



The College of Enlightenment

Greetings, fellow seekers of knowledge! The Librarianum has commissioned me, the redoubtable sage and explorer Adolphus Quint, to provide an accounting and explanation of the redoubtable College of Enlightenment.

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Adolphus Quint

The Origins of the College

At the very height of the La'tieri Empire, before it's ill-documented yet undeniably tragic Fall, each Province possessed it's own *Collegius Illuminatum* – a bastion of learning and education, where the rich and entitled could learn the arts and sciences which ensured their place in the privileged elite. These *Collegii* were fiercely independent and competitive, and were forever jockeying for political position in the Senatoria.

These feuds grew increasingly violent in nature, and often assassins were used to effect success when rhetoric and debate failed. It must be accepted, as well, that more wide-scale academic sabotage also occurred between the *Collegii*, for the records surviving from this time are wildly contradictory and frequently accusatory against the rival *Collegii*. Indeed, it is this lack of purity of focus which so confounds modern-day scholars, as such a betrayal of objectivity has resulted in unknowable amounts of history and lore being lost.

What can definitely be understood is that, during the Fall of the La'tieri Empire, the rivalries exploded to such a point that entire *Collegii* were put to the fire and sword, and accurate records of the time – included what actually caused the fall – have all been lost.

In the dark times following the Fall, it seems that a number of the surviving scholars put aside their differences, and recovered what scattered tomes and scrolls remained. They brought them to the only *Collegius* still standing intact – the beauteous marble edifice which stands as the heart of *Vaes Lexicanum* in the





modern-day College of Enlightenment.

At some point during the next few hundred years, the successors of these scholars forged a lucrative alliance with the five Churches of Enlightenment – aided, no doubt, by the necessity of an educated and intellectual clerical class to administer to the needs of the flock and guide them in the dark times of misery and abandonment following the Fall.

Before the Eruption (including a brief digression regarding magic)

As the Provinces gradually coalesced from the ashes of the Empire into the independent fiefdoms, the emergent College of Enlightenment expanded its powerbase and claimed the fiefdom now called Aesilon for itself. The Pompadour of Aesilon was presumably quite happy with this arrangement, as while Aesilon was the smallest of the fiefdoms, the political and scientific clout the College gave it more than made up for the lack of acreage.

It was during this time, as well, that the Churches and the College between them codified the current pathways of magic. There is a great deal of overlap between the magic granted by the Gods to their chosen priests, and the rites and rituals of more standard arcane conjuring – indeed, they have access to the same essential powers and effects. The difference, then, is one of intent and mechanism. A wizard reaches into the fabric of the world and binds the substance of the world to his will. Conversely, a priest implores their patron God to intercede on their behalf.

That said, it is a rare wizard who does not, at the very least, pay lip service to the Gods, and many remain pious individuals. It is also a truth that while several of the *Vaes* do teach

magical arts – and, indeed, the vast majority of magic is taught by the College – the Churches do retain some secrets of magic back, and it is only through the teachings of their chosen Church that a mage can access the entire magical portfolio of their deity.

Such digressions aside, there was at this time forged the partnerships between the Churches and the College. The College instructed the priests in the ways of science and education and the priests, in turn, instructed the scholars in the ways of faith and magic. Between them, advances in science, hygiene, agriculture and architecture came on in leaps and bounds.

The disciplines of study began to take shape, and the various *Vaes* coalesced, wherein like-minded students could band together to advance their respective fields of study. The College, burgeoned by the prosperity and influence it enjoyed, once again spread throughout the continent, founding schools and campuses in every fiefdom, with Aesilon remaining the central – and governing – council.

The Eruption and Unification War

It seems, alas, that for all their vaunted knowledge the lessons of the past were lost on the hoary old scholars of the College for, although they could not foresee such a tragedy as the coming of The Shifting, they once again spread their records thin. It is unknown how much was lost as the dark times burgeoned once again – as the common man railed against priest and magician who failed to save them and vented their fear and frustration with fire and sword.

Churches were put to the flame, monasteries and libraries alike were consigned to ashes and those who previously led humanity by the hand into a bright future were stoned and





crucified. As The Shifting rolled in and swallowed entire fiefdoms, contact was lost with campuses and terrified refugees arrived in Aesilon with the scraps and remnants they had managed to salvage.

Despite the losses, the College remained the pre-eminent magical force on the continent, and the core body of the College remained intact and protected in Aesilon. When Corbrey Vanadon first began his campaign of unification, he very wisely sought allegiance with the College, using the magical prowess of its members to assist his military actions, and the economic and administrative experience of the scholars to then help settle the Dominions down after they fell under his protection.

Following his successful unification of the Kingdom, and the years of gradual consolidation thereafter, King Corbrey solidified his patronage and alliance with the College. He diverted a substantial amount of funds to the rebuilding of the College's campuses, and helped fund a new central repository, where copies of all surviving and salvaged tomes were kept, so as to ensure that should a further catastrophe fall, then the learning of ages would remain protected.

King Corbrey, in his benevolent foresight, also chose not to annex and absorb Aesilon into his own dominant Dominion of Arador, but allow it to remain a free and self-governing Dominion (under, of course, the overall rule of the Crown). This has also paid dividends – not for Aesilon and the College the bitter squirming of Scarrow or the petulant bickering of Croxin. When King Corbrey died, and the Succession Wars tore through the land, the College once again allied with his chosen heir over the attempted usurpers. With the College's assistance, Queen Elissa manages to secure the throne. The fate and future of

the College is now firmly tied in with that of our magnanimous rulers, and between the College and the Crown, we are blazing a brighter future in this darkest of times!

The Houses of the Wise

The College of Enlightenment is a large and sprawling body and, like all bodies, it is composed of a number of complimentary parts – these are the Houses of the Wise, known individually as the *Vaes*.

Unlike the Churches – which are, as one might imagine, split primarily along lines of worship and influence – the *Vaes* are somewhat different. Each *Vaes* covers a field of study, a specialisation which defines and focuses the scholars who claim membership to each *Vaes*. While there is some clear overlap between the fields of interest, the portfolios of the various Gods and indeed the six pathways of magic, the *Vaes* deliberately blur those lines. It is actively encouraged for a *Vaes* to recruit members of varied Affinities, disciplines and faiths to study together in the furtherance of their field.



Vaes Academicus

The *Vaes Academicus* is one of the largest *Vaes* in the College of Enlightenment, and also one of the most restrictive, being almost entirely composed of dedicated scholars and academics with an affinity to Air. This is a somewhat artificial restriction – certainly, there is no proscription against anyone seeking to join, nor is there overt discrimination against would-be students. However, to join the *Vaes*, a student must submit a dissertation and research project, which will then become their magnum opus and usually, their life's work.

Unlike the majority of the other *Vaes*, which tend to practical results for their studies, the *Vaes Academicus* is largely a pure research school, seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake. It is, therefore, unsurprising, that the majority of Shifted students in the College – overwhelmingly Sylphs – can be found in this *Vaes*, scurrying from library to library, from tome to dusty tome.

This dedication to pure research does have its advantages. The Librarium of the *Vaes Academicus* is second only to that of the *Vaes Lexicanum* in size, and composed of far more ancient and obscure tomes. Indeed, it is rumoured that many volumes lost since the fall of the La'tieri Empire – let alone since the Eruption! – can be found in the Athenaeum of this *Vaes*. Of course, getting in to find any such tome is an undertaking of legendary proportions as it is!





Vaes Astrologicus

The *Vaes Astrologicus* are much closer to the five Churches than any other *Vaes* – even the *Vaes Lexicanum* – and one of the more eccentric *Vaes* in the College. They specialise in religious lore, astrology, astronomy and the fine arts of prophecy, constantly refining divinatory skills and teachings in an effort to gain insight into the future.

While the *Vaes Lexicanum* may chair the Logic Annulus, it is this *Vaes* which most contributes to changing Church doctrine, and works by far the closest with the five Churches of Enlightenment. In this role, this *Vaes* also teaches standard dogmatic instruction relating to Church law and teachings – albeit this may vary from that taught in the specific religious schools attached to the various Churches.



Vaes Biologicus

The *Vaes Biologicus* study nature and all the beasts within it. They are experts at anatomy, vivisection, herbalism and the learning of the natural world, and act frequently as a complimentary *Vaes* with both the *Vaes Philosophicus* and the *Vaes Medicus*.

The *Vaes Biologicus* are also the foremost scholars of the effects that the Shifting has on living tissue, be it animal or vegetable. The study into the effects of the Shifting is strictly prescribed and regulated by this *Vaes*, and for those who engage too frequently in unauthorised research may well face a stern visit from senior *Vaes Biologicus* members – if they are lucky.

The *Vaes Biologicus* teaches a range of subjects, both scholarly and mystical. Those parts of Wood Magic aligned to controlling plants and animals are taught by this *Vaes*, as well as those arts of Fire Magic which allow for alteration of the body – although, again, this is strictly regulated.



Vaes Inquisitat

The *Vaes Inquisitat*: dreaded mailed fist of the College and Churches; harsh, uncompromising justice. When mages begin practising outlawed magic or breaking the rules of the College, the *Vaes Inquisitat* strike. When heathen cults begin defaming the will of the Gods or preaching blasphemous heresy, the *Vaes Inquisitat* strike. When the murder-cults of Thalae rise up once more to bring plague, poison and despair to the civilised world, the *Vaes Inquisitat* strike.

Those who belong to this “shadow House” do so in secrecy. While all know that it exists, those few people who admit publicly to belonging to it are few and far between. Instead, the *Vaes Inquisitat* lies dormant until needed, at which point the masks are drawn and blood is let. This *Vaes*, understandably, draws the largest percentage of those with an affinity to Shadow, however, they act almost in abject defiance of their Element and certainly of their Element’s patron Goddess. They work in the darkness so that the darkness does not encroach upon the light, and they receive no gratitude for their actions.

They receive training in a number of forbidden arts, and help regulate the training and use of the necromantic arts – both those used beneficially, in the prevention and investigation of crime; and the more sinister arts used to raise the dead. Indeed, to practise the arts of necromancy one must be Sanctioned by the *Vaes Inquisitat* – even were one a High Priest of Thalae!

The *Vaes Inquisitat* does have a public face – those known as the Facilitators. These brave souls can be seen patrolling the College or working in cells, providing a visible reminder to those who may otherwise forget. As one might expect, they are distrusted and feared,

regardless of how benevolent of mien they are, yet they do not falter in defence of the realm.



Vaes Lexicanum

The *Vaes Lexicanum* is perhaps the largest and most important of all the *Vaes* of the College of Enlightenment. It is certainly the oldest and most influential, and claims – as is it's right – the largest and most impressive building at the very centre of the College. The spires and shining marble domes can be seen rising over the heart of Aesilon, heralding the bright dawn of knowledge and understanding for all.

The *Vaes Lexicanum* is dedicated to language, words and history. Those who study here become masters of philosophy, rhetoric and the oratorical arts, as well as the finer arts of calligraphy and illustration. They are teachers, poets, and the highest form of scholars.

This *Vaes* also speaks for the entire College when such a spokesperson is needed, and also chairs the Logic Annulus between the Churches of the Gods and those religious and doctrinal researchers within the College to maintain and establish Church doctrine.



Vaes Medicus

The *Vaes Medicus* were originally an off-shoot of the *Vaes Biologicus* which has since evolved into a fully-functioning and extremely well-regarded *Vaes* of their own. This *Vaes* specialises, as the name may suggest, in the healing arts. They combine the curative arts of Wood Magic with the advances in medical lore pioneered over the last hundred years. They also teach some vital alchemical compounds, as well as helping hone the eyes (and, indeed, other senses) of the students so as to assist them in the diagnosis and treatment of wounds.

It is rumoured that the *Vaes Medicus* also has a somewhat more sinister side... for, it is a well-understood truth that in many cases the difference between kill and cure is a matter of quantity, and to best take a life, one needs to know how to save it. The *Vaes Medicus* vociferously denies these rumours – indeed, the merest suggestion that they assist in training assassins is sufficient to render many a master into apoplexy. Still, these rumours do persist, and the *Vaes Medicus* calls as many Wood-affinity students to its doors as it does Shadow-affinity students – a balance which can frequently make for a somewhat tense atmosphere.



Vaes Philosophicus

The *Vaes Philosophicus* are founded on the principles of investigation, experimentation and natural philosophy. Their members study alchemy, geology, gravity and engineering, and boast one of the most Elementally-varied compositions, drawing those with an Affinity to Fire, Air, Water and even Earth to their door.

While this *Vaes* studies and teaches very little of the magical arts – preferring very much to focus on the natural sciences rather than the arcane arts – they are still one of the wealthiest and most influential *Vaes*, largely due to their mastery of the alchemical arts and being the first to discover the advanced engineering that is Clockwork.



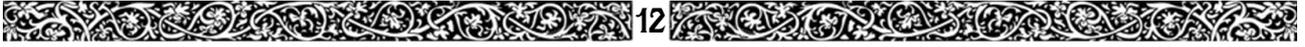
Vaes Tacticus

The *Vaes Tacticus* is unusual, even by the standards of the College. While they do study history and follow some cerebral pursuits, the *Vaes Tacticus* specialises in military history, combat tactics and battle magics. Former students of *Vaes Tacticus* can be found commanding armies, ruling Dominions and heading mercenary companies across the length and breadth of Corvantin. Since the compact with King Corbrey I, all of the rulers of Corvantin have been instructed by the *Vaes Tacticus* in matters of warfare and statecraft, and all senior members of the Order of the Gryphon are also expected to spend at least one term learning warfare.

In addition to this, the majority of squad mages, combat magicians and mystically-inclined Knights Militant also train under the auspices of the *Vaes Tacticus*, and the senior faculty include a number of prominent soldiers as well as academics. All members of *Vaes Tacticus* are also expected to learn how to defend themselves physically as well as intellectually and magically, and so rarely fit the image of the wizened scholar that wander through the halls of the other *Vaes*.

Given all this, it is no surprise that the *Vaes Tacticus*, despite being relatively small, is incredibly influential and politically powerful. While they tend not to involve themselves in more religious matters, such as the Logic Annulus, nigh-on every Order Militant – secular or religious – has a *Vaes Tacticus* correspondent, as do most Dominions.





In Conclusion

The full history of the wondrous College of Enlightenment may span countless volumes; the tales, legends and histories of the *Vaes* countless more. I trust, therefore, that this distillation, condensed by my quill and onto these parchments, may provide thee with sufficient regard and knowledge to inform you of this most august establishment, and to tease – nay, tantalise! – you into seeking out further knowledge for yourself, by enrolment and scholarship.

With regards,

Adolphus Quint, Purple Sage of Arador.

