

Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia

Third Grade - Practicus

This ritual dates from the first half of the 20th century

The Grade of Practicus is conferred by the Celebrant of a College holding a Warrant to admit Fratres to the several Grades of the First Order.

The Convocation is held in a Rosicrucian Temple; a White Altar stands in the East, the Cross of the First Grade stands behind it, upon the Altar are five candles, two in front of three. The Celebrant is seated in the East at the South of the Altar, the Exponent in the West, the Secretary in the North-East, the Conductor in the South-West, and the Herald near the Portal. The Four Ancients are seated as in the Grade of Theoricus. The Acolyte is without the Portal in the ante-chamber. Each Frater must wear the Jewel of his own Grade. Practici must wear the Jewel and Ribbon of the Rosicrucian Society suspended by a Green Ribbon having the figure III or 3 marked upon it. A Theoricus who is a Candidate for admission must wear the Jewel of the Society suspended by the Green Ribbon having the figures II or 2 marked upon it.

The candidate shall be supplied with an Admission Badge, a Swastika Cross, the arms to be coloured red, blue, black and yellow, the central square alone being white.

The candidate is not blindfolded, he must carry the Swastika in his right hand. The knocks of a Practicus are two and three. The candidate will knock as a Theoricus, four and one, when he seeks admission at the Portal of the Temple.

Opening

Celebrant: Fratres Practici. Assist me to open the Temple in the Third Grade of Practicus.

Cel. gives one knock. All rise, and the Herald stands beside the Portal.

Cel.: Frater Herald, you will take care that the Acolyte is without, and that the Portal of the Temple is duly closed.

Herald does this and reports.

Herald: The Portal is closed, and the Temple is safely guarded.

Cel.: I declare that the Temple is now duly opened in the Third Grade of Practicus.

Celebrant gives two and three knocks.

Cel.: May peace and harmony dwell among us, and may our exertions to achieve success in the practice of our Rosicrucian duties lead us to the solution of the great problems of our Science, the transmutation of the Elements, the fixing of the Volatile, and the Volatilisation of the Fixed.

All: Amen Amen Amen.

Cel.: Be seated, Fratres.

Cel.: Frater Secretary, I now ask you to read the minutes of the last Convocation.

The Secretary reads the minutes, and takes the book to the Celebrant, who puts the minutes for confirmation, and if they are approved he signs them in token of their accuracy.

Cel.: Frater Secretary, you will now lay before us any communication that you may have received.

This is done, and ordinary work is transacted.

Reception

Cel.: Fratres, we are assembled to carry on the work of the Rosicrucians in the Grade of Practicus, to receive a Theoricus among us, and to confer upon him the rights and privileges as well as the secret knowledge of the Third Grade.

Exponent: Right [or Very] Worthy Celebrant, we rejoice to hear that another Frater has deserved to be received as a Practicus; and we will assist in his Reception, and will give him, to the best of our ability, all the help he may need to ensure his further progress.

Herald: Right [or Very] Worthy Celebrant, our Frater having worthily performed his duty as a Theoricus in the Second Grade, and having been chosen by you for Reception into the Third Grade, is in attendance without the Portal. He seeks admission in order to proceed to the practical and experimental work of the Rosicrucians.

Cel. to the Herald: Then you will leave the Temple and receive from our Frater the Secret Words of a Theoricus, hand to him the Swastika Cross of Admission, and instruct him to knock on the Portal as a Theoricus. This is done by the Herald, who knocks four and one.

Cel.: Frater Conductor, you will admit the Herald, and the Theoricus whom he brings with him.

This is done, and both stand with in the Portal.

Her.: Right [or Very] Worthy Celebrant, I present to you Frater , a Theoricus of our Society who, having been duly attentive to the studies of that Grade, now seeks to obtain a practical knowledge of our secret work.

The Herald returns to his seat.

Cel.: Frater Conductor, you will lead the Theoricus once around the Temple, and then place him before the Exponent in the West, who desires to put certain questions.

This is done.

Exp.: Will you give me the Sign and Word of a Theoricus?

Theoricus: I will. *Does so.*

Exp.: You have been selected for advancement, because you have shown zeal and ability in the Theoretic studies of Rosicrucianism. Will you make a solemn promise to continue with unabated fervour to pursue your researches into the mysteries of nature?

Theoricus: I will.

Exp.: Will you endeavour to discover the secrets of the Material World by practical Work?

Theoricus: I will.

The Conductor turns Theoricus to face the Celebrant.

Cel.: Do you solemnly promise on the honour of a Rosicrucian to preserve and keep secret from every Zelator and from every Theoricus until his reception into a College of Practici, and from every other person who is not a Rosicrucian the hidden knowledge of the grade, and also the Concealed Word of a Practicus, and any other sign or secret that may be made known to you?

Theoricus: I do promise.

Cel.: Fratres, shall we trust this Theoricus with our Secret Knowledge?

All: We put our trust in his faith and in his abilities.

Cel.: Frater Conductor, you will place our Frater before me in the East.

Cel.: Hand to me the Cross you bear.

This is done by the Theoricus.

Cel.: The form of the Cross of especial symbolism in the Grade of Practicus is the Swastika, also called the Fylfot Cross. It is an emblem of very ancient date, and has been found in countries widely separated; it is the Cross of the Jains of India, and was the Hammer of Thor

of Scandinavian myths. This Grade is chiefly concerned with the study of the Material Universe, and the arms of this figure are referred to the Four Elements of the Ancient Philosophers. The colours Red, Blue, Yellow, and Black refer to Fire, Water, Air, and Earth, on the lower plane and on the higher plane, to the Hebrew letters Yod, Heh, Vau Heh of the Great Name Jehovah; and again to I.N.R.I., who is Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum, and these initials I.N.R.I again refer to Jammim, Nour, Ruach, and Yabeshah, which were the Chaldean names for the Four Elements. The central square is White, to represent the blending of all colours into a Unity.

The Secretary receives the Cross from the Celebrant.

Cel.: I will now reveal to you the Secret Word of the Grade, which is ***. The sign is given thus; point d*** with the *** to your material work, while you look *** as for help from above.

The Conductor places the Practicus in the North beside the First Ancient.

Cel.: Know then, Frater Practicus, that your new study is Alchemy, the Science of the composition of the Material World; in this study Practice and Experiment alone can lead to success, and these require to be preceded by the Theoretical knowledge of the former Grade.

Exp.: Learn then, O Practicus, to separate the Subtle from the Gross, gently and with judgment, for such is the true process of Transmutation on the Spiritual Plane as well as in the Material World.

Cel.: We can but point out the Way; you yourself must follow out the Path. We can check you when you wander from the narrow way of progress to the goal; but you yourself in must perform the steps of the process.

Exp.: Solve et Coagula; Time and heat and Moisture act upon the First Matter of the Philosophers, and you will be led to the Queen and to the King. Through the Black Dragon of Putrefaction and the White Eagle of Sublimation, you may at length attain to the Red Stone, the Quintessence, the Son of the Sun, and so become possessed of the Key to the Constitution of Malkuth.

Cel.: Know then, O Practicus, that here is a Physical Alchemy, and a possible Transmutation of Elementary Matter; and there is a Spiritual Alchemy reserved for your enlightenment in the 4th Grade of Philosophus.

Exp.: Learn then to preserve our Secret Wisdom. The Alchemists have ever used the language of Metaphor, and when we describe the Physical processes we veil our ideas in Spiritual language; and when we write down the secrets of the Spiritual World, we miss the language of Physical Alchemy.

Cel.: Ever so, my Frater, have the boasters and ignorant of the outside World been deceived, and have been hoodwinked and led astray by their own

Conceits, *holding out his right hand* Swear then with me, O Practicus, swear by your good Right hand: May it perish and wither away if it write our secrets without Emblem, Metaphor, and Symbol?

The Theoricus repeats the Pledge.

Cel.: We accept your pledge, and will no longer detain you from your duties.

Cel.: You may take your seat among the Practici.

The Celebrant, or the Exponent, or a Frater specially chosen by the Celebrant, shall then deliver the Lecture upon Alchemy.

Lecture

The subject of Alchemy is one of great interest, and it is well to approach the consideration of the science from the standpoint of Western Occult Philosophy, handed down to us from the

Sages of Mediæval Europe, and which they obtained from three principal sources. First, from the Arabs, who almost alone preserved the ancient sciences through the dark ages. Secondly, from Rabbis of Hebrew culture, who possessed the traditional lore now identified by the name Kabalah, that tradition to which ancient Chaldæ and Babylon so largely contributed. Lastly, from the ancient Egypt of the Pharaohs, ruled by mighty priest-kings, who were Initiates in the Mysteries of Isis, Osiris and Serapis.

Alchemy has two aspects: the material and the spiritual. The opinion that Alchemy was only a form of Chemistry is untenable by anyone who has read the works of its chief professors. The doctrine that Alchymic writings were only religious teachings, and that its chemical references were all foolish allegories, is equally untenable in the face of history, which shows that many of its most noted professors were men who had made important discoveries in the domain of chemistry, and were in no way notable as teachers either of ethics or religion. Chemistry, the modern science which investigates the constitution of material substances, is the lineal descendant of Mediæval and Ancient Al-Chymy. The syllable Al is the Arabic definite article, meaning The, and so Alchymy was The Higher Chemistry. It treated of the essential nature of Matter, of the Elements, of metals, of minerals, and of Transmutation.

Modern Chemistry is a science devoted chiefly to utilitarian and commercial

The earliest use of the word Alchymy is believed to be found in the works of Julius Firmicus Maternus, an Astronomer, who lived in the time of the Emperor Constantine. The oldest Alchymic Volume known is by Zosimus of Panopolis, in Greek, and is entitled, The Divine Art of making Gold and Silver; it was written about A.D. 400. The Mediæval authors often call Alchymy the Hermetic Art, implying an origin from Hermes Trismegistus of Egypt, the pre-historic teacher, to whom was attributed the Emerald Tablet, which has been not inaptly described as being a resumé of all Alchymic science on a single page.

Amongst the most famous names of European Alchymy we note that several were men who rose to high dignity in the Church; such were Pelagius; Synesius, a Bishop; Heliodorus, a Bishop; Cremer; Ripley, a Canon; Albertus Magnus, a Dominican; Thomas Aquinas; Basil Valentine, a Benedictine; Raymond Lully, a Franciscan; Trithemius, an Abbot of Spanheim; and Pope John XXII.

The science of Alchymy taught that all material substances were primordially derived from one basic *hyle* or *foundation*. From this basis differentiation arose, and by myriad steps the immense variety of material substances, such as we now see around us, originated by progression. From the common Minerals were developed the Metals, also in gradation of purity and excellence, until an acmé was reached in the two so-called Perfect Metals, Silver and Gold, which do not rust nor oxidize by exposure to the air. From this theory arose the Art of Transmutation, by which it was sought to produce Silver and Gold from other metals below them in the series, notably from Mercury, Antimony, and Lead. Many, indeed, were the processes devised, but there was a general consensus of opinion that the last three stages of the chemical process were marked by a series of colour changes, from Black through White to Red; this red matter was the Philosopher's Stone, or Red Elixir, which could transmute Silver into Gold. The Alchymists also endeavoured to produce from certain herbs an Elixir Vitæ, which should have power to prolong life and restore health to the sick.

The discovery of Elements has been the grand achievement of Modern Chemistry, and certain renown has for a century been granted to any chemist who has added a new Element to the existing catalogue. The future may change this system, and a niche in the Temple of Fame may be allotted to one who succeeds in dividing one of our present Elements into its constituents. The Chemistry of the Future may seek to gain the power of reducing all Compounds and all the Elements to one primordial matter, named PROTYLE. In other words, the ancient chemical doctrine of the *πρωτη μλη*, or First Matter, may become paramount in the years to come, as it was in the distant past.

If the modern doctrine of Elements be laid aside, the discoveries of the Primordial Matter, the Transmutation of Metals, and the Elixir of Life re-appear and once more enter the range of possible achievements

Ancient Alchemy recognised no Elements, in our modern sense. An element being now defined as “a body which cannot be decomposed,” or “a something to which we can add, but from which we can take away nothing,” or “a body which increases in weight with every chemical change,” or “a body different from all others, yet having constant characters itself, and indivisible except into parts of itself”. The Elements of the Alchemists were Fire, Air, Earth and Water. A close study of the oldest authors shows that these were types of four modes of force or matter, and further that they are four correlative terms, implying states mutually related and dependent, and in no way independent and opposed entities. They were names of time four states

Heat and Dryness - Fire.

Heat and Moistness - Air.

Cold and Dryness - Earth.

Cold and Moistness - Water.

This was demonstrated even by Aristotle, who showed that matter, simple, or combined with its developments, may exist in each of these states.

The Alchemists affirmed the existence of the Primum Ens or First Matter; two Opposites or Contraries; three Principles; and four Elementary states.

Beyond these came Minerals, and lastly the Seven Metals, as forms of matter, essentially stable, except in the hands of the skilled operator, who might attain the power of Transmutation, or of changing one of them into the other. Gold, as the most perfect metal, was the effect of the greatest transmutation, which process, once known, rendered all others of little importance. Hence all the efforts of the Alchemists on the Material Plane were directed to this, the crowning achievement of the work.

For this process of Transmutation one substance was requisite, the Philosopher's Stone, the Quintessence, or Son of the Sun. This was to be derived from the Philosophical Mercury, Salt and Sulphur, and had to pass in the process through the colours Black and White to the Red. This Stone was by some expected to be also one means for the production of the Elixir of Life.

Historical proof may be wanting that the “Stone of the Philosophers” was ever found and used, but no candid student can doubt that the life-long labours of the Alchemists, their modes of chemical manipulation, and their utensils, have laid the foundation of our Modern Chemistry.

Modern chemists have catalogued up to the present time seventy-eight substances as Elements; why should there be seventy-eight Elements to-day, any more than the thirty-two recognised in 1720, the era of Lavoisier, or than sixty-four as in 1876, or eighty next year perhaps? The statement of a fixed number of Elements is only a temporary dogma, which the Alchemists wisely abstained from propounding. Profs. Crooks and Faraday have said: “To decompose the metals, to re-form them, to change one into another, and to realise the once absurd notion of Transmutation, are the problems given to the chemist of the future for solution.”

The strongest evidence of the want of Elementary characters in our modern Elements is provided by the Spectroscope, and the intense heat and light obtainable from Electricity. Several so-called Elements when exposed to the latter, show in the Spectroscope that they are not simple bodies Spectroscopic examinations of rays of light from the Sun and Stars point out that while some of our Elements are shown by their spectra to exist in them, other Elements are certainly broken up in those regions of intense heat, amid their constituents are disseminated and otherwise associated, thereby proving that in the Solar regions at any rate,

such Elements are Compound bodies.

Some examples of Alchymic descriptions of processes on the Material Plane are here given. From the "Open Entrance to the Shut Palace of the King," by Eirenæus Philalethes, is this clearly chemical passage "Take four parts of the perfected Stone, either red or white; melt them in a clear crucible. Take one part of this to ten parts of purified Mercury; heat the Mercury until it begin to crackle, then throw in your mixture, which will pierce it in the twinkling of an eye; increase your fire until all be melted, and you will have a medicine of an inferior order."

The following is from Jean d'Espagnet, and shows the use of Alchymic imagery: "Take a red dragon, courageous and warlike, to whom no natural strength is wanting: take also seven or nine noble virgin eagles, whose eyes will not wax dull in the rays of the Sun: Cast the Birds in with the Beast into a clear prison, shut them up strongly; under which let a bath be placed, that they may be incensed to fight by the warm vapour; in a short time they will enter upon a hard contention; until about the fiftieth day the eagles begin to tear the beast in pieces; this one dying will infect the whole prison with black poison, whereby the eagles also being injured, they will also be soon constrained to give up the ghost."

It may easily be perceived that this Allegory is convertible into a description of chemical processes, thus: Take one part of a red powder a, and add seven or nine parts of the liquid b, which is volatile, i.e., able to fly; mix them, put the mixture into a glass retort—the clear prison—hermetically seal the opening, that is, shut them up strongly; set the vessel on a water bath, and then the heat will make the liquid attack the solid powder and dissolve it, and the result will be the production of a black substance, and both the red powder and the liquid will have lost their previous chemical characters.

In the Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary of A. J. Pernety, 1758, an explanation of Alchymic terms upon the Material Plane is supplied. The Ritual of the Grade of Practicus alludes to several terms of Alchymic Art; as to which the following remarks may be useful to students:

Solve et Coagula: These words meant either Dissolve and precipitate from solution; or Melt and solidify; time and heat would melt substances; time, heat, and moisture would dissolve them. The King and Queen usually referred to Sol or Gold, and Luna or Silver, respectively; but some Alchymists refer the title King to the Sulphur, and Queen to the Mercury of the Philosophers. Gold is, of course, often called the King of Metals.

The whole difficulty of carrying out to-day the processes of the Alchymists consists in the uncertainty as to what actual solids and liquids, metals, acids, and alkalies are to be taken when Mercury, Sulphur and Salt, or Sun and Moon, or King, Queen, and Son are alluded to. The sublimation or Volatilisation of a substance was called The White Eagle; the Black Eagle referred to Putrefaction, by which they meant conversion by heat of dissolved substances or liquids into a sediment or precipitate, or if melted substances, into a slag or form of ashes. The Quintessence, or Son of the Sun, was the Philosopher's Stone, which was made from the Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury of the Philosophers, which by putrefaction or calcination became Black, and then by further processes White, and finally the Redness of Perfection was attained.

This Stone of the Wise was the key to Transmutation; the Alchymists declared that by its power one form of Matter could be changed into another; Lead became raised into Silver, while Silver could be changed into Gold, called by them Sol, the Sun or the King.

Malkuth is the Kabalistic name for the Material World, and for Matter in its multiform states, hence the Stone of the Philosophers was called the "Key to the Constitution of Malkuth."

The old Alchymic books, then, have been shown to be definitely of a chemical nature. Let us now turn to quotations from the works of eminent Alchymists, which illustrate their religious attitude.

Geber, the Arabian, wrote: "Our Stone has been described by me in a way agreeable to the

Most High, the Blessed Sublime and Gluttons God, as it has beets infused by the grace of His goodness, who gives and withholds as it pleases thin. Study with great industry and labour and by continued deep meditation; be sons of Truth and you shall have most excellent gifts of God.”

Nicholas Flansel wrote: “God reserves to Himself to reveal to a select few of such as fear and love Him certain things of knowledge, which therefore ought not to be written.”

In the book Aureus, attributed to Hermes is the following passage: “My Son, before all things I admonish thee to fear God, in whom is thy strength; whatsoever thou bearest consider it rationally. It behaves thee to give thanks to God, Who has bestowed liberally of His bounty to the wise, and Who delivers us from misery. I am proven by the fulness of His substance and His wonders, and humbly pray that while we live we may come unto Him.”

“The Water Stone of the Wise,” an anonymous tractate: “In the first place 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 air 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.

And then in the next sentence reverts to the practical chemical part, adding “Secondly, its earthly use consists in changing all imperfect metals, by means of a Tincture, into pure Gold, as I shall try to show.”

From about the year 1650 the work of the Alchemists has ceased to be given to the world by printed works. Private traditions have, however, always affirmed the permanence of both the theory and art of transmutation.

This silence has been at last broken by the appearance of a new school of philosophers, who have espoused almost entirely the principle of demonstrating the reality of Alchemy upon the higher or Spiritual Planes.

Dr. Kopp, in his “History of Chemistry,” takes this view; and there is a masterly volume by E. A Hitchcock, entitled, “Remarks upon Alchemy,” where he shows that Man was the “Matter” of some of the Alchemists. A clergyman of the Church of England published anonymously a work entitled, “A Suggestive Enquiry into the Hermetic Mystery”; this takes the same view. So great, however, was the pressure put upon him by his clerical brethren, that he was soon induced to destroy all that remained unsold of the edition.

The moral and spiritual aspects of the so called “Higher Alchemy” were also illustrated by the late Anna Kingsford and her co-worker Edward Maitland. They succeeded in many cases in drawing explanations of Alchymic language by means of Hermetic allegory, and also in demonstrating an Alchymic mode of thought and allusions to transmutation on the ethical and higher planes from some of the narratives found in the early books of the Old Testament. The keynote of Alchemy upon this basis is, of course, the implied possibility of the Material once again taking on the Spiritual aspect by successive purifications, which process may be suitably described by terms allied to the art of chemistry.

Similar terms of Alchymic art may be used to describe those schemes of moral, ethical, and spiritual purification which we call Religion. For Religion should mean the processes which may re-unite us fallible and erring creatures to our God, the Divine Spirit illuminating us. 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 Spiritualisation, the separation of the subtle from the gross; the redemption of spirit, while still dwelling in matter, from the taint inevitable to the lowest planes of manifestation. Or again, the transmutation of the

animal forces which are in man—in excess of the bodily needs of subsistence—into the more human and refined emotions, the more delicate shades of feeling, the purer and higher manifestations which even the human personality is plainly susceptible of.

From another point of view, and by the use again of other but allied terms, is perceived that aspect of mental purification, and that form of transmutation into higher powers which is expressed by the ideal of Atonement, At-one-ment, the re-union of the spark to the flame, of the offspring to the parent, of the ray to the sun, of the personal thinker to the divine type of the Christos, or the overshadowing Divine Spirit, from which each one of us has emerged and must remain separate until we shall lie again re-united by personal effort, enthusiasm, and self-sacrifice to the Divine Source of all good.

The Alchymic expression of “Solve et Coagula,” meaning “volatilise and fix,” as two contrasted processes seen alike in chemistry, physics, and human development, are traceable in the biblical allegories of the descent of the Soul into Man, by the putting on of “coats of skin.” The human Ego or Monad becomes fixed in matter, and suffers the consequent loss of the power of direct spiritual communion with the source Divine. On the other hand, we have the allegory of the Resurrection of the Son of the Divine One, who obtains re-union with the God-head by casting off the cloak of matter and returning to His Father, and to our Father; and this resurrection is promised to all who truly seek it. By birth upon earth man is fixed, coagulated and fettered by his environment. By death, and by the throwing off of his material body and its animal passions, man is released from his bondage, and passes at once to a higher Plane, even if his final absorption into Paradise be delayed.

Besides the important analogies already alluded to, the terms Sol and Luna, which in Chemistry refer to Gold and Silver, may be well understood as inferring on the Spiritual Plane to the Soul and the Body of Man. The three terms Mercury, Salt, and Sulphur have also been used as synonyms of the three persons of the Trinity; the Divine Father—Mercury the Divine Mother, passive principle, or the holy Ghost as Salt; and the Son of God, the Christ, the Divine Power in human manifestation, by Sulphur.

As a last example, the Black Dragon of putrefaction, which by time and force can become fashioned into the White Swan of purity, in a beautiful symbol of the change in man from a life of sin to a reformed personality; to the man purified by suffering, chastened by humility, and fit to commune with the Holy Ones whom God has created.

To conclude, it seems manifest that the writings of many mediæval European Alchymists enshrine a doctrine at once exalted, fascinating in formulation, eloquent in language, and worthy of serious study.

Closing

Cel.: Fratres, before we close this Convocation let us return our thanks to the Creator and Preserver for His past care of our Order and of ourselves.

Cel.: Let us pray and give thanks

Prayer

Cel.: Thanks be to Thee, O Creator, Honour be to Thee, O Preserver. Almighty and Merciful God, we offer our grateful hearts to Thee. May the Supernal Triad be with us, and may each and every attribute of the Divine Sephiroth assist us in our exertions, and may we continue to preserve our lives pure and unpolluted.

Cel.: Our duties being concluded, I call upon you all to give the Sign and speak the Word.

All rise, give the Sign, and speak the Word.

C.: Our Thanksgiving is performed. I close this College of Practici by two and three knocks.

Exponent repeats knocks: And it remains closed until re-formed by the R.W. (or V.W.)

Celebrant or his successor.

Cel.: Pax Domini vobiscum.

All: Amen! Amen! Amen!