

SECRET SYMBOLS OF THE ROSICRUCIANS: AN INTRODUCTION

Staff of the Rosicrucian Digest

On the following pages are two of the many illustrated plates from a venerable Rosicrucian classic, *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. These plates were hand-colored by former Emperor H. Spencer Lewis.



The first part of the work was published in German in 1785 in Altona, followed by the second part in 1788. It is considered by many to be second only in importance to the Rosicrucian Manifestos themselves.

The symbols and text gathered in this collection are from earlier works—some as far back as 1621—soon after the Manifestos. It was common in the seventeenth century to privately circulate manuscripts with mystical text and illustrations, and this may have been how these materials came into the hands of the compiler of *Secret Symbols*.

Many of these plates came to North America with the second round of Rosicrucian work, at the Ephrata Cloister in Pennsylvania, around 1700, attesting to the widespread and genuine Rosicrucian nature of these emblems. They were published by AMORC beginning in 1935, and are now available at www.rosecroixjournal.org.

Reproduced here are two plates from book 1.

The first, on page 36, is the venerable *Emerald Tablet of Hermes*, complete with text and allegorical emblem. Although we do not have an ancient original of this most famous Hermetic statement on alchemy, the

manuscript tradition includes versions in *The Second Book of the Elements of Foundation* (*Kitab Ustuqus al-Uss al-Thani*) attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber) (721–815)¹, *The Book of the Secret of Creation and the Art of Nature* (*Kitab Sirr al-Khaliqa wa San'at al-Tabi'a*) (ca. 650–830)², and *The Book of the Secret of Secrets* (*Kitab sirr al-asrar*) (tenth century CE)³.

The Latin headlines on the plate read “The Emerald Tablet of Hermes. The Words of the Secrets of Hermes,” while inscribed around the emblem itself is the well known alchemical phrase V.I.T.R.I.O.L. (Visit the interior of Earth, and by rectifying you will find the hidden stone.)

The second plate, on page 37, is *The Hermetic Philosophy*, with both text and symbolic illustration. This is followed by an explanatory essay by Frater Peter Bindon.

Also included on the following pages is the Preface to this important Rosicrucian resource, written by H. Spencer Lewis, founder of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. As Emperor Lewis recommends, these texts and emblems can be used for mystical work at many levels.

ENDNOTES

¹<http://nwolibrary.com/component/k2/item/680-tablet-hermes>. See also E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1957), 95–8; J. Needham, “Spagyric discovery and invention: Apparatus, Theories and Gifts” in *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5:4.

²Ibid

³Steven J. Williams, *The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians

AN EXACT REPRODUCTION
OF THE ORIGINAL
BUT
WITH THE GERMAN TEXT AND TERMS
LITERALLY TRANSLATED

THE AMORC EDITION
WITH PREFACE BY
H. SPENCER LEWIS, F.R.C., Ph.D.

*H. Spencer Lewis
Feb. 11-1938*

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Title page of the copy of *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians* hand-colored by H. Spencer Lewis. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Research Library.

