

## A COUNCIL OF RITES.

By Bro. JOHN YARROW, P.M., P.M. M.K., P.Z.  
P.E.O., &c.

I would crave the insertion of a few remarks, marginally bearing chiefly upon the position in England of a Council of Rites. Any suggestions of mine will probably weigh little with the Craft, but they are, nevertheless, the result of no little experience in the working of every branch of our ancient Order, and my suggestions are offered for what they may be considered worth, premising that a search in the archives of Grand Lodge might possibly lead to the discovery of matter which would alter somewhat the views here propounded, and help to lighten the labours of the establishment of such a council on a sound and firm basis.

Probably all those Freemasons who believe in the transmission of our traditions from the days of Solomon will attach credit to reasonable Masonic tradition, whilst the more sceptical will rail at all faith in a way which, if allowed to prevail in religious matters, would drive Christianity from the face of the earth—I mean, were people silly enough to believe everything advanced by such sceptics as are at present engaged upon the Masonic Institution. I am credulous enough to believe a little more than I am able to find minutes for. I hold:—

1. That the simple operative ceremonial had in England passed out of use, and been superseded by the present more elaborate one of the Adopted or Ancient Masons, prior to 1717. The proof of this traditional belief rests chiefly on the Manningham letter, the assertions of Dermott, the fact of Adopted Masons having joined the Ancients, and the apparent non-operative character and peculiar working of the Adopted Masons, coupled with very great resemblance in organisation, belief, and even of phraseology, evidently belonging to the Rosicrucian Institution. Truly there is no evidence to show that the old Society of Adopted Masons, existing in 1691, was derived from the benefit societies of the stonemasons; but let that pass. The frequent talk we hear about the non-recognition of the High Grades by Grand Lodge is mere redomontade. Such recognition is the very last thing the High Grades should wish for from a body that has no right to know anything about these degrees, and they have it at any time in their power to call themselves Templars or Rosicrucians, and confer the Craft ceremonies.

2. That the Royal Arch degree is older in substance than 1717, though one of the high-grade series. It is, in my opinion, a very bungling addition to Craft Masonry, and ought to be separated therefrom, and if it can be shown that the lost word was formerly given in the Master degree, the same ought to be restored to its original order. I would place its governance, along with the Mark, the Arch of Enoch, and the Red Cross of Babylon, under the Grand Chapter, and revise again the whole ceremonial, by including Enoch's Arch, the veils, and the present ceremonial which is also that of the degree of Red Cross in the Ancient and Accepted Rite. The Arch degree contains a large amount of Rosicrucian information, besides which there is other evidence, satisfactory to my mind, of its existence long prior to the date 1740, assigned by Dr. Oliver.

3. That the Templar Order and Rose Croix are representatives of the same step; and the York degree of Holy Wisdom and the Kadosh correspondences. The origin of Holy Wisdom in 1686 is not assigned on the authority of one certificate, but of all issued by the Early Grand Templars, a body dating, as such, its working, at least from A.D. 1700 to 1780, and the date 1686 would not have been adopted without some good and satisfactory reason. I am inclined to give due credit to this tradition, all railing, partisan, interested, *ipse dixit* assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. As the Freemasonry practised by the Adopted Masons and Ancients was ceremonially of strict and sworn secrecy, letter, mark, and character, literally interpreted, I should be more surprised at the existence of documentary evidence, either at York or elsewhere, than I am by its absence, and hence I do not give Bro. Finden's opinion a feather's weight. If it is true, as asserted by Entinck, that Bro. Ramsay made certain proposals to Grand Lodge (about 1728) search ought to be made in the minutes of Grand Lodge, and the precise date and particulars ascertained. I disbelieve the whole tale, but it ought to be considered in connection with the apparent allusions to different workings of High Grade Masonry in certain extracts by Bro. Hughan from Dr. D'Assigny's pamphlet of 1744. These two opposite workings might be the Templar High Grade system, and that of some degrees of the A. and A. Rite, then prevailing, as they unquestionably did.

4. That the present Rosicrucian Society in England is of Germanic origin, and founded on English Ancient Free and Accepted Masonry. The degree of Red Cross of Rome and Constantine, arising out of the Templar lecture, whence it ought again to be relegated. If, however, the latter will not be abandoned, that would leave a Council of Rites to deal with about four varying rites, the steps of which ought to be ranked as coequal, and not, as in Ireland, placed one upon the head of another:—

	1	2	3	4
1st class, G. Lodge, } Craft degrees, }		ditto	ditto	ditto
2nd class, G. Chap. } Arch series, }		"	"	"

3rd class, G. Con. }  
Templar series. } 18° & 30° { Rosi- } { R. & O.  
The 31°, 32° and 33°, rank with the Templar Grand Officers and members of Grand Conclave. Members of any one of these recognised rites ought to be admitted at reduced fees to any corresponding degree of the other rite, and such concession should be a *sine quâ non* to the recognition of any rite.

The first step towards the establishment of a Council of Rites, ought to be the revision by England, Ireland, and Scotland of the Craft and Arch Rituals, in the way now undertaken by the Templars. The English ceremonies are isolated, and have really nothing to recommend them.

The next step should be the election by the three sister countries of a Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master of a *Supreme Grand Council of Rites*, having complete jurisdiction over the degrees of Freemasonry and its attendant higher Orders; and assisted by Councils (Grand Officers) of these higher grades with himself, *ex officio* president of all, and entitled, as such, to preside as Supreme Master, of any recognised Order in any province. Each Grand Lodge, Chapter and Conclave, to form its own laws, subject to the approval and revision of the General Council of Rites, which should hold its meetings alternately in each of the sister provinces, and the attendant expenses equitably borne by the three Grand Lodges. Installation by the councils, of the high grades, of the Supreme Chief in each order, to be absolutely necessary for the recognition of his control. All warrants, patents, certificates, and other documents, to bear the signature of the head of the province, and the confirmation of the Supreme Chief; but each Grand Lodge, Chapter, and Conclave would have to retain its own accumulated funds, unless some equitable arrangement could be come to for their amalgamation with the Supreme Council of Rites.

Such a *Supreme Council of Rites*, would be nothing more or less, than the revival of the *Ancient Grand Lodge of all England* held at York, as shown in my little book entitled "Notes on the Orders of the Temple and St. John."

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