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ROSICRUCIANISM ANALYZED

by

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Rosicrucianism was first revealed to the world in 1615 when a German philosopher and theologian by the name of Johann Valentin Andrea published his famous "Fama Faternitatis". Andrea, after obtaining an excellent education, traveled extensively throughout the principal countries of Europe and was later to embrace the clerical profession as a Protestant prelate. In this work Andrea gives an account of the life and adventures of Christian Rosencruetz, a fictitious personage, whom he makes the founder of the pretended Society of Rosicrucians.

The legend of Christian Rosencruetz recounts his journey to Damascus, Arabia, Egypt and Fez, where he was well received and came into possession of much secret wisdom. He returned finally to Germany, where he chose three others to whom he imparted this wisdom and thus founded the order. Later the number was increased to eight who separated, each going to a separate country.

One of the six articles of agreement they adopted was that the fraternity remain secret for 100 years. At the end of 120 years the secret burial place and the perfectly preserved body of the founder was discovered by one of the members of the order, along with certain documents and symbols held in high esteem by Rosicrucians. The sacred vault was recovered, the members of the order dispersed, and no one knows its location. The Fama ends with an invitation to "some few" to join the fraternity.

Some feel that this story marks only a revival of the order which began in remote antiquity in Egypt and lists numerous followers, including Solomon, Jesus, Plato, Philo, Plotinus and others as well as movements such as the Essenes of Jesus' day, the young Christian movement itself and later movements such as Jewish cabalism, as related to the Antient order. These conclusions do not seem convincing, but there can be no doubt that there were in ancient times persons whose outlook and thoughts were similar to that of the Rosicrucians.

Our present Society claims no direct connection with antiquity, but traces its origin to Robert W. Little of London in 1865. This English Society chartered several similar orders in Scotland, America, Ireland and Greece. At the present there are

only three High Councils in the world. England, Scotland and the United States, the others having become dormant. The Society in the United States owes its origin to the High Council of Scotland who established colleges in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and Maryland in 1879-1880. In September 1880 representatives of these four colleges founded the High Council for the United States (S.R.I.C.F.) which has now grown to a total of twelve.

Our Society of Rosicrucians consists of nine grades embodied in three orders. Our teachings combine something of Egyptian Hermetism, Christian Gnosticism, Jewish cabalism and alchemy. As Freemasonry was builded upon Operative principles, Rosicrucianism was builded upon a variety of occult beliefs and practices. The language of both fraternities must be taken symbolically rather than literally, as we have no more interest in Operative building than we do in the transmutation of metals. Rosicrucianism must lie somewhere between a beautiful allegory or at worst be labeled a hoax.

In the first order of Rosicrucianism, which is composed of four degrees, we are charged to be learners:

- I° - Zelator is a period of compulsory silence and probation.
- II° - Theoricus makes an intellectual study of our sciences.
- III° - In Practicus one gains by experiment a knowledge of the properties of matter.
- IV° - In Philosophus your intuition is enlarged and deepened and you contemplate the Divine Power beyond you.

The second order embodies three degrees, which charges us to be teachers of the mysteries of the three worlds, elementary, intellectual and celestial:

- V° - Adeptus minor teaches the Zelators and Theorici.
- VI° - Adeptus major teach and guide the Practici.
- VII° - Adeptus Exemptus guide the studies of the Philosophi.

The third order is composed of two degrees, which can only be conferred by the High Council in which we are charged to be rulers:

- VIII° - Magister Templi -- Secretaries and Past-Celebrants recommended by Chief Adepts.
- IX° - Magus - Chief Adepts appointed by Supreme Magus for life.

Before we can be chosen as rulers we must have labored as teachers, but before we can be teachers we must have toiled as learners; so let us return to the first order of Rosicrucianism and its four grades in which we are charged to be learners:

I° that of Zelator you were recommended to study the powers and properties of Numbers, and the philosophy of the Hebrew Kabbalah, in which the relations between numbers, letters, words and things are defined. You were conducted to the gate of life where the four Ancients unfolded to you by the elemental proofs, the primary secrets of nature and truth by four purifications; earth, air, water and fire which symbolizes that “immortal hope strengthens virtue”. Upon receiving the light of our Mystic Temple you observed the Rose of Sharon embossed upon the cross by aid of a thirty-three branch candle stick symbolic of him who died upon the cross for the remission of our sins. Being invested with the white robe of purity we were charged to wear it without stain before the tribunal of the world, of our Fraters and of our Master, so we also mayest be assured of eternal life. After a period of meditation and reflection you were told that we trace the growth of our philosophy in the perpetual advent of the sages through the remotest avenues of time, a grand and spiritual procession of teachers illuminating the earth with their wisdom. Moses, Elijah and Ezekiel were the heralds of our principles, and all the great wise men of old have kindled their lamps at that sacred fire in which we now rejoice. Among the secrets of nature which is now your duty to investigate you were introduced into the mysteries of the kabalists which included the demonstration of the Eternal Essence of God, the key to the government of the universe and the powers and proportion of numbers.

II° that of Theoricus, the mysteries of nature, of mineral, vegetable and animal life are proper studies, and its ritual of admission teaches you that beyond the colors, as well as the forms of objects, there are occult relations which need investigation. In the study of the constitution of the Universe, and the structure of our world; we also seek to understand the relations which exist between the soul of man and his body. In this degree the token or badge of admission was a simple cross composed of four equal arms around a white central square; the arms being painted in rotation red, blue, black and yellow. This cross of the four elements upon being shown to each of the four Ancients resulted in obtaining much instruction. The first ancient of air seated at the yellow pillar set in motion fan waves of air, although unseen by human eyes are essential to all life and represents the Spirit of God, the spiritual essence in man, the air as necessary to sustain both life and fire. The second ancient of fire seated at the red pillar held a flame which typified the light of God

in nature, which ever burns unseen by mortal eyes, every natural body carries a spark within it, but this light is often eclipsed. At the blue pillar the third ancient with a cup of water instructed that water is the menstrum or solvent of the world, without which man, animal and vegetable life would cease to exist. Seek for the living water which is the water of eternal life. The fourth ancient at the black pillar with a saucer of sand taught that earth is the basis of all bodies, in which other principles reside. Man was formed from the dust of the earth, says the Book of Genesis, and to the earth must his body return after death. Remember that fire preserves the earth from being destroyed by water and water saves the earth from destruction by fire; the air preserves the fire from extinction, and the earth provides a meeting place for the several elemental forces and forms of matter. These forces must remain in due equilibrium, for the universe might be destroyed if either element becomes dominant, and man's progress and destiny would be changed. Even man who is a complex being is composed of many elements but he is also composed of body, soul and spirit. The body is formed from the material world. The spirit of man is a ray from the Divine world of God and his angels. The soul of man from the celestial world dwell in the body, and is illuminated by the Divine Spirit from above. At the death of man, the spirit returns unto God who gave it, the soul passes to the Judgment Hall for reward or punishment, and the Body returns to the dust from which it was formed. In a closing lecture on colours we find that during the primeval chaos which existed before the creation of our world, in the absence of light there was darkness and gloom, and in this darkness was blackness. And God said Let there be light! and there was light!, and this was whiteness. Now this white glory of the beginning was soon diversified in a glorious rainbow from the air, fire, water and earth of the material world, and man having at the last appeared to dwell here in this world of beauty became conscious of colours.

III° The Grade of Practicus has special relation to the ancient art of Alchemy and the modern science of art and chemistry. In this degree the token or badge of admission was a swastika or Fylfet cross, an emblem of very ancient date, having been found in countries widely separated. The arms of this swastika cross were also coloured red, blue, black and yellow; the central square alone being white. This degree is chiefly concerned with the study of the material Universe, and the arms of this figure are referred to the four elements of the antient philosophers. The colours, red, blue, yellow and black refer to fire, water, air and earth, on the lower plane; and on the higher planes, to the Hebrew letters, Yod, Heh, Vau, Heh of the great name of Jehovah; and again to I.N.R.I., who is Jesus Nazareus Rex Judaeorum. The central square is white to represent the blending colours into a

unity. In a lecture on alchemy we learned to approach the subject from the standpoint of western occult philosophy, handed down to us from the Arabian sages, Hebrew rabbis and Egyptian Pharaohs. Alchemy has two aspects: the material and the spiritual; and the opinion that alchemy was only a form of chemistry is untenable by anyone who has read the works of its chief professors. Our antient brethren sought the discoveries of the primordial matter, the transmutation of metals, and the elixir of life. But to Rosicrucians, the practice of alchemy enables us to understand, not merely the marvels of nature, but the nature of the Great Divine One Himself in His unspeakable glory. It shadows forth in a wonderful manner how man is an image of a Divine Trinity; he represents the Union of substances, as well as the difference of persons. It illustrates our purification from sin, and in brief all the Christian faith, and the reasons why man must pass through much tribulation and anguish and fall a prey to death before he can rise again to a new and higher life. All this we see in our art as in a mirror. The higher Alchemy, then, is almost identical with religion, as distinct from theology. The function of religion, like the great work of the alchemist, is spiritualization, the separation of the subtle from the gross, the redemption of the spirit, while still dwelling in matter, or the transmutations of the animal forces which are in man into the more human and refined emotions who finally is fit to commune with the holy ones whom God has created.

IV^o of Philosophus teaches the need of the highest mental culture in order to comprehend the works of the philosophers and the sacred volumes of the world-religions. In this degree we were told that as Fraters of this Society of the Rose and Cross we were familiar with the Christian faith, and had learned to know of a Divine Creator and of Jesus who is the Christ. We were then admonished to study and compare the various conceptions of Divinity which have been held by the great nations of the ancient world, and the tenants of the most famous philosophers, for in all their systems great moral lessons are to be found. By a serious contemplation of these systems we will come to a more just appreciation of the beauties of the Christian faith, and be well able to show the world without that our Rosicrucian Fraternity not only confers knowledge upon its members, but also wisdom. In this grade the Admission Badge was the calvary or crucifixion cross; which was formed of twelve squares. The number twelve represents the cosmogony of the Universe, of the starry heavens; of the months in the year; in the Old Testament it is referred to the Twelve Sons of Jacob and the tribes of Israel, while in the New Testament this number is prominent in the Twelve Apostles of the Messiah. The eleven squares are white; the lowest square is black, it referred to the traitor Judas,

and it should give us warning that the careless as well as the vicious may fall from grace. The study of the Divinity above us should be our future aim, the subject of our aspirations. Life is all too short for success; purity of life is essential, the cultivation of our higher self will lead us to sublime conceptions yet unknown to us. Let us be steadfast and true to our obligations. Be never less ready to learn than our Fratres are to teach, and may we finally attain our spiritual desires.

In the second order of Rosicrucianism which is referred to as adeptship, we begin as an Adeptus Minor in the darkness of low twelve, progress to an Adeptus Major at the dawn of a new day and finally arriving as an Adeptus Exemptus in the blazing light of high twelve. This journey from darkness to light is symbolic of our journey through life to death. The Christian faith teaches that our lives are periods of probation, and that when a life has been ended the body returns to the earth and the soul unto God, who gave it. There is an idea still commonly believed in, that has come down from the earliest times, that at the point of death a man has a mental vision, or review of the course of his past life. It is an awful thought. Let us all, then, so live our lives that this Spectre of life may but little distress us. As Christians, the teaching of other faiths seem less true than the glimpses of futurity which our own sacred writings provide. In this second order of adeptship we learn that it is not given to man to understand “the mysteries of the kingdom of God”. As St. Paul said - “now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face”. To the faithful Christian our Divine Master said - “In my Father’s house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you.”

As Rosicrucians we are taught to love God, act justly by all men, study nature, teach as well as learn, be merciful, hope for mercy and by so doing prepare to close our eyes, in death when our life’s work is done, calm in the dignity of our manhood, assured of the beneficence of God our Father, and trusting in the promise of our Great Master, Jesus the Christ.

We are Fratres Rosae et Crucis - so let us remember the rose as a symbol of the Divine Spirit within us, and the cross as an emblem of self-sacrifice and high endeavor.

So mote it be.

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