

The Origin & Progress of the Supreme Council 33^o
of the A. & A. Rite for England^e

Preface

M.W.Sov. & Brethren,

This essay, which is entitled (as above), contains ~~very~~ ^{very little} original thought or research and is, in fact, based largely on a book, written by M. Ill. ^{Rev. Br.} Arnold W. Oxford who in 1920 was appointed Grand ^{PRIOR} ~~Supreme Council~~ of Supreme Council, (~~in 1920~~) and held that Office for 26 years. Where I have deviated or added to his work (~~there~~) my remarks are based on other and equally good authorities, viz: ^{Dr. R. H. Gould, H. J. Luman, Past Master Knight, W. Buckley, & C. White.}

Rule 54 of Supreme Council regulations, which is headed "Talks or Papers" says "Without the permission of the Supreme Council, no member of this Order may give a talk or paper on the Ancient & Accepted Rite, or any of its Degrees, at any Masonic gathering." Should I be hauled before Supreme Council to shew cause why I thought fit to defy Rule 54 I shall plead that all I am doing is to quote (~~the~~) from the writings of a former and much respected Grand Prior who, bless his dear old heart, may have been guilty of error or omission himself for all I know!!

So under that somewhat tattered umbrella let us proceed ^{L2} study the Origin & Progress of the A. & A. Rite under the guidance of Br. Oxford.

Symbolic Masonry The history of modern or symbolic Freemasonry is somewhat obscure. When the effort was made to link the new system to the old ^{operative} working craft it was natural to hide the join as far as possible.

Working masons may have united into associations from time immemorial. We know that in the Middle Ages there were guilds of masons with definite rules (a) signs and ceremonies. At the end of the 17th. century there is clear evidence that the guilds admitted outsiders into their ranks..... one origin of this custom may have been practical convenience. When a bishop started to build a cathedral or a nobleman a mansion it was con-

(a) Regius M/S , circa 1390.

venient that their chief officers should have free access to the building, which was barred to outsiders. From this practice it would be an easy transition to initiate any man of distinction ... At this period, however, (i.e. the end of the 17th. century) the practice seems to have become very general^(b) and it is possible that lodges were formed with no craftsmen^(i.e. "operatives") in their number.

Anyway, one such lodge did start up somewhere between 1691 and 1717. Not only did it contain no working masons but it consisted entirely of men of high position in the social and scientific world. This was the Lodge now known as the Royal Somerset House & Inverness Lodge No. 4. In 1717 this Lodge united with 3 other Lodges to form a Grand Lodge. One of them, now known as Antiquity No. 2, had been founded in 1691, the 2nd., now Lodge of Fortitude & Old Cumberland No.12, in 1712, the 3rd. ceased to exist in 1736(?).

Passage to France. The Order soon spread to France. The first Lodge given in the English roll was that constituted by the Grand Lodge of England 'at the King's Head in Butchers' Row, Paris, in 1732', [which was afterwards entered as 'au Louis d'Argent dans la Rue de Boucherie à Paris']. In 1736 it was meeting at the Hotel de Bussy, Rue de Bussy. It was erased in 1768. In 1735 it was visited by the Duke of Richmond and Dr. Desaguliers ... and others when the Duke of Kingston was initiated. Other Lodges followed at Valenciennes in 1734, at Aubigny in 1735 and ^(c) Lodge 1^e Anglaise No.204..... Freemasonry was clearly spreading in France. The 'St. James Evening Post' May 12, 1737, ^{reports} writes "By a private letter from Paris we are assured that the Order of Freemasonry, established long since in England, has become lately so much in vogue in Paris, there being great ^(from 1714) striving to be admitted even at the expense of ten Louis d'ors".... Not only did the introduction of Freemasonry into France lead to its rapid spread but it gave rise to a perfect flood of secret societies as well as to many additional degrees in the craft itself. Some of these latter were known as Scottish degrees

(b) See Plot's Natural History of Staffordshire, 1786; 'The Tatler' for June 9, 1709 & other instances in Ars. Quat. Cor. xiv. 345.

(c) According to the Engraved List of 1729.

There seem at first to have been 7 of these degrees but in 1756 there arose a Conseil des Empereurs d'Orient et d'Occident (which you may, in spite of my faulty French, recognise as a Council of Emperors of the East & West) which worked 25 degrees ~~and~~ called the Rite of Perfection and claimed a very superior position in Masonry..... one question naturally arises - "Why were these higher degrees known as Scottish?" It is certain they did not come from Scotland (and he ^(see Oxford) quotes authority for that assertion) (d)

(Ramsay b. 1686 - d. 1742) (see)
 One theory is that the degrees owe their origin to the Chevalier Ramsay. He was born ^{in 1686} and educated at Edinburgh University. He left Britain in 1706 and fought in the Duke of Marlborough's army. He was converted to Roman Catholicism about 1710. It seems probable that he was initiated about 1728 in London. ^(see 47) In 1737, having joined French Freemasonry, he was "Chancellor" or "Orator" of the Paris Grand Lodge and as such delivered his celebrated oration ... in which he attributed the origin of Freemasonry to the knightly Crusaders rather than to the operative masons. Soon after this speech the so-called Scottish degrees made their appearance in France, but there is nothing definite to connect Ramsay himself with their actual introduction. He must be further acquitted of the charge of having sought to infiltrate Jacobitism into Freemasonry, which some writers have asserted, on the strength of his having acted for a year as tutor to the sons of the Old Pretender. In its published form his Oration was burnt in Rome by order of Pope Clement XIII in 1738. After that year no more is heard of the Chevalier as a Mason. ^(e) Incidentally, in his Oration he mentions a lodge at Kilwinning of which James, Lord Steward of Scotland, was Grand Master in 1286. ^{It may be significant that} Kilwinning was not far from Ramsay's birthplace.

~~A second~~ theory is that the degrees were of a Jacobite origin, organised for political purposes. *(but that is pure speculation)*

Mention may be here made of the word 'Heredom' Early French rituals defined it as the name of the mountain situated

(d) Lawrie's 'History of Freemasonry', Gould's 'History' and the Grand Secretary of G.L. of Scotland.

(e) Taken from Pick & Knight's "F.M.'s Pocket Reference Book"

(ea) According to Dr Mackay, Ramsay was born at Lyon on 9th June 1686; (son of a baker & owner of property). But see R.F. Gould Vol 3 p. 10 who thinks his year of birth was 1680/81, so that his death in 1743 he was 62 yrs. of age.

(eb) In the same year he issued his famous Bull "In Eminenti" which banned Freemasonry in perpetuity.

between West and North of Scotland at the end of the course of the Sun, where the first Masonic lodge is held in that part of the country which gave the name to Scottish Masonry. The meaning of the word, if any ever existed, is lost. Many suggestions have been advanced, most of them fanciful and none convincing. Among the ingenious suggestions offered are: (a) From Herodium, a castle built by Herod (b) From 'Highrodiam' a Masonic degree at Gateshead in 1746 (c) From 'Harodim' (d) From the Greek "heiros" (holy) and "domos" (a house). Whatever may be the derivation of the word, it is evidently intended, in the degrees where it is used, to imply "Rulers or High Masonic Dignitaries". (f)
 Br. Oxford thought it was more likely derived from two Hebrew words "Hár Edom". (meaning "noble men")

The Passage to America. In 1761 the Council of the Emperors of the East & West issued a patent to one Stephen Morin, a Jew, to spread the Rite of Perfection in America. The patent appointed him Grand Inspector in all parts of the New World and authorised him to create Inspectors in all places where the Sublime Degrees were not established.....

Morin settled in the island of San Domingo. ^(West Indies) He appointed Inspectors and they, in their turn, appointed other Inspectors to carry on the work in America... The history of the following years is confusing, at times sordid, and not very interesting. But on May 31st. 1801, "The Council of the 3rd. D^o for the United States of America" was opened at Charleston, South Carolina. Until this date nothing is known of degrees higher than the 25 of the Rite of Perfection. In the following year this Supreme Council issued a circular to all the Grand Lodges and Councils of the world.

The circular, after dating the origin of Freemasonry to the beginning of the world and attributing the rise of religion to "the contemplation of the Planetary system" wanders into strange history. (To quote) "In ⁽¹⁷⁶¹⁾ 1761, the Lodges and Councils of the superior degrees being extended through the continent of Europe, His Majesty the King of Prussia, as Grand Commander of the Order of Prince of the Royal Secret, was acknowledged by all the Craft as the head of the Sublime and Ineffable Degrees of Masonry ^{THROUGHOUT} ~~throughout~~

(f) Taken from Inman's "Masonic Problems & Queries".

the two hemispheres.... On the 25th October ⁽¹⁷⁶²⁾ 1762, the Grand Masonic Constitutions were ratified in Berlin and proclaimed for the government of all the Lodges of Sublime and Perfect Masons, Councils, Chapters, Colleges and Consistories of the Royal and Military Art of Freemasonry over the surface of the two hemispheres. There were Secret Constitutions which have existed from time immemorial and are alluded to in these Instruments.....

On the 1st. of May ⁽¹⁷⁸⁶⁾ 1786, the Grand Constitution of the 33rd. D^o, called the Supreme Council of Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, was finally ratified by His Majesty the King of Prussia, who, as Grand Commander, of the Order of Princes of the Royal Secret possessed the Sovereign Masonic power over all the Craft. In the new Constitution the High power was conferred on a Supreme Council of 9 brethren in each nation, who possess all the Masonic prerogatives in their own districts that His Majesty individually possessed and are Sovereigns of Masonry".

Br. Oxford then lists the names and gives a brief biography of the 9 members of the Supreme Council at Charleston (South Carolina, U.S.A.) of which 4 were Jews..

However, there is no doubt that the whole story of Frederick the Great and the Constitutions is a pure myth. Some historians have denounced it as a fraud and have accused its authors of stooping to falsehood, blasphemy and low vulgarity.. But Albert Pike, a former Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, defended the authenticity of the Constitutions in a large quarto volume of 467 pages (1872). But without additional evidence a mere perusal of the circular is enough to show that the whole story is a myth. An authority had to be found and named and as there was no obvious world figure ^{but} Frederick was chosen. The Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States is acknowledged by prescriptive right the Mother Supreme Council of the World.

Ireland.

Before giving an account of the Councils of Great Britain and Ireland it must be noted that some of the Scottish degrees were early introduced into these countries. Though France invented them, their high-sounding titles fascinated many of the sober English masons and the degrees were widely worked. This is evident from Article II in the Articles of Union ^{in due course} (Quote) "That this Article is not intended to prevent any Lodge or Chapter from holding a meeting in any of the degrees of the Orders of Chivalry, according to the constitutions of the said Orders". The last to work them in London is said to have been the Lodge of Fidelity No.3 (Antients, founded 1754). In the Baldwyn Chapter of Bristol and other places some of these degrees are still conferred.

(ff) See *White's Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2 p. 412

The Supreme Council of Ireland received its Constitution from Charleston in ¹⁸²⁴1829, but as early as 1809, John Fowler, Grand Commander of the Ill. College of Kadosh and the Original Chapter of Prince Masons was in communication with Dalcho(g) concerning the formation of a Supreme Council. On May 27th. 1811 he and two other brethren took a solemn obligation in St. Patrick's Cathedral ^(Dublin) to obey the warrant which was to be sent to them from Charleston, but the War of Independence broke out and all further communication was stopped.

In 1823, ^{after a lapse of 12 years.} however, Moses Holbrook, who was soon to be the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Charleston Council, wrote to John Fowler and asked whether he still wished for a Supreme Council. As a result letters patent, dated August 13th. 1824, were sent constituting the Duke of Leinster(h), John Fowler and Thomas McGill to be the Supreme Council for Ireland.

This Supreme Council, however, had no control over the Rose Croix degree, which had been introduced in 1782 (i.e. in the Kilwinning Lodge, Dublin) and the holders of the Degree had opened (in 1796) a "Grand Supreme Council" for working still higher degrees.. ^(A.O.W. p. 15) This Council continued until ¹⁷⁹²1807 when, under a French warrant, the Metropolitan College of Heredom of Ireland was ~~founded~~ formed (with John Fowler as its Grand Commander) as the governing body of the "Order of Philosophical Masonry" in all its Branches.

In 1836 a "Council of Rites" was formed by the joint action of this body and the Original Chapter of Prince Masons and the Knights of the Sun to take over the working of the Rose Croix Degree.. In 1870 the Council of Rites changed its name to ^{"the} Grand Chapter of Prince Masons". It was not until 1905, after long and ~~many~~ often most painful controversies, that a friendly arrangement was made and this body came into obedience to the Supreme Council ^(of Ireland).

(A.O.W. p. 15) - Scotland. England comes next in seniority, but it is convenient to first consider the history of Scotland. This Supreme Council seems to have taken the unusual course of constituting itself. On June 4th. 1845, there was a meeting of the

(g) A member of the Supreme Council, Charleston.

(h) Born 1791; Grand Master of Ireland from 1813 - 1874 (61 years!)

*an interesting point, in passing
The Duke was only 22 years of age when appointed
Grand Master - 61 years! (Duke of Devonshire was S.M. for 22 years)*

"Supreme Grand Council of Rites" under the guidance of its Grand President, George Walker Arnott, LL.D (of Arlay), who had lately been the means of introducing into the Council the "celebrated ^{PRIMITIVE RITE OF NAMOURS} Rite Primitive de Namours". This was, presumably, the Primitive Scottish rite, established at Namours in 1770 and consisting of 33 degrees. Dr. Arnott must have been a perfect glutton for degrees, as this year, according to the 'Freemasons' Quarterly Review' (Vol. xii, p. 349) he not only introduced the Ancient & Accepted Rite (33 degrees) and the ^{PRIMITIVE RITE OF NAMOURS} Rite Primitive de Namours (33 degrees), but also the Order of Mizraim (91 degrees) and the Rite of Heredom of Perfection. Be that as it may, Dr. Arnott and his collaborators 'flirted' with the Supreme Council, Northern Jurisdiction in America but it declined to recognise the ^{Scottish} Scottish Supreme Council which faded away.

(p. 173) In the following year (i.e. 1847) another Supreme Council sprang up, created by Dr. Charles Morison of Greenfield which in turn 'flirted' with the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction of America (and) for recognition but, like its predecessor, was rejected. Nevertheless, the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of to-day is the direct descendant of the body founded by Dr. Morison and his collaborators in 1847.

The First Warrant for England. A Supreme Council for Great Britain, Ireland and for the English possessions in America and the Indies was formed under a patent granted by the Supreme Council of France dated 3th. OCTOBER 1819. The Duke of Sussex, who had received the higher degrees in Paris, was designated Sovereign Grand Commander. Having received the patent the Duke, who was anything but enthusiastic towards those Masonic degrees outside the Craft, put it on one side and did nothing further. (22)

(A.W.O. p. 29) The Second Warrant. It was not until two years after the death of the Duke of Sussex that the Supreme Council of England was constituted. Its formation is connected with two doctors, Crucefix (of Royal/Benevolent Institution fame) and Leeson. ^{Masonic}

(A.W.O. p. 30) Leeson commenced the necessary steps for the formation of the Council of the Ancient & Accepted Rite; whilst they were progressing, Br. Crucefix obtained a legal authority from the Supreme Council at New York giving him the first rank. Br. Leeson ... was at the time in correspondance with another body (thought to be the Grand Orient of France) for a like authority, but on the arrival of the New York power, overtures were made to him to forego ... the privilege and to assist in the establishment of a Supreme Council in this country under the authority of the American body..

(A.W.O. p. 31) Unfortunately (As we shall see,) the original Minutes were removed and (22) it is possible that this induction was deliberate so far as after the Union he had trouble with a number of lodges who refused to conform to the Rules & regulations of the new G.W.M.E.

probably destroyed, so that/^{for}the early history we are dependant on the Proceedings of the Supreme Council of the Northern Jurisdiction (U.S.A.) and the Freemasons' Quarterly Review (founded ⁱⁿ by Dr. Crucefix in 1834) which, naturally, reported everything of interest to the Order. In gratitude for the Warrant issued by the Northern Jurisdiction the bound-volume for 1846 is dedicated:-

"To the M.P. & Ill. Brother J.J.J. Gourgas, Grand Commander and the Supreme Council 33^o for the northern district and jurisdiction of the United States - the former a veteran freemason who, has sustained by precept and example the high degrees; prevented their decadence; and, as a crowning labour, emulated the character of Frederick the Great in having conducted to the organization of the Supreme Council ~~of~~ this kingdom, where it was hitherto known but in name; and the latter his compatriots in zeal, and the partakers of his honourable success"

(A.W.O. p.31) → In the Issue of the Warrant on July 23rd. 1846, the Northern Jurisdiction had been equally complimentary:

"We feel, as scions of a parent stock, no small pride in thus having the power in some measure to repay a debt of gratitude to the memory of past worthies, by the opportunity afforded us of regenerating the scintillations that have been so long dormant in England" *(see A.W. Oxford, p.31)*

With the Warrants were sent rituals, constitutions, regulations etc. 'also copied of correspondence with

General Count de Fernig at Paris
John Fowler at Dublin,
& Dr. Arnett in Scotland (?)

General de Fernig was one of the joint committee appointed in 1841 to reconcile the Supreme Council of France (~~with~~) and the Grand Orient.

(A.W.O. p.32) On Dec. 30th. 1846, Dr. Crucefix forwarded to America the list of the Supreme Council as follows:-

- R.T. Crucefix, Grand Commander
- Rev. George Oliver, Lt. Grand Commander,
- Henry Adal, (Barrister) Grand Treasurer General
- Henry B. Leeson, Grand Chancellor,
- David Nash, Grand Secretary General,
- Richard Lea Wilson, Grand Master of Ceremonies
- Thomas Pryer, (Solicitor), Capt. of the Life Guards
- William Tucker,

(A.W.O. p.33) All seemed well with the new Council. But in the beginning of 1847 the Northern Jurisdiction heard that not only had Dr. Leeson visited Paris and been received 'with marked distinction' but that an alliance had been completed between the Grand Orient of France and the Supreme Council of England.

When Dr. Crucefix approached the Northern Jurisdiction

1839-1856

in 1845 the Grand Secretary (William Henry White) cautioned him most particularly against the Grand Orient of France, who had led into 'irregular and injudicious proceedings' the Grand Councils of Scotland and Ireland. 'We are aware that they have long had their eye upon England, but have hitherto been restrained from action by the well-known opposition of your late Grand Master to the high grades (degrees).... to thwart them should be the desire of every friend'.

(A.W.O. p 33) The correspondence of Count de Fernig had been sent in order to show the evil designs of the Grand Orient. In acknowledging it Crucefix wrote 'I have perused it with intense interest; indeed, as a point of reference, I have taken a copy for my future guidance in case of need!'

No wonder the Supreme Grand Commander spoke of 'the defection, contemplated and so systematically carried through and accomplished by' Crucefix. 'We have been completely circumvented by him in a shameless manner, it appearing clearly to have been a deep-laid systemactical plan, acted upon by him with great duplicity, from the very moment he had received in his hands the full powers vested in him by us, and solely used by him as his introduction and alliance with the Grand Orient of France'

(A.W.O. p 33) Crucefix seems to have first excused himself on the ground of having been ill-treated by the Irish brethren, and in a brief final letter gave as his defence that 'the previous misdoings of Arnott and the subsequent vagaries of Morison..... left us no alternatives'.

(A.W.O. p 34) Sentence was passed on September 23rd. 1847. "Resolved and decreed unanimously that all intercourse or communication with the aforesaid Dr. Robt. Thos. Crucefix of his Supreme Council has ceased and is forbidden until he and they publicly abjure all further connection and alliance with the aforesaid Grand Orient of France"

(A.W.O. p 34) It was probably the death of Dr. Crucefix in 1850 which brought about the reconciliation. In accordance with Article III of the General Constitutions of 1786, Dr. Oliver took his place, but in a few months he gave way, with some unwillingness, to Dr. Leeson and again became Lt. Grand Commander. *It was peace restored.*

(A.W.O. p 35) The account of the meeting on February 10th. 1853 alluded to "The High Grades Union", a dining-club for members of 30th. Degree. Candidates had to dine once before being put up for ballot.

(A.W.O. p 35) In a report of the meeting held on April 28th. 1854

it was stated that the Secretary-General, Davyd W. Nash, had resigned and that William Tucker (i) had been appointed his successor. After a brief tenure of office the new Secretary, (William Tucker), died at his residence at Axminster on March 1st. 1855. aged 40 years. He was succeeded by Br. Charles John Vigne.

(see note (i) below)

Supreme Council Minutes between 1847 and 1854 are missing, the "first" Minute Book begins on July 5th. 1854.

(AWC p. 36) There was trouble with the ex-Secretary and the Treasurer. The former, Davyd Nash, had retired to Bristol and had not given up the Minute Book and other papers. An application to recover them seems to have been unsuccessful. The Treasurer had neglected his duties in every possible way and in July was "dismissed from all station, office, power and authority".

The Minutes of April 21st. 1857 record that the 30th. D^o had been worked for the first time "...without the aid of the Ritual"

On October 1857 a "....communication from Ill. Br. John Barker of Newcastle was received stating that it ~~was~~ the desire of himself and other members of a Chapter of Rose Croix (which had hitherto been held at Newcastle under an old Warrant,) to place themselves under the control of Supreme Council, taking a new Warrant and enrolling themselves members agreeably to the constitution of the Order and requesting to be informed upon what terms the Supreme Council would be willing to admit them. After the discussion the Secretary was requested to inform Br. Barker that Supreme Council would, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, be willing to grant a Warrant free of expense and enroll their members upon their signing the obligation of allegiance and paying the sum of one shilling each for registration".

(AWC p. 34) Fresh trouble arose with Davyd Nash. The Sovereign Grand Commander requested every member to attend the meeting in July 1857 to hear a charge of holding communication, especially in the 18th. D^o with bodies not recognised by Supreme Council. There had been correspondance with him and more followed. Finally, Nash agreed to meet the Grand Secretary (General). But before

~~the meeting~~

Another interesting character —

(i) Br. William Tucker was Prov. G. Master for Dorset from 1846 to 1853. He was deposed by the ^{Board of England} Grand Master for appearing in his Prov. G. Lodge in the regalia of 33rd. D^o by letter from Grand Secretary d/d 21/11/1853. See AQC Vol. 83 p.124 - 135.

the meeting a letter appeared in the Freemasons' Monthly Magazine dated July 10th. (P.625) which, according to the Grand Secretary (General) precluded any idea of negotiation. On January 13th. 1858, Nash was formally expelled and notice to that effect was given to all Chapters and to the Supreme Councils of Ireland and America.

(A.W.C. p. 39) ^{just referred to} The unrecognised bodies were the Baldwyn Chapter at Bristol and the Antiquity at Bath. Nash had joined the former six years before the date of the formation of the Supreme Council. In the circumstances his expulsion seems rather odd ^{in retrospect}.

(A.W.C. p. 38) Br. J.A.D. Cox, who had been appointed Grand Secretary (General) in 1857, ~~and~~ resigned in 1861. As he answered no letters, forcible steps had to be taken at some expense for the purpose of recovering the property of the Council. It was decided to appoint an assistant secretary and Dr. W. Hyde Pallen was selected for the Office.

(A.W.C. p. 38) Capt. Nathaniel George Phillips, who had been 'perfected' in Ireland, but had received the 30th and higher degrees in England, was elected to the Council in 1864. He remained a member until 1905, resigning a few weeks before his death. To him, more than any other man, is due the successful course of the Ancient & Accepted Rite in England.

The Rose Croix members of the Antiquity Encampment (or Preceptory) at Bath (already referred to) agreed to come under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council and received a new warrant in 1866..... The Rose Croix degree is known to have been conferred as early as 1797 in this Encampment, of Knights Templar.

(A.W.C. p. 51) The Encampment (~~XXXXXXXXXX~~) of Baldwyn of Seven Degrees, time immemorial, was established before 1772 and worked both the Rose Croix and Kadosh (Higher Degrees). Its usages showed a great similarity to those of Ireland Overtures to join the Supreme Council were made unsuccessfully by Lord Limerick (J) in 1868, but in 1880 Col. Shadwell Clarke, who had come to install the Prov. Prior for Bristol reopened the question and, as a result, a Treaty of Union was completed on May 10th. 1881. In the Treaty it was stipulated that the Chapter should be under its own Inspector General, that it should continue (if it wished) to use its own ritual and place a copy of the same in the Archives of Supreme Council, and that the Templar and Rose Croix degrees should be kept separate and not, as a rule, worked on the same (evening.

(J) Mr. Limerick & Supreme G. M. (Kt. Templar) 1873-'76.

(A.W.C. p. 62) The Constitution. All Supreme Councils profess allegiance to the Grand Constitutions of 1786 but it would be difficult, in the present day, to observe them in their entirety. For example, Article XV orders that "a Supreme Council should regularly be held during the three days wherewith each third new moon commences" and states that "each Supreme Council will have three sacred days in each year peculiar to itself etc..."

The Supreme Council of England does follow the Constitutions in regard to its membership. It consists of nine Inspector Generals of the 33rd. Degree of whom the Sovereign Grand Commander and the Lt. Grand Commander are elected for life.

(A.W.C. p. 59. Jeremiah Howe in his book "Illustrations of Freemasonry" says:-

"It has been urged as an objection to the Ancient and Accepted Rite, and not without some show of reason, that the Supreme Council is a self-elected tribunal which is contrary to the spirit of the Masonic institution. We should, however, remember that we are directed to judge of the tree by its fruits; and when we consider the natural working of the system of government adopted in this Rite, we are constrained to admit that the objections are founded rather on a theoretical basis than on its practical results". This was written in 1862 but it is equally true in the present day.

(A.W.C. p. 60.) Rituals. The early rituals of the Rite were poor stuff and general opinion was not favourable. The early translations into English seem to have made no improvement which led Albert Pike, the Sovereign Grand Commander, Southern Jurisdiction, (in 1878) to pronounce that "The truth is that the rite was nothing and the rituals almost naught, for the most part a lot of worthless trash until 1855". They were first revised by a French emigrant, M. Laubet, particularly the Rose Croix but the main work fell on Pike himself. He summed up his ~~text~~ ^{task} in his monumental work "Morals & Dogma". In spite of this the Supreme Council of England has always insisted that the Rite should be based on Christianity. Br. Oxford, as a member of the cloth has some criticisms of our Ritual which I, as a layman must leave aside, but he advocates the appointment of a committee of theological experts to undertake the revision of the Ritual.

That, Brethren, concludes what Br. Oxford and I have to say about the Origin & Progress of the A. & A. Rite & I trust that in the process I have not shattered any fond (or even cherished) ~~illusions.~~ ^{opinions of illusions} I use the word 'illusions' because there seems a widespread tendency among Freemasons to think of Freemasonry as a movement the origin of which is lost in the mists of antiquity.

I suggest, Brethren, that it matters not whether the degrees of the A. & A. Rite had their origin in the 18th. century A.D. or the 18th. century B.C. - what really matters is the MESSAGE its ritual is meant to convey (I refer, particularly to the 18th.D^o).

If you depart from the Chapter this evening or any other evening feeling refreshed after a spiritual "wash-and-brush-up" then its mission has been accomplished and the message has gone home.

So, in conclusion, I will ask Br. Oxford to finish off this rather rambling essay in his own well chosen and comforting words *(and he says):*

"In Freemasonry men often look at the pageantry, the ritual, the outward show, as if they were the main thing, and forget the real essence. They worship the outward form and neglect the spirit. They give it a blind loyalty and a thoughtless enthusiasm as if it had its end and essential value in itself.

The Ancient and Accepted Rite is less exposed to this danger, for it points out incessantly that the supreme need of one and all is a plan of life and that the only life worth living is the Christian one. The way of Christ is the one way to live, the only way, the one-way street to courage, vision and strength. It is the only life which satisfies and which one is not only willing but glad to live; for its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace."