

# **ROSICRUCIANISM**

## **The Fraternity of the Rose Cross**

### **Council of Nine Muses**

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A cursory glance at the question of, “What is Rosicrucianism?” quickly leads one to be struck at how complex the subject really is. For, as much as Freemasonry has been known over the years as a secretive order, the Rosicrucian Order appears to be one much more secretive and mysterious. Dating from as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is a legendary and secretive order generally associated with the symbol of the Rose Cross, also found in certain rituals beyond “Craft” or “Blue Lodge” Masonry.

The Rosicrucian movement first officially surfaced in 1614 in Cassel, Germany, with the publication of *Fama Fraternitatis, des Loblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes* (The Declaration of the Worthy Order of the Rosy Cross). The name “Rosicrucian” is thought to be derived from the symbol, a combination of a single rose upon a passion cross. Legend holds that the order was initiated with one Christian Rosenkreuz, born in 1378 in Germany. He was of good birth, but, being poor, was compelled to enter a monastery at a very early period of his life. At the age of one hundred years, he started with one of the monks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher. He visited Damascus, Egypt, and Morocco, where he studied under the masters of the occult arts. Once he crossed over into Spain, however, his reception was not a terribly warm one and he determined to return to Germany to provide his own countrymen with the benefit of his studies and knowledge, and to establish a society for the cultivation of the sciences which he had studied during his travels. Selecting three of the monks of the old convent in which he was educated, he imparted to them his knowledge, under a solemn vow of secrecy. He commanded them to commit his teachings to writing, and to form a magic vocabulary for the benefit of future students. They were also taught the science of medicine, and ministered to all who came to them in need. With the demands of their duties continuing to grow, Father Christian, as he was called, chose to enlarge the society with the initiation of four new members. A lodge, called the House of the Holy Spirit, was constructed in order to provide a place for the society to meet.

When the time arrived for these eight men to separate and begin the promulgation of their teachings, they bound themselves by six rules:

1. To make no public profession of superior knowledge, and to heal the sick free of charge.
2. To wear no special garment, but to dress according to the custom of the country in which they lived.
3. To return to the House of the Holy Spirit on a certain day each year, for the purpose of mutual help and instruction.
4. To seek a worthy person to succeed each member.
5. To adopt the letters R.C. as their sign and mark.
6. To keep the existence of the Fraternity a secret for a period of one hundred years.

At the age of one hundred and six years, Father Christian Rosenkreuz died, and was buried by the two brethren who had remained with him, but the place of his burial remained a secret. The society continued to exist, always consisting of eight members. There was a tradition among them that at the end of one hundred and twenty years the grave of Father Rosenkreuz was to be discovered, and the brotherhood no longer remain a secret. About that time the brotherhood began to make some alterations in their building, and a secret door was discovered in the House of the Holy Spirit. When the door was opened it disclosed a burial vault with seven sides, each five feet broad and eight feet high. In the center of the vault stood an altar, beneath which lay the perfectly preserved body of Christian Rosenkreuz.

Though the *Fama Fraternitatis* was initially published anonymously, it has generally been attributed to the philosopher and theologian, John Valentine Andreä. It is thought that Andreä, along with thirty others, had sent forth the *Fama Fraternitatis*, in the hope that they might discover the true lovers of wisdom, and that this group was the true basis for the founding of the Rosicrucian Society. Andreä, a German Lutheran pastor, had envisioned a society for the reformation of social life – and he, with or without assistance from his associates, is supposed to have created the legend and published the documents describing it. A few have seen Rosicrucianism as a complete hoax. Most believe, however, that either Andreä formed the order to combine his interest in esotericism and the reformation of society, which the documents promoted, or, more likely, that he wanted the documents to catalyze others to become involved in the Rosicrucian work.

Although the existence of the Fraternity was not made public until 1614, the influence of the Brothers was felt long before that time. In his *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, Elias Ashmole states that Queen Elizabeth was cured of smallpox by a member of the Order, and that the Earl of Norfolk was healed of leprosy by a Rosicrucian physician who may have been Robert Fludd, a noted physician of the time. Between 1603

and 1625 several important books appeared in which the Fraternity was mentioned, the most important being the *Apologia* of Robert Fludd, which was published in 1616 and is still preserved in the British Museum. In 1623 there were said to be only thirty-six Rosicrucians in Europe, scattered about in six different countries, but by the end of the seventeenth century, many prominent men were identified with the Rosicrucians.

One of the aims of the Rosicrucians was to combine the various branches of Occultism into a whole. Many of the Brothers were alchemists, seeking for the invisible “spirit” in inorganic as well as organic matter. Alchemy, a form of speculative thought, is perhaps best known as attempting to transform base metals into gold, and for trying to discover a cure for all diseases and a way of extending the human life span. It is in fact a system of thought, related to broad disciplines including natural philosophy, medicine, astrology, metallurgy, and hermetic thinking. While modern science may have proven many of their theories untenable, it cannot be said that these men did not seek the true betterment of the world in which they lived.

One year after the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the *Confessio Fraternitatis* was also published at Cassel, Germany, again by an unknown author and, this time, in Latin rather than German. It repeated the message of the *Fama*, emphasizing a new age, the hope of a reformed world with less papal tyranny, and the mysterious and powerful knowledge of the Rosicrucian brotherhood.

A further year later, in 1616, a third manifesto was published, this time in Strasbourg, Germany, entitled *Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreuz* (The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz). In this manuscript, Christian Rosenkreuz himself narrates the text and describes his experiences as a guest –and not the bridegroom, as the title suggests – at the wedding of a king and queen who live in a magnificent castle. The whole event develops into a type of initiation, where the guests are subjected to many tests and some are killed and revived again, due to a special alchemical operation. This publication has many fascinating and unusual symbols, many of which are still being studied today. But after the publication of these three compositions, controversy arose in Germany. Some people wanted to join; others claimed to be members; and soon so much material was in existence, that the entire matter became very confusing.

The Rosicrucians denied the ordinary chemical theory that the fuel that nourishes a flame must of necessity be converted into by-products, declaring that the “spiritual essence” of liquid gold can be made to absorb its oily humidity, thus continuously feeding its own flame. “The Hermetic gold,” said Robert Fludd, “is the outflow of the sunbeam, or of light suffused invisibly into the body of the world. Light is sublimated gold, and gold is thus the deposit of light, which of itself generates.”

Many Rosicrucians claimed to possess the secret of prolonging Life, a possibility which no Theosophist would deny. If nature is able continually to renew her wasted energies by absorption from the source of energy, why should not man do the same? If the surface waters of certain mineral springs can restore physical vigor, is it illogical to say that if we

could get the first runnings from the natural fluids that spring from the earth, we might perhaps find that the “fountain of youth” is no fairy tale after all.

The Rosicrucians were also known as the “Fire-Philosophers,” and among all the mystics and Kabbalists of the Middle Ages they alone gave out the true interpretation of the word *Fire*. As the esoteric teachings say, “Fire is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven as on Earth, of the ONE FLAME. It is Life and Death, the origin and the end of every material thing. It is divine ‘SUBSTANCE’.” The Rosicrucians postulated one eternal, boundless and limitless Cause, which they defined as *Darkness*, the root and basis of light. Robert Fludd described it as “Divinity latent or at rest,” declaring that “Darkness adopted illumination in order to make Itself visible,” and that only after the active period of manifestation began did Light *and* Darkness appear.

“After the active movement from the center began, the radiation or interchange of Light and Darkness produced Spirit and Matter. And in the relative counterbalancing the diversity of things arose. From these rudiments of being the archetypal scheme arranged itself, which, though One in essence, was triple in manifestation.” (Robert Fludd)

Fire is a triple principle. Esoterically, it contains a visible flame (the Body), and invisible, astral fire (the Soul), and Spirit. Its four aspects are heat (life), light (mind), electricity (Kamic, or molecular powers), and the synthetic Essence, *beyond Spirit*, or the radical cause of its existence and manifestation.

Every material form, said Robert Fludd, contains an “eager fire” or “jewel of light,” the development of which brings about its evolution.

“Thus all minerals, in this spark of light, have the rudimentary possibility of plants and growing organisms; thus all plants have rudimentary sensitives which might (in the ages) enable them to perfect and transmute into locomotive new creatures; thus all plants pass off into more distinguished highways of independent, completer advance, allowing their original spark of light to expand and thrill with more vivid force.”

One of the fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* of the Rosicrucians describes all Souls as “sparks” of the Universal Over-Soul. But whereas the “spark of life” in the lower kingdoms evolves unconsciously to itself through natural impulse, the “three-fold Flame” of the human may hasten its evolution through its own self-induced and self-devised efforts. As the Rosicrucians taught,

“Although the individual human monad, with spiritual self-consciousness and self-knowledge, may arrive at that state of perfection in the slow course of its evolution, extending perhaps over millions of years, nevertheless there is no necessity to wait until nature may, perhaps slowly and unaided, accomplish her object, but she may be assisted by the individual will and effort of those who know how to proceed.”

The method by which this may be accomplished was outlined in the Rosicrucian maxim: *To know, to will, to dare and to keep silent.*

To *know* is the first step, and this knowledge includes an understanding of the laws governing the visible and invisible universe, and involves the study of the complete constitution of nature and of man. Knowledge brings power, and power – if it is to be of any practical value – must be applied. The application of knowledge requires a conscious and deliberate use of *will*, which, to be effective, must always work in perfect harmony with the Universal Will. The great Will of Nature works for the good of all, and the individual who would blend his own will with the Universal Will must *dare* to practice good alone. But power, once it has been acquired, may be used for either good or evil purposes, Therefore the Rosicrucians taught that power should be given only to those who have been sufficiently tested to prove that it would not be misapplied. Their fourth requirement, therefore, was to *remain silent* about their own powers and knowledge with those with whom it was not expedient to speak.

The *Instructions* of the Rosicrucians date from the year 1675, and begin with a warning to the candidate never to use his knowledge for selfish purposes. They inform him that the Brothers of the Rosy Cross have already shown the “Way” to many peoples in many languages, and deplore the fact that their efforts have often been misunderstood and their teachings perverted. Then, in the form of an allegory, the candidate is given a description of the “Way” and is told how it may be found.

For one hundred years after these *Instructions* were written, little is heard of Rosicrucian activities in Europe. Today, there are a number of different Rosicrucian organizations, most of which have as their goal the preservation of the Rosicrucian theosophy. One of the largest is the Rosicrucian Fellowship, founded by Max Heindel (1865-1919) in 1907. Heindel, born Carl Louis Von Grasshoff, was an engineer whose interest in the occult led him to the Theosophical Society shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century. The Society was successful in establishing a few small groups, but the majority of its efforts have been through various mail order courses it offers in astrology and the occult.

The best known of the several Rosicrucian groups in America, the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, or A.M.O.R.C., was formed by Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939), a writer, artist, and occultist living in New York City. During the early part of the twentieth century, he made contact with a number of occultists, and was initiated into a Rosicrucian order in France in 1909. Returning to the United States, he pulled together a group of interested occultists and formally organized the A.M.O.R.C. in 1915. In 1927, headquarters were established in San Jose, and eventually included the Rose-Croix University, a Planetarium, and the Rosicrucian Research Library. The most well-known structure, the Egyptian Museum, has received a certain acclaim and has become a popular tourist attraction in the area. The A.M.O.R.C. has spread throughout the world and has groups in most non-Communist countries.

In 1867, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia was founded by Robert Wentworth Little (1840-1878) in Aldermanbury, London. This was derived from the Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia, to which Brother Little and Brother William James Hughan had been admitted and became very active. The society requires all aspirants for membership to declare a belief in the fundamental principles of the Trinitarian Christian faith, and is further limited to members of Masonic lodges in amity with the Grand Lodge of England. Rather than attempting to further the principles of the original Rosicrucian Order, it attempts to imbue in its members a desire for intellectual research, particularly relating to the mysteries of the ages, ancient religions, and the like.

More to our interest, the Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (S.R.I.C.F.) was founded in Pennsylvania in 1879 by a group of three Philadelphia Masons who had traveled to England in 1878 and were initiated into the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia at the college at York. Under the authority of the Society in Scotland, three Colleges were chartered within the United States and the S.R.I.C.F. was formally formed on September 21, 1880, with Charles E. Meyer serving as the first Supreme Magus. Not a group desiring to greatly increase its membership, it nevertheless has grown in recent years and now has active colleges in a majority of the fifty United States.

Masonic Rosicruciansism was originated as an alternative activity for Masons, and not really in the same vein as the activities of the non-Masonic Rosicrucian groups. While organized in similar manner and with similar governing structure, the Masonic groups tend to focus on a desire for intellectual awareness and research into the esoteric philosophies of past civilizations, particularly as relating to the ancient religions of the world, eastern philosophies, and the mysteries of the ages. We are fortunate that the American group has been led some nine years by such a wise and energetic individual as the Secretary of Nine Muses Council No. 13, M.: W.: Thurman C. Pace, Jr. It will be of interest to all to observe what the future might hold as this group continues its search for further enlightenment and knowledge.