

REFLECTIONS ON THE CREED OF PEACE

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“I am guilty of war when I believe other people must think and live as I do.”

The words written above by former Emperor Ralph Maxwell Lewis have inspired Rosicrucians and others for decades. This is one of the twelve statements from Frater Lewis’s “Creed of Peace,” written just after the end of World War II.

In 2004, when we dedicated the Rosicrucian Peace Garden at Rosicrucian Park, we announced the new “Contribution to Peace,” which is based on Frater Lewis’s “Creed of Peace.” Members around the world revised the “Creed of Peace” to be based on positive attributes and ideals, rather than on the more negative terms found in Frater Lewis’s text.

At first I thought that this was an important improvement on the older “Creed of Peace.” Rosicrucians know that energy follows thought, so, of course, we should focus on what we want more of, which in this case is peace, rather than on the ways that we are guilty of war.

Since then, however, my perspective on this has changed. I still highly value the inspiring text of the “Contribution



to Peace.” Striving towards ideals is important in many ways. However, I am not sure that we humans are ready for this more positive approach alone because we haven’t fully accepted the fact that we are still guilty of war sometimes. Our left hand aspires to be peaceful, while our right hand may still be at war. We declare that we are contributing to

peace, when actually, we may still be contributing to war.

For me, Frater Lewis’s “Creed of Peace” holds the mirror up to my face so I can see where I may still be contributing to war or discord or disparity on a personal or more broad level.

For example, we (all of us) are guilty of war when our society consumes a disproportionate percentage of the world’s natural resources. We are guilty of war when we support businesses that harm the environment or disregard human rights. We are guilty of war when we deny people basic civil or human rights through our votes or our silence. And, of course, there are more personal examples in our close relationships and

interactions with others. Until we recognize this, until we fully accept how we may be contributing to war, we are not fully ready to contribute to peace.

I have found that the key for me to be able to see what is in this mirror is non-judgment or compassionate understanding and acceptance of myself. I need to be gentle with myself when examining traits that I may judge to be embarrassing or unacceptable.

When I pause to reflect on why I am acting in a way that is inconsistent with my ideals, it becomes clear that it's because I feel threatened in some way, so I call on one of the many aspects of my "self" or personality to address the situation. I believe I am doing the right thing at the time.

For example, if we behave selfishly, it may be because we don't think there is enough to go around and our survival or well being depend on asserting ourselves, over others. Some people may feel that they are entitled. In other instances, we may be acting through fear, like we did when we were a child and were unable to protect ourselves, although we may be capable of protecting ourselves now.

Most of us can probably think of a situation where afterwards we realized that we over-reacted. For example, we might think that we didn't need to get so angry or to be so afraid in this situation, but things unfolded so quickly or intensely that we reacted habitually. Fear or anger stepped in to protect us, when actually caution or irritation might have been able to handle the situation. And, of course, there are times when fear is the most appropriate response.

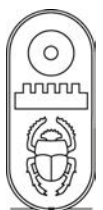
It's the same with denial. Our first reaction in a situation that feels overwhelming may be denial, which is a natural response. We can sincerely thank

"denial" for helping us to cope and then ask ourselves if it's okay for introspection to step in now, as it might be more productive or helpful instead. Then we can determine if we should become more engaged or, if this is a situation that can't be changed (for example, with death), then we can ask that our "acceptance of what is" self steps in. This is usually challenging for me, as the "what is" that caused me to feel overwhelmed often stimulates "fear" to want to step in.

However, through introspection, rather than denial, we can recognize what we can control and what we can't. As the New England minister, Reinhold Nieburh, said as Hitler's armies marched across Europe, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

We are often blind to what aspect of our personality has taken control in the moment and frequently we can only see and understand our behavior when we reflect on the situation afterwards. This may be why the Pythagoreans, Benjamin Franklin, and many other mystics took time each evening to reflect on their actions that day. This helps us to prepare to call on the most helpful aspect of our "self" or personality in situations in the future.

This leads us back to Frater Lewis's masterpiece on self knowledge. I encourage you to meditate a few moments on each of these statements, reflecting honestly on your actual actions in situations in the past, not on your ideals – how you wish that you would have acted. Compassionately search your experiences to see if there have been instances when you were guilty of war.



CREED OF PEACE

I am guilty of war when I proudly exercise my intelligence to the disadvantage of others.

I am guilty of war when I distort other's opinions, which differ from my own.

I am guilty of war when I show disregard for the rights and properties of others.

I am guilty of war when I covet what another has honestly acquired.

I am guilty of war when I seek to maintain my superiority of position by depriving others of their opportunity of advancement.

I am guilty of war if I imagine my kin and myself to be a privileged people.

I am guilty of war if I believe a heritage entitles me to monopolize resources of nature.

I am guilty of war when I believe other people must think and live as I do.

I am guilty of war when I make success in life solely dependent upon power, fame, and riches.

I am guilty of war when I think the minds of people should be regulated by force, rather than by reason.

I am guilty of war when I believe the God I conceive is the one that others must accept.

I am guilty of war when I think that the land of a person's birth must necessarily be the place of his or her livelihood.

The true articles of peace cannot be legislated but are drawn up in the personal aspirations and conduct of the millions of little people. When all people will frankly perceive their common dependence, an understanding will emerge that will transcend the barriers of time and space, creed, and race.

Once we fully understand this then perhaps we can focus on the "Contribution to Peace" alone. Until then it may be best to continue to awaken our self knowledge through Ralph Lewis's "Creed of Peace," while aspiring to the ideals expressed in the "Contribution to Peace."