

THE LEDGEND
of
ROSICRUCIANISM

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John Valentine Andrea, a distinguished philosopher and moralist, who has been claimed by many writers as the founder of the Rosicrucian Order, was born on the 17th of August in 1586 at the small town of Herrenberg, in Wurtemberg. After receiving an excellent education in his native province, he traveled extensively through the principal countries of Europe. He died on the 27th of June, 1654, at the age of 68 years.

One of the most important of his works, or at least one that has attracted most attention, is his "FAMA", published in 1615 in which the Order of the Rosicrucians is mentioned.

Rosicrucian is a Christian society of a purely literary character. Many distinguished Masons take great interest in it and are active members of the society.

Many historians have sought to discover a close connection between the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons. There are sufficient coincidences of character between the two to render the history of Rosicrucianism highly interesting to the Masonic student.

John Valentine Andrea gives an account of the life and adventures of Christian Rosenkreuz, whom he makes the founder of the Society of Rosicrucians.

Christian Rosenkreuz was an assumed name, invented by John Valentine Andrea, and by which he designated a fictitious person to whom he has attributed the idea of Rosicrucianism.

According to Andrea's tale, Rosenkreuz 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 sixteen, he started with one of the monks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands. On their arrival at the island of Cyprus, the monk was taken sick and died, but Rosenkreuz proceeded on his journey. At Damascus, he remained for three years, devoting himself to the study of the occult sciences, taught by the sages of that city. He then sailed for Egypt, where he continued his studies. He arrived at Fez, in Morocco, as he had been directed by his masters of Damascus. He spent two years in acquiring further information from the philosophers of Africa, and then crossed over into Spain.

He returned to Germany and gave to his own countrymen the benefit of his studies and researches and established there a society for the cultivation of the sciences, which he had acquired during his travels. Accordingly, he selected three of the monks of the old convent in which he was educated, and to

them he imparted his knowledge under a solemn vow of secrecy. He imposed on them the duty of committing his instructions to writing and forming a magic vocabulary for the benefit of future students. They were also taught the science of medicine and prescribed for all the sick who applied to them. Father Christian, as he was called, resolved to enlarge his society by the initiation of four new members.

The eight brethren being now thoroughly instructed in the mysteries agreed to separate--two to remain with Father Christian, and the others to travel but to return at the end of each year and mutually to communicate the results of their experiences. The two who had remained at home were then relieved by two of the others, and they again separated for another year.

The society thus formed was governed by a code of laws, by which they agreed that they would devote themselves to no occupation; that they would not distinguish themselves from the rest of the world by any peculiar costume; that each one should annually present himself at the House of the Holy Spirit, or send an excuse for his absence; that each one should, during his life, appoint somebody to succeed him at his death; that the letters R. C. were to be their title and watchword; and that the brotherhood should be kept a secret for 100 years.

At the age of 100 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 to all of the rest - the two carrying the mystery with them to the grave. The society however continued, notwithstanding the death of the founder, to exist but unknown to the world and always consisting of eight members. There was a tradition among them, that at the end of 120 years the grave of Father Rosenkreuz was to be discovered, and the brotherhood no longer would remain a secret.

About that time the brethren began to make some alterations in their building and attempted to remove to a more fitting place the memorial table on which was inscribed the names of those who had been members of the fraternity. The plate was of brass and was affixed to the wall by a nail driven through its center. However it was so firmly attached that in tearing it away a portion of the plaster came off and exposed a secret door. Upon removing the incrustation on the door, there appeared written in Latin in large letters, "After 120 years, I will appear"

Returning the next morning to renew their researches, they opened the door and discovered a

heptagonal vault with each of its seven sides being 5 feet wide, and 8 feet in height. The light was received from an artificial sun in the roof. In the middle of the floor there stood instead of a tomb a circular altar on which was an inscription, importing that this apartment as a compendium of the universe, had been erected by Christian Rosenkreuz. Other inscriptions in Latin - "Jesus is my all; the liberty of the Gospel" - indicated the Christian character of the builder. In each of the sides was a door opening into a closet, and in these closets they found many rare and valuable articles, and the secrets of the Order, together with bells, mirrors, burning lamps and other curious articles.

On removing the altar and a brass plate beneath it, they came upon the body of Rosenkreuz in a perfect state of preservation.

Such is the sketch of the history of the Rosicrucians given by Andrea in his "FAMA". Scholars now generally assent to the theory that Andrea, who at the time of the appearance of his book was a young man full of excitement, seeing the defects of the sciences, the theology, and the manners of his time, sought to purify them. To accomplish this design, he imagined the union into one body of all those who, like himself, were the admirers of true virtue. In other words, that he wrote this account of the rise and progress of Rosicrucianism for the purpose of advancing, by a poetical fiction, his peculiar views of morals and religion.

It is true, that about the middle of the 18th century, a period fertile in the invention of high degrees, a Masonic Rite was established which assumed the name of Rose Croix Masonry, and adopted the symbol of the Rose and Cross. But this was a coincidence. There was nothing in common between them and the Rosicrucians, except the name, the symbol, and the Christian character. Doubtless, the symbol was suggested to the Masonic Order from the use of it by the philosophic sect. But here the connection ends. A Rose Croix Mason and a Rosicrucian are two entirely different persons.

The symbolism of Rosicrucianism is derived from a hermetic philosophy; that of Freemasonry from an operative art. The latter had its cradle in the Stonemasons of Strasburg and the Masters of Como long before the former had its birth in the inventive brain of John Valentine Andrea.