



New York College  
Societas Rosicruciana  
In Civitatibus Foederatis  
Summer 2023



**From the Chief Adept**  
**RW R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX° et Philologus Zelator**

Fratres, ego salutant vos,

“The diffusion of light and the advancement of science.” When we open a Convocation of our College, we state this as the central purpose of our Society. In our College and increasingly at the High Council, this is accomplished by individual Fratres studying, researching, reflecting, and then sharing their insights with us all by means of papers and presentations. A primary sparkplug and facilitator of this process at both levels has been and continues to be our own RW W. Bruce Renner IX°, Past Junior Deputy Supreme Magus. In that office Bruce was responsible for the intellectual content presentations which are the heart of High Council meetings.

However, is Bruce to be allowed to rest on his laurels? Of course not. Later in this newsletter you will see a report on the 2023 High Council sessions, but certainly one of the highlights was the appointment of Bruce to the newly-created office of Director General of Studies. Our sister Societies in England, Scotland and Portugal have long had such an office responsible for intellectual content, and the creation of this office centralizes and magnifies this function in one place in the SRICF. Among other things, Bruce will guide SRICF publications and website content. Our College congratulates Bruce and wishes him all the best in this new endeavor.

I wish each and every frater wherever he may be and in whatever circumstances, a thoughtful and reflective holiday season. I look forward to seeing you at our January Convocation.

LVX,

*Curt*



**Northeast Regional Conference Rescheduled for April 27, 2024**

This will be a one-day session, tentatively scheduled for **Saturday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, via Zoom**

Planned activities include an intensive look at the Zelator Grade, including commentary on each part of the ritual, and guidance on furnishings and floorwork. In the afternoon there will be four practicums/workshops.

**Mark your calendars! Watch for more details coming soon!**

## **From the Celebrant** **RW Richard Powell VIII° et Philologus Theoricus**

Happy Holidays Fratres!

I hope this newsletter finds you all well. At the time of this writing, I am just a few weeks back from the High Council session in Louisville, KY. This year, the New York College was well represented by Past Junior Deputy Supreme Magus W. Bruce Renner IX°, KGC, Chief Adept Curtiss Montgomery IX°, Secretary Myron Deputat VIII°, Exponent Walter Cook VIII°, Frater Bill Edwards VII° and myself. The programming was top notch as always and the company was brilliant.

Our own Bruce Renner was appointed as the (newly created) Director General of Studies and will be in charge of creating a program of study for the SRICF similar, perhaps, to that of the SRIA. We have been doing the SRICF Solstice/Equinox Rituals for over a year now in our College and they were just published along with a few other rituals in a small booklet that will soon be available to order. Perhaps Bruce will use us as a test group for some future courses?

Our next meeting will be online on the morning of Saturday, January 27th. Myron will email the details, Zoom link, time, etc. once it has been ironed out. We have a guest presenter lined up and are looking for one of our Fratres to be a second presenter or provide a practicum that can be done virtually. Keep your eyes peeled.

2024 will bring more Grade conferrals, a possible visit from current Junior Deputy Supreme Magus, Piers Vaughan IX°, KGC and presentations from more NY College Fratres. Meeting dates will also be forthcoming. The Northeast Regional meeting is still a goal for 2024 but will likely be virtual for the first so we can gauge interest in an in person one.

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and I wish all very Happy New Year! See you soon...

Saper Aude!

*Rick*



## **From the Secretary** **RW Myron J. Deputat, VIII° et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus**

Fratres mei carissimi,

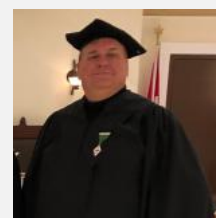
As the holiday season approaches, I wanted to take a moment to extend warm wishes to you and your families. The holiday season is a time for reflection, celebration, and appreciation. It provides us with an opportunity to express gratitude to all.

May this holiday season bring you joy, peace, and relaxation. Take this time to unwind, spend quality moments with loved ones, and recharge for the upcoming year. We look forward to seeing you on Zoom at our convocation on Saturday, January 27th.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

LVX,

*Myron*



## From the Editor

RW W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

Cari Fratres,

At the end of my messages, I provide the following:

Scire! Velle! Audere,! Tacere!  
To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Remain Silent

These verbs pop up in many traditions. We might label them the four Rosicrucian virtues, although they are often referred to as Powers...but are not virtues powers? (We might also note that these very much resonate with our Masonic instruction!)

Eliphas Lévi wrote: “To attain to *Sanctum Regnum*, in other words, the knowledge and power of the magi, there are four indispensable conditions—an intelligence illuminated by study, an intrepidity which nothing can check, a will which cannot be broken, and a prudence which nothing can corrupt, and nothing intoxicate.”

RW Chic Cicero, IX°, suggest a fifth, *Amare*, to Love. Who can argue? Many believe that Love is the greatest virtue, and one surprisingly difficult to express in our daily lives. Faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of these love, as reflected in The Scottish Rite’s Rose Croix ritual from the thoughts of Paul (1 Corinthians 13:1-3), who echoed Jesus, ”This is my commandment: love one another as I love you” (John 15:9). Similar thoughts can be found in other religions, as we have discovered in our current series of essays.

Love is often thought of as a feeling or emotion, because some forms of love spring from these sources, but in the sense used here love is, like other virtues, a way of life. Love should empower everything we do, and especially our faith hope and charity, as well as the Rosicrucian virtues. Love to study, love to exert your will to accomplish good in the world, love to be daring and adventurous in life, and love the power of silence to summon the voices of our better nature.

All well and good but be accepting that we will fail at this frequently. Take a lesson from meditation then, and when we detect a drift from our good intentions, gently forgive yourself, and return to your vision.

So then –

Stay your Path!

*And most definitely -*

Scire! Velle! Audere,! Tacere!  
To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Remain Silent

LVX,

*Bruce*



## College Happenings

At our Fall Convocation held on September 30th, it was another busy day in the life of the College. Central to the day was the advancement of our current class to the Grade of Theoricus. The Grade was conferred by the following officers:

Celebrant - Fr. Myron Deputat, VIII<sup>o</sup>  
Herald - Fr. Richard Powell, VIII<sup>o</sup>  
Exponent - Fr. Walter Cook, VIII<sup>o</sup>  
Conductor - Fr. Richard Powell, VII<sup>o</sup>  
Ancient of Earth – Fr. Bill Edwards, VII<sup>o</sup>  
Ancient of Air – Fr. Bob Bowles, VII<sup>o</sup>  
Ancient of Water – Fr. Frank Rice, VII<sup>o</sup>  
Ancient of Fire – Fr. Marlon Gayadeen, VII<sup>o</sup>  
Lecturer - Fr. Steve Joyce, VII<sup>o</sup>

Other activities included a pathworking practicum into Yesod, the celebration of the Autumnal Equinox, an excellent paper by RW Walter Cook entitled, “Working Your Way Through,” and an induction into and advancement in the Philologi Societas.

There was also our traditional pizza, salad, and cookie lunch for a much-enjoyed social hour.

**Our Winter Convocation is on Saturday, January 27th via Zoom. Mark your calendars now!**



Ancients in position!



Fr Cook presents!



## **Frater Josh Newman, VII<sup>o</sup>, latest Frater inducted into the Societas Philologi**

VW Frater Josh Newman, VII<sup>o</sup> is now VW Frater Josh Newman, VII<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Zelator after being inducted into the Society in the Fall Convocation. Frater Newman gave presentation on *Egyptian Origins of the 47<sup>th</sup> problem of Euclid* at our Winter 2023 Convocation,

Congratulations to our newest Philologus!

Picture here is Chief Adept, Montgomery, Frater Newman holding his certificate and sporting a new tam, Celebrant Powell, and Secretary Deputat.



## **Frater Cook becomes a Adeptus Exemptus of the Societas Philologi**

During our Summer Convocation, RW Frater Walter E. Cook, VIII<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Adeptus Major reached the Adeptus Exemptus level in the Societas Philologi. He is pictured here receiving his certificate and the white tassel of Adeptus Exemptus from our Celebrant and Secretary. The Adeptus Exemptus is the highest level that can be earned in the Society. Congratulations to RW Frater Walter E. Cook, VIII<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus.

Pictured here Chief Adept Montgomery, Frater Cook with Certificate and White Tassel, Celebrant Powell, and Secretary Deputat.

**Become more active in the College by writing a paper, giving a presentation, contributing to our infrastructure, or submitting an essay or book report for the newsletter. The Societas Philologi awaits you!**





## There and Back again – 2023 High Council, Louisville Kentucky

This year six New York College Fratres attended the Annual Meeting of the High Council; Chief Adept, Curt Montgomery, Celebrant Rick Powell, Secretary Myron Deputat, PJDSM Bruce Renner, Assistant Editor Walter Cook, and Frater Bill Edwards. This is the eighth year that the High Council has been held at the venerable Brown Hotel, a venue that gives just the right feeling to antiquity to our organization.

JDSM Piers Vaughan is to be commended for putting together the best program yet with six in person lectures, and one remote by the Supreme Magus of Scotland. Although short, the business meeting had some great news. Once again, the SRICF has grown nationally both in new Colleges and new Fratres!

A constitutional change was put in place this year to establish the office of Director General of Studies, and New York College's Bruce Renner was this first appointed to the office. There are many new initiatives planned over the next few years, and the appointment of a Director of Studies will accelerate rollouts. Examples include a program being developed by Piers called the Knight of the Golden Stone, after the Order in the Chemical Wedding, which will be awarded to the best paper each year at High Council. Meanwhile, Bruce gave a short introduction to the Portal, an online repository, for SRICF intellectual property. Both Piers and Bruce will be working on revising the SRICF ritual. A start to this effort was made this year by issuing a Supplemental Ritual Manual to each attending Frater. Containing rituals for installations, memorial services, and Equinox/Solstice observances, it will soon be available for purchase on the SRICF website. While at the website store, you might want to purchase an SRICF tie. We sold out our 450 tie initial order last year but have since replenished it.

Bruce also received a Past Junior Deputy Supreme Magus certificate at the Saturday Night Banquet. Speaking of the banquet, it should be noted that the hotel meals were excellent. Attendance at this event was back to pre-pandemic levels, and the City of Louisville, in general, seems to be recovering, as well. The Chief Adept and I have already booked a room for next year. We hope to see you there!













## Confucianism

Of the religions we have so far considered, Confucianism will perhaps resonant most strongly with Freemasons as they share many common characteristics. In an article by the National Geographic Society, they stated that, “Confucianism is best understood as an ethical guide to life and living with strong character,” while allowing that it also began as a revival of earlier religious traditions. In practice, though, Confucius embraces religious observance and piety as part of a virtuous life, he had little to add to the current theology of the time concerning metaphysical aspects of the divine. The one exception will also ring true to Freemasons, especially ones with an esoteric outlook: the striving for a virtuous life is a doorway to the divine.

Freemasonry, of course, came at a time of considerable evolution of religious thinking, but despite emerging in a Christian Europe, had remarkably little religious requirements for its initiates other than a belief in a monotheistic God and the immortality of the soul. Otherwise, it left the exact outlook of its members up to them, and discouraged debate on religious subjects as disharmonious. Its moral teachings, of course, echoed Judeo-Christian ethics, but with a strong dose of Stoicism. Much of this teaching appears in Confucianism, as well, and it is interesting to note that Greek philosophical systems, such as the Stoics, were close contemporaries of Confucius.

Freemasonry and Confucianism also share in this debate – are they a religion or not? Freemasonry, for its part, has always taken a position of not being a religion, and there have been convincing arguments presented to support this position. Confucianism, on the other hand, as we shall see, is still an open question. It will surely add to our list of perennial ideas.

## Genesis

Confucianism, like many religions we have explored, is an Axial Age religion. We have discussed the Axial Age premise in prior essays, and will not comment further here, other than to point out that it was a period of incredible religious evolution, one that spawned many new religions, and greatly changed some established ones.

What we in the West refer to as China, its own inhabitants refer to as *Zhongguo* (Middle Kingdom). The People's Republic of China (*Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó*) and Republic of



China (*Zhōnghuá Mínguó*) are the official names of the two sovereign states presently claiming sovereignty over "China." The name "China" appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century from Portuguese explorers, although its actual etymology is a matter of some historical speculation. For those interested, see the Wikipedia entry *Names of China*.

Confucius, however, while recognizing *Zhongguo*, would also likely refer to it as *Huáxia* (grand florescence or illustrious blossoming). *Zhongguo*, however, might be more apt, for it can also be interpreted as "central kingdom" and indeed the inhabitants thought of themselves as the center of civilization, not only geographically, but as a way of life. This Yellow River Valley culture into which Confucius was born dates to the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.E. and is considered one of the cradles of civilization. Elaborate religious rituals had been established there from 3000 B.C.E.

**Birth Places of Chinese Philosophers in Zhou Dynasty**



Wikipedia

Confucius greatly venerated the past, and viewed this period as one of benevolent philosopher-kings of the legendary (and perhaps mythical) Xia dynasty. More is known about the Shang dynasty that next appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Their central concerns – ancestor worship, ritual behavior, the king’s responsibilities toward his subjects, and the ethics of war and peace – would figure heavily in Confucius’s writings.

In the Zhou dynasty, which followed, its first king, Wen, created a book of divination called the *Yi Jing* (Book of Changes). It was Wen’s son, Dàn, however, that Confucius found most interesting. Although never king himself, he is thought to have created the concept of *tianming* (the mandate of heaven). This doctrine held that a ruler governed with divine sanction if he was virtuous. Conversely, one could oppose or even dispose a poor king if morally justified.



As it turned out, the Zhou weren't particularly virtuous, and the period was marked by lawlessness and war. The final years of the period is referred to as the Period of Warring States. Warfare was also evolving, and increasingly leadership roles in the military and elsewhere was determined by merit, not hereditary aristocracy. Government bureaucracy increased, and it too was often determined by talent and hard work which open positions to all levels of society.



This period was also known as the Period of One Hundred Schools and was an immensely creative time philosophically and religiously. Confucianism was one of many schools to emerge.

### Who was Confucius?

Many of the religions we have discussed so far in this series coalesced around a single progenitor figure. These figures are usually larger than life. Mohammad was inspired by conversations with the archangel Gabriel and the Buddha went from an relatively ordinary person to a sage in a single epiphany. Modern historical techniques have challenged the historic veracity of these progenitors, as evidence suggests that their depiction was largely romanticize storytelling, and may have, in some cases, been a composite of several people.

By contrast to figures such as Mohammad and the Buddha, Confucius's life is singularly mundane, but oddly, faces the same sort of historical challenge. For example, *The Analects*, a collection of aphorisms, conversations, and anecdotes, supposedly penned by Confucius can be shown to be the product of several authors. There are no known documents about him written in his lifetime and no writing in his own hand. Sima Qian, a court historian of the Han dynasty, wrote the first biography of Confucius 400 years after his death. Most historians, however, believe that he was an actual person, although an authentic account of his life is elusive. Here then is what is generally presented.

Confucius's given name was *Kongqiu*. The name Confucius is a Latinization of K'ung-fu-tze (Mister K'ung). Throughout Chinese history, he has often simply been called the Sage. The traditional dates of his lifetime are 551 B.C.E. to 479 B.C.E. Sima Qian claims he was descended from the royal family of the state of Song. At one point the family was forced to flee Song for the state of Lu, where they fell on hard times. Confucius was conceived (possibly out of wedlock) in a field, and his parents prayed for his conception at a sacred mountain. Not an auspicious beginning for the future sage.

His father likely died when he was a toddler, and he was raised by his mother in poverty. Physically, he is described as uncommonly tall. He appeared to have a early interest in ritual and ceremony, but was described as skilled in many menial things, meaning he likely accepted many lowly jobs in his youth. However, he was entitled to an education by virtue of social standing (even in poverty) as a *shi* (a common gentleman) a status between declining nobility and common peasantry. He is noted as having been a enthusiastic learner throughout his life, and learning was central to his teaching of a virtuous life. This led him to develop a form of mindfulness that he passed to his students.

He was a husband and father, but possibly his marriage ended in divorce. It appeared that he didn't aspire to become a sage, so much as a teacher and civil servant. His view of the latter may have included visions of advising high ranking officials, but in fact, the highest office he held was equivalent to a modern-day police commissioner.

His teaching efforts were decidedly better and many of his students would be far more successful in public life than him. The success of the student is certainly an indicator of an excellent teacher!

He strove his whole life to be the virtuous gentleman his teaching espoused. He was self-critical and constantly endeavoring to correct perceived deficiencies. He is characterized as gentle, benevolent, respectful, frugal and deferential. Although Confucianism is largely non-violent, his time as a civil servant saw him order several executions that later interpreters had difficulty reconciling.

For unknown reasons he left civil service after a few years and became an itinerant political consultant. This life was arduous, but he is said to have faced it with resolve and acceptance. Along the way he survived two assassination attempts. He eventually returned to Lu, where he largely taught, with a bit of consulting. He had come to think of his work as sanctioned by the highest realities, never lost his love of learning, and continued to strive for self-improvement until his passing.



## The divine in Confucianism

It is clear that Confucius thought the divine was essential to human welfare, and piety was part of a virtuous life. As mentioned above, however, he largely accepted the current notions of his time concerning spiritual matters, while adding little of his own metaphysics. Of course, everyone has slightly different interpretations of such thinking, which we will briefly consider in this essay.

In Confucius's day, an ancient belief system thought of reality as two worlds, the realm of heaven (*tian*) and Earth (*di*). Heaven consisted of many gods and other entities that were available to human beings through divination, and which could even enter and possess individuals. It was believed that this accessibility was both ways and it was important to maintain a harmonious relationship between heaven and earth. On the human side this was preserved through rituals and sacrifices, a principal duty of kings.

During the *Shang* dynasty heaven was envisioned as a royal court similar to those on earth. Although polytheistic, there was one high god, *Shang Di*, who presided over a court of lesser entities (*shen*), whom dealt with humanity. This arrangement was rather business like, and the average person would no more try to form a personal relationship with divine entities, as they would with nobles of earthly courts.

During the Zhou era, heaven began to take on a more complex nature in the minds of the Chinese, one of an overreaching principle or force, but one with a moral dimension. This evolved into the idea of a moral preference by the divine, enforced by a divine will. This was very much an idea that Confucius, in his advocacy of the virtuous life, could embrace. He did, however, promote veneration of the deities, not so much to benefit the gods, but to evoke specific qualities in human beings. The idea of heaven as a unifying power, therefore, was a reality where both gods and men were subject to moral rules. He thought of heaven as moral and wanted humans to be moral, as well. Even so, Confucius believed in free will and felt humans could resist the will of heaven, and therefore its power wasn't absolute.



## Confucianism in the world

It would be safe to say that Confucius saw the mandate of heaven as perfecting life on earth. Having a belief that heaven was on his side in the matter, Confucius set about defining, teaching, and attempting to live the virtuous life. When his students asked him about heaven, he told them you can't understand heaven without first understanding life on earth. When asked about death, he would respond that one must first understand life. The higher is revealed through the lower, is his version of as above, so below.

In fact, much of Confucius's teachings visit themes familiar throughout religious culture. There are moral imperatives that all humans seem aware of, although few follow. Those that would be carried on after his death, had different views on a fundamental question: is man inherently good or evil? Either way, Confucius believed that men can be directed to a virtuous life, which they could perfect if they applied themselves. However, he seemed to favor the idea that man was inherently good. He defined nearly two dozen traits of moral perfection, and in describing how to achieve it suggested using the lives of various sages as models. Central to his teaching was that the past served as a guide and standard for living in the present. This approach was taken to extremes in China in the centuries to follow, and critics point to it for China's lack of progress in early modern history.

## Confucius's version of the Golden Rule: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others."

Among the traits Confucius thought important, perhaps humaneness (*ren*) was most important. Expressions of *ren* included kindness, benevolence, goodness, compassion, and nobility. Unsurprisingly, this led to Confucius's version of the Golden Rule: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others." Love was a complex subject, and Confucius didn't advocate loving everyone equally. In the case of filial piety, a central concept in Chinese culture, we are obligated to love our parents as life givers. This filial love is then extended in a spectrum of lesser intensity to immediate family, to extended family and friends, to a local village, to a province, and on to the whole world.

Confucius characterized many character types, e.g. sage, the good man, the complete man. The one he stressed above others, however, is the gentleman or superior man (*junzi*). Although not the highest ideal of the sage, the *junzi* was ideal for those destined for a political career. Such a person (in Confucius's time invariably a man) obtained a noble character through hard work and self-cultivation. Such a man would be impartial in his dealings, and practice equanimity with respect to all circumstances of his life.

## Six Classic Works of Confucianism: I Ching (the Book of Changes), Classic of Poetry or Book of Songs, Book of Documents or Book of History, Book of Rites, Spring and Summer Annals, The Analects (Sayings of Confucius)

As with any path of virtue or spirituality, many found his way difficult to follow. One entered it knowing one might not obtain the desired state, but the path must be taken for its own sake, and not for any other reason.

## Confucianism, society, and politics

There was in Confucius's time, as in every time, a wide spectrum on theories of governance and the maintenance of social order. Legalism in ancient China thought that a ruler's power should be absolute and regarded the interest of the state paramount. Those interests could legitimately be enforced by violence.

On the other end of the spectrum were the Daoists, who we considered in a previous essay, that believed in a minimum of governance, in which rulers curtailed extravagance, lived simply, and stayed out of other people's business.

Confucius held a middle ground, sharing Legalism's order and hierarchy, but distaining legislation and violence. He believed that governments should exist to promote the moral well-being of all citizens and leaders should exhibit virtue in their own lives. He thought of the legal system as a flawed human enterprise that should be unnecessary in a virtuous culture. He envisioned the virtuous force or power (*de*) to evoke a natural response of kindness (*bao*). When exhibited by a ruler it could transform the whole state.

This idea hinged on everyone living a virtuous life, by any measure contradictory to his time and all of human history. Confucius didn't embrace a democratic form of government. Rulers still ruled, not the people, who were expected to follow the rules. As we mention previously, practicing filiality, was, in his mind, well within the capability of every person, and this love of parents and family should be extended to all of society.



Another important component of governance for Confucius was the practice of ritual (*li*). In the *Shang* and early *Zhou* dynasties, ritual was understood primarily as the performance of sacrifice and divination - simply going through the motions was sufficient. By Confucius's time, *li* came to include the sense of reverence and sincerity on the part of ritual's participants. Confucius saw it a not so much as pleasing divine beings, but to shape the character of people. He also expanded the idea to include manners and etiquette. Ritual was also the glue that connected heaven and earth. Confucius's focus on ritual also demonstrated his attachment to ancient rites that he thought had foster a better society in the past. Restoring past practices would restore harmony without enactments and enforcements of laws.

### **Living Confucianism**

So far, we have discussed the theories of Confucius. It is time to consider how one might foster them in one's daily life. Confucius listed many attributes of a virtuous life (not recorded in his hand, perhaps



compiled by later sages) but left no instruction manual on how to achieve them. A successful practitioner of Confucianism had then to embark on a road of self-discovery through a variety of personal practices. Unlike many religions, there was no church of Confucianism, and if one sought instruction, one had to seek out a teacher. Confucius was a committed learner and encourage continuous, lifelong learning in his students. He saw ignorance as a great barrier to becoming a perfected human being.

Living a virtuous life requires first and foremost a strong commitment, because, like all spiritual paths, it can be quite challenging. The nature of a spiritual path (*dao*) is fraught with failures, a necessary experience to advance. One must, therefore, learn to overcome disappointment and frustration.

Along with ignorance, another practice to overcome was self-centeredness, which is destructive to the interconnection of individuals. This practice included the restraint of desires and the living of a simple life without ostentation or luxury. Confucius also believed a little discomfort kept the mind attentive.

Self-centerless should not be confused with self-awareness which Confucius promoted through the practice of an introspection technique called quiet sitting. Unlike many spiritual traditions that use practices like meditation and contemplation to commune with the divine, this practice focused on critical self-examination and developing the faculty of keen discernment. Such would lead to, among other things, a refinement of listening and speaking skills.

By living a simple life, Confucius didn't intend for people to have a disregard for the material. Rather he thought we should radically engage in the things of the world, but paying attention to all of our activity of life in a practice similar to mindfulness in other traditions. He saw life as one grand ritual and thought every aspect should be attended to as one would a sacred ceremony. It is important to understand that attending to these daily rituals, perhaps initially distasteful and boring, would eventually make such things natural and spontaneous. Thus a person not naturally humble, could, by practicing acts of humility, developed feelings of genuine humbleness.

Although Confucius thought the sophisticated enjoyment of music, poetry, and dance were essential to the virtuous student, he also taught that it could debase and disrupt humanity. It was once again important to develop a keen discretion in how one approached these activities. One way to foster this type of behavior was to surround oneself with friends who continually acted in a moral way.

## Mencius and Xunzi

Mencius and Xunzi represent two of many Confucian philosophers that carried on the tradition after the passing of Confucius. Now they are considered the greatest after Confucius himself. The term philosopher is telling, for as Confucianism became better known, it appeared to many to be more philosophical than theological. Later practitioners of the tradition increasingly left more of a written legacy, which has helped in the understanding of the tradition, but has inevitability colored the original thoughts of Confucius.

Mencius (c. 372-289 BCE) was perhaps the most important Confucian after Confucius himself. Confucius was almost entirely concerned with pragmatic considerations and had little to say philosophically about man's nature. Mencius, however, was much more contemplative, and one of his major questions was whether man was inherently good. His conclusion was that man was innately good. However, failure to nurture this innate goodness could cause it to wither and die. In other words,



Painting of Mengzi by Kanō Sansetsu. Japan, Edo period, 1632, Wikipedia

evil could be created in men through upbringing, educational neglect, and thwarted moral cultivation. He also took Confucius's idea of a heavenly mandate one step further suggesting that heaven has endowed all human beings with virtue, and our proper response is to bring this virtue to fullness.

A hundred years later, Xunzi (c.310-c. after 238 BCE) came to exactly the opposite conclusion. He maintained that human beings were born with a tendency to waywardness, an inclination to act in self-serving and self-pleasing ways – not so much evil as nonmoral, an outgrowth of the basic drive of self-preservation. Although he saw ritual and social etiquette as ways to foster benevolence, he didn't consider them an expression of human nature, but as artificial constructs established to benefit society as a whole. He also thought heaven disinterested in the question of human virtue.

### **The struggle of Confucianism**

The number of identified Confucians today is about 6.1 million. This number is a bit misleading, however, as many Confucian practices remain central to China and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Confucianism heavily influence education and its theories that promoted advancement by merit. For example, the official canon of Confucian classics known as the Wu Jing formed the core curriculum for Chinese education and the basis of civil service exams for 2000 years, until 1911.

Confucianism, however, was hard put to compete with Taoism, Legalism and Buddhism. The latter was particularly adept at incorporating ideals of other religions into its own, and then supplanting them. Confucius, despite its goal of societal harmony, was not a very social religion, as it outsourced many of the normal trappings of religious observance to other outlets of spiritual expression. If Taoism could be too ethereal, Confucianism could be too pragmatic. Thus both were to be outmatched by Buddhism, which offered a full religious experience. Confucianism, therefore, exists without being identified as such in a myriad of other traditions.

One might think that the raise of Communist China would be somewhat compatible with Confucianism, but they would instead portray Confucius and Confucianism as quaint, backward, and antirevolutionary. This built on thinking that had increasingly developed since China's exposure to the West – that China's veneration of the past had made it less effective in the present. The current culture of China seems to be developing a progressivism, not so much as a replacement, but as an extension of traditional practices, and resembles a curious combination of Legalism and Confucianism.

### **Conclusions and Epiphanies**

Despite being a minor religion that many consider not a religion at all, Confucianism brings a great deal to our study. First and foremost, it raises the question of what constitutes a religion, a question that other religions completely ignore. Why did the idea of a supernatural divinity arise universally in diverse human cultures? Was it a evolutionary coping mechanism to self-awareness, or a gift of divine insight given by God?

Our human estate is a delicate balance between cooperation and competition. Our survival and advancement has depended on keeping this balance. History is littered with instances of disastrous imbalance, but in



Imaginary portrait of Xunzi, Qing dynasty(1636–1912), Palace Museum, Wikipedia



some sense the struggle to return to balance has defined our progress. The idea of a divine oversight of our activities appeals both to our fear of divine retribution and desire for divine favor. The very unknowability of notions of heaven and hell adds tension to our self-interest and makes us hedge our bets. Best be virtuous just in case!

Confucius believed it was possible for society to become entirely virtuous and indeed that it was in the not so distant past (about 500 years before his birth). This was mythical, but it raises the question of whether human nature will ever allow an entirely virtuous society. If we are God's children, will our childhood ever be over, when we indeed become more in the image of the divine. Despite the shortcomings of current civilization, it is far better than any other age. Are we making progress, or is it illusionary? Are we nearing another Axial age in religious thinking?

Confucians aren't the only ones that think humans should take more responsibility for their actions, without the fear or favor of the divine being the only driver of such actions. Freemasonry, taking a cue from the Stoics, embodies that hope, as well.

### Further Reading

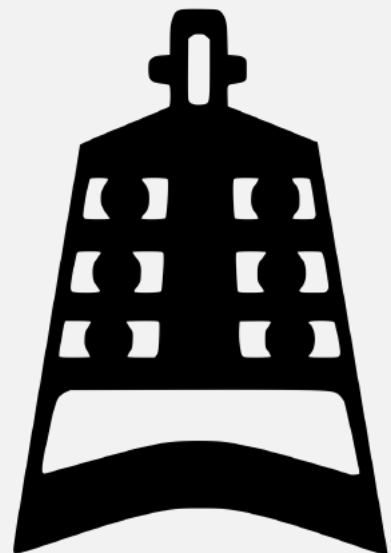
Although Confucianism is now a very minor religion, there are plenty of English books on the subject ranging from the elementary to deep academic studies. On-line encyclopedias such as Wikipedia and Britannica offer excellent essays on the subject, as well.

This essay, like several others in this series, is based on a course offered by Wondrium ([wondrium.com](http://wondrium.com)). This one is entitled: *Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad* by Professor Mark W. Muesse of Rhodes College. It includes a lengthy study guide. Consider this essay my course notes. If you want to go deeper, I recommend starting here. As the name implies this course is broader than just Confucius, comparing four religious progenitors. The section specific to Confucius is composed of eight, half hour sessions.

I highly recommend Wondrium for those interested in continuous learning. You can buy courses individually, but if you are a committed adult learner, consider a low-price subscription that provides access to all offered courses.

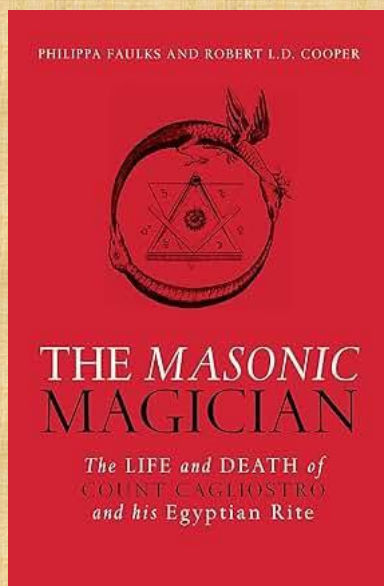


Symbol for Traditional Confucianism



Symbol for Neo-Confucianism  
Wikipedia

## In bibliothecam



### The Masonic Magician The Life and Death of Count Cagliostro and the Egyptian Rite

By

Philipa Faulks and Robert Cooper

There are few characters in the history of Freemasonry as infamous as Giuseppe (Joseph) Balsamo (6/8/1743-8/26/1795), better known as Count Alessandro di Cagliostro. One of the earliest memories I have of our late Grand Master, Earle J. Hino, was of him making fun of the Count. He wasn't alone. Much of Masonic literature and casual conversation characterized him as, at best, a showman, and, at worst, a scoundrel and charlatan. Over the years, though, I've run into some authors who challenge this one-dimensional portrayal of the man. Even Brother Henry Coil, no friend of pretentious Masonry, seemed to give him the benefit of the doubt in a short article in his famous *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*.

Faulks and Cooper in going considerably beyond Coil's opinion, suggest that the Count was a man of many parts. Their book is divided into three major sections, together with a few useful appendices, a glossary, and an extensive bibliography. It is also well indexed.

The first section of about 80 pages considers what is known of the life of Cagliostro. Considering the length of this section, there isn't a vast amount of matter available for this research. Nonetheless, what emerges is a much more sympathetic character. Over the years, I've acquired some knowledge of those involved in esoteric studies throughout history. I've found that there is a bit of a charlatan in many of them. It appears to be a necessity of the times they lived. Alchemists, for example, often received stipends from wealthy aristocracy longing to turn lead to gold. Every so often proof of concept was accomplished in some chemical sleight of hand. Cagliostro undoubtedly played this game, starting with assuming a name guaranteed to get him before the right audiences.

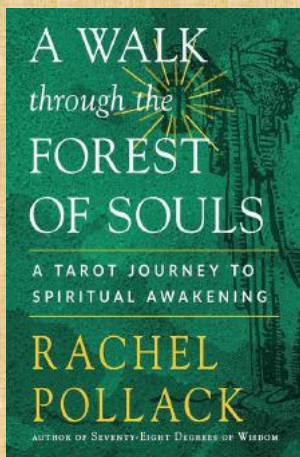
He also emerges, however, as passionate and more than somewhat naïve. The best example of the latter is his ill-advised trip to Rome and the heart of the inquisition, a mistake that cost him his life. He appears to have been happily married and adored his wife, although she was forced to betray him at the hands of the inquisition. He also appears to have held Freemasonry in high regard, and sought largely to improve it, not to take advantage of it or corrupt it.

The second portion of the book reviews early Masonic history. The now familiar history of Freemasonry's likely beginnings in Scotland centered in the person of William Schaw (1550-1602) as the proposed founding father. This is a good review as far as it goes but seems a little out of place in this book and does little to connect Cagliostro to the Masonry of his time.



The final section will be of the most interest to esoteric Masons, as it is devoted to His Egyptian Rite, a curious blend of alchemistic symbolism, and angelic and planetary magic. Coupled to this was a far deeper esoteric interpretation of Masonic symbols than that offered in regular lodges – all in an Egyptian backdrop. Indeed, Cagliostro’s aim was not to replace Masonry so much as to complete it - at least according to his vision. Much of this section is based on found manuscripts of the ritual. Although not in Cagliostro’s handwriting (verified samples exist), the thought is that he dictated it. The ritual itself isn’t very flushed out, but it clearly required lavish furnishings and costumes. There is an excellent discussion of the ritual provided by the authors.

Cagliostro was a contemporary of early Martinists, as well as, Swedenborg and Mesmer, and seemed well grounded in esoteric concepts used by them - many of which survive in modern traditions. I can recommend this books to students of esoteric and Masonic history, but don’t expect any revelations to your spiritual practice. There is nothing in the Egyptian Rite that isn’t found better elsewhere, but there was, I think, a genuine attempt on Cagliostro’s part. If his life hadn’t been cut short by Rome, who knows what it would have become.



## A Walk through the Forest of Souls

By Rachel Pollack

There are many books that will introduce the beginner to the practice of tarot. For the true beginner, Ms. Pollack’s *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: A Tarot Journey to Self-Awareness* may be a better choice (although I still favor Benebell Wen’s *Holistic Tarot* as a first book). This book, though, is for one who, familiar with the basics, wants to know its deeper practices. In doing so, it connects the reader to wide variety of traditions from Kabbalistic to Native American. She uses many different decks, sometimes using a specific deck to delve into a question, and sometimes doing a comparison of two or more decks.

My big take away from the book is the use of tarot to approach big questions in life: is there a God and, if yes, what is its nature? Another might be, what is my place in the universe i.e. why am I here? One can see this type of question is far removed from, “Should I take this job or that one?” Yet it operates in the same way to connect us to an answer not achievable by engaging the intellect alone.

This is more of a collection of essays rather than a text that connects from front to back. I suspect she compiled it from her journals over many years of practice. The writing style is easy to follow even over rough terrain, with a bit of humor, but also conveying a sense of awe in the use of a powerful tool. There is ample references for further reading.

In her introduction she states that the cards help us explore unknown territory - ourselves. For her, the cards become pieces of an infinite collection of stories which are ours to explore. They can, on this basis, inform us on any aspect of our spiritual path.

Recommend for your next step in tarot !



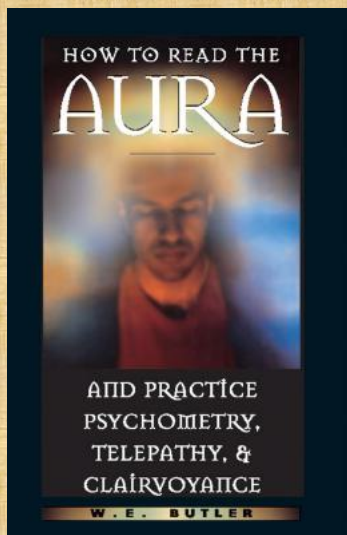
Before beginning this review, I want to reassure anyone who has been missing my series on seminal works of Western Civilization that the series will continue, and that I thank you for your patience as life continues its habit of unpredictability. At a minimum it was a project that was going to take roughly eight years to complete, and it appears as if it will take a bit longer than that now.

If I can complete it before my daughter (now six) graduates high school, I will consider it a win.

That being said, I observed how engaged the room was during my last presentation as soon as we had an opportunity to experiment with what I call the “invisible floating ball.” Reflecting on the appetite we share for something more experiential I thought I would review this book and see if the College desires more. Please make sure to reach out to me and let me know if you are interested in this and I’ll make sure to accommodate the desires of the fratres.

Yours in the M\*\*\*\*\*C\*\*\*\*\*

R.:W.: Walter Cook, VIII<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus



## *How to Read the Aura and Practice Psychometry, Telepathy, & Clairvoyance*

By W.E. Butler

*How to Read the Aura and Practice Psychometry, Telepathy, & Clairvoyance* is a book in four parts, of which I will cover the first, which essentially details the practice of clairvoyance. Clairvoyance is the skill of second sight. This topic is useful to discuss for a variety of reasons, and this book in its somewhat meandering fashion touches on some very important information that lays latent within our studies of the first and second grade.

As Mr. Butler details, it is important to keep in mind that nearly the entire function of the non-physical senses is just that: non-physical. The mechanism in use by the mind takes place in the unconscious. The unconscious mind is aware of the deeper realities at work around us, and usually does not bother us with its goings-on. The reason for that is that our species has evolved to exist in a generally continuous decision-making meditation which is only slightly bothered by the subtle spiritual realities in play. In order for us, as conscious individuals, to perceive with our waking senses the subtle realities around us, we have to build a bridge of trust with our unconscious mind.

The nature of our unconscious mind is its own subject of study, and could easily fill a continuing column in this newsletter in perpetuity. As the subject is so vast, any more explanation will only serve as a distraction, but those interested may whet their appetite with the works of C.G. Jung just to name one corpus of study.

Accepting that it is the unconscious mind that perceives the non-physical world around us, the task at hand is to create a reliable communication to the conscious mind of what the unconscious perceives about what we direct our attention towards. It is a simple, but not easy task.

There are a few pitfalls that must be dealt with in order to make progress. The first is our own eagerness to succeed – the state of mind needed for this work is one of a poised, rather placid state of mind. The emotional reaction of the first few experiences of success is very likely to slingshot one back into normal waking consciousness, and ruin the session. The second pitfall is that of personal issues one has kept cooped up in the unconscious. When the bridge is built between the conscious and unconscious mind, those issues or “complexes” are likely to bubble up and cause a problem. The third pitfall is that of pre-conceived notions. If the conscious mind has already decided what its going to see, then the unconscious will often oblige by showing us what we expect to see. This is a problem as it is hard to learn about this grander vista of reality if we insist on already knowing what is there!

The methods of dispensing with these issues are really more of common sense than any mystical practice. The issue of excitement will be dealt with by repetition and little else. Speaking for myself, I can say that it is harder to stay focused in the correct frame of mind for psychic perception than it is to begin to perceive psychic reality. The only cure for this is to continue the practice beyond the point that success is exciting and get on with further practice. Personal complexes are personal issues that we can work out on our own or perhaps with the aid of trusted friends, or even with a counselor or therapist. It should not be a surprise to the working Rosicrucian that our world can provide difficulties aplenty, and sometimes we may have shelved some emotionally potent something-or-other longer than is prudent due to business or the discomfort necessary for its processing. There is no shame in being reminded that we are all human, even while we reach for the divine. Lastly, preconceived notions can be dispensed with merely by keeping an open mind, and allowing for ourselves to be surprised by what we find and accepting of what we see without judgement. We can figure out what it meant after the fact – see first, puzzle it out later!

The methods of developing this skill should not be unfamiliar to those who attend our College with any frequency. The beginning steps are those which we’ve taught in every practicum for many years:

- Sitting in a comfortable position, seek to ensure a relaxed posture without distracting sensations
- Begin a simple four-fold breath

Following this basic formula, the burgeoning clairvoyant will have provided for himself some manner of black field to gaze upon. The book recommends several, from black mirrors, to concave bowls painted black, to black ink floating on water. The type of instrument used to my mind doesn’t really matter, as long as the attention is focused on something that allows the unconscious mind a blank screen or field to present its images on.

Success in developing this skill will see the practitioner likely proceeding past a stage where images go out and come back into focus. This is due to fatigue of the physical eye and not an aspect of psychic perception. Likewise, staring at anything for long enough will produce fatigue of the rods and cones in the retina which produces negative after-images, and a field of greyish fog which may come and go.

Persisting beyond this is where things get interesting.



As the mind is kept aware of the physical body, the room and so forth, the attention on “seeing” with “nothing to see” eventually brings the unconscious online. It should be noted that the book points out that there are some people with a natural talent for this work, and others who are unsuited for it. Keep in mind this is a skill, like playing the piano. Not everyone can be Mozart. Most, with persistence will be passable. Unfortunately, there are still others who are unsuited for this particular method of perception. Should you find yourself of the latter disposition, rest assured there are plenty of things to explore, including other subtle senses. Despair not.

Those who persist and have the capacity for this work will begin to see dreamlike images of scenes, people, or creatures as varied as the imagination is capable of producing. Should this be something you experience, Mr. Butler explains that a journal of your experiences is valuable to keep. Indeed, the very act of writing in a journal once your session is done (simply give a gentle mental command that this session is over) is an effective grounding technique that helps plug one back into normal life.

In the fullness of time, the clairvoyant will be able to perceive subtle aspects of people and places they encounter in the world, including emotions and thoughts, but this takes quite a lot of practice or talent. I will reiterate that if it is the desire the fratres to continue to look into this subject, let me know. I’m certainly willing to provide more reviews and presentations on the subject, as I find it to be one underserved in our studies.

I look forward to your thoughts at our next meeting!

Until then, I wish you good health and happy holidays!

Yours in the M\*\*\*\*\*C\*\*\*\*\*,

RW Walter Cook, VIII<sup>o</sup> et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

## Future High Council Dates! Mark Your Calendars!



All sessions at  
the  
**Brown  
Hotel,  
Louisville,  
KY**



Check the  
SRICF.org  
website as the  
time approaches  
for information  
on registration  
and program



November 15-16, 2024

November 14-15, 2025

November 13-14, 2026



## **Philologi Societas (in order of initial induction)**

VW Frater Joseph F. Oelgoetz, VII° et Philologus Theoricus\*\*  
VW Frater Philip G. Beith, VII° et Philologus Theoricus \*\*  
RW Frater Gerald T. Coleman, VIII° et Philologus Theoricus  
RW Frater W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC, PJDSM et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Marlon Gayadeen, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater John Comstock, VII° et Philologus Zelator \*  
VW Frater Charles Hancock, VII° et Philologus Theoricus  
RW Frater Robert S. Finley, IX°, KGC et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus \*  
RW Frater Richard J. Powell, VIII° et Philologus Theoricus  
RW Frater Paul Barrera VIII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Clyde Card, VII° et Philologus Philosophus\*  
RW Frater R. Curtiss Montgomery, IX° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater James N. Stoll, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Richard Simpson, VII° et Philologus Zelator\*  
MW Frater William Howard Koon II, IX, KGC et Philologus Magus (Honorary)  
RW Frater Walter E. Cook, VIII° et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Caleb Haines, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater William M. Hodwitz, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
RW Frater Myron J. Deputat, VIII° et Adeptus Exemptus  
VW Frater Frank Rice, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Clint Lewey, VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Steven J. Joyce VII° et Philologus Zelator  
VW Frater Josh Newman, VII° et Philologus Zelator

\* Deceased

\*\* Not now a member

## **Have a need to communicate?**

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS! UPCOMING 2024 CONVOCATIONS**

**Saturday, January 27, 2024  
10AM**

**Next College Convocation  
ZOOM**