

# The Masonic Career of A.E. Waite

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## INTRODUCTION

In English Freemasonry the seal of a certain distinction attaches to the name of Arthur Edward Waite, while it has proved of such appeal in America that an important Grand Lodge has conferred upon him, *causa honoris*, one of its highest official positions. Among his many publications those on the mystical and symbolical aspects of the Secret Tradition in *Christian Times* occupy a place apart, being things unattempted otherwise in the records of research'. So Waite referred to himself in the prospectus for the revised edition of his book, *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*<sup>[1]</sup>, but it is doubtful if a single masonic scholar of his time - or since - could be found who would agree that this self-adulation was justified. During his lifetime Waite was castigated, and with justification, for his peculiarities of style, for his frequent errors of historical fact and for his cavalier attitude and contemptuous references to his contemporaries. All this must be admitted against him, but he was also a highly original thinker who broke completely new ground with his studies of what he termed the 'Secret Tradition', while, for the esoteric school of thought within Freemasonry, he has been the most pervasive and powerful influence of this century. As such, his writings deserve more careful and objective analysis than they have received to date, and it is the purpose of this paper to encourage such analysis by demonstrating, through a study of his masonic career, both Waite's originality and his continuing influence.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Waite was meticulous about recording the minutiae of his life, and he took great care that all the records of his work and career should be preserved after his death. These records, now kept in private hands and to which the present writer has been granted full access, comprise his private diaries from 1909 to 1942, an extended diary for 1902-1903, the Minute Books of his Rosicrucian Order, working notes and proofs of many of his published books, and a long series of bound volumes of his periodical contributions, reviews and masonic ephemera. Waite was also a prolific letter-writer, and I have been fortunate in being able to examine his correspondence with the late Bro. Harold van Buren Voorhis of New Jersey, with the

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<sup>[1]</sup> *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry* (Rider, 1937). The prospectus is a 4 pp. quarto sheet, written by Waite although not so attributed.

late Bro. W. R. Semken (Supreme Magus, 1956-69 of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, and his official correspondence with the Independent Great Priory of Helvetia. But, while these manuscript sources are crucial for an understanding of Waite's life and masonic activities, his ideas and attitudes towards Freemasonry are set out openly and clearly in his published work (*see* Appendix B). The events of his early life are, however, obscure and difficult to establish in any detail - almost certainly because he wished to hide them.

## WAITE'S EARLY YEARS AND THE PRELUDE TO FREEMASONRY

In Waite's autobiography, *Shadows of Life and Thought*,<sup>2[2]</sup> he states that 'The *suppressio veri* has been minimized so far as possible, while the *suggestio falsi* is absent, I hope, throughout' (p. 5), but this is less than the truth. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 2 October 1857-, his father, Charles Waite, a captain in the American merchant marine, *did* die at sea; his mother, Emma Lovell, the daughter of a wealthy London merchant involved in the East India trade, *did* return to England shortly afterwards with the two-year-old Arthur and his infant sister Frederika. What he does not say is that both he and his sister were illegitimate, for Captain Waite and Emma Lovell were never married<sup>3[3]</sup>, and that it was not pride but her family's ostracism that forced her to rear her children in poverty in a succession of unfashionable suburbs in north and west London. Rejection by her family was almost certainly the cause, too, of her conversion to the Roman Catholic Church - an event that was to have an even greater effect upon Waite than his illegitimacy. By virtue of his early life style Waite turned in upon himself and, being unable to receive a formal education of any kind,<sup>4[4]</sup> he simultaneously educated himself and found a way of escape by reading 'penny dreadfuls' and medieval romances<sup>5[5]</sup>.

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<sup>2[2]</sup> *Shadows of Life and Thought. A Retrospective Review in the Form of Memoirs* (Selwyn and Blount, 1938). Hereafter referred to as *SLT*.

<sup>3[3]</sup> There is no record of a marriage between two people of these or similar names over a period from 1848 to 1857 at St. Catherine's House, nor is there any reference in the registers of Kensington Parish Church where Waite claims that the marriage took place.

<sup>4[4]</sup> Waite's education was of the 'dame school' variety, save for two terms at the Roman Catholic school, St. Charles's college in Bayswater, in 1874.

<sup>5[5]</sup> *SLT*, chapter 2, *passim*

After his sister's death in 1874 Waite began to lose his faith in Roman Catholicism, although he retained a great love for its ceremonial, utilizing a number of elements of the Roman liturgy for the rituals which he constructed in later life for his various secret Orders. He turned instead towards Spiritualism but found no spiritual consolation and moved on to the Theosophical Society, which fascinated him although he disliked the anti-Christian bias of works of H. P. Blavatsky who was its driving force. In this way he approached magic in general and Eliphas Levi<sup>6[6]</sup> in particular, and began to realize where his real dedications lay. He had already written and published many poems and imitation romances<sup>7[7]</sup> but was forced to recognize, reluctantly, his shortcomings as a writer of fiction and entered instead upon his career as a critical expounder of the history and doctrines of occultism in all its forms. Waite was never happy with popular occultism and he rejected from the start its follies and pretensions, for he was an acute, if untrained, critic and recognized the need for historical textual accuracy if anything of value was to be drawn from his chosen field.

His first essay in occultism was an anthology of the writings of Eliphas Levi<sup>8[8]</sup>, which he followed with a study of the Rosicrucian manifestos, written as a corrective to the lunacies of Hargrave Jennings<sup>9[9]</sup>. The translations from Levi contained a few incidental references to masonry, but for his *Real History of the Rosicrucians* Waite was obliged to consider the subject more carefully. He rejected the thesis of Buhle that Freemasonry was derived from Rosicrucianism and set out the differences between the two brotherhoods: 'Originally an association for the diffusion of natural morality, it [Freemasonry] is now simply a benefit society. The improvement of mankind and the encouragement of philanthropy were and are its ostensible objects, and these also were the dream of the Rosicrucian but, on the other, it has never aimed at a reformation in the arts and sciences, for it was never at any period a learned society, and a large proportion of its members have been chosen from illiterate classes. It is free alike from the enthusiasm and the errors of the elder Order, . . . it been singularly devoid of prejudices

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<sup>6[6]</sup> Eliphas Levi was the pseudonym of the French occultist Alphonse Louis Constant (1810-75). The standard biography is by Chacornac, *Eliphas Levi* (Paris, Chacornac, 1926).

<sup>7[7]</sup> His first published work was *An Ode to Astronomy* (1877). He published many poems and stories in minor literary journals between 1876 and 1886

<sup>8[8]</sup> *The Mysteries of Magic, a Digest of the Writings of Eliphas Levi, with a Biographical and Critical Essay* (Redway, 1886)

<sup>9[9]</sup> Jennings's book was *The Rosicrucians, their Rites and Mysteries* (Chatto & Windus, 1879, 2nd ed.). It was savaged by Waite in Redway's journal, *Walford's Antiquarian* and with justice; it is a hotchpotch of irrelevant and misleading data.

and singularly unaffected by the crazes of the time It preaches a natural morality, and has so little interest in mysticism that it daily misinterprets and practically despises its own mystical symbols<sup>10[10]</sup>. In such a way Waite clearly exhibited his disdainful attitude to the Craft, a disdain that he extended to the higher degrees for in a careful distinction between the Rose Croix degree and Rosicrucianism proper, he is most unflattering to the former: 'when ill-informed persons happen to hear that there are Sovereign Princes of Rose-Croix," "Princes of Rose-Croix de Heroden", &c, among the masonic brethren, they naturally identify these splendid inanities of occult nomenclature with the mysterious and awe-inspiring Rosicrucians. The origin of the Rose-Cross degree is involved in the most profound mystery. Its foundation has been attributed to Johann Valentin Andreas, but this is an ignorant confusion, arising from the alleged connection of the theologian of Wurtemberg with the society of Christian Rosencreutz<sup>11[11]</sup>.

Merely impolite references such as these could have been ignored, but not so his final chapter 'Modern Rosicrucian Societies', which printed (pp. 416-22) the 'Rules and Ordinances of the Rosicrucian Society of England' quoted verbatim from *The Rosicrucian*<sup>12[12]</sup>. This was followed by an accurate account of the society's history and concluded by Waite's own sarcastic and unkind critical comments: 'The most notable circumstance connected with this society is the complete ignorance which seems to have prevailed amongst its members generally concerning everything connected with Rosicrucianism. This is conspicuous in the magazine which they published<sup>13[13]</sup>. The Fratres of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* (S.R.I.A.) were, not surprisingly, upset by this and the Secretary-General, Dr. William Wynn Westcott, wrote to Waite threatening legal action if the 'Rules and Ordinances' were not immediately withdrawn. In his reply<sup>14[14]</sup> Waite apologized and offered to omit the offending text from subsequent editions of the book. Honour was thus satisfied but it is probable that Waite wrote his apology solely to ensure that there should be no loss of sales to potential purchasers

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<sup>10[10]</sup> The Real History of the Rosicrucians, founded on their own Manifestos and on Facts and Documents collected from the Writings of Initiated Brethren (Redway, 1887) pp. 403-4

<sup>11[11]</sup> Ibid., p. 405

<sup>12[12]</sup> *The Rosicrucian; a Quarterly Record, No. 1*, July 1868, pp. 6-9. This journal was the official organ of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, a body for which the qualification for membership was that the applicant must be a Master Mason.

<sup>13[13]</sup> *Real History of the Rosicrucians*, p. 424

<sup>14[14]</sup> Published in the Minutes of the High Council of the S.R.I.A. for 13 October 1887, pp. 5-6

within the S.R.I.A.; he would have known, as Westcott certainly did,<sup>15[15]</sup> that *The Rosicrucian* had never been copyrighted.

Waite returned to the subject of Freemasonry in 1890 with an article in *The British Mail*<sup>16[16]</sup>, a journal that he edited for Horatio Bottomley. In this brief article, entitled simply 'Freemasonry', Waite's ambivalent attitude to the fraternity is evident: 'The true object of the masonic fraternity differs from the aims which have been ascribed to it precisely in that way in which a universal institution would be expected to differ from the purpose of a fanatical craze. In its vulgar aspect its object is benevolence and providence; in its esoteric significance it is an attempt to achieve the moral regeneration of the human race; by the construction of a pure, unsectarian system of morality, to create the perfect man'. This secret purpose remains inviolate because 'the vacuous nature of the great arcanum of allegorical architecture is its permanent protection'<sup>17[17]</sup>. His conviction that Freemasonry had lost its way is stressed in *The Occult Sciences*<sup>18[18]</sup>, in which he says: 'From a century of contradictory sources it borrows a many-splendoured aureole of romance and of esoteric fable, which is eminently liable to attract the soul-student at the threshold of mystic research ... We must counsel him to overcome this gravitation of his desires towards Masonry. There is no light there; there is no secret of the soul enshrined in the recesses of its suggestive ceremonial; whatever it may have been in the past, at the present day it neither is, nor claims to be, more than "a beautiful system of morality veiled in allegories and illustrated by symbols"' (pp. 214-15). Its true principles, according to Waite, are these: 'The foundation of all transcendental philosophy is the doctrine of interior regeneration, and its end is the Perfect Man. This also is the foundation, and such the end, of Masonry' (p. 213). These principles are now obscured, but can yet be recovered. 'It has been corrupted by worldly wealth and magnificence; it has turned away its eyes from its objects ... but the principles are there, and let us hope that within the ranks of the brotherhood, but without if not within, it will be possible to inform them with new life' (p. 213). And the reader is left in little doubt that it is Waite who can and will restore Freemasonry to its lost glory: 'At the same time, we ask only a tentative faith. In a forthcoming "Esoteric History of Freemasonry" he will find the

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<sup>15[15]</sup> Westcott pointed out the lack of copyright at the High Council meeting (above). See p. 5 of the Minutes

<sup>16[16]</sup> *The British Mail*, vol. 20, No. 172, New Series, March 1890, pp. 20-1

<sup>17[17]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>18[18]</sup> *The Occult Sciences, a Compendium of Transcendental Doctrine and Experiment* (Kegan Paul, 1891)

entire subject exposed, with the necessary proofs, documents and available sources of knowledge'(p. 214)<sup>19[19]</sup>.

Shortly before *The Occult Sciences* was published Waite had joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a society of would-be magicians founded in 1887 by Westcott, Dr. W. R. Woodman and S. L. MacGregor Mathers, on the basis of manuscript rituals written in cipher and produced under highly suspicious circumstances<sup>20[20]</sup>. These were supplemented by a series of letters - of even more questionable authenticity - allegedly emanating from a Fraulein Anna Sprengel of Nuremberg (known within the Order as *Soror Sapiens Dominabitur Astris*; each member was obliged to take a pious motto, usually in Latin) who gave Westcott authority from the German centre of the Order to found a Temple in London, to be known by the name of *Isis Urania*. The hierarchical structure of the Golden Dawn and its system of grades paralleled those of the S.R.I.A. - which was scarcely to be wondered at, given that all three founders were prominent members of the S.R.I.A. - and were derived ultimately from the eighteenth-century German Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross. The grades and their symbolism were far from secret as they had been printed in 1877 as 'two tables illustrative of Rosicrucian Philosophy' in Kenneth Mackenzie's *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*<sup>21[21]</sup>.

Waite was certainly aware of the Order's existence, and of its nature, before he joined it in June 1891<sup>22[22]</sup>, for he had used the motto of Fraulein Sprengel under his own pseudonym of 'Grand Orient' on the title-page of his *Handbook of Cartomancy*<sup>23[23]</sup> in 1889. Whether the pseudonym and motto were intended to irritate Westcott, by the

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<sup>19[19]</sup> This unpublished work was advertised occasionally as 'forthcoming' in others of Waite's publications during the 1890s. The manuscript, if one was ever written, has as not survived.

<sup>20[20]</sup> A full, documented account of the origins and history of the Golden Dawn is to be found in Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (Routledge, 1972).

<sup>21[21]</sup> The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbolism and Biography (John Hogg, 1877). The tables are on pp. 617-18.

<sup>22[22]</sup> According to the Golden Dawn's address book and record of members' progress, Waite had attained the grade of Zelator in September 1891. He was no. 98 on the Order's Roll and, from the dates of initiation of surrounding members, June 1891 seems to be his date of entry. He demitted in 1893

<sup>23[23]</sup> An insignificant work on fortune-telling, published by Redway. Waite never permitted his connection with

implication that his German mentor was involved with the Grand Orient of France, or whether Waite hoped that by using the motto he would increase sales of the book is unclear, but they do indicate an irreverent attitude to the Order that he was to maintain for a number of years.

Waite's initial sojourn in the Golden Dawn was short, apparently because he was unhappy with the activities of some of his superiors: 'I began to hear things which, in my several positions at the moment, told me that I should be well out of the whole concern. It was not on the score of morality, seeing that there were *Fratres et Sorores*; for on this ground it is just to say that no breath of scandal ever arose in the G.'D.'. during all that period. It was a question of things which had an equivocal legal aspect and in which leading members of the Order should not have been concerned, had I been informed accurately, as there seems no doubt that I was<sup>24[24]</sup>. His scruples were eventually overcome however and, after three years, during which time he issued a series of alchemical translations and edited an occult journal entitled *The Unknown World*, he rejoined the Golden Dawn on 17 February 1896, although he was not to enter the Second Order, the *Ordo Rosae Rubae et Aureae Crucis*<sup>25[25]</sup>, until March 1899. Waite's account of his return is inaccurate; he states that he was urged to rejoin by Ralph Palmer-Thomas, an enthusiastic collector of masonic degrees, who 'assured me that I was missing things that I should value and of which I could have no notion at the stage of my demission. I had been moderately certain that there was little enough to miss; but his keenness prevailed in the end, and I made an application to rejoin ... and I returned to the dubious fold by the unanimous voice of the Fellowship'<sup>26[26]</sup>. But Palmer-Thomas did not join the Golden Dawn until November 1896 and it seems probable that it was the Second Order that he encouraged Waite to enter, as he himself had done in April 1898. Waite goes on to say that it was his membership of the Second Order that led him ultimately to seek initiation into Freemasonry, but there were other influences at work upon him before this time.

#### DIANA VAUGHAN AND DEVIL WORSHIP IN FRANCE

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it to be known publicly, but he admitted it to Voorhis and others in private.

<sup>24[24]</sup> *SLT*, p. 126

<sup>25[25]</sup> The Second Order worked a spectacular Rosicrucian Initiation, devised by S. L. MacGregor Mathers who 'had a genius for constructing such rituals. It is printed in Israel Regardie's four-volume work, *The Golden Dawn* (Chicago, Aries Press, 1937-1940).

<sup>26[26]</sup> *SLT*, p. 160

From 1886 onwards French anti-masonic feeling had been exacerbated by the writings of an apparently reformed anti-clerical writer, Gabriel Jogand Pages, who wrote under the pseudonym of Leo Taxil and began to issue a series of outrageous and inflammatory works hostile to Freemasonry<sup>27[27]</sup>. Each successive work became more extravagant in its allegations of satanic practices within Freemasonry, until the publication in 1891 of *Y-a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maconnerie?*, in which 'Leo Taxil' described the rituals of the 'New and Reformed Palladium', an androgynous and satanic rite ultimately derived from Albert Pike, one of the most prominent of American masons. This nonsense was avidly swallowed by the French anti-masonic lobby, as were the utterly fantastic tales of 'Dr. Bataille' (Dr. Charles Hacks) in *Le Diable au XIX Siecle* (1892-4). Further fuel was added to the anti-masonic fire with the revelations of the supposed head of the 'New and Reformed Palladium', Miss Diana Vaughan, *soi-disant* descendant of Thomas Vaughan the alchemist, and recent convert to Rome. Her *Memoires d'une Ex-Palladiste* (1895-7) equals the work of 'Dr. Bataille' in its ridiculous tales of satanic wonders, but surpasses it in libels upon living English freemasons. She claimed that '*Le chef actuel des Luciferiens anglais est M. le docteur William-Wynn Westcott, demeurant d Londres, Camden-Road, No. 396 ... c'est lui le Supreme Mage de la Rose-Croix socinienne pour l'Angleterre. Ses adjoints sont: en premier degre, M. John-Lewis Thomas (Senior Sub-Magus), qui est aussi le tresorier general de la Fraternite; en second degre M. MacGregor Mathers (Junior Sub-Magus)*<sup>28[28]</sup>. This is followed by a list of members of the High Council of the S.R.I.A., all described as chiefs of the Third Luciferian Order, and including John Yarker, who is also correctly described as head of the Rite of Memphis and Misraim. By this time, and with such allegations, the controversy over Diana Vaughan had spread to England, where Waite took a leading role in the counter-attacks upon this suppositious lady freemason. A series of detailed rebuttals of her claims was published in the correspondence columns of the Spiritualist journal *Light*<sup>29[29]</sup>, and Waite then analysed the whole of the literature about the Palladium in his book *Devil-Worship in France*<sup>30[30]</sup>, demonstrating conclusively the fictitious nature of the whole affair - and this a year before Jogand-Pages admitted that it had been a hoax designed to embarrass the French anti-masons.

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<sup>27[27]</sup> There are twelve in all, the most important being *Revelations completes sur la Franc-Maconnerie* (1886) and *Les Freres Trois-Points* (1885).

<sup>28[28]</sup> Op. cit., p. 247

<sup>29[29]</sup> Waite's letters were printed in the issues of 7 December 1895, 4 January, 28 March and 6 June 1896.

<sup>30[30]</sup> *Devil- Worship in France, or the Question of Lucifer. A Record of things seen and heard in the Secret Societies according to the evidence of Initiates* (Redway, 1896)



Waite had described the Diana Vaughan affair as 'among the most extra-ordinary literary swindles of the present, perhaps of any, century'<sup>31[31]</sup> and claimed, with justice, to have 'unveiled the mass of fraud, falsehood and forgery contained in their depositions, and has placed the position of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to the whole conspiracy in an unenviable light'<sup>32[32]</sup>. He had also earned the gratitude of both Westcott and Yarker for refuting the outrageous allegations of their involvement with Satanism, and for giving a far kinder description of the S.R.I.A. than he had done nine years before in *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*<sup>33[33]</sup>. Yarker, especially, was impressed. In a brief review of *Devil- Worship in France*, in *The Freemason* for 31 October 1896, he said: 'Mr. Waite's well-written book is as -interesting as a romance, which in some sort it is, and though a non-mason, the Order has fallen into good hands, and owes him some gratitude; the book is critical, scholarly and Dispassionate'. He repeated his praise in an article, 'Freemasonry and Devil-Worship', in the same journal two weeks later (11 November), describing it as a 'most interesting book, written in critical and dispassionate style by a non-mason, the end of which is that Mr. Waite pronounces the charges to be "lying myths"'. Thus pleased with Waite, Yarker was soon to have further and more significant contact with him.

Non-masonic reviews of *Devil-Worship in France* were generally favourable<sup>34[34]</sup>, "although they tended to suggest that the author had taken a sledgehammer to crack a nut, and popular interest in masonic Satanists waned rapidly so that Waite's sequel, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism*<sup>35[35]</sup>, was never published. It is, nonetheless, worth quoting its conclusion for it shows a significant change in Waite's attitude to Freemasonry: 'It is a satisfaction to be able to add that the reception of my book among masons has not at all justified the common accusation of languid interest shown by the rank and file of the brethren towards all that concerns the Craft. It is sometimes said that the fraternity in England possesses no literature because masons fail to support any enterprise of the kind. Possibly the average brother is not a more serious personage than the average man anywhere, and I must admit that it is frequently the members of the higher and so-called spurious grades who take a literary interest in the

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<sup>31[31]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306

<sup>32[32]</sup> In the prospectus for *Devil- Worship in France*, written by Waite himself

<sup>33[33]</sup> *Devil- Worship in France*. See pp. 214 and 254 for Yarker, pp. 227 and 279-81 for Westcott, and pp. 282-3 for the S.R.I.A.

<sup>34[34]</sup> e.g. *The Echo*, 11 July 1896; *The New Saturday*, 12 September 1896, and F. Legge's review in *The*

*Contemporary Review* (date not ascertained).

<sup>35[35]</sup> The typescript survives. It is on 130 leaves, typed on one side only

Order, but personally I have no cause to complain of what has resulted from my first attempt to interest and vindicate the institution<sup>36[36]</sup>.

This change on Waite's part had already been perceived by the more rabid of Roman-Catholic anti-masons who saw him as a prime mover of the satanic conspiracy: 'It is perfectly apparent that during the last thirty years the English leading masonic knights, whether in Europe or America, have imbibed more or less of the magical teachings of the French Magician (Eliphas Levi), and we do not know anyone who contributed to this result more than Mr. A. E. Waite did in England', and 'No one has contributed as he did to the propagation of mystico-magic among the English occultists in or out of Freemasonry'<sup>37[37]</sup>. Colonel Ratton, in his pseudonymous and rather silly attack upon Freemasonry, *The X-rays in Freemasonry*<sup>38[38]</sup>, went further and claimed that Waite 'professes himself to be both a "mystic" and a mason' (p. 60) - which claim is manifestly untrue - although he was here slightly less off the mark than when he claimed that 'Waite is a Rosicrucian, and cannot be suspected of Catholic leanings' (p. 110). He was evidently unfamiliar with both Waite's life and his published works.

#### MARTINISM AND THE ROAD TO THE CRAFT

After the diversions of the Diana Vaughan affair, Waite returned to his more serious literary pursuits. He was becoming increasingly interested in the philosophy of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, 'The Unknown Philosopher' (1743-1803), and in the newly-created Martinist Order of the French occultist 'Papus' (Dr. Gerard Encausse, 1865-1916). He wrote to Yarker for advice about joining the Martinist Order; Yarker was enthusiastic: 'I found an objection in the *Masonic* branch of the Order of St. Martin to receive a non-mason, and I have no doubt that it would be found inconvenient both to you and them. However that need not interfere with my conferring the Order upon you as I had it myself from a non-mason, the Baron Surdi of Prague. The ritual is properly in four books - I enclose you the first, and you need only send me a short note that you

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<sup>36[36]</sup> Ibid., ff. 121 and 122

<sup>37[37]</sup> L. Floquet, *Luciferianism or Satanism in English Freemasonry* (Montreal, Cadieux and Derome, 1898). Quoted in *Light* for 7 January 1899

<sup>38[38]</sup> *The X-Rays in Freemasonry* by 'A. Cowan' (Effingham Wilson, 1901). The cover design, free-style lettering in red on black boards, is consciously modelled on the cover of Waite's *Devil- Worship in France*

conform yourself entirely to carry out the Ob ... You can then proceed on your own account to form a non-masonic branch, and when you have done something I daresay you might get a Charter from "Papus" for a London body<sup>39[39]</sup>.

Waite was delighted at this response and sent his obligation by return, expressing at the same time his own wish to promote the Order: 'I thank you most cordially for the honour which you have done me in conferring upon me the Order of St. Martin. The fact that I am not a mason makes that honour somewhat exceptional, and I can but value it the more highly in consequence. I entirely conform to the obligation required of the candidate, and I hereby pledge myself never to reveal the name of my Initiator to anybody or to make it public in what manner soever. I have read with great interest and have carefully transcribed the MS. containing the first two books of the ritual, and I return it herewith. I shall look forward to the receipt of the third. I trust that I shall prove useful, as I shall certainly endeavour to be active, in the diffusion of the Order among occult students who are not masons'<sup>40[40]</sup>.

No correspondence with 'Papus' survives from this period and it is not possible to determine whether or not Waite applied for a Charter but, in an address to the International Congress (of Spiritualists) in 1898, 'Papus' referred to the progress of his Order, which had added two new Martinist 'Formations' in England during 1897<sup>41[41]</sup>. One of these may well have involved Waite, although in 1902 he broke completely with 'Papus' when he learned of the bad odour in which the latter was held by orthodox masonic bodies. However his enthusiasm for the doctrines of Saint-Martin remained and in 1899 he completed a major study which is still the only significant English work on Saint-Martin<sup>42[42]</sup>.

The doctrines of Saint-Martin are diffuse and difficult to elucidate with any clarity but Waite succeeded admirably in his presentation. It is unnecessary here to expound them except to record that Waite treated Martinism as 'a body of mystic doctrine, and not a

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<sup>39[39]</sup> Letter from Yarker to Waite, Manchester 30 January, 1897. In the collection of the late Geoffrey Watkins

<sup>40[40]</sup> Letter from Waite to Yarker, Gunnersbury, 5 February 1897. Formerly in the Yarker Library, now in private hands.

<sup>41[41]</sup> Printed in *Light*, for 2 July 1898

<sup>42[42]</sup> *The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, The Unknown Philosopher, and the Substance of his Transcendental Doctrine* (Wellby, 1901). The book was to have been issued in 1900 by Redway but his business had failed in the interim and was taken over by Wellby.

masonic rite devised by Saint-Martin to replace the Elect Cohens<sup>43[43]</sup>. He was also sceptical of 'Papus's' claims as to Saint-Martin's masonic connections and advised his readers 'to bear in mind that upon historical questions the criterion of evidence is not invariably so rigorous in France as it is in England'<sup>44[44]</sup>. What is most significant about *Louis Claude de Saint-Martin* is that it represents a turning-point in Waite's career, for it was effectively the first of his many books on what he called 'The Secret Tradition' and it was Martinism rather than the Golden Dawn that brought him into Freemasonry.

*Louis Claude de Saint-Martin* was published in May 1901 but review copies had been sent out several months earlier. On 25 May Waite wrote to 'Papus', advising him that a second copy of the book was on its way from the publisher, and expressing satisfaction that 'Papus' liked the book: 'I learned with very sincere satisfaction that you had formed a good opinion of the book. There is no opinion that I could hold in such high estimation as you have every means of knowing and have done such admirable work yourself in the same direction'<sup>45[45]</sup>. But 'Papus' had offered a more tangible reward than mere praise: 'Please accept my best thanks for your kind offer to obtain for me the degree of Doctor from the *Ecole Hermetique*. I shall value the distinction highly'<sup>46[46]</sup>. The degree was quite worthless but Waite did use it on one occasion much later when he wished to use a pseudonym -'Doctor of Hermetic Science' - to hide his connection with an anthology of the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis, an early American spiritualist<sup>47[47]</sup>. The first copy of the book on Saint-Martin sent to 'Papus' had almost certainly been forwarded to Edouard Blitz, the head of the Martinist Order in America, who became a frequent correspondent of Waite and who encouraged him to become a freemason. Waite refers to Blitz in his autobiography as one 'who had been long and intimately acquainted with the occult schools of Paris, but was a mason under an orthodox obedience, probably in the United States'<sup>48[48]</sup> and adds 'I cannot remember whether I was already a mason

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<sup>43[43]</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>44[44]</sup> Ibid., p. 459

<sup>45[45]</sup> Letter from Waite to Papus, London, 25 May 1901. Original in the Martinist Order archives at Lyon. Copy supplied by M. Robert Amadou

<sup>46[46]</sup> ibid

<sup>47[47]</sup> *The Harmonial Philosophy. A Compendium and Digest of the Works of Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of*

*Poughkeepsie*, edited by 'A Doctor of Hermetic Science' (Rider, 1917)

<sup>48[48]</sup> *SLT*, p. 164

when he and I began to talk of these things in letters, or whether what I learned from him decided me to seek Initiation'<sup>49[49]</sup>.

As will be seen, what he learned was of yet another source of secret rites, and it was unquestionably the continuing quest for rituals that led Waite to Freemasonry. He was already dissatisfied with the rituals of the Golden Dawn in both form and content, and he had determined to reshape them and to divert the course of the Order down mystical rather than magical paths; in this endeavour he was supported by Marcus Worsley Blackden, a fellow adept and amateur Egyptologist: 'A day came when Blackden and I began to think seriously of Freemasonry and to wonder whether a deeper insight into the meaning and symbolism of Ritual would be gained by joining the most predominant and world-wide combination of Rites . . . There is no question that an important side of the tentative consideration was whether, were such a course adopted, the Order of the Golden Dawn might profit thereby'<sup>50[50]</sup>. This was not exactly the whole truth for Waite already knew enough of masonic ceremonial and its symbolism to satisfy the needs of any reconstituted rituals within the Golden Dawn, and his further statement, 'that I did not fail to anticipate an extreme probability of meeting in the high grade circles, if not in Craft and Arch, with at least a few others of our own dedications, to whom symbolism spoke a language and ritual opened a realm of grace'<sup>51[51]</sup>, gives a wrong emphasis for those few freemasons who were 'of our own dedications' were already within the confines of the Golden Dawn.

The most probable reason for Waite's seeking admission to Freemasonry at this time is a growing awareness on his part, through his correspondence with Blitz, that only by passing through the Craft degrees and the Holy Royal Arch would he be able to enter those higher degrees whose rites he so eagerly desired. To this end he sought the help of Palmer-Thomas, who 'offered high encouragement; and when the time came he prepared our way and was duly present as a guest when Blackden and I were at length made masons at Runymede Lodge in the Province of Bucks'<sup>52[52]</sup>. And so, on 19 September 1901, at the age of 43, Waite was initiated in Runymede Lodge No. 2430 at Wraysbury in Buckinghamshire.

## WAITE AND CRAFT MASONRY

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<sup>49[49]</sup> Ibid., p. 165

<sup>50[50]</sup> Ibid., p. 161

<sup>51[51]</sup> Ibid., p. 161

<sup>52[52]</sup> Ibid., p. 162

As a courtesy to Runymede Lodge both Waite and Blackden were raised, on 10 February 1902, in St. Marylebone Lodge No. 1305 and, as neither of them knew anyone in either lodge, it must be conjectured, in the absence of further information<sup>53[53]</sup>, that Palmer-Thomas was a personal friend of G. S. Beeching who was then both Master of Runymede and Secretary of St. Marylebone.

Initiation into Craft Masonry brought no spiritual enlightenment to Waite: 'For myself it was a curious experience in more ways than one, and perhaps especially because it was so patent throughout that I could have told the Worshipful Master all that he was communicating to me. My Initiation was nothing therefore but a means to an end: I awaited the Grades beyond<sup>54[54]</sup>. He was not enthusiastic about his brother masons: 'I like that phrase "Brother of the Appearance of Light" applied to the masonic brethren to show that their attributed illumination is but phantasmal<sup>55[55]</sup>, nor about the formal management of a lodge: 'The revised Byelaws of the Runymede Lodge have been sent me. It is not to be expected that they should make for the Life Eternal and I suppose that they are not more eternally voided of all importance than other legislative documents framed for lodges and chapters by "hollow hearts and empty heads"<sup>56[56]</sup>. He also disliked office: 'I had a hideous experience yesterday at the Runymede Lodge, on the occasion of the installation of a new Master. I took the last possible train which would have brought me in time for my part of the ceremony and arrived only in time for the dinner. I was made Steward in my absence and this caused the dinner itself to be very nearly intolerable and some slight functions afterwards caused me to lose the last train<sup>57[57]</sup>.

But despite these inner reservations he was popular with his fellow-members of Runymede Lodge, who saw him in a dual role: primarily as the London Manager of Horlick's Food Company (a post he held from 1900 to 1909) and, less importantly, as an enthusiast for esoteric subjects. In 1907 G. S. Beeching, an adept at doggerel verse, referred to both roles when describing the Senior Deacon:

Here am I - my name is Waite,

Rosicrucian up to date,

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<sup>53[53]</sup> It has not been possible, in spite of several requests, to see the Minute Books of Runymede Lodge.

<sup>54[54]</sup> *SLT*, p. 162

<sup>55[55]</sup> Diary for 1902/1903, 10 October. Waite called this diary 'Annus Mirabilis Redivivus' because of its record of his great successes in ritual matters.

<sup>56[56]</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 March 1903

<sup>57[57]</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July 1903

One hot night I had a dream,  
Dreamt I swam in Malted Cream.<sup>58[58]</sup>

Waite, too, produced verse for Runymede, albeit of a heavier kind, and his 'Ode of Welcome' in 1909 records his own quests as well as the drinking habits of his fellows:

Give me another glass - who do the speaking -  
I've look'd for Secret Rites from zone to zone;  
High grades and orders answer to my seeking,  
But there's no Warrant and Diploma  
Which bears the incense sweetness and aroma  
Of Runymede's - my first, my very own!<sup>59[59]</sup>

In 1910 Waite was installed as Master of Runymede Lodge, and during his year of office he celebrated the Winter Dinner of the lodge, on 1 February 1911, 'by conferring on all brethren present the Great Mystery of the Vault of the Adepts (under dispensation from the unknown Superior of the Sodality of the Shades)<sup>60[60]</sup>. This was the closest he came to introducing his brethren to the mysteries of the Golden Dawn, although he had

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<sup>58[58]</sup> Beeching's verses were printed as a broadsheet entitled 'The Masque of Runymede'.

<sup>59[59]</sup> 'An Ode of Welcome', Runymede Lodge, 21 January 1909. The verse quoted is no. 5. Waite also wrote an 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Preferment in Runymede Lodge' (1907). It was privately printed as a broadsheet for members of the lodge

<sup>60[60]</sup> Quoted as item (d) on the summons for the Winter Dinner of the lodge, 15 January 1911

persuaded Bernard Springett<sup>61[61]</sup>, a member of Runymede from 1901 to 1905, to join the Independent & Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn in 1910, and he introduced Percy Bullock, a prominent member of the Isis Urania Temple, to Freemasonry via Runymede Lodge. Bullock was initiated on 14 June 1904, but resigned from membership in the following year. Waite regularly attended meetings of Runymede Lodge until 1920 when he moved from Ealing in West London to Ramsgate in Kent, after which time his association with Craft Masonry faded although he remained a member of his mother lodge until his death.

### THE HIGHER DEGREES AND *THE SECRET TRADITION*

As soon as he had been raised, Waite began his quest for higher degrees in earnest. On 10 April 1902 he and Blackden were admitted to the grade of Zelator in the S.R.I.A., having been proposed by Palmer-Thomas and seconded by Westcott - both of whom were keen to have Waite as a member. The two new Rosicrucians then proceeded to the Holy Royal Arch, being exalted in Metropolitan Chapter No. 1507 on 1 May 1902, following this one week later with their Installation as Knights Templar at the Consecration of the King Edward VII Preceptory. Here they rested, and Waite prepared for a journey to Switzerland and for reception into the one Rite he craved the most: the *Regime Ecossais et Rectifie* and its grade of *Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cite Sainte* (C.B.C.S.).

As a result of his earlier correspondence with Blitz, Waite had come to see the *Regime Ecossais et Rectifie* as maintaining more than any other rite the essence in ritual form of that secret tradition that 'tells us not alone that the Soul "cometh from afar" and that the Soul returns whence it came, but it delineates the Path of Ascent'<sup>62[62]</sup>. The theory that all esoteric practices and traditions, whether alchemy, the Hebrew Kabbalah, the legends of the Holy Grail, Rosicrucianism, Christian mysticism or Freemasonry, were secret paths to a direct experience of God had been developed by Waite over many years. He was convinced that the symbolism in each of these traditions had a common root and a

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<sup>61[61]</sup> Springett wrote a number of books on secret societies and on masonic symbolism. He was an active

supporter of the F.R.C. and of the later Golden Dawn before it, but there is no evidence that he was involved

prior to 1910 and thus it cannot be assumed that it was he who introduced Waite to Runymede Lodge

<sup>62[62]</sup> *SLT*, p. 164



common end, and that their correct interpretation would lead to a revelation of concealed ways to spiritual illumination. In his published works it is difficult to find this theory of the secret tradition clearly expressed, but it is put quite succinctly in *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*.<sup>63[63]</sup> 'The Secret Tradition contains, firstly, the memorials of a loss which has befallen humanity; and, secondly, the records of a restitution in respect of that which was lost ... the keepers of the tradition perpetuated it in secret by means of Instituted Mysteries and cryptic literature' (vol. I, p. ix).

In itself 'The Secret Tradition is the immemorial knowledge concerning man's way of return whence he came by a method of the inward life' (vol. 11, p. 379). Common to all its forms is the evidence that 'testifies to (a) the aeonian nature of the loss; (b) the certitude of an ultimate restoration; (c) in respect of that which was lost, the perpetuity of its existence somewhere in time and the world, although interned deeply; (d) and more rarely its substantial presence under veils close to the hands of all' (vol. 1, p. xi). For Freemasonry 'that loss and restoration are essential . . . the middle term is absence, out of which quest arises. When one of the triad is wanting, whether implicitly or explicitly, the grade is not masonic' (vol. 11, p. 379). He further believed that a proper understanding of the tradition in Freemasonry would enable him to construct rituals of his own devising, the working of which would lead all those who took part to a spiritual enlightenment of their own.

It was thus of crucial importance for Waite to gain access to the Rectified Rite which represented, *par excellence*, the secret tradition in practice but, while he prepared the ground for his visit to Geneva, he was also collecting other rites and planning the moves that would lead him in 1903 to gain control of the faction-ridden Golden Dawn<sup>64[64]</sup>. Contrary to appearances, he was not driven by a desire for power; all his eager gathering of masonic rites was for the dual purpose of bringing together the various lines of what he saw as a type of 'Masonic Apostolic Succession' and the subsequent quarrying of their rituals for the benefit of his own projected Order.

Waite had no intention of encroaching on the jurisdiction of Grand Lodge, Grand Chapter, Great Priory or Supreme Council, and sought possession only of rites that were moribund, quasi-masonic or unrecognized in England. They were to be brought together under the control of a 'Secret Council of Rites' that had been created by himself with the aid of Blackden and Palmer-Thomas, at the latter's home on 2 December 1902:

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<sup>63[63]</sup> *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry and an analysis of the Inter-Relation between the Craft and the High*

*Grades in respect of their term of Research* (New York, Rebman, 1911) 2 vols

<sup>64[64]</sup> For the complex tale of the schism in the Golden Dawn, see Howe, *op. cit.*

I proposed that we should constitute ourselves a Secret Council of Rites which was carried with great joy, it being further agreed that the news of this Council should never transpire. We shall be indeed an occult Order of Unknown Philosophers - a concealed kind<sup>65[65]</sup>. At a later meeting the C.B.C.S. was specifically excluded although it was restored to the Council's control when a Constitution was finally drawn up in April 1903 (see Appendix D for the whole text of this curious document).

Greater satisfaction was anticipated by Waite from the C.B.C.S. than he had so far gained from the Knights Templar. I attended this evening the meeting of the Templar Preceptory [King Edward VII] when two installations took place. It is by far the most interesting of all of the Christian chivalries with the rites of which I am acquainted, though such gleanings as I can make concerning the Perfect Knights' charges seem to hope for greater significance therein<sup>66[66]</sup>. He was also far from adept when he 'tried to play at toy soldiers'<sup>67[67]</sup>, finding that my feet refused to do anything that was required of them ... By a curious fatality I always turn the wrong way. I do not know why this should be, and really it is very confusing. I do not know whether I am proud of my infirmity like St. Paul or ashamed like the ordinary individual when convinced of his stupidity<sup>68[68]</sup>. His own rituals were to be easier to perform.

As a prelude to his Swiss journey Waite travelled to Scotland to receive the Early Grand Rite of 47° which he felt would be of some use to him: 'So far as cyclopaedias and masonic historians are concerned, this rite is utterly unknown, nor have I so much as met with the sequence of its grades. Obscure or not, 47° means at least 44 rituals which cannot fail of material for my paper against the time when I shall unsay all that has till now been said as to the symbolic builders'<sup>69[69]</sup>. His visit did not begin well: 'My projected journey to Scotland ...

took place by the midnight train on Friday and I reached Kilmarnock in the early morning, as might well have been expected, amidst drenching rain'<sup>70[70]</sup>. And it was afternoon before he met his host, Colonel Spence, 'coming from the station through a sea of mud'. Spence did not impress him 'as being of any particular attainments or of more than average education', nor did the other Kilmarnock masons meet his expectations: 'A considerable proportion of them belonged to the mechanic order while one or two looked as if they were shepherds'. Waite was also disappointed with the ceremony: 'It was proposed to confer upon me the 41st Degree called Priestly Order or White Mason. I

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<sup>65[65]</sup> Diary, 2 December 1902

<sup>66[66]</sup> Ibid., 23 October 1902

<sup>67[67]</sup> Ibid., 30 March 1903

<sup>68[68]</sup> Ibid., 7 April 1903

<sup>69[69]</sup> Ibid., 13 October 1903

<sup>70[70]</sup> Ibid., Diary for 8 February 1903. All the quotations concerning his visit to Kilmarnock are from this entry

went through an almost indescribable initiation, the officiating brethren wearing white surplices and holding small pieces of tallow candle in their hands. There was no attempt at reciting the ritual from memory, books being used for the purpose and the ceremony was simply muddled through ... The Obligation Degree was administered to me with very curious variations on the part of the Grand Master so as to enable me to receive anything else which I wanted, but it is quite impossible to make any clear inference from the wording of the pledge. At the time I took it I understood it to refer only to the degrees of what they are pleased to term White Masonry, but it was explained to me afterwards that it was binding also as regards all the forty-seven degrees and I think for Memphis and Mizraim as well as anything in the way of adoptive Orders and perhaps the Royal Order of Scotland'.

Worse was to follow: 'After the meeting I was introduced to my brethren and, a good deal to my dismay, Colonel Spence then engineered the assembly, still through the pouring rain, back to my hotel where in a small smoking-room he ordered drinks for all; they then proceeded to make speeches on the subject of my visit to Scotland, on my literary labours, etc., and to these I had to reply. The whole experience was incredibly squalid and yet more curious than I can give an account of in a hasty description'. But he had obtained the rites he sought in embarrassing abundance: 'I purchased the rituals of the Early Grand Rite from the 4th to the 44th Degrees and ... found I was also in possession of the Order of the Temple for Scotland which, having regard to my affiliation with the Grand Priory of England, was the very last thing I wanted ... in like manner I am in possession by the most heterodox means possible of the Mark Degrees of Masonry, of a rival Royal Arch Knight of Malta, Red Cross of Rome and Constantine and even the Royal Ark Mariners ... If the fact that I had been affiliated should transpire generally it will no doubt lead to a good deal of trouble'.

His reception in Geneva was to be a happier affair for his path had been smoothed by Edouard Blitz who, in his capacity of Great Prior for America, both introduced Waite to the Rectified Rite and highly recommended him. In February 1903 Waite received the preliminary forms of admission and pledge and a series of *Questions d'Ordre*, all of which he duly completed, signed and returned - with a curious error; he gave his year of birth as 1859. In his replies to the questions he stated his belief 'that there is a Masonry which is behind Masonry and is not commonly communicated in lodges, though at the right time it is made known to the right person. But it is requisite that he should come in by the door and should pass through the preliminary grades to attain the ineffable ends'<sup>71[71]</sup> and in his covering letter he intimated that he 'was going among the brethren of Geneva to learn and not to teach'<sup>72[72]</sup>. He was also 'required to choose (1) a mystic name; (2) a motto, also symbolical; (3) armorial bearings prior to my being armed as a knight in the secret conclave. I have chosen therefore as follows: (1) *Eques a longe aspiciens*; (2) *Sacramentum Regis abscotidere bonum est*; (3) argent, a cross sable,

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<sup>71[71]</sup> Quoted from his carbon copy of the replies, pasted into his Diary for 1902/03

<sup>72[72]</sup> Diary, 16 February 1903

between four roses gules, which is, of course, purely Rosicrucian and is assigned to me by myself for that reason<sup>73[73]</sup>.

Thus prepared, he travelled to Geneva, arriving early on 28 February 1903, to be received by Joseph Leclerc (1835-1927), Great Prior of the Independent Great Priory of Heivetia. On the evening of the same day Waite received the two grades of Squire Novice and Knight Beneficent of the Holy City although, under normal circumstances, a period of one year was supposed to elapse between receiving the first and the second. Waite's account of the evening emphasizes his innate snobbery: 'The gathering from an English point of view was exceedingly mixed, consisting (a) of respectable tradesmen, as e.g. booksellers; (b) members of the French parliament; (c) persons who had the appearance of Genevan gentlemen of good position; (d) an Englishman holding some official appointment under this government; (e) a few who might have belonged to a class inferior to the tradesmen so far as their appearance goes; (f) various representatives of the Genevan government. I had throughout especial marks of kindness and consideration from all those who were evidently the better placed of the gathering'<sup>74[74]</sup>. The ceremonies however greatly impressed him: 'the ceremony throughout was read or recited, the rituals not being committed to memory as in English Masonry. The effect was in reality much better, but it is possible that the ritual lends itself especially to this kind of delivery as it was more narrative and exhortatory than are the Craft degrees. I wish in any case to record that as regards both grades the rites could have scarcely been simpler, more impressive or worked with more smoothness and dignity.'

Later he found the ceremony of raising to the grade of Knight Beneficent to be 'done very beautifully and very affectingly' and noticed in the Profession of Faith 'the stress which it laid upon the doctrine of the Fall of Man and the distinctly Martinistic flavour which characterized the wording of the doctrine and was apparent also in other parts of this document'. On the following day he returned to England well-pleased and anticipating the news that finally reached him early in May: 'The Helvetian Priory in its session of 16 April has agreed to confer upon me the full powers required for the establishment of the Secret Order in England and the Colonies and that the necessary papers will be sent to me in due course'<sup>75[75]</sup>. This had been his real object in going to Geneva, as he had confided to his diary in the previous October: 'I will not undertake a journey to Geneva ... merely for affiliation with that rite, much as I desire to possess it. I must have its custody for England, and it will be something to possess a rite which requires no reconstitution, as in

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<sup>73[73]</sup> Ibid., 22 February 1903. The motto was that which he used in the Golden Dawn and in the F.R.C. It is taken from the Vulgate (of the Book of Tobit). The arms are reproduced on the covers of *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*

<sup>74[74]</sup> Diary, 3 March 1903

<sup>75[75]</sup> Ibid 2 May 1903

the case of Martinism ... If I do secure the Rite of the Holy City, there will be trouble, I suppose, in this case with the English Council of Rites...But unless some such connection based on a reasonable *modus vivendi* should suit my purpose, I will frighten the Grand Council with the rumour of secret associations behind my rite and they shall be glad to leave it alone'<sup>76[76]</sup>.

His plans for the C.B.C.S. in England were destined to come to nothing, however, for, although he translated the rituals into English<sup>77[77]</sup> and was received in 1907 into the degrees of *Profes and Grand Profes* - by correspondence, he did not make a second visit to Geneva<sup>78[78]</sup>. he made no attempt to work the two grades that had been conferred upon him and the only dissemination of the rite in England was, according to G. E. W. Bridge, by 'Waite personally and through his literary references to the Rite'<sup>79[79]</sup>. Bridge felt, however, that 'this advance has developed itself naturally and smoothly and I'd let it continue on the same quiet lines'<sup>80[80]</sup>. They were quiet lines indeed for Waite's sole activity had been to recommend B. H. Springett, in 1924, and Bridge, in 1929, to the authorities in Geneva. In the letter recommending Bridge he explained his inactivity: 'There was a time when I hoped to found the *Rigime Ecosais et L'Ordre Interieur* in England...The jealousy of the High Grades here made the scheme impossible, and I look sometimes with sore regret on the great parchment which is the evidence of my appointment'<sup>81[81]</sup>. In the same letter Waite doubted that Bridge 'could do anything of a practical kind for the furtherance of the Order in this country ... I should have done it long since, had any path opened'. He was yet pleased when the rite was re-established in America in 1934 (Blitz's Charter having fallen into abeyance), for the two brethren concerned, Dr. William Moseley Brown and J. Ray Shute, had learned of the rite and its significance through Waite's writings.

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<sup>76[76]</sup> Ibid., 27 October 1902

<sup>77[77]</sup> In 1905; they were printed, or rather mimeographed, in 1934 by F. F. Bahnsen at Warrenton in North

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<sup>78[78]</sup> His letter of Obligation is dated 26 November 1907. It is preserved in the archives of the Independent

#### Great Priory of Helvetia at Geneva

<sup>79[79]</sup> Letter from Bridge to F. Amez-Droz, Chancellor of the Order, 27 September 1929. In the same archives

<sup>80[80]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81[81]</sup> Letter from Waite to Arnez-Droz, 18 May 1929

Waite still believed that he was the sole authority for disseminating the rite in England but the Independent Great Priory of Helvetia did not see him in that light and they did not inform him when, in 1938, fearful of the Axis threat to Masonry in Switzerland, they had agreed to grant a Charter to the Great Priory of England and Wales for the C.B.C.S. in England. He learned of the new Charter through a letter from Shute, and expressed his surprise and annoyance in his reply: 'It should be clearly understood, in view of other rumours, that I have held for many years, and still hold, the Warrant of the Helvetian Priory which placed the Rite in my hands . . . You might tell me further about those 'printed reports that the Templar Great Priory of England has taken over the C.B.C.S.' in this country. I have heard nothing about it and cannot imagine what it means, as there is nothing less likely in the world of Masonry than that it should attempt to work them here'<sup>82[82]</sup>. With the failure to propagate its most important rite, Waite's 'Secret Council of Rites' had, masonically speaking, long since come to naught. He had attempted to resurrect it in 1922 but the attempt came to nothing; there were, however, other ways to propagate the secret tradition.

Ever since his marriage in 1888 Waite had officially styled himself as an author, despite his involvements in publishing and with the Horlick's Food Company, and it was through his books that he was best known to most of his masonic brethren. His authority in all matters occult was widely accepted, as was his great knowledge of the esoteric byways of Freemasonry, and this undoubtedly helped him to gain entrance to the various lodges, chapters and preceptories he sought to join - all of which contained potential converts to his ideas. Once converted they tended to seek admission to the Independent & Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn and to its successor, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, but it must be stressed that Waite never actively sought recruits. He did, however, seize every opportunity to propagate his doctrine of the secret tradition, not only through his lectures (*see* Appendix C) but also when speaking informally.

His first masonic venture into public debate was at a meeting of Quatuor Coronati Lodge on 3 October 1902, when he commented on E. J. Castle's paper, 'The Reception (Initiation) of a Knight Templar'<sup>83[83]</sup>, and, with all the authority of a knight of five months' standing (Castle was not a member of the Order of the Temple), asked a series of questions about Castle's sources. The paper was unexceptionable and Castle's answers more than adequate, but Waite was convinced of his own superior knowledge and scornful of the members of Quatuor Coronati Lodge. He recorded in his diary that the paper was 'ill-conceived, ill-defined and altogether *male sonans*. These people know not whither they are going. I asked certain questions at the end but there was no one to answer them. These are not brethren; they are simulacra - "antic figures which a juggler dances"<sup>84[84]</sup>. Later he referred to the paper again: 'Of course I must not say what I think

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<sup>82[82]</sup> Letter from Waite to Shute, 22 November 1938

<sup>83[83]</sup> *AQC 15* (1902), pp. 163-74. Waite's comments are printed on pp. 170-2

<sup>84[84]</sup> Diary, 3 October 1902

really - that it is an incoherent and slovenly paper...I begin to see very clearly how much a real history of the Templars is wanted in England to set matters right, so far as they can be set, once and for all. This is of course a scheme of my own doing for my seminal work on the secret doctrine of religious societies<sup>85[85]</sup>. Waite's strictures on Castle's paper were, of course, quite unjust but his diary entry is highly significant in that it reveals how his unpublished *Esoteric History of Freemasonry* was being transformed into *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*.

## MAGNUM OPUS I

Before this great work was published Waite had written a series of articles on the origins of Freemasonry and on the more obscure of the higher degrees, for his own journal, *Horlick's Magazine*. These were then published in *Studies in Mysticism* (1906). He followed these with a paper on 'The Place of Masonry in the Rites of Initiation' for the S.R.I.A. and a series of papers on Templar symbolism and history, delivered between 1908 and 1910 at the Sancta Maria Preceptory, of which Waite had been a founding member in 1906. All these were, however, but a foretaste of the glory that was to come. In July 1911 Waite's 'first contribution to masonic literature' appeared, seeming to him 'in respect of production - the most beautiful work which has ever been issued in any land or language on the masonic subject'<sup>86[86]</sup>. But it was the contents not the covers that mattered. 'As the Mark restored to Masonry the lost notion of Christhood, so did the Royal Arch bring it back to Trinitarian Doctrine . . . These were convictions which lay behind my first contribution to masonic literature'<sup>87[87]</sup>. It also set out in exhaustive detail his theory of the secret tradition and it was this that brought him a host of favourable reviews.

The non-masonic press praised the book while not understanding it<sup>88[88]</sup>, the occult press enthused over it, and the masonic press approved of it and commanded it to its readers. W. L. Wilmshurst produced reviews in all three categories, for *The Bookman*, *The Occult Review* and *The Freemason*, all being favourable. This can only be presumed in the case of *The Occult Review*, for Wilmshurst there achieved the almost impossible feat of writing in a style at once more verbose and more incomprehensible than Waite at his

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<sup>85[85]</sup> Ibid., 18 October 1902

<sup>86[86]</sup> *SLT*, p. 179

<sup>87[87]</sup> *SLT*, p. 178

<sup>88[88]</sup> E.g. *The Saturday Review*, 18 November 1911

worst<sup>89[89]</sup>. In *The Freemason* he claimed that the book 'unquestionably exceeds in importance any that has yet appeared in regard to what may be called the problem of Freemasonry', praised Waite and added that 'the whole Craft is deeply obligated to him for presenting it with so admirable a mirror and exegesis of its own doctrine'. Another favourable review appeared in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 25, (pp. 133-5) but it was, perhaps, less than objective, being written by B. E. J. Edwards, who was a long-standing member of the Golden Dawn. The only carping note was struck by John Yarker who reviewed the work for *The Co-Mason* (vol. 4, pp. 29-32, 1912). He was upset because Waite 'does not seek to hide his contempt, often expressed in uncourteous language, against all who differ from him, or otherwise against those degrees from which he could extract nothing to confirm his theories, and the writer of this review comes in, with many better men, for a "slating"', and he rightly criticized the factual errors and condemned Waite for his sneers at 'the thing called Co-Masonry': 'We may not like Co-Masonry; for one thing, it affords less opportunity for the gourmandizing proclivities of the ordinary freemason, but the system has come to stay and we might treat it with civility'.

Most co-masons were, however, quite happy with Waite. The following issue of their journal contained a second and highly favourable notice of the book, written by Revd. A. H. E. Lee, who was an active member of Waite's Golden Dawn but who preferred Co-Masonry to the legitimate Craft. He also, and quite inexplicably, was among the 'few persons who attempted to carry on by themselves' when, in 1914, Waite 'put an end to the Isis-Urania or Mother Temple, owing to internecine feuds on the authenticity of documents'<sup>90[90]</sup>. Other co-masons supported Waite and, after he founded his new Order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, in the following year, he drew more of its members from Co-Masonry than from Freemasonry proper. The co-masons were also to prove more friendly when Waite's second *magnum opus* appeared.

## MAGNUM OPUS II

As we have seen, Waite had an inordinately high opinion of his own scholarship, and a correspondingly low one of the more usually recognized masonic scholars. 'Brother R. F. Gould, who has written a rather illiterate, albeit pretentious work on Freemasonry, and writes also a rather illiterate letter, asks me to suggest some picture or portrait to illustrate a chapter on Rosicrucianism in some concise history of the fraternity which he is about to publish'<sup>91[91]</sup>, while 'of the two Masonic cyclopaedias which have appeared in English,

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<sup>89[89]</sup> *The Bookman*, October 1911; *The Occult Review*, October, 1911;

*The Freemason*, 25 May 1912

<sup>90[90]</sup> *SLT*, p. 229

<sup>91[91]</sup> *Diary*, 30 April 1903



one - that of Woodford - swarms with the mis-statements and ineptitudes of ignorance, and one - that of Mackenzie - with the misstatements and extravagances of a lying fancy'<sup>92[92]</sup>. About his fellow-Rosicrucians he was even more scathing. In 1903 he was chairman of the S.R.I.A. Study Circle and found that its reports 'are diseased memorials and the malady from which they suffer requires the continued process of the cemetery. Such instances of inability to state with any clearness what the speaker intended to say I have never met with previously'<sup>93[93]</sup>. At the same time he admitted to himself. 'I have noted that in certain instances my share in the discussion is open to the same criticism' - such self-criticism of his literary abilities was rare indeed.

After *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry* had run its course, Waite conceived the idea of compiling a masonic encyclopaedia that would reflect his own predilections for the higher degrees and their symbolism. Literary researches and the affairs of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross were occupying much of his time, and his involvement with Craft Masonry had practically ceased, but he found that 'my activities had increased rapidly in the High Grade circles. It is another way of recording that I saw more than ever the unexpressed things that lie behind the rites'<sup>94[94]</sup>. At the same time, 'I had no wish to include among my writings still another Encyclopaedia added to those that existed already in the world of English Masonry. On reflection however, it seemed to me that here was the most convenient form in which to introduce a multitude of personal views and standpoints'<sup>95[95]</sup>. Accordingly, in May 1917 he went to see Ralph Shirley, who owned the publishing house of Rider & Co., and 'proposed by inspiration a great new masonic encyclopaedia'<sup>96[96]</sup>. A draft agreement was drawn up in June and by 3 July Waite had assembled 'over 200 pp. of rough materials collected from old MS. sources in three days'<sup>97[97]</sup>. By Boxing Day his rough notes had risen to 1,000 pages; three months later they were in rough alphabetical order and, by December 1918, he had completed over 500 pages of his final draft.

Throughout 1919 he was involved in complicated discussions with Shirley and with the printers, Brendons of Plymouth, over the layout of the rapidly-expanding book, over its illustrations and over money. Waite received a series of small sums in advance of royalties, an agreement to extend the book to two volumes and a new contract. After much last-minute addition and correction to the text, *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* was finally published in March 1921, Waite's delight at its appearance

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<sup>92[92]</sup> Ibid., 5 October 1902

<sup>93[93]</sup> Ibid., 23 March 1903

<sup>94[94]</sup> *SLT*, p. 207

<sup>95[95]</sup> Ibid., pp. 207-8

<sup>96[96]</sup> Diary, 21 May 1917

<sup>97[97]</sup> Ibid., 3 July 1917

being tempered by his expectation that 'the vested authorities and the diehards of dead Masonry might rise up of course to curse me'<sup>98[98]</sup>. And so they did.

Volume 11 of the *Transactions of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research* contains the text of Waite's paper 'Robert Fludd and Freemasonry', which he had delivered to the Association in September 1921; it also contains an anonymous review of *A New Encyclopaedia Of Freemasonry*. The reviewer was shocked both by Waite's cavalier attitude to historical fact and by his contempt for earlier scholars; 'There are many errors of date and name which students, however, will readily detect, but it is when men like John Yarker are referred to as illiterate and other even more gifted writers of the past are almost as contemptuously alluded to that the value of the compiler's opinions is discounted' (p. 139). He also disapproved of Waite's views: 'It seems quite out of place to endeavour to incorporate the view that Freemasonry is part of a Divine Quest which after all, is only the author's fancy' (p. 139), but finally, and grudgingly, admitted that it might have some value: 'The book is not likely to replace former encyclopaedias, although it may find its own place in masonic literature' (p. 139).

The task of demolishing Waite utterly was left to *AQC* 33 (1920) and the two reviewers of the book, W. J. Songhurst and J. E. S. Tuckett, went to work with a will. Songhurst found that 'the impression left on my mind after reading the work is that Bro. Waite has merely linked together a series of essays embodying personal opinions, by means of lists and tabulations for which he has very little respect' (p. 169). He also attacked Waite's arbitrary and bizarre arrangement of subject matter: 'It is surely unusual to find an index in a Dictionary or Encyclopaedia, ... That an index was needed for Bro. Waite's Encyclopaedia seems to show that a faulty arrangement of the matter has been recognized. True, it is planned on a alphabetical basis . . . but to find any particular subject one has to resort to a system of guess-work, the index affording scarcely any help' (p. 169). Waite's errors of fact and examples of his ignorance of recent scholarship are listed with glee, as are his abusive and unjust comments on earlier writers, with the question posed, 'What particular advantage or abilities does Bro. Waite claim to possess which enable him to take a position superior to that of earlier writers' (p. 172). Songhurst concluded by criticizing the imaginary picture of Ramsay in volume 2 and disputing Waite's ascription of an alleged portrait of James Anderson in Volume 1: 'Can it be that it is so set down in ignorance, or is it to be understood as yet another deliberate flight into the realms of fantasy?' (p. 173). His views on the frontispiece to volume 1 - which shows Waite in the robes of Emperor of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross - he refrained from printing.

The second review reinforced the first. Tuckett substantially enlarged the list of factual errors and condemned Waite for his contemptuous remarks about his fellow masonic writers. He then reinforced Songhurst's criticisms by tabulating the more glaring inconsistencies of Waite's apparent alphabetical arrangement and listing examples of Waite's self advertisement, adding the query, 'would it not have been better to avoid such direct claims to profound knowledge, leaving the reader to discern it for himself ?' (p.

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<sup>98[98]</sup> *SLT*, p. 208

175). Unlike Songhurst, Tuckett concluded his review with praise for Waite's position as an authority on 'the doctrine of the Great Quest in Masonry', but as an encyclopaedia 'the work now under consideration does not compare favourably with its predecessors, and, as an exposition of the Quest Theory, it cannot compete with the same author's *Secret Tradition*' (p. 180).

For Waite such comments were wormwood and gall, but he could take comfort in the laudatory reviews by Philip Wellby in *The Occult Review* (although Wellby was a close personal friend and Waite had, in any case, helped to write the review)<sup>99[99]</sup>, and by Miss Bothwell-Gosse in *The Co-Mason* (vol. 13, p. 104, 1921). Even more satisfying was a detailed and favourable review by Revd. A. Cohen in *The Jewish Guardian* for 3 June 1921. Despite detecting errors of fact Cohen found that 'there is more to admire than to criticize in these handsome volumes. The author has earned the gratitude of every mason who is curious to learn all that the Craft has to teach him'. Even more satisfying for Waite was Cohen's reference to Waite's claim that, prior to 1717, Freemasonry was exclusively Christian and 'that the Jew and the Heathen had no part therein', and his admission that 'the correctness of Mr. Waite's statement seems to me unquestionable'. But Cohen may have been inclined to be especially lenient as the Jewish press had been praising Waite earlier in 1921 for his detailed refutation, in *The Occult Review*<sup>100[100]</sup>, of Mrs. Nesta Webster's anti-Semitic and anti-masonic articles in *The Morning Post*.

Such reviews undoubtedly helped sales of the *New Encyclopaedia* and by 1930 some 7,000 sets had been sold, but through flaws in his contract Waite lost his rights to the book when it passed to Virtue & Co. in 1925, and he received little more than £300 in total royalties. Worse was to follow as, for all his protestations to the contrary, Waite valued the esteem of masonic scholars and he took the hostile reviews to heart. He began to revise and correct the text for a projected new edition but, when the 'New and Revised Edition' of 1923 was issued, Waite was horrified to find that it was merely an exact reprint of the fault-ridden original. For himself his proud boast that, by 1938 'no less than nineteen thousand sets of the costly volumes have been sold'<sup>101[101]</sup>, must have been a hollow one. It was also erroneous, for the maximum sales could have been little more than half that number.

## WAITE AND THE HIGHER DEGREES

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<sup>99[99]</sup> Diary, 12 March 1921. The review appeared in *The Occult Review* for April, 1921

<sup>100[100]</sup> 'Occult Freemasonry and the Jewish Peril', *The Occult Review*, vol. 32, September 1920, pp. 142-53

<sup>101[101]</sup> *SLT*, p. 208

By this time he was turning away from the world of masonic scholarship, although he was still to produce his highly important study of Rosicrucianism, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*<sup>102[102]</sup>, and in 1924 he resigned from the Masonic Study Society which he had helped to found in 1921, confining such lectures as he still gave to those higher degree bodies with which he was increasingly involved. He was now a member of virtually every rite that was worked in England and he played an active role in many of them. In 1905 he had entered Mark Masonry, which he believed had 'originated to recall Grand Lodge Masonry from the muddled Deism of the Anderson Constitutions to the Christology and high Catholicism of the Old Charges'<sup>103[103]</sup>, and in 1930 he was still actively promoting the Mark when he became a founder and first Master of Tower Hamlets Mark Lodge No. 892.

He had long ceased to see the Rose Croix degree as one of the 'splendid inanities of occult nomenclature' and, having been perfected in the Orpheus Chapter Rose Croix No. 79 in 1909, he became its Sovereign in 1915, and from 1918 onwards he was its Recorder. But it was for the Order of the Temple that he felt the greatest affection and to the Sancta Maria Preceptory that he gave his greatest support. He had been Preceptor in 1909 and from 1910 to 1940 acted as its Registrar; his early speculations on Templar history and symbolism had been first presented as lectures in the Preceptory and his last, and most important, paper 'The Knights Templar and their alleged perpetuation in Freemasonry' - had been delivered therein 1930.

Waite's Rosicrucian activities, in their masonic context at least, had ceased in 1914 when he resigned from the S.R.I.A. after failing in his bid to be elected as Celebrant. He had also quarrelled bitterly with Blackden over the workings of the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn and felt that the same Rosicrucian body could not happily contain them both<sup>104[104]</sup>. All his energies in this direction were now bent towards the creation of rituals for his Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (F.R.C.), an androgynous and avowedly Christian Order structured in a series of grades that represented a symbolical ascent of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Its rituals and officers were based on those of the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn, but the ultimate derivation from Freemasonry is

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<sup>102[102]</sup> *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, being Records of the House of the Holy Spirit in its Inward and Outward*

*History* (Rider, 1924)

<sup>103[103]</sup> *SLT*, p. 177

<sup>104[104]</sup> The details of the quarrel and of the demise of the Isis-Urania Temple are given in R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians* (Aquarian Press, 1983)

immediately evident when the rituals are read<sup>105[105]</sup>. The first meeting of the F.R.C. was held on 9 July 1915 at De Keyser's Hotel on Victoria Embankment. Of the ten *Fratres* who, with one *Soror*, were present at that Consecration of the Salvator Mundi Temple of the F.R.C., five can be identified, all of whom were freemasons<sup>106[106]</sup>. The F.R.C. did not demand a masonic qualification from its *Fratres* but in practice most who joined were not only members of the Craft but active in the higher degrees. They were also increasingly outnumbered by the ranks of co-masonic and theosophical *Sorores*.

Nor were all the members English. The single *Soror* present at the first meeting was an American medical practitioner, Dr. Helen Worthington, and in 1921 the American photographer, Alvin Langdon Coburn, joined the Order. He rapidly entered the Second Order, the *Ordo Sanctissima Roseae et Aureae Crucis*, but became more concerned with his own Neoplatonic Society, known as The Universal Order, borrowing parts of Waite's rituals for use within it. This was unforgivable to Waite and, at the end of 1924, the two men broke completely with each other. Coburn, however, still recognized Waite's pre-eminence in the field of esoteric research and continued to recommend Waite's writings to his own followers<sup>107[107]</sup>. Relations with other American freemasons were to prove more satisfactory to Waite.

In July 1915 Waite had published a fulsome review, under the title of 'Master Building'<sup>108[108]</sup>, of Dr. Joseph Fort Newton's book, *The Builders: a Story and Study of Masonry* (1914). This was only just for Fort Newton had referred to Waite in glowing terms as a 'master of the vast literature and lore of his subject, to the study of which he brought a religious nature, the accuracy and skill of a scholar, a sureness and delicacy of insight at once sympathetic and critical, the soul of a poet, and a patience as untiring as it is rewarding; qualities rare indeed, and still more rarely blended'<sup>109[109]</sup>. Fort Newton was also editor of the American masonic journal *The Builder*, and, given that he saw Waite in such a fight, it is not surprising that he should reprint Waite's review and asked him to contribute to its columns.

Waite's first contribution, a three part study entitled 'Some Deeper Aspects of Masonic Symbolism', was reprinted and used as a set lecture in a reading course for Lodges in Iowa and, as a copy of *The Builders* was given to every newly-made mason under the

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<sup>105[105]</sup> Twelve of the rituals were printed in 1916 and 1917. Many of them are in the library of the United Grand Lodge of England.

<sup>106[106]</sup> The five were Waite himself, G. Barrett-Dobb, E. B. Florence, H. J. Lloyd and B. H. Springett

<sup>107[107]</sup> E. g. Coburn's paper, 'The Kabbalah', for the Lancashire College of the S.R.I.A. lists fourteen books in its bibliography - two are by Waite

<sup>108[108]</sup> *The Occult Review* for July 1915

<sup>109[109]</sup> *The Builders*, pp. 55-6

Grand Lodge of Iowa, Waite's name and ideas were rapidly made known to a far greater number of masons in America than was ever the case in England. This, in fact, is still the case for *The Builders* has remained constantly in print and Waite has thus remained constantly before American freemasons. So great was the esteem in which Waite was held that, shortly after Fort Newton's meeting with Waite during his visit to England in 1916<sup>110[110]</sup>, the Grand Lodge of Iowa awarded him the rank of Past Senior Grand Warden, which rank was, in due course, prominently displayed on the title-page of the *New Encyclopaedia*.

During the 1920s a number of young American freemasons became fascinated by Waite and his work and became regular correspondents. The most enthusiastic was Harold van Buren Voorhis, who amassed a remarkable collection of Waite's books (now housed in the library of the Grand Lodge of Iowa) and became successively a frequent correspondent, confidant and personal friend<sup>111[111]</sup>. He went on to propagate many of Waite's ideas through the occasional miscellanies of masonic papers he edited under the title of *Miscellanea*. Other correspondents were Dr. W. M. Brown and J. Ray Shute, whom he had helped indirectly to enter the C.B.C.S. Shute recalled their visit to Waite, in 1934, in his book *Soft Tolls the Bell* (1953), describing how 'we spent our days and nights in the company of one who will be remembered as one of the truly great Christian mystics' (p. 31) and discreetly ignoring the co-masonic impedimenta that surrounded them - they met at 104 Maida Vale, the Headquarters of one of the co-masonic bodies, where Waite's second wife (his first wife died in 1924) had a flat and where one room was used as a temple by the F.R.C. Although Shute remembered the visit as lasting 'for about two weeks' (p. 31), the two Americans were with Waite for only two days, during which time they received the first four grades of the F.R.C. with the intention of setting up an American branch of the Order. In return they awarded Waite the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from Atlantic University, Virginia Beach, of which they were both trustees.

Both gestures were, as it turned out, empty. The F.R.C. was never established in the United States of America and Waite's doctorate was worthless, for Atlantic University had closed down in 1932<sup>112[112]</sup> and had never been accredited to award degrees of any

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<sup>110[110]</sup> On 3 July 1916 Waite was a guest at the reception for Fort Newton held at America Lodge No. 3368. On 20 July Fort Newton was Waite's guest at Runymede Lodge.

<sup>111[111]</sup> Voorhis first wrote in August 1928 and continued his correspondence up to Waite's death, continuing then to correspond with Mrs. Waite until her death in 1955.

<sup>112[112]</sup> Information from the Commonwealth of Virginia, State Department of Education.

kind. Waite, however, knew nothing of either failure and fondly believed that his Order was secure in America and that the academic world had at last recognized his ability.

By the time of the visit Waite had retired from virtually all masonic activity and spent his days revising his works on the secret tradition. The last of these was *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, which was published in 1937; it was more than a simple revision of his earlier work. It incorporated much of *Emblematic Freemasonry* (1925) and material from *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* and, in his own words, 'it is so altered, extended and transformed that it may claim to be a new undertaking and to supersede in fact that which it preserves in name'<sup>113[113]</sup>. For all its transformations, and its attempt to be less cavalier over matters of fact, the book is still principally a restatement of Waite's thesis that the essence of Masonry lies in the Mystic Quest. All his work was devoted to that end, and the question whether or not his thesis is viable should not prevent recognition of its importance.

Waite died in 1942 and was accorded a brief, three-paragraph obituary in *The Freemasons' Chronicle* (vol. 135, p. 178, 6 June 1942) in which he was characterized as a poet and writer on Freemasonry. There was no attempt to appraise his work or to state his primary thesis. He was buried in the churchyard at Bishopsbourne in Kent where he spent most of his later years, and his grave is now obscured by a thick growth of deadly nightshade - an appropriate parallel to the blight that has fallen on his reputation.

His besetting faults were a conscious refusal to accept his limitations as a historian, limitations that were inevitable, given his lack of academic training - and the sub-conscious recognition of them that led to an inordinate conceit and to constant belittling of his predecessors. Serious though these faults are they are not serious enough to deny him a place amongst the foremost masonic scholars. Indeed, he was, and is still, the only such scholar to have attempted to unite the outward history of the higher degrees with their inward spirituality. The danger of such an attempt is that of falling into the follies of occultism, but Waite avoided that danger, as Fort Newton had observed in 1916: 'Brother Waite warns us against the dark alleys that lead nowhere, and the false lights that lure to ruin, and he protests against those who would open the Pandora's Box of the Occult on the altar of Masonry. After a long study of occultism, magic, omens, talismans and the like, he has come to draw a sharp line between the occult and the mystical, and therein he is wise'<sup>114[114]</sup>. We too, perhaps, would be wise if we did him the courtesy of studying his work and recognizing its peculiar genius.

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<sup>113[113]</sup> *The Secret Tradition in JFreemasonry* (1937), p. x

<sup>114[114]</sup> *Some Deeper Aspects of Masonic Symbolism* (1916). The forward is by Fort Newton, pp 6-7.

<a href="#">Appendix A</a>	<a href="#">Appendix B</a>	<a href="#">Appendix C</a>	<a href="#">Appendix D</a>
The Masonic Career of A.E. Waite	The Publications of A.E. Waite	Lectures Given by A.E. Waite	Constitution of the Secret College of Rites

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# The Masonic Career of A.E. Waite

## Appendix B

### MASONIC WRITINGS OF A. E. WAITE

#### (1) BOOKS WHOLLY OR PARTLY RELATING TO FREEMASONRY

*The Real History of the Rosicrucians founded on their own Manifestos, and on facts and documents collected from the writings of Initiated Brethren* (Redway, 1887)

*The Occult Sciences, a Compendium of Transcendental Doctrine and Experiment* (Kegan Paul, 1891) (Part 3, Section 3: The Freemasons)

*Azoth, or The Star in the East* (Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893) (Appendix II: The Secret of Freemasonry)

*Devil-Worship in France, of The Question of Lucifer. A Record of things seen and heard in the Secret Societies according to the evidence of Initiates* (Redway, 1896)

*The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, The Unknown Philosopher, and the substance of his Transcendental Doctrine* (Wellby, 1901) (Appendix IV: Martinism and the Masonic Rite of Swedenborg)

*Studies in Mysticism* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1906) (Part III, chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 concern Freemasonry)

*The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry and an analysis of the Inter-Relation between the Craft and the High Grades in respect of their term of research* (Rebman, 1911) 2 vols. *Some Deeper Aspects of Masonic Symbolism* (Anarnosa, N.M.R.S., 1916)

*The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal, its Legends and Symbolism* (New York, Rebman, 1909) (Book IX, chapter 8: The Analogies of Masonry)

*A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry (Ars Magna Latomorum) and of cognate Instituted Mysteries: their Rites, Literature and History* (Rider, 1921) 2 vols.

(The issue of 1934 adds an account of The Masonic Peace Memorial)

'Robert Fludd and Freemasonry', Manchester Association for Masonic Research (Offprint), 1922

*The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, being Records of the House of the Holy Spirit in its Inward and Outward History* (Rider, 1924) (Chapters XV to XXI and XXIV relate to Freemasonry)

*Emblematic Freemasonry and the Evolution of its Deeper Issues* (Rider, 1925)

*The Liturgy of the Rite of the Strict Observance* (Warrenton, N.C., 1934, Mimeographed)

*The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry* (Rider, 1937)

*Shadows of Life and Thought, being a Retrospective Review in the form of Memoirs*  
(Selwyn and Blount, 1938) (Chapter 17, and *passim*)

(2) CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERIODICALS

ARS QUATUOR CORONATORUM

1902 Comment on E. J. Castle, 'The Reception (Initiation) of a Templar' vol. 15, pp. 170-2

THE BRITISH MAIL

1890 'Freemasonry', vol. 20, New Series, No. 172, March, pp. 20-1

THE BUILDER

1915 'Master Building', vol. 1, pp. 240-1 (Reprinted from *The Occult Review*)

1916 Criticism of 'The Great Work', vol. 2

'Some Deeper Aspects of Masonic Symbolism', vol. 2, pp. 107-9; 144-6; 175-6

1917 'Discourse on the Fellowcraft Degree', vol. 3, pp. 334-5

1918 Note on the Origin of Co-Masonry, vol. 4, p. 112

1920 'London Morning Post's attack on Freemasonry', vol. 6, p. 333

1921 'Emblematic Freemasonry', vol. 7, pp. 160-5

1922 Note concerning the Comacini, vol. 8, p. 25

Review of Dudley Wright, 'Masonic Legends and Traditions', vol. 8, p. 221

THE FREEMASON

- 1915 Reply to Welcome at Author's Lodge No. 3456, 6 March, vol. 55
- 1920 'The Recent Attacks on Freemasonry', vol. 60, pp. 133-5 (Reprinted, in abridged form, from *The Occult Review*)
- 1921 'The Laureate of Masonry', vol. 61, p. 576

#### FREEMASONS' CHRONICLE

- 1930 'The Knights Templar and their alleged perpetuation in Freemasonry', vol. 111, pp. 257, 290, 315; vol. 112, pp. 73, 91, 108-9, 124

#### HORLICK'S MAGAZINE AND HOME JOURNAL FOR AUSTRALIA, INDIA AND THE COLONIES

- 1904 'The Keeping of the Brotherhood', vol. 2, pp. 365-74
- 'The Freedom of the Brotherhood', vol. 2, pp. 429-42
- 'The Transformations of the Brotherhood', vol. 2, pp. 559-68
- 1905 'The Innermost Sanctuary', vol. 3, pp. 241-8

#### LIGHT

- 1895 Letter, 'The Mystery of Miss Diana Vaughan', vol. 15, pp. 593-4
- 1896 Letter on 'Diana Vaughan', vol. 16, pp. 11-12 'The Question of Lucifer', vol. 16, pp. 271-2

Letter, 'The Question of Lucifer', vol. 16, pp. 321-2

MANCHESTER ASSOCIATION FOR MASONIC RESEARCH, TRANSACTIONS

1921 'Robert Fludd and Freemasonry: a speculative excursion', vol. II, pp.65-80

THE MASONIC SECRETARIES' JOURNAL

1918 'The Rite of the Strict Observance', vol. 1, pp. 179-81

THE MASTER MASON

1927 'The Royal and Masonic Art', vol. 4, pp. 745-53

NOCALORE (TRANSACTIONS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA LODGE OF RESEARCH)

1946 'An Introduction to the C.B.C.S.', vol. 16, pp. 62-91

THE OCCULT REVIEW

1907 'Satanism and the Black Mass' by S. R. (on Leo Taxil) vol. 5, pp. 318-21

1908 'The Latin Church and Freemasonry', vol. 8, pp. 146-50

1911 'Count Cagliostro and Freemasonry', vol. 13, pp. 48-50

- 'Freemasonry and the French Revolution', vol. 14, pp. 140-7
- 1913 'A Master of the Inward Way' (Saint-Martin & Martines de Pasqually), vol. 18, pp. 259-67
- 1915 'Master Building' (Review of J. Fort Newton, *The Builders*), vol. 22, pp. 39-42
- 1917 'A Lodge of Magic' (Martines de Pasqually and the Elect Cohens), vol. 26, pp. 228-34
- 1919 Review of Buckmaster, *The Royal Order of Scotland*, vol. 29, pp. iv-v
- 1920 'Occult Freemasonry and the Jewish Peril', vol. 32, pp. 142-53 Letter, 'Mark Degree', vol. 32, p. 183
- 1921 Review of Churchward, *The Origin and Evolution of Freemasonry*, vol. 33, p. 121 Review of Wright, *Masonic Legends and Traditions*, vol. 34, p. 186
- 1925 Review of Haywood, *Symbolical Masonry*, vol. 41, pp. 127-8
- Review of Haywood, *Great Teachings of Masonry*, vol. 41, p. 128
- Review of Fort Newton, *The Men's House*, vol. 41, p. 199
- 1927 'The Templar Orders in Freemasonry', vol. 45, pp. 12-19; 161-70
- 1930 'An Elect Priesthood' (Review of Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Occultiste*), vol. 52, pp. 383-7
- 1939 Review of van Rijnberk, *Martines de Pasqually*, vol. 66, p. 262
- 1911-1931 Waite contributed a monthly feature, 'Periodical Literature', in which he reviewed contemporary journals, including many masonic journals.

#### SOMERSET MASTERS LODGE, TRANSACTIONS

1921 'Masonic Tradition and the Royal Arch', pp. 244-55

#### S.R.I.A., TRANSACTIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

1906 'The Place of Masonry in the Rites of Initiation', pp. 9-16

1909 'Preliminary Considerations on the nature of Ritual and Symbolism', pp. 15-20

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# The Masonic Career of A.E. Waite

## Appendix C

### MASONIC LECTURES DELIVERED BY A. E. WAITE

- 1906 'The Place of Masonry in the Rites of Initiation', 11 January S.R.I.A.1 Metropolitan College (printed in *Transactions*)
- 1908 'The Higher side of Templar Symbolism', 12 October, Sancta Maria Preceptory (read also at King Edward VII Preceptory, 11 May 1916)
- 1910 'Inner Relations of the Craft and High Grades', 14 February, Sancta Maria Preceptory
- 1911 'The Alleged Perpetuation of the Temple through three distinct Channels', 13 February, Sancta Maria Preceptory
- 1912 'Some deeper intimations in the Grade of Knight of the Holy Sepulchre', 29 January, Lily of the Valley Conclave
- 'Some Inner Meanings of Rosicrucian Grades', 11 March, S.R.I.A. Study Group
- 1914 'Some Deeper Aspects of Symbolism in the Craft Grades; 11 February, Holden Lodge No. 2496 (printed in *The Builder* with an altered title)
- 1921 'Robert Fludd and Freemasonry', 29 September, Manchester Association for Masonic Research (printed in *Transaction*)
- 'Masonic -Tradition and the Royal Arch', 28 February, Somerset Masters' Lodge No. 3746 (printed in *Transactions*)
- 1922 'The Mystical Quest in Freemasonry,' 16 September, Mid-Kent Masters' Lodge 3173 (printed in *Emblematic Freemasonry*)
- 1923 'The Second Birth of Masonry in Continental Rites', 8 January, Mid-Kent Masters' Lodge 3173 (printed in *Emblematic Freemasonry*)



- 1925 'The Templar Orders in Freemasonry: An Historical Consideration of their Origin and Development,' 6 April, Sancta Maria Preceptory (printed, in revised form, in *The Occult Review*)
- 1926 'The Secret Tradition in French Grades analogous to the Royal Arch', 13 December, Helio Chapter No. 3900
- 1927 'The Secret Tradition in Christian Times and the directions in which Research is baffled', 9 September, Kingsgate Lodge No. 4882
- 1930 'The Knights -l'emplar and their alleged Perpetuation in Freemasonry', 10 February, Sancta Maria Preceptory (printed in *Freemasons' Chronicle*)

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# The Masonic Career of A.E. Waite

## Appendix D

### THE SECRET COUNCIL OF RITES

#### *The Secret Council of Rites*

S+C+R

#### CONSTITUTION

(1) The S.C.R. was constituted on December 2nd, 1902 for the determination in a particular direction of existing Mystic Interests, more especially in connection with Masonry and the Orders which are connected with and dependent upon it. (2) The work of the S.C. lies entirely outside that of any legislative bodies, Grand Lodges, Grand Chapters or Supreme Councils; it does not seek to intrude among them and it will not tolerate their interference in its concerns.

(3) The S.C. will for its better protection vigilantly conserve an occult and anonymous character and, save in the Supreme Degrees of the Council, will at no time divulge the names of its Members to any person in the world.

(4) The S.C. consists of the following brethren: Frater L.S.; Frater M.W.G.; Frater S.R., under the conditions now to be set forth:- The S.C. of R. does not exist and no person is, therefore, a Member of it, except when it is called into being and declared to be in activity by some one or more of the above mentioned Fratres or their successors for executive or consultive purposes and on the completion of the work in hand or before if so declared it automatically lapses until again in like manner revived. Membership of the S.C.R is therefore to be understood in the sense just defined whenever referred to in this Constitution.

(5) Frater L.S., Frater M.W.O. and Frater S.R. being Members ab initio by whom the C. was constituted simultaneously, there is no priority or precedence in respect of them and this fact is to be borne in mind more especially by the Frater S.R. who first suggested the constitution of the Secret Body for those objects which are known to the C.

(6) The Members of the S.C. can work only in common for the furtherance of the objects which it proposes and therefore no action must be taken by one independently of the others in respect of any O. matters

(7) The S.C. has no power to add to its numbers and the absence of any Member from the country of its present location does not constitute a vacancy, since an efficient inter communication can always be preserved.

This rule is absolute and invariable in respect of both its clauses.

(8) Vacancy is constituted by death or permanent alienation as also by insanity or unfitness to act; agreement on the part of the other two Members as to the existence of either disability being alone necessary in order to take action. Each Member has the right to nominate his successor, who shall be of the male sex and a Royal Arch Mason.

Such nomination may be made absolute prior to decease by the approval of the other Members and ranks alternatively as a very serious and urgent recommendation to be adopted if possible, failing which, the appointment rests with the survivors.

(9) In the event of permanent alienation, insanity or unfitness to act without a successor having been nominated previously, the other Members shall appoint a suitable Mystic Mason to complete the Triad at such time as may be advisable and in any case within a period of twelve months.

(10) In the event of the death of a Member suddenly and without nomination, similar procedure shall be adopted, as two Members cannot constitute a complete C. (11) The C. as it now stands is complete, perfect and permanent, without power of expulsion or the right to insist on resignation.

(12) The S.C. will always deprecate resignation on the part of a Member, but it must not disallow it altogether. In such event the right of nomination is abrogated but one of counsel remains, such counsel to be regarded with great respect and followed if reasonable and desirable.

(13) In the event of two Members resigning simultaneously, the C. would cease to exist, and this therefore is interdicted by the honourable pledge which has been taken by each Member, as will appear hereinafter.

(14) As it is necessary for the furtherance of its objects that the S. C. shall have a certain acknowledged existence, it has appointed the Frater S.R. as its present Envoy-Extraordinary with full powers in conjunction with the whole C. only.

(15) The Envoy-Extraordinary is not as such a Member of the C.

(16) The S.C. may and will appoint Envoys-Subordinate for different countries or districts for the spread and representation of the Rites conserved by the C. but such Envoys shall represent special Rites only.

(17) The Frater S.R. is at this time the sole Envoy-Extraordinary representing all Rites of the C., under the obedience of the C., with the special Envoys to him subordinate, also under the obedience of the C., and this rule shall be absolute henceforward for every Envoy Extraordinary successively appointed and for the Envoys-Subordinate.

(18) The S.C. will obtain and exercise jurisdiction over Independent Lodges, Chapters and Temples of the following Rectified Occult Orders and Masonic Rites:-

*Occult Orders*

- (a) The Independent and Rectified Rite of Martinism.
- (b) The Reformed Order of the GD. Masonically reconstituted.
- (c) The Rectified Rite R.R. et A.C.

*Masonic Rites*

- a. The Rectified Rite of Swedenborg.
- b. The Independent Order of the Illuniinati.
- c. The Order of the Novices and Knights Beneficent of the Holy City of Jerusalem.
- d. The New and Reformed Rite of Adoptive Masonry.
- e. The Incorporated Order of the Eastern Star.

(19) Members of the S.C. are Members of these Bodies and will work them in a constitutional manner for the purposes of the C., and all other Rites and Orders which it may subsequently acquire for the same purposes in like manner.

(20) The Members of the S.C. will if possible obtain their reception into the Secret Order 7.16., as it is requisite for the purposes of the C.

(21) The S.C. will if necessary and desirable acquire other Rites and Orders, Masonic and non-Masonic, to work in connection with its purposes and will at the proper time constitute two further Rites for the completion of the existing series as follows:-

a† The Order of the Daughters of Zion.

b† The Third Order R.R. et A.C.

(22) The C, will distribute these Rites upon an ascending scale as follows:-

a\* Rite of Martinism, referred to Malkuth.

h\* Rite of the G.D., referred to Jesod.

c\* Rite of Swedenborg, referred to Hod. (with its complement)

d\* Rite of the Eastern Star, referred to Netzach.

e\* Rite of the R.R. et A.C., referred to Tiphereth.

f\* Rite of the Illuminati, referred to Chesed. (with its complement)

g\* Rite of Adoption, referred to Geburah.

h\* Rite of the Novices and Knights of the Holy City, referred to Chockmah.

(with its complement)

i\* Rite of the Daughters of Zion, referred to Binah.

j\* Rite of 7.16, (intermediate) referred to Daath.

k\* Rite of the Supreme Crown or Third Order R.R. et A.C., referred to Kether.

(23) This distribution is in part a matter of convenience and in part arises naturally from the ascent of the Grades. Its design and arrangements are entirely a C. Secret, as ostensibly there will be an independent working of all the Rites. (24) The scheme of Rites belonging to the Pillar of Benignity can be entered only through Martinism, with the exception of that referable to Death.

(25) The Masonic Rites can be entered independently without passing from one to another.

(26) The Adoptive Rites can be entered only through the Order of the Eastern Star.

(27) By the design of the S.C., the Rite of Martinism will act as a drag net for all the Rites, but especially for those of the Central Pillar, and the most suitable Members who have drifted independently into the Masonic and Adoptive Orders will ultimately be absorbed by the Androgynous Centre.

(28) With the exception of the Third Order R.R. et A.C., all Rites will meet and recognise each other in Daath, and so far the Scheme of the S.C. will be at last unveiled.

(29) Those who attain the Third Order will meet the C. for the first time face to face, and it is hoped that in the course of Nature the C. will be recruited there from.

(30) The Members of the S.C. pledge themselves hereby to communicate to one another all occult knowledge and all knowledge concerning occult Orders which they may possess now or obtain hereafter, and in the case of such knowledge being communicated to them individually under binding obligations, each will do his best to obtain for the two others a participation of such knowledge and reception by such Rites. (31) The Members also honourably pledge themselves, each to each and all to all, to work seriously and in

harmony for the objects of the S.C., to keep their names unknown, not to desert one another, to resign only by necessity, simultaneous resignation being interdicted unless it be unanimously determined to dissolve the C., and to bear in mind the desirability of finding someone to succeed them if possible.

(32) The objects of the S.C. of R. are the stimulation and the nourishment of Mystic Aspiration, more especially in Freemasonry, towards the Great Work of Reintegration with the Centre, or Union with the Divine as the Supreme End of all research, such objects to be pursued by all legitimate means, from which any identification with social or political movements is expressly excluded, the same being neither means nor ends.

These are the 32 Paths of the Absolute in respect of the S.C. of R. and are the irremovable Landmarks thereof, to which, in token of their agreement, the contracting parties here append the initials by which they are known to each other within the C.V.

in succession to L.S.

L.S

May 25th, 1910

M.W.0

S.R

Dated this 25th day of May, in the year of our Lord 1903.

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