

The Rosicrucian Impulse:

The Rosicrucian Impulse: Magic, Mysticism, and Ritual

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In the early years of the seventeenth century, the people of Europe began to realize that they were faced with an enigma. When a series of intriguing manuscripts began showing up in Germany, the public's imagination was captivated with strange stories of one Christian Rosencruetz and his mysterious Rosicrucian Brotherhood, a secret society of Christian mystics and adepts that worked for the betterment of mankind, studied the arts of alchemy, Hermeticism, and Qabalah, and veiled themselves in symbol and allegory. The first of these manuscripts, circulated privately since 1610 and printed in 1614, was the *Fama Fraternitatis*,<sup>1</sup> which described the life of Christian Rosencruetz (or C.R.C.) and his travels and in the Middle East where he gained much knowledge in the esoteric sciences. The *Fama* also gave an account of the foundation and aims of C.R.C.'s Rosicrucian Fraternity and the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the miraculous discovery of Rosencruetz's tomb, one-hundred and twenty years after his death. On the heels of the *Fama*, the manuscripts of the *Confessio Fraternitatis*<sup>2</sup> and the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencruetz*<sup>3</sup> were soon to follow.

The *Confessio* continued the same basic message of the *Fama* and described the profound knowledge possessed by C.R.C. and the Rosicrucian brotherhood, although its pronouncements were even more daring, vigorous, and controversial.

The *Chemical Wedding* was a lively story of Christian Rosencruetz's allegorical exploits in the field of alchemy, containing all the ingredients of a good seventeenth-century fantasy—more of a novel than a manifesto.

These three manuscripts taken together clearly established the character of the brotherhood as a religious Order with strong Protestant leanings. Poverty, humility, the practice of good works, and the healing of the sick were stressed. The foundation of the Order's teachings were the Christian Gospels, but these teachings were supplemented and enhanced by Hermetic and Neoplatonic doctrines. However, the exact teachings of the Rosicrucians were only hinted at and not revealed in the manifestos, and the sense of mystery they instilled was increased by the author's anonymity. What made the manifestos so enchanting to some and odious to others was the idea of a secret organization of spiritual masters who possessed unique, spiritual powers and a vast knowledge of esoteric wisdom.

Fervid interest in the inscrutable brotherhood was immediate. So was condemnation of the Rosicrucians on the part of those who saw the brotherhood as a threat to the established political

and religious order. Passionately sought after by would-be initiates, the fraternity remained ever elusive. But the impulse that spawned the manifestos was contagious, and the Fama's Utopian vision of an enlightened group of mystics gave rise to various Orders styling themselves after the Rosicrucian teachings. For nearly four centuries after the manifestos first appeared, our fascination with all things Rosicrucian continues. But in the search for the origins of Rosicrucianism, just as for Freemasonry and the Knights Templar, historical fact and romantic fiction often go hand-in-hand in the public's imagination.

In his book on *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*, A. E. Waite suggested that there were three classes of Rosicrucian thinkers; those who consider the story of Christian Rosencreutz and the manner in which he founded the Rosicrucian Brotherhood as portrayed in the *Fama Fraternitatis* as historically accurate, those who regard the same as pure mythology, and those who regard the legend of Rosencreutz as fiction, but nevertheless believe the Rosicrucians, as a Secret Society, do indeed, exist.<sup>4</sup> The legendary history of those elusive Rosicrucians, replete with stories of mysterious adepts, arcane wisdom, true "spiritual" alchemy, secret meetings of initiates, and mysterious powers, has certainly attracted and intrigued many over the centuries, from true seekers after knowledge to charlatans hoping to cash in on the Rosicrucian craze.

Fervently believing in the enigma, some scoured the German countryside to find actual location of Christian Rosencreutz's burial place. Dr. Robert W. Felkin, a member of the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn and a co-founder of a G.D. offshoot known as the *Stella Matutina*, went off to search for C.R.C.'s tomb in 1914. Felkin never found what he was seeking and very nearly missed escaping from Germany at the outbreak of the First World War. Such was the allure of the riddle.

### Pre-Rosicrucian Influences

The Rosicrucian manifestos did not just appear out of thin air, of course. They were a product of, and a reaction to, their time and place. The esoteric climate of Europe in general and Germany in particular was beneficial to their creation. In the years prior to the publication of the manifestos, there was a great interest in esoteric subjects on the part of many prominent intellectuals of the day. With the Dark Ages behind them, Renaissance scholars began a fresh examination of the wisdom of the ancient world, and therein they discovered forgotten gems of knowledge, which they polished and placed in new settings. These various jewels of wisdom are collectively known as the Western Esoteric Tradition.

In an address to the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, published in 1915, Dr. William Wynn Westcott, a prominent Freemason and founder of the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn, stated that:

“We must remember that Rosicrucianism itself was ‘no new thing’ but only the revival of still earlier forms of Initiation, and was a lineal descendant of the Philosophies of the Chaldean Magi, of the Egyptian priests, of the Neo-Platonists, of the Hermetists of Alexandria, of the Jewish Kabalists and of Christian Kabalists such as Raymond Lully<sup>5</sup> and Pic de Mirandola.”<sup>6</sup>

These “earlier forms” of initiation and knowledge have always attracted the interest of the open-minded. Gnosticism, a quasi-Christian movement that flourished throughout the Mediterranean world during the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., was one of these. Derived from the Greek word *gnostikos*, meaning “one who has gnosis” (“knowledge”), the knowledge emphasized by the Gnostics was an esoteric spiritual knowledge that could only come from personal and direct revelation from the divine, not from any outside institution or doctrine. This knowledge only came to a select number of people. The two major branches of Gnosticism were Sethian or Jewish Gnosticism, and Valentinian or Christian Gnosticism. Although the term “Gnostic” is used to cover a variety of groups and sects who held diverse beliefs, Gnostics primarily believed in a fundamental dualism between the spiritual world of the highest transcendent God and the material world of an evil creator god or demiurge who desires to keep mankind imprisoned in a world of matter. The transcendent God was believed to intercede in the material world by offering his followers a means by which they could attain gnosis—by providing a redeemer or savior. In Valentinian Gnosticism, Jesus Christ was the main redeemer and source of revelation. Some of the early church fathers, including Origen and Clement of Alexandria, were inspired by Gnostic sources, but the main body of the church fought against Gnosticism in all its forms.

Neoplatonism was the last great school of Greek philosophy. Founded in the third century A.D. by Plotinus, Neoplatonism dominated Greek thought until the sixth century, A.D. It was heavily influenced by the principles of Gnosticism and the doctrines of the classical Greek philosopher, Plato. Among its major tenets were the ideas that: God is completely beyond all human knowledge or definition; the world is the result of progressive emanations from God; the soul of man is immortal and incorruptible; the objective of man is to return to God; and the way back to God is through contemplation of the divine, for reason alone will not satisfy the human soul.

One important Syrian Neoplatonist, Iamblichus (d. 326 A.D.), went beyond Plotinus’ idea that contemplation of God alone could lead man back to the divine source, by stressing the practice of theurgy (“god-working” or “divine action”). Theurgists emphasized salvation of the soul and union with the transcendent God by through active invocation of the divine, and through ritual magic or theurgic rites that are empowered by the celestial gods through the correct knowledge and use of symbolism and correspondences. According to Iamblichus:

“..the great herd of humanity is subject to nature, is governed by natural powers...and accepts for itself the order of things which are brought about to completion by fate. ... But there are a small number who, using a certain power of the mind that surpasses nature, are released from nature and

are led to the separate and unmixed Nous (divine or universal mind), and at once they become superior to the powers of nature.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition to its focus on the soul’s quest for union with the divine, the emphasis on Pythagorean mathematics, music, and proportion, also present in Neoplatonism, held great interest for the later Renaissance scholars.

Gnostic and Neoplatonic writings influenced the early works of Hermeticism, a body of knowledge attributed to an ancient Egyptian priest-magician known as Hermes Mercurius Trismegistos or “Hermes the Thrice-Great” named after and envisioned as a combination of Hermes, the Greek messenger god, and Thoth, the Egyptian god of magic and wisdom. Hermes Trismegistos, is credited with writing forty-two books collectively known as the Hermetic literature, that deal with esoteric subjects. These books, which include The Emerald Tablet and the Divine Pymander (or Poimandres), describe the creation of the universe, the soul of humanity, and the way to achieve spiritual rebirth.

There were actually two classes of Hermetic literature, obviously not written by the same person. The first more popular and practical type, which dates to the 3rd century B.C., deals with ancient sciences such as the practice of astrology, alchemy, the secret or magical properties of plants and gemstones otherwise known as the system of occult correspondences. The second more “learned” type, which dates from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., is comprised of several books about religious philosophy and theurgy. Most important among these books are the Corpus Hermeticum and the Asclepius. However, both types of Hermeticism, popular and learned, shared the same philosophical root, behind which is the idea that matter is an essential (although not necessarily evil) part of creation. Man must comprehend, control, and manipulate matter in order for his spirit to rise beyond the material or physical realm. It is this aspect of the Hermetic writings that became the foundation of alchemy—sometimes referred to the “Hermetic Art.”

Although the Hermetic books were not markedly different from other contemporary texts on philosophy, these works became extremely important because of the high position given to them by later Renaissance thinkers. They were also judged to be acceptable to the church for nearly 1500 years because many of the spiritual ideas embraced by the books were very similar to Christian principles. Thinking that the Hermetic books were much older than they actually were, church officials thought that they were the work of an enlightened ancient pagan who envisioned the forthcoming Christian truths. In the mind of the Renaissance philosopher, Hermes was a real person, who, along with Zoroaster and Moses, was thought of as one of the great teachers—the *prisci theologi* (“pristine theologians”) who had foreshadowed the teachings of Christ.

Of the various philosophies discussed so far, none is more important to the teachings of the Western Esoteric Tradition and the development of Rosicrucianism than the Qabalah, the mystical philosophy of the Hebrews. The exact origins of the Qabalah are lost to time, but the primary development of the system was initiated by the Jewish scholars of medieval Spain. Qabalah or “tradition” is a complex philosophy that includes ideas on the origin of the cosmos, the mind and essence of God, and the relationship that exists between God and man. The primary glyph of the Qabalah is a diagram of ten spheres or Sephiroth, said to be the outward emanations of God, which extend down into all things in creation, even into the internal makeup of humanity. Qabalah also considers the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to be divine, and all manner of correspondences and properties are assigned to them. The Qabalistic teachings include a method of reading the Hebrew language as a numerical cipher. Thus, the Hebrew scriptures can be interpreted by Qabalists who know how to extract the hidden or occult meanings of Biblical words and phrases. In addition, the Qabalah provides mystical techniques and spiritual exercises for accessing higher realms of reality and communication with the divine.

These were the primary traditions that were unearthed and explored by Renaissance scholars—Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Qabalah. But all traditions must be invigorated by individuals who work to maintain them. Here we shall briefly examine some of the more important figures in the Western Esoteric Tradition.

Italian philosopher and theologian Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), was commissioned by Cosimo de Medici to translate the writings of Plato and the Corpus Hermeticum of Hermes Trismegistos. De Medici, a wealthy and influential figure in Florence, was keenly interested in Neoplatonic and Hermetic literature, and as a result, he founded the Platonist Academy of Florence and hired leading scholars of the day, the most prominent being Ficino, to carry out the work of the academy. Ficino’s influence permeated European thought for the next two centuries.

Ficino’s student, Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), was the first Christian scholar to use Qabalistic doctrine in support of Christian theology. In his book *Nine Hundred Conclusions*, Pico employed Neoplatonic and Qabalistic ideas to explore the characteristics that the three major monotheist religions held in common, and for that he received the condemnation of the church. Pico is quoted as saying that, “No science yields greater proof of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Qabalah.”<sup>8</sup>

Germany proved to be fertile soil for esoteric thinkers. Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) was an avid student of Pico della Mirandola’s works. His defense of Hebrew literature helped galvanize the intellectual forces that preceded the Reformation, and he is sometimes referred to as the father of the German Reformation. His book *De Arte Cabalistic* (“The Cabalistic Art”) was the first systematic description of a Christianized Qabalah to be presented to a European public. An earlier work *De Verbo Mirifico* (“Concerning the Miraculous Word”) described the Qabalistic attributions of the

Pentagrammaton or “Five-lettered Name,” composed of five Hebrew letters which spell out the name of Jesus (Yeheshuah).

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535), another German, led a colorful life as a soldier, physician, lawyer, alchemist, astrologer, magician, and envoy to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. An outspoken supporter of Ficino’s Neoplatonic school of thought, Agrippa is considered one of the most influential figures in the Western Esoteric Tradition. He was the author of the seminal work *De Occulta Philosophia*, which was divided into three parts which examined: natural magic, the symbolism and power of numbers, and Qabalistic divine names and angelic hierarchies. In his text, Agrippa defended magic as a method of understanding God and his creation. Magic was understood to involve a change in one’s mental state—a change in consciousness or focus—rather than as means of producing physical effects on matter, although that was also considered possible through the magical arts.

Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim (1493-1541) was a German-Swiss alchemist and physician who changed his name to Aureolus Paracelsus to show that he was “beyond Celsus,” the renowned 1st-century Roman physician. He is considered the father of modern medicine, and a forerunner of homeopathy, microchemistry, and chemotherapy. He wrote a significant amount of work dealing with medicine, mysticism, and cosmology. Paracelsus maintained the Hermetic view that human life is inseparable from that of the universal mind and is effected by the cosmic realities—man is a Microcosm or miniature reflection of the Greater Universe, the Macrocosm. As a physician he taught the holistic concept that a doctor must also be a theologian, because in treating illness both body and soul must be healed concurrently. The basic alchemical precept that gold must be purified of its gross components is behind much of Paracelsus’ work, both in spiritual alchemy and in medicine. Around the time that the Rosicrucian manifestos were written, there were many Paracelsian physicians practicing medicine in Germany.

Of course, there are other many other individuals who helped pave the way for the coming Rosicrucian fervor by providing the type of intellectual climate needed for their conception. There was also a host of other figures who, even if they did not directly influence the creation of the manifestos, were themselves certainly influenced by the esoteric tradition that the manifestos represented. These include Michael Maier (1568–1622), German alchemist and physician; Dr. John Dee (1527–1608), English mathematician, astronomer, and astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I; Francis Bacon (1561–1626), English philosopher and statesman; and Robert Fludd (1574–1637), English philosopher and historian.

#### The Role of Johann Valentin Andreae

There is no real evidence of an actual secret brotherhood of Rosicrucians existing at the time the manifestos were written. It would certainly have been strange for a self-proclaimed “secret” society

to announce its existence to the world in such a public and provocative fashion. It is accepted by some that the manifestos (or at least one of them, namely the Chemical Wedding) were written by Lutheran theologian Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), inspired perhaps by discussions with learned associates from Tübingen University who, like Andreae, were visionary thinkers interested in esoteric subjects and social reform. According to Christopher McIntosh in *The Rosicrucians*, the Tübingen University circle of friends, which included Qabalist Christoph Besold, Abraham Holzler, and Paracelsian physician Tobias Hess, was:

“...composed of men who desired and anticipated the golden age foreseen by Joachim of Fiore.<sup>9</sup> They saw this golden age as being ushered in initially on German soil and under the banner of Protestantism, but a new and reinvigorated Protestantism. They also believed that the men who would prepare the new age would be men of learning, illuminated by the hidden light of Hermetic wisdom, but not deceived by false alchemists and other tricksters. The manifestos can therefore be seen as a kind of parable intended to inspire those who understood the symbolic language in which they were written and to stimulate the uninitiated to set out in search of true wisdom.”<sup>10</sup>

McIntosh theorizes that the Tübingen circle struck upon the idea of making the main character in Andreae’s innovative story *The Chemical Wedding* into a legendary founder of a secret brotherhood whose teachings would encompass all of the principles that they themselves aspired to. Ultimately, they hoped that the manifestos would influence people all over Europe by providing both an Utopian vision of the world and a symbolic language that satisfied the human spiritual need for an esoteric symbology.

Andreae’s involvement with the manifestos has been further confused because once he had married and settled into a comfortable position as pastor of Vaihingen, he wrote contemptuously about the Rosicrucian movement. It is possible that among the Tübingen circle, Andreae was unhappy with the publication of the manifestos, based as they were upon Christian Rosencreutz, a character which Andreae himself had invented.<sup>11</sup> It is also possible that he wished to avoid the kind of attention, for good or ill, that the word “Rosicrucian” attracted.

Other researchers, including occultist A. E. Waite, Renaissance scholar Frances Yates, and Protestant theologian and biographer of Andreae, John W. Montgomery,<sup>12</sup> have all challenged the assumption that Andreae was the primary author of the *Fama* and the *Confessio*. Perhaps some other member of the Tübingen circle was responsible for the first two manifestos.

In any event, Andreae’s exact role in the Rosicrucian drama itself, remains a mystery.

Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry

In her book on The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, Dame Frances Yates explored the ongoing debate concerning any possible connection between the Rosicrucian movement and Freemasonry. The main obstacle to research on this subject, she contended was the pervasive lack of objectivity on the part of secret society enthusiasts. “And when, as is often the case, the misty discussion of ‘Rosicrucians’ and their history becomes involved with the Masonic myths,” says Yates, “the enquirer feels that he is sinking helplessly into a bottomless bog.”<sup>13</sup>

Research into this area began in eighteenth century Germany and resulted in a work published in 1804 by professor J. G. Buhle titled Ueber den Ursprung...der Orden der Rosenkreuzer and Freyman. The principle arguments of Buhle’s work were repeated in an article by Thomas De Quincey called “Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons,” which originally appeared in the London Magazine in 1824, and later reprinted in DeQuincey’s Collected Writings (1871).

Despite DeQuincey’s own admittance of the fact that “no college or lodge of Rosicrucian brethren, professing occult knowledge and communicating it under solemn forms and vows of secrecy, can be shown from historical records to have been ever established in Germany,” he attempts to prove that:

“Rosicrucianism was transplanted to England, where it flourished under a new name, under which it has been since re-exported to us in common with the other countries of Christendom. For I affirm, as the main thesis of my concluding labours, that Freemasonry is neither more nor less than Rosicrucianism as modified by those who transplanted it into England.”<sup>14</sup> DeQuincey even goes so far as to state that “He that gives himself out for a Rosicrucian without knowing the general ritual of masonry is unquestionably an imposter.”<sup>15</sup>

Amid the confusion derived from the idealized histories of both groups, Masonic historians of the so-called “non-authentic” or “romantic” school have often attempted to link the two Orders together. In Chapter One, “Of the Essential Characteristics of the Orders of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons,” DeQuincy listed what he considered the “universal and essential characteristics of the two orders,” such as, “the orders make pretensions to mysteries,” “entire equality of personal rights amongst their members in relation to their final object,” and “these orders have a general system of signs, (e.g. that of recognition), usages, symbols, mythi, and festivals.”

DeQuincey, like countless researchers before and after him investigating any number of subjects, uses the terminology of comparison to make his case. However, the prudent researcher should be cautious when basing his case solely on comparison and not on hard evidence. In *Drudgery Divine*, Jonathan Z. Smith points out aspects of comparison that that are quite revealing about its shortcomings:

“...in any disciplined inquiry, comparison, in its strongest form, brings differences together within the space of the scholar’s mind for the scholar’s own intellectual reasons. It is the scholar who makes their cohabitation—their ‘sameness’—possible, not ‘natural’ affinities or processes of history. ...comparison does not necessarily tell us how things ‘are’ ...like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be ‘redescribed’ ...It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being ‘like’ in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which we ‘re-vision’ phenomena as our data in order to solve our theoretical problems.”<sup>16</sup>

While it is certainly tempting to “re-vision” the historic evidence and create a link between Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry that would satisfy our romantic inclinations toward the epic and the legendary, Masonic historians of the “authentic” or “scientific school” have stressed that only documented facts and verifiable evidence will lead to the truth about the origins of Freemasonry. According to Bro. John Hamill in his book, *The History of English Freemasonry*:

“Some have sought the origins of Freemasonry in Rosicrucianism, either as a British manifestation of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood or as a breakaway group from the mainstream of Rosicrucianism. ...the Rosicrucian idea has continued to weave its way in and out of European thought since its emergence in the early 1600s. The only factors common to both Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry are the central idea of the creation of an ideal society and the use of allegory and symbolism to impart this ideal to initiates. There the similarity ends. There is no common pool of symbolism and both developed along different paths. There is no evidence to show a common origin or the development of one out of the other. Much has been made of the fact that Elias Ashmole, the first recorded non-operative initiate, was also interested in Rosicrucianism; but nothing is said about the other known accepted Masons who had no Rosicrucian connections (real or imagined) or about the claimed Rosicrucians who had no links with accepted Masonry.”<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the principles and symbolism of the Rosicrucians held great appeal to some Freemasons. So much so that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several Masonic and quasi-Masonic Rosicrucian groups came into being. One such group was the Gold- und Rosenkruetz, founded in Germany in 1757 (probably) by Hermann Fictuld. Another fraternity is, of course, the Societas Rosicrucian in Anglia, founded in 1866 by Robert Wentworth Little, which requires all candidates to be Master Masons. Some of the terminology of the Rosicrucians was borrowed by Masonry, such as in the eighteenth degree of the Scottish Rite, known as Knight Rose Croix. According to Albert Mackey:

“The modern Rose Croix, which constitutes the summit of the French Rite, and is the eighteenth of the of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, besides being incorporated into several other Masonic systems, has not in its construction the slightest tinge of Rosicrucianism, nor is there in any part of its ritual, rightly interpreted, the faintest allusion to the Hermetic philosophy. I speak of it, of course, as it appears in its original form. This has been somewhat changed in later day.”<sup>18</sup>

Is there evidence of a connection that can be found between Rosicrucianism and Masonry, other than an intellectual interest on the part of learned Masons? At this time, we have no hard evidence of such, only speculations, conjectures, guesswork, and no small amount of wish-full thinking.

### The Instinctive Quest for the Spiritual

What is it about Rosicrucianism that intrigues us so? Why should we be so romantically smitten by a fantastic fiction created by a small but imaginative group of seventeenth century dreamers who wished to reform society? A fiction with a history that is saturated with characters that are mythical, events that cannot be confirmed, and plagued from its inception to the present day with frauds and con-artists?

The answer lies in the fact that Rosicrucianism speaks to the spirit of Western man in a way that cannot be measured by science nor confirmed by historians. It speaks to the human heart, which cares not whether the legend of the Rosicrucians is factual, so long as it feels that the essence and principles behind them are true and right. It is the truth of the soul. The actual existence of an original “secret society” of illuminated masters is of little importance compared to the values and ideology its legend continues to inspire.

The symbolism of the Rosicrucians, namely the Rose and Cross, is basic and archetypal to the Western mind. It affects us deeply and powerfully. In addition to reminding us of our Christian values, the cross is a complex symbol which includes the meaning of conjunction, the binding together of opposing forces. The cross is a symbol of the heart, of the mystic center of the universe, a place of junction for the forces of the cosmos. Consequently, the cross affirms the primary relationship between the two worlds of the heavenly or celestial and the earth-bound (spirit and matter). The cross alludes to the divine spirit descended into the realm of the physical—life—symbolized by the four elements of the alchemists (the four arms of the cross) which are the components of life.

The rose is primarily a symbol of completion, achievement, purity, and perfection. The rose and cross together refer to the synthesis of these ideas. The red color of the rose also alludes to the compassion and sacrifice of Christ, and the golden cross alludes to the spiritual gold, the philosophical gold of the alchemists, concealed within the nature of man.

What is Rosicrucianism ultimately concerned with. How can its principles be applied to a modern world? It is inherently Christian, although it embraces the wisdom of those ancient pagan philosophers of the Western world who formulated the first concepts about the nature of the divine universe, the transcendence of God and the evolution of the human soul. It advocates a personal understanding of the divine, through the discipline of esoteric studies and spiritual exercises. It embraces the sciences of the ancient world. It suggests that theurgy, magic, and mystical rites are important tools whereby the soul communicates with God. It requires humility and selflessness. It also requires spiritual wisdom and arcane knowledge—not knowledge gained for vanity’s sake, but knowledge that can be used in service to others. It promotes the healing of humanity, of both the individual and the collective society. According to Dame Frances Yates:

“To the genuine Rosicrucian, the religious side of the movement was always the most important. The Rosicrucian attempted to penetrate to deep levels of religious experience through which his personal religious experience, within his own confessional affiliation, was revived and strengthened. ... The manifestos stress Cabala and Alchymia as the dominant themes in the movement. The latter gave the movement a turn toward medicine. The R.C. Brothers are healers. ... Magic was a dominating factor, working as a mathematics-mechanics in the lower world, as celestial mathematics in the celestial world, and as angelic conjuration in the supercelestial world.”<sup>19</sup>

The Rosicrucian impulse is optimistic. It envisions a positive future for humanity brought about by advancements in science and a new understanding of philosophy and spirituality. The Rosicrucians “...know they hold in their hands potentialities for great advance, are concerned to integrate these into a religious philosophy. Hence the Rosicrucian alchemy expresses both the scientific outlook, penetrating into new worlds of discovery, and also an attitude of religious expectation, of penetrating into new fields of religious experience.”<sup>20</sup>

In this modern era of materialism, cynicism, and greed, it is perhaps not so surprising that some of us still long for a “golden age” similar to that promised by the “secret brethren” of the Rosicrucian manifestos—an age dominated by mysterious adepts with almost superhuman powers, great wisdom, and the ability and compassion to heal the illnesses and evils of society. There are those who still believe that the act of one individual seeking to make himself a better human being through knowledge of philosophy, religion, and the arts, can indeed effect a positive change for the benefit of all humanity. Rosicrucianism touches us because it shows us a vision of how the world ought to be—what we ourselves could be if only we would strive to be more than human—if only we would shift our mental focus to an awareness of the greater macrocosm beyond ourselves.

Some of us “dreamers” have not yet forgotten how to dream.

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## Endnotes

1. Full title: "Fama Fraternitatis of the Meritorious Order of the Rosy Cross, Addressed to the Learned in General and the Governors of Europe."

2. Full title: *Confessio Fraternitatis Roseae Crucis ad Eruditos Europae*, or “The Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honorable Order of the Rosy Cross, Written to All the Learned of Europe.”
3. *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz*.
4. Waite, 217.
5. Raymond Lully (1235–1315) was a Spanish alchemist and Christian Qabalist. The Qabalah became popular during his lifetime among the Jewish intellectuals who were living in Spain. One of Lully’s goals was to convert Moslems to Christianity. He wrote numerous mystical, literary, and philosophical works.
6. Westcott, 1.
7. Iamblichus, quoted in Shaw, 147.
8. Pico della Mirandola, *Opera Omnia* (Basil, 1557; reprint, Hildesheim: George Olms, 1969), 166.
9. Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202), Italian abbot and mystic who predicted that in the coming Third Age of Man the antichrist would appear and destroy the corrupt church and be destroyed in turn, after which the age of the true church of Spirit would commence.
10. McIntosh, 27.
11. In a later work, Andreae admitted to writing the *Chemical Wedding*.
12. Montgomery, John Warwick. *Cross and Crucible*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.)
13. Yates, 206.
14. De Quincey, 420.
15. *Ibid.* 394.
16. Smith, 51–52.
17. Hamill, 26.
18. Mackey, 355–356.
19. Yates, 222.
20. *Ibid.* 225–226.