

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSY CROSS, BLOSSOMING YET THORNY

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Many scholars have varying, even sharply conflicting views about one Masonic Rosicrucian whose name was Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942). Undoubtedly, he was a learned man, yet a bit of an offbeat individual. He was born in New York, but died in Kent County, England. Waite is regarded by historians as a British poet and scholarly mystic. However, the man came to Rosicrucianism by unorthodox means to say the least. To put it bluntly, Waite dabbled in Rosicrucianism BEFORE he became a Freemason.

In the year 1891, Waite joined the outer order of The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In 1893, he withdrew from it, only to re-join it in 1896. In 1899, he entered the second order of The Golden Dawn. Initially, Waite was highly critical of Freemasonry. Then, in an unexplained transformation {perhaps prompted solely by curiosity} Waite was Raised a Master Mason on 10 February 1902 in St. Marylebone Lodge #1305 as a courtesy to Runymede Lodge #2430 in Wraybury in Buckinghamshire. In the year 1910, Waite was installed as Master of Runymede Lodge; yet Craft Masonry really had no special appeal to A.E. Waite.

Perhaps to legitimize his dabbling in Rosicrucianism, Waite and his friend, Marcus Worsley Blackden {who was Raised a Master Mason on the same day as Waite in the same Lodge} were admitted to the Grade of Zelator (IV°) in the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia {the Masonic Rosicrucian system governing England}. Waite soon joined Royal Arch Masonry, Cryptic Masonry, and Knight Templar Masonry. It is said that Waite's greatest affection was to the Sancta Maria Preceptory of Knights Templar. He served as Preceptor {Eminent Commander} in 1909 and was Registrar from 1910 to 1940. He was perfected in Orpheus Chapter of Rose Croix #79 in 1909 and became its Sovereign in 1915. At one time Waite despised the Rose Croix degree of Freemasonry, deeming it an illegitimate imposter to true Rosicrucian symbols, names and tenets. Waite further slandered the Rose Croix Degree {18°} by referring to it as one of the "splendid inanities of occult nomenclature." In essence, during his pre-Masonic years, Waite boasted that the Rose Croix Degree in Masonry was meaningless, senseless, and foolish. He later came to regret his own comments, and Waite is deemed a hypocrite by some of today's Regular Freemasons with some correctly casting him in the category of a "fringe Mason" as has been done by The Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon Freemasonry. Waite was smart, yet in many ways he was a kook. Waite resigned from the S.R.I.A. in 1914. Waite thereafter alligned himself with dubious quasi-Rosicrucian groups.

Despite all of this in the 1920's, Waite became friends with a number of young American Freemasons. Among them was Harold van Buren Voorhis, who later became Supreme Magus of our High Council of the S.R.I.C.F. in the United States. Another friend was Bro.: J. Ray Shute who indirectly helped Waite join the C.B.C.S. {Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cite Sainte} or {the Beneficent Knights of the Holy City}. This seemed to be the ultimate Regularly-recognized Masonic Degree that Waite coveted the most. The Grand Lodge of Iowa was so enamored with Waite that they awarded him the Rank of Past Senior Grand Warden. Yet, many Masons consider his on-again/off-again interest in Freemasonry and Masonic Rosicrucianism to be redeeming with certain academic works and a bit murky with his other works. I, likewise, deem Albert Edward Waite's scholarship to be good with only a very few of his writings. One of his books that had {mostly} redeeming aspects was his book "The Brotherhood of The Rosy Cross" written in 1924. This 649 page volume is too lengthy to summarize. But, I shall endeavor to reveal useful information that can be gleaned from it. Waite notes that in THE FAMA FRATERNITATIS, it is said that "After a certain point in history began the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, at first, by four persons



only, and by them was made the Magical Language and Writing, with a great Dictionary, which we still use daily to the praise and glory of God, finding great wisdom therein." Waite correctly noted that some dubious groups fell into what he called "false analogies and gratuitous speculation." It is a pitiful shame that Waite himself fell into this same trap on rare occasions when he intermittently drifted between conventional Rosicrucian principles and spurious Rosicrucian groups and philosophies. Waite was raised a Roman Catholic as his personal religious denomination, but later lapsed in practicing that faith, but incorporated much of the Roman Catholic Church's traditions into Masonic and Rosicrucian Rituals that he either wrote, participated in or modified. Quite remarkably, in Waite's book, he cites a completely different man, a "Dr. Bell, {who} ventured to suggest that the Rosy Cross may have been derived from the Rosary, which 'has in German the appellation of Rosencrantz' which appeared in "THE MASONIC AND ROSICRUCIAN RECORD, No. 1, year 1876." [*That is the first notation I have seen of the spelling 'Rosencrantz.'*] Waite cites the historically acclaimed history --whether actual or allegorical-- of Christian Rosenkreutz being a "high-illuminated man of God" and that Christian Rosenkreutz was undisputedly {in his view} the "chief and original {originator} of our Fraternity." Waite repeats the conventional history that C.R.C. traveled on a pilgrimage to The Holy Land, to see the Holy Sepulchre and phrases it "with such object in view," but his fellow Monk, his companion, died on the island of Cyprus. Rosenkreutz, Waite describes: "shipped himself over to Damascus, from which he prepared to reach Jerusalem" {page 127 Brotherhood of The Rosy Cross by Waite." Waite claims that Rosenkreutz's hopes were delayed and he remained in Damascus owing to "the feebleness of the body." Waite claims that Rosenkreutz "made a bargain with the Arabians to carry him for a certain sum of money to Damcar." I do not doubt that in the least. But, since Rosenkreutz eventually regained his strength to go to the island of Crete, and travel across Spain before being expelled to his native Germany {where he died} --- I firmly believe that Christian Rosenkreutz DID reach his goal of visiting Jerusalem. Why? Waite admits that the Order became a "College of German Philosophers" and although Waite admitted he was unclear of how to connect-the-dots between Christian Rosenkreutz, Martin Luther, Michael Sendivogius, Michael Maier and Robert Fludd --- Waite nevertheless admits that their involvement allowed the Order to progress with basically an uninterrupted chain until the 20th Century with the S.R.I.A. governing England's Masonic Rosicrucianism, the S.R.I.C. governing Canada; and the S.R.I.C.F. governing the United States of America. Waite almost excessively repeats Robert Fludd's evaluation that "the Rosicrucian's subject of chemistry, their Stone, their Regimen, being concerned with the Corner Stone ...the attained state of Christhood {belief}. On page 327 of Waite's book, he states: "The Golden Rule in question being the Law of the Fraternity." He also adds on page 329 "The Rosicrucians are the servants of the King of Kings." Waite discusses "German Rosicrucianism" and claims one important feature of a former tenet that "the Brethren {Fratres} shall not be given to much talking and that they shall not marry, but the regulation {was later amended} and it shall be lawful to take a wife, should a Brother {Frater} very much desire it." However, it came with certain "conditions" and requirements too numerous to mention.

Waite states that, "a certain Adolphus Magnus who was Emperor of the Rosy Cross, attained the age of 967 years." On the same page of his book (page 415) Waite notes that "Duke Ernest Augustus of Saxe-Weimar ....was said to have been received into the Order." As for the country of France, Waite says unequivocally that prior to the year 1754, "there is no trace of the Rosy Cross in France." Waite throughout his life still had traces of animosity to a degree of Scottish Rite Masonry called "Knight of the Rose Croix of Heredom." It was, in Waite's mocking opinion "one of the most unlikely things that ever occurred in the course of Masonic history." Waite had a prejudice for Rosicrucianism {as he saw it} and although he was a Freemason in later life, he never could suppress his disdain for any reference to the Rose Croix in any connection with Freemasonry. {*Author's note, in*



*my view, this is one instance where Waite's prejudice clouded his better judgment and thus he became gullible enough to associate with dubious, spurious and borderline clandestine groups that entertained weird notions. He would believe women who pretended to be 'scholars and authorities' although their involvement in Freemasonry was non-existent and their exposure to Rosicrucianism was limited solely to reading and parroting histories of the era. Sadly, some of those women, put their own 'spin' onto genuine histories. Such blunders allowed devious men such as Aleister Crowley to concoct perverted so-called "Rituals" that mixed Sexual escapades, Magic and Fraternal Societies. To my way of thinking, that perversion is the one of the reasons that the name 'Rosicrucian' is looked upon with as much suspicion as another dubious group 'The Illuminati.'*

Despite his wishy-washy views, Waite occasionally regained his moral compass. On page 466 of Waite's book, he notes that the works in chemistry, philosophy, and medicine were in harmony with the works of prayer. He says "The {Rosicrucian} quest was a divine quest {not replacing a church} calling for a pure heart and a devout mind; and success therein was peculiarly a gift of God." Waite cited an example of "the Eighth Grade, or that of Mastery {Magister} or {VIII°} and he noted that "the advancement of a Rosicrucian Brother was taught symbols {and reminded of God's Grace} and advancement or preferment required "persistence, skill, and ability" Waite speaks of Saint-Germain and Cagliostro, but it is so convoluted and even dubious theories involving men allegedly named Cagliostro, that I will not even attempt to untangle the theories.

It was in ENGLAND where Waite believed Rosicrucianism achieved its renowned prominence. On that point, I wholeheartedly agree. Waite states on page 563 of his book that "John Harland, the editor of the Manchester Guardian newspaper, belonged to the Masonic Rosicrucian Brotherhood." I found it even more interesting that Waite acknowledges with joy that The Manchester Guardian newspaper regularly "gave reports on Rosicrucian activities." I firmly believe that Christian Rosenkreutz reached Jerusalem and the rest of The Holy Land. Our Society of The Rose and Cross has been Christian since its inception. And The Manchester Guardian described The Masonic Rosicrucian Society as "an Antiquarian Society" which almost exactly matches the hopes of The Prince Demetrius Rhodokanakis, IX°, Supreme Magus for Greece who said he envisioned Masonic Rosicrucianism as a "Literary Society" not only in Greece, but worldwide. Our Masonic S.R.I.C.F. has an exclusively membership of Freemasons who are Christians. Frater Arthur E. Waite, despite his shortcomings still had the strength to acknowledge in his chapter devoted to "A Modern Rosicrucian Order," he says a candidate "must be willing to take upon himself the burden of the Master Jesus, bringing offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh {if only in a symbolic offering}. Waite advises would-be Rosicrucians to do their part: "Let him raise up the Holy Cross and pledge himself solemnly to follow the quest of God, of the Most Holy Son and that of the Divine Light of the Holy Spirit. This is the understanding of all the Grades and this its sacred obligation."

To his credit, Bro. and Frater Arthur Edward Waite was among the earliest scholars to openly acknowledge that Frater Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875) established the earliest known Rosicrucian Order in the United States of America. Although P.B. Randolph had his share of shortcomings, too, he always stressed faith in Christianity was fundamental to the Order.

Waite, early in his Rosicrucian studies had to "apologize" to William Wynn Westcott for erroneous or offending commentaries. Later, he made peace with Westcott, who was Supreme Magus of the English S.R.I.A. In a great illustration of irony, Westcott was a prominent Freemason. His occupation was that of a Medical Doctor and coroner for the northeast part of London, England. It is one thing for a person such as Westcott to study "the occult," but Dr. Westcott associated with another man S.L. MacGregor Mathers, who had a prolonged problem



with alcoholism. The two men were early members of "The Golden Dawn" which was also open to women as members. However, quite quickly internal dissension and acrimony caused The Golden Dawn to split into various separate factions, which are said to continue to the present day. Public outcry over a public official such as a Coroner dabbling in "the occult" forced Dr. Westcott to resign as corner. Bro. Westcott afterward relocated to Durban, South Africa, where he died in July 1925.

Waite's last Chapter is devoted to "Last Developments of the Mystery." On page 629, he himself cites "dubious paths of Ceremonial Magic" yet it is unfortunate that Waite himself fell victim to hucksters and degree-peddlers who engaged in just that same thing Waite condemned. How ironic. *{Author's note: In my view, Waite's book is one of his few good books, but even it should be gleaned with a fine-toothed comb. It is up to future scholars to believe or disbelieve. But, some of the most famous pretender groups professing to be 'Rosicrucian' --- only amount to glorified correspondence courses and degree-peddlers. Bro.: and Frater A.E. Waite had his strengths and weaknesses. I choose to speak well of the dead and note his strengths which I believe in this book outweigh his weaknesses. However, it should always be remembered that just because Waite made a splash with friends in high places and had impressive scholarly credentials --- he wasn't infallible. Again, it is tragic that dubious men, whether H. Spencer Lewis or Aleister Crowley, used Waite's writings in a further contorted manner {with ulterior motives} as a pawn or stepping-stone to corrupt an ancient Society. We, as Masonic Rosicrucians, must jealously guard our honorable institution of the Rose & Cross to keep it free from scandal or skepticism. Masonic Rosicrucianism has an honorable reputation --- and I hope we keep it that way.}*

Sources / References / Exhibits /Recommended Readings:

-Brotherhood of The Rosy Cross, A History of the Rosicrucians" by Bro.: and Frater Arthur Edward Waite. Initial publication year 1924. This edition referenced was re-published by Barnes and Noble Books, New York. 1993. This particular book was purchased by Frater James A. Marples, VIII° in April 2015.

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33° and a Knight Templar.

- Archives of The Masonic Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, Canada.

- Archives Grand Lodge of Kansas A.F. & A.M

- Macoy's Masonic Manual by Robert Macoy, 33° and a Knight Templar. Fifteenth Edition. New York. Published in New York, Year 1861 by Clark, Austin, Maynard & Company located at 3 Park Row & 3 Ann Street, New York, New York. "A Pocket Companion for the Initiated".

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