

## **State-Owned Part of Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica Comes to Allard Pierson**

After being housed for 10 years at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library), the national library of The Netherlands in Den Haag, the State-owned part of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica will be brought back to Amsterdam, per the decision of the Minister of Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Education, Culture, and Science). The Allard Pierson Museum will receive 4,400 works on a long-term loan.

The Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (BPH) is a unique collection of 10,000 manuscripts and printed works about the hermetic tradition. It is a collective name for philosophic-religious and practical-esoteric texts, originating in Hellenistic Egypt, that found their entrance in both Jewish, Christian, and Arabic culture. The BPH includes many rare and often unique works about Rosicrucians, alchemy, mysticism, gnosis, Sufism, Kabbalah, Anthroposophism, freemasonry, and the holy grail.

### **Scientific Library**

The collection originated as a private library of the Amsterdam entrepreneur Joost Ritman. In 1984, the library became accessible to the public. Led by curator and director Frans A. Janssen (1983-2000), the collection grew exponentially and the library became an important scientific research institution.

### **The Emergence of the State-Owned Part**

In 2005, the Dutch State acquired an important part of the library. Since 2010, the Royal Library maintained with State-owned part of the BPH. Ten years later, the collection returns to Amsterdam. The Allard Pierson Museum is situated within walking distance of the Embassy of the Free Mind in “The House with the Heads” on the Keizersgracht, where the remaining part of the BPH is housed.

### **Accessible for Education and Research**

The State-owned part of the BPH connects perfectly with the heritage collections of the University of Amsterdam, that are managed, unlocked, and presented by the Allard Pierson Museum. Amongst those collections there is already an important collection of books and

writings in the field of non-conformist Christian groups from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The collection contains rare writings from the circle of Modern Devotion, but also letters and publications from spiritual leaders such as Hendrik Niclaes, David Joris, and Antoinette Bouriginon.

The relocation of the State-owned part guarantees maximum access to the collection for education and research. Therefore, the Allard Pierson Museum will cooperate closely with the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents. This Chair at the UvA is the world's largest in the history of Western esotericism, and is the only one that offers a full academic educational programme in this field.

### **From 2021**

The State-owned part of the BPH will become available in the course of 2021, both for researchers from The Netherlands and abroad, and also for an interested public. The Allard Pierson Museum will professionally categorise the 4,400 works, restore them where necessary, and partially digitalise the works. A part of the State-owned part of the BPH collection will be regularly viewable in the permanent exhibition, "Van Nijl tot Amstel," where visitors can become acquainted with 10,000 years of culture history.