

AMORC

THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

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In this excerpt from his book Rosicrucian History and Mysteries, Christian Rebisse describes some of the more recent history of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.



After World War II, Emperor Ralph M. Lewis (1904-1987) reorganized the activities of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis. Under his direction, Grand Lodges and Lodges were established in most countries of the world. In keeping with the wishes of H. Spencer Lewis, he proceeded with a revision of the teachings intended for the members. At the same time, he wrote a large number of articles concerning esotericism and philosophy, as well as many noteworthy books, such as *The Sanctuary of Self* (1948) and *Essays of a Modern Mystic* (1962). During Ralph Lewis's administration, he traveled all

over the world to meet members of the Order and its directors, notably during Rosicrucian conventions. On January 12, 1987, he left this world, after having worked for forty-eight years in the service of the Rose-Croix. He left us with memories of a cultivated man, an inspired philosopher, and a great humanist.

In 1990, Christian Bernard, who at that time was the Grand Master of the French-language jurisdiction, was unanimously elected to the office of Emperor. Having worked for more than twenty years in serving this jurisdiction, he now devoted his experience to the Order as a whole. Under his direction, AMORC has



Emperor Ralph Lewis and future Emperor Christian Bernard, then Grand Master of the French Grand Lodge, 1983.

become increasingly internationalized, and its teachings have been revised once more, in keeping with the necessary rule that they always be kept up to date so as to respond to the evolution of consciousness and thinking.

The Teachings of AMORC

Concerning the teachings of AMORC, and without entering into details that have no place in a book that is primarily concerned with Rosicrucian history, we will limit ourselves to stating that they take the form of monographs that cover twelve degrees of material. They generally deal with the great themes of the Tradition, including those of the origins of the universe; the nature of time and space; the laws of matter, life, and consciousness; the nature of the human soul and its spiritual evolution; the mysteries of death, the afterlife, and reincarnation; traditional symbolism; and the science of numbers. To these topics are added practical experiments devoted to learning such fundamental mystical techniques as mental creation, meditation, prayer, and spiritual alchemy.

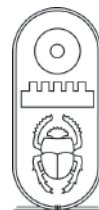
As AMORC favors freedom of consciousness, its teachings are not dogmatic or sectarian in character. They are proposed to members as the basis for reflection and meditation, with the aim of passing on to them a traditional knowledge that contributes to their spiritual unfoldment. Thus, the ultimate goal of initiatic development is to reach the *Rose-Croix* state. It is important to emphasize here that the words *Rosicrucian* and *Rose-Croix* do not have the same meaning in AMORC. The first designates an individual who studies the Order's teachings and philosophy, whereas the second indicates an individual who, at the end of this study, has attained perfection, in the sense of being wise in his or her judgments and behavior. It is to this state of wisdom that every Rosicrucian aspires.

Along with the written instructional material, AMORC perpetuates an oral instruction that may be obtained by attending the organization's Lodges. Although attending the Lodges is not mandatory, they are a useful complement to the Rosicrucian study, in the sense that they favor the ritualistic aspect of Rosicrucianism and serve the framework of collective study. It should also be noted that AMORC initiations, in their most traditional form, are conferred in these Lodges. It can be said that these initiations bring the Rosicrucian quest to its perfection.

It should be mentioned that since the beginning of the twentieth century AMORC has sponsored a university that is now known throughout the world as *Rose-Croix University International* (RCUI). Formed primarily of Rosicrucians specializing in some particular field of knowledge, this university serves as a framework of research carried out in disciplines as diverse as astronomy, ecology, Egyptology, computer science, medicine, music, psychology, physical science, and esoteric traditions. As a general rule, the result of such research is communicated only to members of the Order, but RCUI also holds conferences and seminars that are open to the public. It also publishes books.

AMORC in the World

In the modern era, AMORC has expanded throughout the world and is composed of approximately twenty jurisdictions traditionally called "Grand Lodges," most of which cover all the countries where one language is spoken. All are part of a collective entity bearing the traditional name of the "Supreme Grand Lodge." The Order as a whole is directed by a Supreme Council that is composed of the Emperor and all the Grand Masters of the world, each of whom is



elected to his or her office by a mandate renewable every five years. This Council convenes on a regular basis to oversee the activities of the Order, both on the jurisdictional level and on a worldwide level. Each Grand Master enjoys the same prerogatives as the others, and each Grand Lodge has the same ranking as the others.

The Fourth Rosicrucian Manifesto

In keeping with its motto: “The greatest tolerance in the strictest independence,” AMORC is independent of all religions and all political systems. However, it is interested in the evolution of the world. That is why it has expressed its position on the state of humanity in drafting a manifesto entitled *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*. Dated March 20, 2001, this text was made public by Christian Bernard on August 4, 2001, at the world convention held in Göteborg, Sweden. This manifesto constitutes an important event in the history of Rosicrucianism, so much so that it was published simultaneously in twenty languages. Whereas the three Rosicrucian manifestoes of the seventeenth century were primarily addressed to an intellectual, political, and religious elite, the *Positio*, which may be considered as the fourth Rosicrucian manifesto, is meant for the public at large. It launched an appeal to all those who, all around the world, are concerned about the meaning of human destiny and the fate of humanity.

In the foreword, AMORC makes explicit the reasons motivating the publication of the *Positio*:

History repeats itself and regularly re-enacts the same events, but generally on a broader scale. Thus, almost four centuries after the publication of the first three manifestos, we notice that the entire world, and Europe in particular, is facing an unprecedented existential crisis in all spheres: political,

economic, scientific, technological, religious, moral, artistic, etc. Moreover, our planet—the environment in which we live and evolve—is gravely threatened, elevating in importance the relatively recent science of ecology. Certainly, present-day humanity is not faring well. This is why, faithful to our Tradition and our Ideal, we, the Rosicrucians of today, have deemed it advisable to address this crisis through this *Positio*.

Although it highlights the crucial problems facing humanity at the dawn of the third millennium, the fourth manifesto does not in any way invoke ideas of an approaching doomsday or apocalypse. Rather, it reports on the world situation and brings to the fore those problems and trends which, according to the Rosicrucians, menace Earth in the near future. According to the Rosicrucians, the crisis confronting humanity has arisen because modern societies are dominated by individualism and materialism. Thus, the *Positio* appeals primarily to humanism and spirituality. At the same time, the manifestos emphasizes the need for an individual and collective regeneration of all humanity:

In this transitional period of history, the regeneration of humanity seems to us more possible than ever before because of the convergence of consciousness, the generalization of international exchanges, the growth of cross-cultural fertilization, the world wide coverage of news, as well as the growing interdisciplinary movement among the different branches of learning. But we think that this regeneration, which must take place both individually and collectively, can only come about by favoring eclecticism and its corollary, tolerance.

Among the key ideas expressed in the fourth Rosicrucian manifesto may

be noted the unqualified condemnation of totalitarian ideologies—of which Rosicrucians themselves have been the victims—and the blacklisting perpetrated by political systems based on a single way of thinking. For Rosicrucians, if democracy remains the best form of government, “the ideal in this regard would be for each nation to help promote the emergence of a government bringing together the personalities most capable of governing the affairs of state.” We also note throughout the *Positio* a desire to reaffirm the humanism distinctive to Rosicrucians. Thus we read:

...each human being is an elementary cell of a single body—that of all humanity. By virtue of this principle, our conception of humanism is that all humans should have the same rights, be given the same respect, and enjoy the same freedoms, regardless of the country of their origin or the nation in which they live.

In another realm, that of spirituality, AMORC ponders in the *Positio* the fate of the great religions, and even lets it be understood that they are fated to disappear in favor of a universal religion. For what is properly called Rosicrucian spirituality, the fourth manifesto defines it in this way:

It is founded, on the one hand, on the conviction that God or the Divine exists as an absolute Intelligence having created the universe and all that

it contains, and on the other hand on the certainty that a human being possesses a soul that emanates from the Divine. Better yet, we think that the Divine is manifested in all of Creation through laws that humans must study, understand, and respect for our greatest good.

While this spiritualistic humanism may seem utopian, it is precisely what AMORC calls for, recalling that Plato, in the *Republic*, sees the form of ideal society in Utopia. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the *Positio* ends with a text deliberately given the title of “Rosicrucian Utopia,” placed under the auspices of the “God of all beings, God of all life.”

The *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* continues the lineage of the Rosicrucian manifestos published in the seventeenth century. We may even say that it constitutes their continuation beyond time and space. As such, it now forms an integral part of the Rosicrucian Tradition and builds a bridge between the Rosicrucians of yesteryear and those of today. Furthermore, since its publication this fourth manifesto has been the object of comments along these lines, on the part of historians of esotericism. Let us mention one in particular: Antoine Faivre, who has written. “It will certainly remain as an outstanding document in the history of Rosicrucianism.”

