

ON THE MASONIC SOCIETAS ROSICRUCIANA IN CIVITATIBUS FOEDERATIS

Paper by Fra. Roger W. Miner VII

The **Societas Rosicruciana** is an independent Masonic body, unaffiliated with any of the organizations or individuals listed below. However, we recognize that the true Rosicrucian Order is a state of mind, not any single organization. One *becomes* a Rosicrucian: one does not *join* the Rosicrucians.

The aim of the Society is to afford mutual aid and encouragement in working out the great problems of Life; and in searching out the secrets of Nature; to facilitate the study of the system of Philosophy founded upon the Kabalah and the doctrine of Hermes Trismegitus, which was inculcated by the original Fratres Rosae Crucis, A.D. 1450; and to investigate the meaning and symbolism of all that now remains of the wisdom, art and literature of the ancient world.

The nominal Founder of our Society--Christian Rosencreuz, did not invent, at least in our modern sense of the word, the doctrines he started, and which we should now study. It is narrated that he journeyed to the middle east, to Egypt and to Spain, and in the seats of learning in those countries he found and collected the mystic lore, which was made anew by him into a code of doctrine and knowledge. On his return from these foreign travels he settled in Germany, founded a Collegium, selected certain friends and transformed them into enthusiastic pupils, and giving his new Society his own name, he laid the foundation of that scheme of Mystical Philosophy, which we are now here to perpetuate and carry into practice: let us remember that he died in the year 1484.

The fratres of the original Collegium, who met in the "Domus Sanctus Spiritus," or "House of the Holy Spirit," were learned men, earnest students and public benefactors. Their rules were: That none of the members should profess any art except to relieve the sick and that gratis; each one should wear the ordinary dress of the country, and should attend on Corpus Christi day at a general Convocation every year, each one should seek a suitable pupil to succeed him: that the secret mark of each one should be C.R. or R.C., and that the Society should remain secret for 100 years.

As time went on the purposes and duties of the fratres became altered, the cure of the sick especially was taken over by the development of the medical profession.

About 1710, one Sigmund Richter, using the motto of "Sincerus Renatus," published at Breslau his work called "The perfect and true preparation of the Philosophical Stone according to the secret of the Brotherhoods of the Golden and Rosy Cross." In this volume we find a series of 52 rules for the guidance of Rosicrucian members; these rules are such as were likely to lead to useful and orderly lives.

The Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (Rosicrucian Society of the United States) was formed on September 21, 1880, by three Colleges chartered within the previous ten months by the Society in Scotland. It is entirely autonomous and in no way connected with any other institution.

The Society is in amity with the only other similar societies in the world--Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (England) and Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia (Scotland).

Membership, which is by invitation, is predicated on Masonic affiliation. The Society is not merely another degree of Freemasonry which may be acquired, and it exists outside of the normal "workings" of the Craft.

The Masonic qualification assures the membership that the candidate has given proof of that fidelity and privacy which characterizes a member of that Fraternity, and it will be noted that a certain community outlook and understanding among the members (called Fratres) is necessary.

The governing body of the Society is known as The High Council composed of Fratres of the Third Order (IX° and VIII°), plus any College Celebrant not a member of the Third Order. The head of the Society is titled The Supreme Magus, IX° degree, elected each triennium. The subordinate bodies are termed "Colleges", each being headed, in the United States, by a Chief Adept, TX°, appointed for life by the Supreme Magus. Membership in a college has been restricted to 72. New members are required to select a distinctive "Latin Motto" and state that they are not a member of a non-Masonic Rosicrucian organization as a matter of ethics. The Society is not interested primarily in increasing its membership, but is always happy to consider such brethren whose interest in the Society's aims is sincere and whom it considers to be in sympathy with the movement.

Masons in the United States learning about the development of Masonic Rosicrucianism in England and Scotland and became interested in organizing a similar body in the United States as early as 1878, as indicated by the granting of a Charter to Dr. Jonathan S. French to organize a College in the state of Illinois. Unfortunately, Dr. French died later that year so the College did not survive. Interest did not wane, as Brothers Charles E. Meyer, Melita Lodge No. 295, Daniel Sutter, Phoenix Lodge No. 230 and Charles W. Parker, Philadelphia Lodge No. 72, all of Philadelphia, PA were admitted to the Zelator degree in Yorkshire College while on a Masonic Pilgrimage to England on July 25, 1878. Brother Mark Merckle, member of Hermann Lodge No. 1251, Philadelphia was admitted subsequently to Metropolitan College, London. These four brethren served as the nucleus for the Pennsylvania College which received a charter from S.R.I.S. on December 27, 1879. This was followed by charters issued to New York on April 9, 1880; Massachusetts, May 4, 1880; Maryland, May 10, 1880; and Vermont on September 22, 1880. Vermont was never active. Members from Philadelphia and New York met in Philadelphia, PA on April 21, 1880 and formed a Grand High Council, then known as Soc.Ros. Republican Americae. Nineteen representatives of the Colleges, were present at the first meeting of High Council held on September 21, 1890 at Boston, MA. Charles E. Meyer from PA was elected the first Supreme Magus. The Massachusetts College only has had a continuous existence. The others were erased and subsequently reorganized. This by William Westcott Past Supreme Magnus (1848 -1925).

Another side of this: The main personality in our beginning is Robert Wentworth Little (1840 -1878) who basically founded and organized the Society in 1866. R.W. Little became the first Supreme Magus and his certificate is dated December 31, 1866. (The minutes of the first meeting however are dated June 1, 1867.) He undoubtedly had counsel from others including Kenneth Mackenzie. There are many names associated with the beginning years of our Society that have contributed much to Masonic history. The grade structure seems to go back to a society founded in 1757 by Hermann Fictuld (*Gold- und Rosenkreuz*). The structure was first published in 1781 in the book The Rosicrucian in his Nakedness (*Der*

Rosenkreitzer in Setner Blosser). It is thought that the rituals were found in the Grand Lodge library and translated from the German by William Henry White for Robert Little. When Little died at age 39 in 1878 he appointed Dr. William R. Woodman (1828-1891) to succeed him. And when Woodman died in 1891 he in turn appointed William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) who held the office till his death in 1925. These latter two, Woodman and Westcott, along with another S.R.L.A. member, Samuel L. Mathers (1854-1918) founded another society in 1888 designed to take these rites to an even deeper and more symbolic level. This society was called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. By 1893 there were 5 temples in operation. Many of the members were drawn from the S.R.I.A., but they also allowed women members.

The purpose in mentioning the Order of the Golden Dawn is that the symbol of the Rose-Cross emerged from that Society in a much more profound way than ever before. It becomes the symbolic embodiment of much of the Rosicrucian Order's teachings.

Therefore, our main study consists of the material we call Kabbalah and Hermetics. It is the foundational studies of the philosophy "inculcated by the original Fratres Rosae Crucis." These teachings are presented to us in a graded structure of degree work. The work is delineated as follows:

Zelator (I°): "Is 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." In this grade we are introduced to the Four Ancients, the elements, the Cross, the Pentagram, and the symbol LVX.

Theoricus (II°): "...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." We also hear doctrines on the Elements, the Zodiac, the Hebrew Divine Name IHVH and the four worlds of the Kabbalistic philosophy. (Yoo-Hea-Va-Heh)

Practicus (III°): "The Grade of Practicus has special relation to the ancient art of alchemy and the modern science and art of Chemistry." In this grade we hear the alchemical terms of Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury. The terms "the Black Dragon" and "Solve et Coagula" are also referred.

Philosophus (IV°): "...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." These are the teachings of the First Order which culminate in the entrance grade of the Second Order **Adeptus Minor** (V°) which relates to the center of the Tree of Life, the Sphere of the Sun, sphere six.

It is to these grades of Adeptship that the Rose Cross lamina corresponds in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. It is to that symbol that we can now turn our attention; for, that symbol is the symbol par excellence of the synthesis and attainment of all the Work in the First Order.

The obvious major symbol of our Society is the Rose Cross. Indeed it is within the very title of the foundation manifestoes from which we derive our purpose as a Masonic body. Those manifestoes being the Fama Fraternitatis (1610) and the Confessio Fraternitatis (1615) or basically, The Fraternity of the Order of the Rose Cross and The Confession of the Rosicrucian Fraternity. The very core symbol of our Society is the rose flower attached to the center of a cross. This paper will concern itself with that symbol, how it has evolved and

what it has meant. We will also explore its relationship to our soul, much like the lambskin apron: it is at once the symbol of the journey and the goal.

First of all, let us explore the symbolism of the rose and the cross individually. The cross is a symbol that is about as universal and ancient as any symbol that has emerged out of man's psyche. The cross symbolizes the meeting at right angles of horizontals and perpendiculars. Forces going in quite opposite directions but meeting at a central point, a common ground. It can symbolize the union of opposites and the dualism in nature. It can be the outstretch archetypal man with the infinite possibilities of growth being immortal. It represents eternal life. The cross can symbolize the decent of Spirit into matter. It is the intersection of the level of time with the Eternity of the Spirit.

The cross is the axis of the cycle of the year whose spokes are the equinoxes and solstices. It is the crossroads where the four directions meet. In a Christian sense the cross signifies acceptance of sacrifice, suffering, and death as well as immortality. There is a legend that the cross of Christ was made out of wood from the Tree of Knowledge, the cause of the Fall, making it the instrument of Redemption. In the Egyptian mythos the crux ansata or a type of cross was a symbol of life, immortality, and health. It is held by the gods and goddesses. It also represented the union of Isis and Osiris.

Numerologically, the cross is sometimes represented by the number four. Within our own teachings: "No.4 is the Mystic number, and indicates the operative influence of the four elements. Under this number, or the geometrical square, Pythagoras communicated the Ineffable Name of God to his chosen disciples." In the Hebrew alphabet the last letter is called Tav. And Tav means "mark" or "cross" and its original form was written much like ank or cross. I could go on with many more examples but I think we can see that the cross transcends human culture in both time and space. It is a symbol that ties us all together as a Brotherhood of Mankind. It is a symbol that goes to the very root of our being.

The rose (Latin, rosa, in Greek, rhodon) also is a symbol that has a rich and ancient history. And like the cross, it can have paradoxical meanings. It is at once a symbol of purity and a symbol of passion, heavenly perfection and earthly passion; virginity and fertility; death and life. The rose is the flower of the goddess Venus but also the blood of Adonis and of Christ. It is a symbol of transmutation that of taking food from the earth and transmuting it into the beautiful fragrant rose. The rose garden is a symbol of Paradise. It is the place of the mystic marriage. In ancient Rome, roses were grown in the funerary gardens to symbolize resurrection. The thorns have represented suffering and sacrifice as well as the sins of the Fall from Paradise.

The rose has also been used as a sign of silence and secrecy. The word sub rosa "under the rose" referring to the demand for discretion whenever a rose was hung from the ceiling at a meeting. In the Mysteries roses were sacred to Isis. It is also the flower of her son Harpocrates or younger Horus, the god of silence.

Numerologically, the rose represents the number 5. This is because the wild rose has 5 petals. And the petals on roses are in multiples of five. Geometrically, the rose corresponds with the pentagram and pentagon. Our teachings state: "No.5 is the emblem of Health and Safety; ...it represents Spirit and the four elements." The Pythagorean brotherhood used the pentagram as the symbol of their school.

The number five being associated with the rose has linked them with the 5 senses. In an absolute sense the rose has represented the expanding awareness of being through the development of the senses.

It should be apparent that great care was taken in the design of this symbol. And it should be clear how this lamen synthesizes the entire First Order teachings as well as embodies that of the whole Rosicrucian Fraternity as well. It contains the Kabalah, numerology, the elements, the pentagram taught in the Zelator degree, the four worlds, the Hebrew Divine Yc t' Name, the color symbolism found in the Theoricus grade, the alchemy taught in the Practicus grade, and alludes to the esoteric connections of the world religions, ancient philosophies and the deep mysteries of I.N.R.I.

And finally this from Fra. William Westcott: Let us not forget; that not only as Rosicrucians, but even as Freemasons, we are pledged, not only to Brotherhood and Benevolence, but also to look below the surface of things, and to seek and to search out the hidden secrets of Nature and of Science. Let us be in mind that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but that deeper study reveals the roots of knowledge, as well as increases our store of information. Let us not, with folded arms, float with the tide of indolence, but ever strive after increase of that true knowledge which is wisdom and remember that "to labour is to pray," or as the Latin motto has it, "Laborare est Orare," for the day.

Colleges have the power to confer the following grades:

First Order: Consisting of Four Grades
(These are classified as the Learning Grades.)

First Grade.....Zelator

Second Grade.....Theoricus

Third Grade..... Practicus

Fourth Grade.....Philosophus

Second Order: Consisting of Three Grades:
(These are the Teaching Grades.)

Fifth Grade.....Adeptus Minor

Sixth Grade Adeptus Major

Seventh Grade....Adeptus Exemptus

The jewel of these two orders is a bar with the letters S.R.I.C.F. from which is suspended a green ribbon with the grade achieved embroidered in Roman numerals and the jewel.

The Third Order consists of Two Grades conferred by the Supreme Magus
(These are the Ruling Grades, conferred only by or with the permission of the Supreme Magus.)

Eighth Grade.....Magister

The jewel is the same as the VII except the ribbon is gold with a suspended jewel.

Ninth Grade.....Magus

The jewel is a miter from which is suspended a red ribbon and jewel.

The Official publication "The Rosicrucian Fama" was first published by the late Harold V.B. Voorhis, S.M. 1950-1979. The Fama is published bi-annually and is distributed through the College Secretaries.

MASONIC ROSICRUCIAN JURISDICTIONS

There are 32 Active Colleges in the United States. There are two in the Far East, Hong Kong and Okinawa. The membership in 1990 was app. 1400. England has 50 active colleges with membership of 2000 in 1990. Scotland has 5 active colleges with a membership of 300 in 1990.

Reference:

Fra. Thomas D Worrel VII and William Wescott P.S.M, S.R.I.A. XI