

Rosicrucian Emblems of Daniel Cramer

The Douai-Reims Catholic English Bible was published in 1582 (New Testament in Reims) and 1609-10 (Old Testament in Douai). Its Protestant counterpart appeared one year later (1611) during the reign of King James I. Three years after that (the date is disputed) a less traditional document was published. The *Fama Fraternitatis* made the first self-declared reference to the public emergence of the “Most laudable Order of the Rosy Cross.” The same year (1614) saw the publication of the *Confession Fraternitatis R.C.* Other documents suggest that 1604, the cover date of Simon Studion’s *Naometria*, is closer to the first public announcement of the existence and intentions of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood.

The first two aforementioned books are, truth to say, stellar examples of portentous obscurity. Claiming nothing less than the restoration of the original uncorrupted world order through this group of Rosicrucian adepts, one may read and reread the tracts without gaining much of substantive value. They seem to have been deliberate blinds, and achieved greater notoriety precisely because of their elusiveness. More interest was generated in *who* the Rosicrucians were than in *what* was the content of their potent wisdom. Three centuries later this emphasis was reversed with the publication of *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* by Max Heindel.

At least *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, unlike its two predecessors of purported Rosicrucian provenance, is a document rich in imagery and curious particulars, suggesting that

I LOVE

Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.—Song of Solomon



Let me be kindled, Jesus, by your incense and breath;
I flame, let yours be the love;
I am fragrant, let yours be the scent.

it is an extended metaphor on the transformation of the soul, or initiation. The putative author of this latter work makes no claim for its veracity; in fact, he later denies responsibility for its creation. It was about this time that the German mystic Jacob Böhme (1575-1624) began producing his inspired illustrations under Rosicrucian influence. Likewise Heinrich Khunrath’s mystical drawings published in 1609 under the title of *Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom*, included motifs from Cabbalism, Hermeticism, and Alchemy which later appeared in *The Chymical Wedding*.

Several other persons at this time introduced symbolical drawings combining Christian mysticism with occult information, notably Theophilus Schweighardt, whose work, first appearing in 1618, suggests that he was actually Johann

I AM ILLUMINATED

In thy light shall we see light.—Psalms 36:9

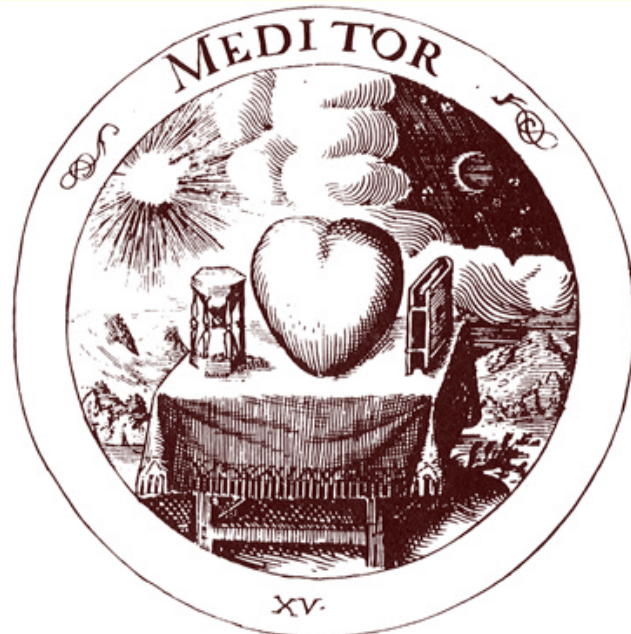


I see the light in your light.
Let darkness be far away,

He is wise who gains wisdom from the book of the Lord.

I MEDITATE

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.—Galatians 6:9



The centuries fly by, the days pass away,
Every man must work for the good,
while there is an hour of time.

The two emblems pictured above constitute a pair whose emphasis is on enlightenment. In "I am Illuminated" it is Christ (arm projecting from the cloud holding a lamp), or the living wisdom from the World of Life Spirit, which informs the heart through intuition, ensouled by the ever-open eye of God. This living wisdom may also arise from the contemplation of the Word of God, the Holy Bible. In "I Meditate" human consciousness (heart) must "seize the day" (hourglass) and live according to the Word.

Valentin Andreae, the author of *The Chymical Wedding*. Robert Fludd's (1574-1637) principal work, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*, released in 1617, shows the Rosicrucian (Hermetic) correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm. Fludd's large opus also reflects his interest in healing, a primary concern of the Rosicrucians. Count Michael Maier published his *Atalanta Fugiens* in 1618. His figures of symbols were intended, through contemplation, to induce in the subject an experience of world geometry and to impart knowledge of how creative forces have been inscribed into the world by divine spiritual beings.

Johann Van Helmont (1577-1644) also published works depicting Rosicrucian cosmology as did Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) in his work *Pansophia*, in which he sought through symbolism to describe the building of the Temple of Wisdom within each human "according to the ideas, measurements and laws of the highest

Master-Builder Himself."

The same year that *The Chymical Nuptials* were published, Daniel Cramer brought forth his *Rosicrucian Emblems*, with the subtitle "The True Society of Jesus and the Rosy Cross." Described as "forty sacred emblems from Holy Scripture concerning the most holy name and cross of Jesus Christ," the work would seem to be intended as a manual for focusing and guiding Christian meditation—forming Christ within by imitating the life of Christ in Jesus.

Like many of the symbolical works cited above, Cramer's Rosicrucian Emblems use Hermetic, alchemical, and Christian terms and images as cor-relatives for inner qualities and processes. In other words, they have an esoteric purpose.

Cramer's "true society of Jesus," the Rosicrucians, still suggests an influence from the Society of Jesus as founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534, soon after Luther broke ranks with a corrupt

I BECOME SWEET

To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life.—Corinthians 2:16



The cross, the bitterness, the smell of Christ are deadly to others, but to me they are life, the cross is love and sweet scent.

SIMPLE WISDOM

Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.—Matthew 10:16



He whose heart is saved by simplicity, whose eye by wisdom, Will be both serpent and dove to God

The two emblems pictured above complement each other. Both show the cross as the way to life in Spirit-consciousness. The connection between purifying the desire nature, and thus the blood of the student on the Rosicrucian path, and the blooming of the roses of the extrasensory faculties on the cross of the physical body, is shown in the emblem entitled "Mellifico", where the honey of wisdom is extracted from flowers (occult eyes and ears) nourished by the blood of sacrifice. "Simple Wisdom" reverses the order of the heart and head (God's eye) path as given in Max Heindel's symbolism, where the intellectual (head) path is represented by a lamp and placed on the masculine or right side of the facing cross. Sapiencia (wisdom) results from the blending of the heart and mind paths, symbolized by the ascending serpent. The five nails (stigmata) may refer to the vital body.

Catholic church in sore need of radical house-cleaning. Loyola stayed within the ranks. His exercises include strong will-based visualizations of the violent aspects of Jesus' renunciation and suffering. They are meant to purge the psyche and steel the resolve of the practitioner. Though Cramer wrote a tract against the Jesuits, Loyola's word-pictures are likely antecedents for his emblems; they serve as the basis for spiritual exercises in what might be called Protestant esoteric Christianity.

Cramer's emblems, informed by occult knowledge, seek to establish a balance between chastening and purifying the desire nature through Old Testament disciplines, defined by the "Law of Commandments," and regenerating the soul forces through the New Testament "Law of Love." The point where these impulses meet is the Cross—the

pivot of Scripture, indeed, of historical time, which reflects, unbeknownst to most, the turning point of human evolution.

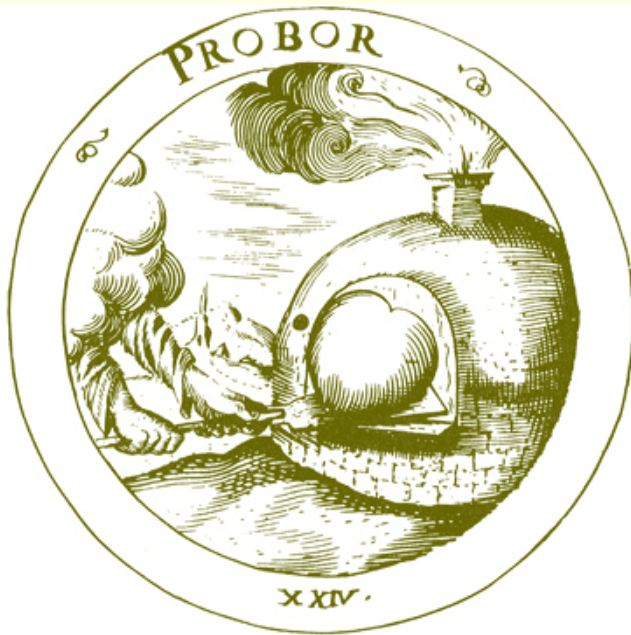
Each of Daniel Cramer's forty plates has a title, together with a verse from the Bible, and two lines, originally in Latin, conveying an assertion of the spirit's overcoming, through Christ, all worldly obstacles, including death.

The function of these symbolical representations is to dissociate the seeker's mind from a purely material contemplation. Images drawn from the physical world are abstracted from their familiar context and combined in new relationships designed to awaken the mind to truths free from and independent of material constraints.

Nevertheless, it is the heart center that is emphasized in these illustrations. Cramer's own piety and humility are evident in a caption below his

I AM TRIED IN THE FIRE

*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
—Isaiah 4:10*



The Lord burns and tries us in the fire of the furnace.
May you be upright and constant,
and you will be proved good.

SUFFER AND LEARN

*The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in
a furnace of earth, purified seven times.—Psalms 12:6*



The brick and hearth
Witness to the quality of gold;
The same may testify to the good

The above pair of emblems use alchemical images and terms to refer to phases or experiences in the Self's development. In both depictions the heart or feeling center undergoes trials associated with burning and purification (of the desire body). The emblem titled "Probor" (Latin, probare test, prove, from probus, good, honest) indicates why a student seeking to "put on" Christ is called a "probationer"—he is tested by difficult experiences to prove his mettle. His resolve is probed to the core. From selfless service the auric gold (light ether of the soul body) is generated. His probity in all circumstances is proven. Peter reminds us: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." (1Pet. 4:12). As Max Heindel states, "The suffering that comes to us is needed to teach us a lesson or mellow our character" (2Q&A, p. 485). That is, we develop a "soft heart." The first of Cramer's forty emblems shows a heart being hammered by "God's arm" extending from a cloud. It bears the caption Mollesco, "I Grow Soft," as versus being "hard-hearted."

engraved portrait, a common practice at the time:
*I know nothing, I am capable of nothing,
I am nothing;
The fact that by my face and nature
I am seen to partake of these three
Is all due to God.*

Whereas in Cramer's time the pictures could themselves evoke specific feelings, in the first concerted and direct exposition of Rosicrucian truths for the modern world, the appropriate image or emblem for concentration is completely separated from any trace of naturalism. In fact, this same evolution can be seen in Max Heindel's presentation of the Rose Cross. It went through its own metamorphosis. Originally it appeared as a black

cross with the more organic or naturalistic depiction of the rose as a climbing "twining" plant, with thorns, stems, and green leaves (see *Cosmo*, p. 519). The later, more abstract version, referring to what is nonmaterial, should also, as far as possible, be divorced from temporal associations.

The composite symbol of the Rose Cross, comprised of four colors and three forms, shows, for those who have "eyes" to see, no less than "the end and aim of human evolution, the road traveled, and the means whereby that end is gained." In it lies "hidden the solution of the World Mystery—Man's past evolution, present constitution, and particularly the secret of his future development" (*Cosmo*, p. 519). The key words in this passage are *hidden* and *secret*. What is to be found in the emblem pre-

I OUTWEIGH

For ye are not under the law, but under grace.

—Romans 6:14

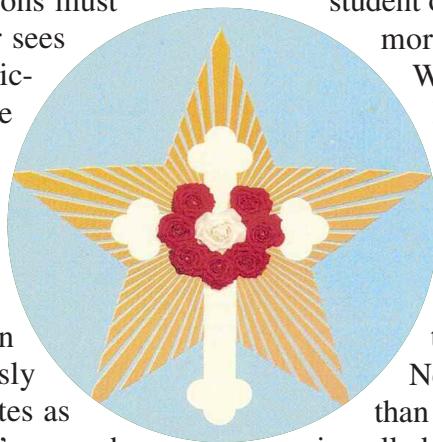


The heart, stained on the rosy altar of Christ's blood,
Overcomes the weight of the law
by the triumphing weight of the cross.

Emblem 18, directly preceding the above illustration, with the caption "I AM NOTHING," shows the balance reversed, the two stones of the decalogue outweighing a heart unaccompanied by a cross and a blood-filled chalice. Old Testament law brought us to Christ, but a crucified Christ was necessary to save man from the weight of sin and the merciless law that could punish but neither forgive nor regenerate. Thirty-three of these forty emblems are I AM assertions: they are affirmations of the development of individual spirit identity.

sumes some prior knowledge.

The meaning of what one envisions must be brought to what one pictures or sees pictured. The truth is not in the picture but in the heart and mind of the perceiver. One does not wait for the discrete elements of the image to convey their meaning. Rather, one brings to them their meaning, calls them by their unique name, and in so doing creates them—as God, in bestowing a name, simultaneously gives form to what the Logos creates as archetype. Thus we can only “see” as much as what we know, what our own experience discloses and brings to light in us.



A stanza from the Cramer's preface to the *Rosicrucian Emblems* gives a synopsis of the artist's intent:

*And so, Reader, you have the work of death
and life,*

*The embossings of the Holy page, and a short
epigram.*

*These will be able to show and teach your mind
What your state was once and what it may
become today...*

*The spirit illuminates all corners of the heart,
And renews you through the Gospel...*

*Death lays snares for the heart inscribed with
the name of Jesus,*

But, unharmed, it seeks the kingdoms of the sky.

It is possible to see a path of spiritual development outlined by these forty emblems. They are separated into four decades. While only a few emblems can be pictured in this article, thoughtful study will resolve the images into twenty pairs, each of the two contrasting and complementing the other. These polar pairs can then be combined into larger groupings, and finally a whole. The heart, the soul's seat, is the operative center of this inner work, and its transformation is the work's objective.

The terms and images used in these exercises have much in common with the experiences described by western mystics. They center more in realm of feeling than do the scientific exercises advocated by the Rosicrucian Order for the modern student of esoteric Christianity, which take a

more mental approach to initiation.

While Max Heindel characterizes the Rosicrucian Fellowship's emblem as “a symbol of God in manifestation” (*Cosmo* p. 522), the use of Cramer's symbolic images does not assume such an advanced degree of occult knowledge, nor do they purport to be as comprehensive.

Nevertheless, they will have more than an historical value for those who are impelled by something other than casual curiosity or tepid antiquarianism. □

—C.W.