

THE ROSICRUCIAN INFLUENCE ON SIGISMUND ALBICUS

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I have always had a deep interest in the life of the acknowledged founder of our Rosicrucian Society, Father Christian Rosenkreutz. While some authors have speculated as to whether this was a real person or purely a contrived myth or fable --- I am inclined to believe that he was, indeed, a real person. Historical accounts list his birth year in 1378 and that he died in the year 1484 at the ripe old age of 106. Supposedly he was the last descendant of the German family Germelshausen, who were of Jewish origin, but they converted to Roman Catholicism --- plus they also embraced Albigensian principles which combined a mix of Christianity and mystical tradition which they felt defined them best. According to various historical accounts, Christian Rosenkreutz was orphaned and taken to a monastery where he was essentially adopted by the monks who raised him. In due course, he became a Roman Catholic priest and set about on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. While en route there, his companion died in Cyprus, but Fr. Rosenkreutz's journey took a detour to Damascus, Syria and then on to various travels in Arabic lands. I maintain that he finally reached Jerusalem, made his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and then returned to western Europe (Spain and eventually his homeland of Germany) whereby he founded his Society of the Rose & Cross. It is my belief that he wanted his new Society to become a new religious Order (similar to the Franciscans and Dominicans). Today's Masonic Rosicrucian Society is one of the few legitimate remnants of his efforts.

Searching for any information about Fr. Rosenkreutz is very difficult due to the scarcity of tangible historical information which survives from that time period. However, I was astounded to come across a biography of a man whose history closely mirrors that of Fr. Rosenkreutz. The person I speak of is Sigismund Albicus (1347-1427). His life is so strikingly similar that it is almost uncanny. I will describe his life and let readers make up their own mind.

Sigismund Albicus was born in Moravia (it today's modern Czech Republic) in the year 1347. He would have been 31 years OLDER than Christian Rosenkreutz, yet they lived during the same time period...in an area not too far away from Germany. Sigismund Albicus (Zikmund Albik z Unicova) studied at the University at Prague and obtained a Degree in Medicine in 1387. He wanted to study civil and canon law, so he went to Italy and received his Doctor's Degree in 1404 at Padua. On his return to Prague, in then Bohemia, he taught Medicine for twenty years at the University. Albicus was said to be the first Rheumatologist at Prague.

By today's standards, Albicus would have been an expert in the field of Rheumatology --- centuries after his death, he was even honored at a Conference of Rheumatologists in the Czech Republic in the year 1969 --- and a special commemorative medal was struck in his honor. I recently purchased one of those medals from a seller in Europe. Additionally, today's medical profession would also consider Dr. Albicus partly a specialist of pulmonary disorders/internal medicine ---- and partly a specialist of arthritic problems or bone/joint diseases. Dr. Albicus prepared a manuscript: "Regimen Contra Reumata Magistri Albici" (or, "Rheuma, the Mother of all Diseases according to Albicus"). Albicus studied "flows" in the head caused by sleeping in a draft. He was appointed Physician-in-chief to Wenceslaus IV who recommended him to become the new Archbishop of Prague in 1409 since the previous Archbishop had died. Archbishop Albicus resigned from the Archbishopric after only four years in 1413, he was approached by the old Prior of Vysehrad, Conrad (Konrad z Vechty,) who offered a sum of money to Albicus to swap offices with him. Conrad then became Archbishop of Prague and in exchange Albicus received the Priory of Vysehrad and the additional title of "Archbishop of Caesarea."





Albicus Commemorative Medal

Some historians say Archbishop Albicus was accused of favoring the doctrines of Jan Huss and John Wycliffe. They list his tenure as Archbishop as only from the year 1411 to 1412. Others say that he was "too penurious" or too poverty stricken to hold such an important post which always put him before the public eye. In any event, he was a cheerful man who, as a Medical Doctor was compassionate even to the point of leniency; and, as a Medical Doctor was devoted to his patients and the world of scientific education. His spirit of tolerance was too much for those in positions of power. Dr. Albicus grew uneasy and retired to his native homeland of Moravia, but eventually went to Hungary during the War of the Hussites and died there on July 23, 1427. But, before he died, then-retired Archbishop Albicus worked on scientific and medical subjects: "Praxis medendi"; "Regimen Sanitatis"; and "Regimen pestilentiae." These were published in Leipzig, Germany, after his death.

One particularly striking similarity between Rosenkreutz and Albicus is the fact that Archbishop Albicus was an adherent of Albigensian principles just as Fr. Christian Rosenkreutz was. This type of belief wasn't widespread. It was generally confined to a small group of people in southern France, but also tiny clusters in neighboring Germany as well in its neighbors of Bohemia and Moravia. Their beliefs were totally Christian in nature, but it might be best said that they also espoused a few extra-Christian beliefs, which could be broken down in two sub-sets: Ordinary and Extraordinary studies of phenomena. Albigensians tried to explain how the hand of Almighty God seemed to intervene in some events; while being absent in other events. Although their attempts were sincere, their attempts were flawed. Mortal man's brain is 'finite.' The wishes and actions of Almighty God are omnipotent, omnipresent, and 'infinite.' It is impossible for mortal man to truly comprehend all aspects of the Infinite. Almighty God solely oversees the infinite realm of Heaven and the entire universe.

Albigensians searched for explanations of any issue they didn't understand. They classified phenomena into two categories. Ordinary phenomena would consist of the natural growth of such things in the universe such as planets or the smooth constant revolution of the Earth on its axis. Extraordinary phenomena would focus on such unpredictable things such as earthquakes. I've often heard many good, decent, Bible-believing people mourn their losses after a tragedy such as a natural disaster by exclaiming: "Why would a Merciful God allow this to happen?" While members of the clergy were vested in offering Spiritual Aid to the afflicted, Albigensians wrongly wanted to know the 'why?' behind a crisis. By contrast, Rosicrucians made an effort to study the implications of 'what' they observed. They did not displace their trust in Almighty God. Their trust in God was solid. They merely sought to heal via Medicine; make sense of things via Philosophy; and promote awareness (of things such as disease-prevention) via Education. All the while, their belief in the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ remained steadfast and unwavering.



By some skeptical scholars, Christian Rosenkreutz's identity and authenticity is disputed. By contrast, Sigismund Albicus's identity is universally agreed on. The study of his life may shed new light on early Rosicrucian life. Albicus first studied Medicine...then he became a member of the clergy as the Archbishop of Prague...then, still later, he laid that career aside to resume learning, and continued his practice of Medicine until the day he died. Such diversity of ability and such range of physical, geographic travels gives Albicus a unique status to our scholarly studies of today. Albicus travelled far and wide -- and his path obviously crisscrossed the path of Fr. Christian Rosenkreutz. Since both were adherents of a very precise theolog/philosophy, it is quite likely that they met each other or at least shared parallel experiences. Their Albigensian beliefs were not without controversy. In subsequent years, some Popes confiscated the meager properties held by the Albigensians and gave them to the Dominicans. Some of the purported beliefs of the Albigensians are still in dispute as to the truth of an alleged two-tiered system of adherents' religious fervor: "the perfect" as contrasted with the lower tier of just "believers." There were claims that some held the status "believers" for years and years and were only 'initiated' to a higher grade on their deathbed. It is my impression that Fr. Christian Rosenkreutz and Archbishop Sigismund Albicus ended this practice and did not allow it in the Rosicrucian Society. Their aim was to reach out, interact, and share knowledge and understanding. They wanted wisdom to be carried-on to subsequent generations....not to tossed-out like flowers on a deathbed.

On a plaque in the town of Unicoiv, in Moravia (within today's Czech Republic) is a tablet honoring Archbishop Albicus, which reads: "There is no other meal than meat. There is no other drink than wine. There is no other pleasure than woman." Such a proclamation indicates a zest for life and that the pleasures of life were most appreciated when compared to the hardships of life. Such wisdom in the form of comparative analysis was acknowledged frequently by early Rosicrucians, which strongly indicates that Sigismund Albicus had a connection with our Rosicrucian Society. Archbishop Albicus's admirable tolerance for people of differing religious factions such as the Hussites, was very similar to the spirit of Fr. Christian Rosenkreutz who embraced Christian, Muslim, and Jew in an attempt to learn useful ancient knowledge in an atmosphere which put prejudice aside as far as scientific, medical, and philosophical studies were concerned.

Albicus's work "Regiment Sanitatis Salernitanum" is written in poem form and concerned medical practices such as hygenical procedures and diet --- including the use of therapeutic wine. It also speaks of the body in terms of observations with: air, food and drink, sleeping and waking, motion and rest, excretions and retentions, and dreams and passions of the soul. The original Latin was translated into Irish, Bohemian, Occitan (an old Romance Language spoken in Spain and Monaco) Hebrew, German, Anglo-Norman, and Italian. The original version addressed the Humors, the Complexions/Temperaments, and some diseases. It also contained a commentary on bloodletting.

I think that it is interesting that some Rosicrucians were studying alchemy...and doing so in a context of transforming base materials into something of more value (by putting an emphasis on attaining higher levels of Purity) ---Archbishop Albicus as a physician was studying the effects of good air for the lungs, good food, water, and wine for health to the body. He also studied a kind of alchemy of the blood ---not for devious purposes -- but he recorded primitive ideas on 'good blood' and 'bad blood.' Bloodletting was thought to remove impurities or toxins. As we all know now, the therapeutic use of wine is even prescribed in moderate amounts by many of today's physicians to aid in digestion, to add amounts of iron and resveratro to enhance the blood and improve heart health as well as provide antioxidants which may reduce cell damage and even reduce the likelihood of some cancers.

It Glasgow, Scotland, are some rare manuscripts which corroborate that Dr. Albicus most likely studied at Prague, possibly 1378-1382, where the great pestilence of 1379-1380 (the Black Death of the bubonic plague) afforded special opportunities of acquiring medical experience. These manuscripts in Scotland confirm that Albicus took the degree in law, "Doctor utriusque juris" at Padua, Italy, where he became a follower of Arnaldus de Vilanova of Montpellier. Albicus's manuscript "Tractatulus de regimine hominis ('Vetularius')" printed at Leipzig in 1484 is preserved in The British Museum. It has a table of zodiacal signs listed in relation to supposed health therapies propounded by Dr. Sigismund Albicus.



The noted Masonic scholar, Dr. Albert G. Mackey who was a Medical Doctor himself states that Freemasonry came to Prague, Bohemia at an early date. He mentions the Lodge named "The Three Stars," was said to have been established at Prague in the year 1726. This was long after Albicus departed the area and long after he had died in Hungary; but the Masonic and Rosicrucian fascination with astronomy and the stars of the sky was likely passed down the generations in Prague, as a symbolic reference to the Three Stars of Orion, which Archbishop Albicus had gazed upon so often.

In any event, Archbishop Sigismund Albicus was a credit to the Art of Medicine; he was a credit to the Church, and he was a credit to everyone who continues to pursue knowledge and refine to a higher level of Purity those elements of study which they've previously pursued. Let us all remember Archbishop Albicus and Fr. Chrstian Rosenkreutz for their contributions to the world.

Sources / Recommended Readings:

- Original Catholic Encyclopedia: Biography of Sigismund Albicus
- The Reformers before the Reformation by Emile de Bonnechose, Published 1844.
- Cyclopedia of Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical literature by John McClintock, James Strong.
- Biographical Dictionary by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Biography of "Albicus of Prague".
- Mackey's Enclopedia of Freemasonry by Albert G. Mackey, M.D.
- University of Glasgow, Manuscripts Catalogue. Collections relating to Pseudo-Aristotle

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