

[Book Review by Tony Pope, published in *Harashim* #3, July 1997.]

### ***COIL'S MASONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA***

Henry William Coil, revised by Allen E Roberts, Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co, Richmond, Virginia, 1996.

ISBN 0 88053 054 5, hard cover, 734 + xxii pp, publisher's price US \$69.50; review copy from Southern California Research Lodge, Box 6587, Buena Park, CA 90622, USA; US \$55.60 + overseas postage US \$7.

The original 1961 encyclopedia has been updated by the late Allen Roberts, who says in his *Preface*:

This continues to be *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*. Eighty percent, or more, of the original masterpiece remains. The few errors in the 1961 edition have been corrected and changes made in Freemasonry during the past thirty-three years have been added.

Random sampling of entries substantially supports this assertion. Sure, there are a couple of typos (what else could 'Arthur Edward Waite (1957–1942)' be?), a few small factual errors (for examples, see entries for Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, under the general heading 'Australasia'), and some omissions in the revision (no mention of the Grand Lodge of India, let alone its rebel offspring), but no more than is inevitable in a work of this magnitude.

It does contain a few surprises. It is astonishing that Prince Hall Freemasonry (listed under the general heading of 'Black Freemasonry') should contain (a) the popular version of Prince Hall's initiation with no indication that the 'facts' are neither proven nor undisputed and (b) the assertion that the United Grand Lodge of England erased African Lodge No 459/390 EC [in 1814] without mention that this has been denied by the English Board of General Purposes in its November 1994 report. To the reviser's credit, the article gives a full and substantially correct list of 'Black Grand Lodges other than Prince Hall'.

France receives an entry of 12 pages, with a balanced summary of its complex Masonic history and a surprisingly liberal attitude towards the question of regularity of French Masonic bodies other than the French National Grand Lodge (GLNF). Indeed, in places it is difficult to distinguish between the views of Allen Roberts, FPS, and those of Michaël Segal, MPS, Master of the research lodge *Jean Scot Erigène N° 1000 GLdF*, an able apologist for the Grand Lodge of France. It so happens that your reviewer has come to share that view, but it is not generally held in 'the establishment'.

Only the totally dedicated or geographically isolated researcher is likely to place this work on his own shelves, but every student of Masonry would benefit from having access to it. So, badger your librarian to obtain at least one copy.