

PRISTINE CHURCH OF THE ROSE CROSS

While the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, founded in 1915, is and always has been a non-sectarian philosophical, initiatic, and educational organization, the founder and first Emperor of AMORC, Harvey Spencer Lewis, was also at one time the Bishop of the Pristine Church of the Rose Cross, which he founded. This church, whose tenets were primarily Gnostic in nature, in the broad sense of this term, was created by H. Spencer Lewis in San Francisco in the early 1920s.

Inspired by his childhood minister, S. Parkes Cadman, a radio church pioneer in New York City, H. Spencer Lewis decided to offer non-sectarian church services on a radio station in San Francisco. They included an opening ritual with vowel sounds, a musical program, a highly informative but brief discourse followed by a question and answer period, and a closing ritual. This was the first Radio Church in the western United States and was extremely popular.



H. Spencer Lewis, Bishop of the Pristine Church of the Rose Cross.

In H. Spencer Lewis's biography, *Cosmic Mission Fulfilled*, his son, Emperor Ralph Lewis, writes:

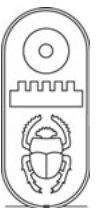
In the early twenties, the first radio broadcasting station established in San Francisco was known by the call letters KPO. On one or two occasions Harvey Lewis had spoken over that station. He had given an inspirational discourse on a Sunday morning. Here was a medium that reached into the home. It was novel as yet. At first, listeners had to make their own receivers, but the audience was increasing. Here was an opportunity to give a spiritual, a moral discourse to those who had no specific creed or who felt disinclined for some reason to attend one of the churches.

Why not have a *nonsectarian* service by air? It could eliminate dogmatic creeds with their biases and prejudices. It could include a discourse on moral principles and the psychology of religion, and explain the religious impulse. Such a program could also acquaint an audience with comparative religions, showing how spiritual concepts were syncretic and eclectic and not exclusive disclosures of any one sect.¹

In other words, why not a *Radio Church*?

The response to the Radio Church was very positive. Ralph Lewis continues,

If there was such a response to a nonsectarian, religious program, or rather, a spiritual ceremony and discourse over the air, why not make



it an established institution? So again an idea in the mind of Harvey Lewis was materialized into what became the Pristine Church. The word pristine referred to a return to original or early principles.

In other words, it was to be a church to discuss spiritual and mystical concepts in their pure form, as they were before being converted or distorted by theological dialectics or cant. . . . It would be a church whose rituals would not be just an impressive and dramatic event with its symbolism and rites left shrouded in mystery. Rather, the psychic and emotional nature of the ceremonies and rituals were to be explained and were to implement the intellectual aspects, that is, the sermons or discourses.

The Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, *not* being a religious organization, the Pristine Church was, therefore, established as an entirely separate function. However, it not only attracted Rosicrucian members but hundreds of other persons who flocked to its doors each Sunday evening, particularly those who had not been church attendees for many years.

Within a few years, H. Spencer Lewis decided to focus on the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC rather than the Pristine Church of the Rose Cross, which ceased operations shortly thereafter. The Rosicrucian Order,

FROM ONE OF THE RITUALS OF THE
PRISTINE CHURCH OF THE ROSE CROSS:

Let us pray:

Oh, thou who art the Way of Lao Tze,
The Equilibrium of Confucius,
The Braham of Brahma,
The Truth of Buddha,
The Unity of Zoroaster,
The Ra of Amenhotep,
The I AM of Israel,
The Christ of the Christian,
The Cosmos of the Rose and Cross,
And the God of our Hearts,

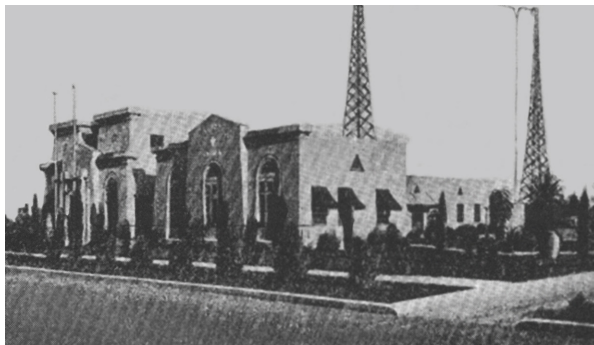
Hear Thou our prayer that we may
know Thee as Brothers and Sisters
in Thy great Family of being, and in
Divine Consciousness as one together
and with Thee in membership in this
Holy Church under the direction of
the Masters, visible and invisible.

So Mote It Be!

AMORC (officially known as the Ancient & Mystical Order Rosae Crucis) has been incorporated in California as a 501c3 (non-sectarian, public benefit, educational) organization since 1928 and has positively influenced the lives of millions of women and men around the world over the past century.

ENDNOTES

¹ H. Spencer Lewis received an honorary ordination in Hinayana Buddhism, honorary degrees from the Gold Cross of the Knighthood of the Temple of Jerusalem, the Brahminist Brotherhood, the Unknown Samaritans of Europe, and many honors from various esoteric orders.



Rosicrucian Park, 1931.

In the 1920s, H. Spencer Lewis built two large radio towers at Rosicrucian Park and a complete radio studio which he used for broadcasts related to the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. Today the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC continues to use the latest technology, such as Facebook (www.facebook.com/Rosicrucian.Order.AMORC) and YouTube (www.YouTube.com/RosicrucianTV) to spread the Light of the Rosicrucian Tradition.