This law arranges that "a man is born at the time when the position of the bodies in the solar system will give the conditions necessary to his experience and advancement in the school of life." p. 161. "The stars may therefore be called the 'Clock of Destiny'." p. 163. We are even told that the twelve signs of the Zodiac are "twelve Creative Hierarchies!"

After this excursion into astrology, we are introduced to the old re-incarnation theories of Indian philosophy; improved, of course, by Rosicrucian wisdom. There is no transmigration of human souls into animals. The "Rosicrucian" Law of Rebirth means that we become re-incarnated only as better men, progressing always towards our final evolution into Angels; when we, too, shall become "creators."

On p. 400 we are told that no human beings need redemption and salvation by the precious blood of Christ, as Christians have been led to believe; and, on p. 402, that not all men need salvation, even in the Rosicrucian sense of the word.

Such is "Mystic Christianity" according to "Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conceptions." But what a travesty it all is! On p. 520 of his book, Max Heindel says frankly, "The Order of Rosicrucians is not merely a secret society; it is one of the mystery schools, and the Brothers are Hierophants of the lesser Mysteries." Would it not be better if they contented themselves with the claim to be "Hierophants," dropping all pretence to be Christians?

"NOT ASTROLOGY"

Despite Max Heindel's description of the stars as the "Clock of Destiny," and his open support of astrology as a branch of Rosicrucian "science," AMORC's "Who and What" propaganda booklet insists on p. 7 that "The Rosicrucian Order does not teach, endorse, or practise astrology, fortune-telling, crystal-gazing, numerology, or any of the other past or present superstitions, or similar popular pseudo-scientific practices. Furthermore, it neither teaches, practises, nor recommends spiritualism or hypnotism." In the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," the Emperor, Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, gives the same assurance in his article on Rosicrucianism. He declares that "it has consistently tabooed the superstitious arts of the Orient, and does not include fortune-telling, necromancy, or spiritualism."

Yet, on p. 10, some of the facts placed at our fingertips in the "Who and What" brochure concern the Planetarium. "The Rosicrucian Planetarium, located in Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California, and built at considerable cost, is one of the six planetariums in the United States. It is the only one entirely built and designed in America. It is called 'The Theatre of the Sky,' because it presents the greatest drama of all the ages, the mythological traditions and Cosmic

roles of the planets and stars, revealing their surprising astronomical mysteries, and giving young and old a clearer conception of the wonders of the heavens.”

No one can object to the study of astronomy, nor to any scientific aids towards obtaining a clearer conception of the wonders of the heavens. But scientific astronomy is left far behind in a Planetarium designed to “present the greatest drama of all the ages, the mythological traditions and Cosmic roles of the planets and stars.” Mythological traditions cannot have for Christians the value Rosicrucians attribute to them. And what becomes of the Rosicrucian repudiation of astrology, in the light of statements about the “Cosmic roles” of planets and stars? Planets and stars have no more a “Cosmic role” than have cabbages or camels.

And can any Christians admit that the “mythological traditions and Cosmic roles of the planets and stars” constitute “the greatest drama of all the ages”? For a Christian, the Greatest Drama of all the ages was the life on earth of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, and His redemptive death for the Salvation of mankind.

But the effort to deceive credulous people into the adoption and support of Rosicrucianism does not stop there.

“NO STRANGE PRACTICES OR RITES”

The “Who and What” booklet, in its effort to disarm suspicions concerning the true nature of Rosicrucianism, declares that it has “no strange practices or rites.”

“Rosicrucianism,” it says, “makes no demands upon its members that would oblige them to conduct themselves in any manner that would bring them into public ridicule or condemnation. The members are not required to dress, eat or act any differently than would be expected of any intelligent and morally responsible man or woman in the conduct of his or her ordinary affairs. The members resort to no practices or rites which in any sense are injurious to health, family relationships, or morals.”

The first thing that occurs to one on reading these words is astonishment that such an assurance should be needed. What is there, in Rosicrucianism, which would lead one to suspect that members might be expected to behave differently from ordinary people who rejoice in intelligence and moral responsibility? The very protestation is an admission of something queer about the whole system.

But secondly, the explanation strangely fails to cover the proposed objection. It makes no reference to the superstitious religious rites, against which Christians must be particularly on their guard. The general statement that there is nothing which could bring members into “public ridicule or condemnation” is not enough. That would follow from the very nature of the Rosicrucian Order as a secret society. Are there any strange practices or rites in secret? That is the vital question.

Now, on p. 19 of the official handbook, there is an illustration of “The Supreme Temple, Rosicrucian Order, A.M.O.R.C.” But the very description of a building as a “temple” connotes worship. And the interior design of the building is obviously one of religious significance. There is a central sanctuary, with a Mithraic-looking altar encompassed by four decorated pillars, the whole set-up intended to create a mystic atmosphere. The official booklet describes it as a “lodge-room,” but goes on to say that in it “are conducted the impressive and symbolic ritualistic convocations of the Grand Lodge.” No matter how they may wrap it up in words, however, the fact remains that the ceremonies conducted in this “Supreme Temple” are religious in character. They are “impressive” because strange. And what are “symbolic ritualistic convocations,” if not “rites”? Yet we are seriously asked to believe that Rosicrucianism involves “no strange practices or rites!”

Again, on p. 17 of the official booklet, there is the picture of “The Shrine of Amenhotep IV, Pharaoh of Egypt.” It is built as a square-cut archway, leading to a colonnade of pillars bordering an open sun-lit pathway which is possibly meant to suggest the road to wisdom. The arch itself is covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, in honour of the mystic teachings of Amenhotep IV, upon whom the Rosicrucians have conferred the privileged title of “traditional first Grand Master.”

Once more, however, a “shrine” is a religious term, implying a hallowed centre of devotion and worship. It at once awakens the thought of prayers and of pilgrimages. Nor are our misgivings allayed by the description accompanying the illustration. “This artistic structure, erected on the grounds of Rosicrucian Park, commemorates the Initiation held by approximately a hundred Rosicrucian men and women in Karnak Temple, Egypt, in 1929.”

Such admissions of ritual and worship in the midst of ancient symbols of pagan mythology make it astounding that, on an earlier page in the same booklet, the categorical statement could be made, "The Rosicrucian Order is absolutely NOT a religious movement or sect." p. 5. Have the compilers of this brochure no idea of the meaning of words? Or do they hope that at least the readers of the booklet will miss the real significance of the movement they have been invited to join?

CHRISTIAN VERDICT

What is the truth about Rosicrucianism? It is a modern revival of, or at least an imitation of the ancient pagan mystery religions. It is precisely what it so emphatically denies itself to be, an occult, semi-theosophical, superstitious, thinly disguised form of astrology, blended with strange practices and rites which do constitute it a religious movement or sect.

It may, not very innocently, describe itself as an innocent "system of mystical and metaphysical philosophy, intended to guide the development of the inner consciousness."

But Christians have all the religious and spiritual guidance they need in the teachings of Christ, Our Lord. One who understands the Gospels, who meditates their teachings, who has at his disposal the wisdom, experience, and advice of the Church Christ established to safeguard His doctrines and precepts, one who sincerely tries to put into practice the prescriptions of the Gospels and of the Church of the centuries - such a one has no temptation to look elsewhere for religious truth and spiritual guidance.

Certainly, no one who has any real understanding of the Christian religion, and loves Christ above all things, could have anything to do with Rosicrucianism. It is a system which hopes to secure recruits from amongst the ranks of Christians who have drifted from any clear knowledge and realization of what the Christian religion really means.

In conclusion, it must be said that, far from resulting in a more enlightened interpretation of Christianity, Rosicrucianism can result only in its perversion. It appeals to imagination, not to reason; to credulity, and not to any genuine spirit of faith; to pride, and not to humility; to self-assertion, not to reliance upon divine grace. In a word, it is utterly un-Christian. And only one conclusion is possible. St. Paul's horror of the ancient heathen mystery religions is the only attitude a true Christian can adopt towards the Rosicrucian System, and similar out-breaks of humanity's morbid propensity towards esoteric magic, secret so-called mystical societies, and pagan mythology.

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