

SOVEREIGN PRINCES ROSE CROIX of H.R D.M

*Under the Authority of the Supreme Council 33° of the Ancient and Accepted Rite
for England and Wales and its Districts and Chapters Overseas*

*Sovereign Grand Commander
Most Puissant Brother G.L.Tedder 33°*

St. Theodore Chapter Rose Croix No. 887

Consecrated 18th May 1981



Very Illustrious Bro. Dr. I. John White, 33°

Sovereign Grand Inspector General for the District of Worcestershire

Address given to Members of the St. Theodore Rose Croix Chapter, No 887

By V. Ill. Bro. Leonard W. Greenwood, 33°, Past Inspector General, Worcestershire

On November 3rd, 1981

The Chapter was consecrated on Monday 18th May 1981 at Rainbow Hill, Worcester by Supreme Council 33°
Sovereign Grand Commander M.P. Bro. Maj. General Sir Ralph Hone, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., M.C., T.D., O.C. 33°

The creation of a new Rose Croix Chapter is a solemn, significant and happy event. Its purpose is primarily twofold : to afford wider membership in the Order for those who desire and deserve and give a chance to ascend the ladder of office to those who have hitherto been denied this privilege owing to the large numbers in their former Chapters. But there are other considerations as well.

First the precious intrinsic quality of our ceremonies in which are stressed the continuing identity of the individual beyond the grave and his redemption on the other side by the combinations of his own efforts and the gift of divine grace. This is followed by the attractive symbolic affirmation in the Third Point of Brotherly Love springing in response to the love of God. I also include the Ceremony of Consecration especially when conducted with the sincerity, dignity and fluency of the Supreme Council's performance last May.

These ceremonies are indeed a splendid reinforcement for our Christian Faith, Pleasantly surprised by any doctrinal differences or uncertainties: for some they may even prove a cogent reminder of the Christian outlook, temporarily neglected or forgotten.

Secondly you are planning, not for to-day or tomorrow but for all time. You have started to which there is no foreseeable end unless one day the Chapter completely loses its enthusiasm.

Now in the building of a fine tradition and in the maintenance of high standards it is a real joy to find any special details of history or environment that will enhance the Chapter's identity and give it a flavour of its own. For example, you Founders of this Christian Chapter have wisely associated its birth with the Thirteenth Century of the Diocese's creation, and its warrant was appropriately signed in 1980. Moreover this happy linkage has been sympathized by your choice of Theodore, who created the diocese in 680, as the Chapter's Patron. These are distinctive features of real value for establishing the Chapter's identity and pride in itself.

Let me tell you something of St. Theodore. There is no contemporary biography and nearly all we know of him comes from Bede (673-735) He was a Greek, born at Tarsus, St Paul's birthplace, in Asia Minor in 602 or 603. He studied at Athens, became a monk and later went to Rome. In 666 Pope Vitalian was faced with a difficulty. After a gap of some years a certain Wighard, elected in England as Archbishop of Canterbury, seventh in succession to St Augustin, had come to Rome to be invested with the pallium of his office, but he caught a virus and died. Vitalian was the Pope to do.

Vitalian first offered the Archbishopric to Hadrian, a native of North Africa and currently Abbot of a Monastery near Naples, who had a high reputation as a scholar in Greek and Latin. Hadrian excused himself on the ground that he was not fitted for such high office and recommended a monk, named Andrew, who was Chaplain to a neighbouring Convent. Andrew excused himself on the grounds of ill health. So Hadrian, being impatient again, asked just as he did so as to make a fresh attempt to find a more suitable candidate. Theodore, then aged 66 (surely near retirement age?) was well known to Hadrian and was living in Rome. Hadrian suggested his name to the Pope, who agreed to consecrate him provided that Hadrian accompanied him to Britain. He had already traveled twice through Gaul and knew the way and could watch for any lapses from orthodoxy by Theodore, due to his Greek antecedents.

Theodore's answer to the Pope was in mortal "I accept, your Holiness, but request that the Appointment and Consecration be delayed for one month so that I can get a proper Hair-do" His actual words may have been less familiar. You see he had the Greek tonsure – a completely shaven head! He must have looked like those well known actors, Telly Savalas and Yul Brynner! It took time to achieve the Roman type – a shaven crown with hair all round.

Vitalian consecrated Theodore on 26th March 668 and the next day Theodore, Hadrian and Benedict (Bishop of Northumbria) monk (who was on the third of his visits to Rome, on horse and cart) set out for Britain. They crossed the sea to Marseilles, stopped briefly at Aclis and remained some time in Paris where Agilnoth, the Bishop of Paris was able to tell Theodore many details about the church in Britain as he had been previously a Bishop and had attended the Synod of Whitby in 664. They arrived at Canterbury on the 26th May, 669, just a year after leaving Rome, to find a critical situation. For nearly five years there had been no Archbishop at Canterbury. Moreover these five years had been marred by plague so that Bishops and Clergy were sorely diminished. In fact there were only 3 Bishops in the whole country, Wilfred who had committed simony by buying the See of London, Wilfred who had returned from a valid consecration at Compiègne in Gaul to find his Diocese had been stolen during his rather long absence by Chad, whose position as Bishop of Northumbria, was impaired by these charges, used an allegedly faulty consecration, moreover Wilfred's quarrelsome and arrogant disposition was likely to make him more of a hindrance than a help to his Metropolitan.

Theodore's method of dealing with the emergency may be summarized as follows:
He saw the Bishoprics must be fitted with men who would co-operate with him. So with Hadrian he made a visitation of the whole country and ordained bishops in proper places. Their number was increased and at his death there were 15, three new ones in the Midlands covering Leicester, Worcester and Hereford. Basil was the first Worcester Bishop, he came from the Monastery of Whitby. Northumbria was divided into three. Chad was transferred to Lichfield. Theodore aimed at achieving a unity of the dioceses, with Canterbury as its focus and was so successful that he became the first Archbishop, willingly obeyed by all Anglo-Saxon England. Periodic Synods were instituted At Hertford in 672 and Hatfield in 680, where all ecclesiastical matters could be discussed and reforms initiated. Among these were the substitution of private penance for public – a real landmark in church history – and the confining of Bishops to their own diocese. Most important of all his schemes was the establishment of a school at Canterbury under Benedict Biscop for two years followed by Hadrian when he had found his feet. He lived on 'til 709. Latin and Greek were taught and Roman Law, the rules of metre, music and audacommentary on the Bible was given. This school at Canterbury and the Monasteries at Wearmouth and Jarrow spread scholarship throughout the church in England and were famed throughout the civilized world.

Bede's judgment stands that the English Church more than ever before during the Episcopate of Theodore. His great achievement was to give unity, organization and scholarship to a divided church on the edge of the civilized world at an age when most men had reached old age or infirmity. He died on the 19th September 690 at the age of 87 – an Episcopate of twenty one years – the greatest figure in the Church between 600 and 950.

He is indeed a notable Patron for the new Chapter to venerate and by your choice you are paying homage to one of that Great Cloud of Witnesses who in every age have been lights of their several generations.

Yes, in these dark and anxious days when so often Christian love and other virtues seem swamped by waves of hatred, violent crime and murderous fanaticism, it is well to remember that "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness"

And that, Princely Founders of the St. Theodore Chapter, if my interpretation of this occasion is correct – is precisely what you have done!

Good luck attends you and mind you keep it burning!

The Prayer, recited before the opening of the Chapter, is the one used in Canterbury Cathedral every 19th September, St Theodore's Feast Day,

St Theodore's Prayer

O God, the light of the faithful and Shepherd of souls, who did'st set Blessed Theodore to be a Bishop in the Church that he might feed them by his word and guide them by his example : grant us, we pray thee, to keep the faith which he taught, and to follow in his footsteps, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen

The original of this prayer is in the Minute Book of the Chapter in V.III. Bro Greenwood's own handwriting

Maurice A Howe 31st

Recorder, St Theodore Chapter R.C. No 887

20 th November 2004