

RECTIFIED SCOTTISH RITE ISSUE CLARIFIED

SYNOPSIS

The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in 2010 declared the Great Priory of America, Rectified Scottish Rite, an unrecognized Templar Order, operating in the United States in violation of the Constitution of the Grand Encampment. The Grand Encampment recognized the Rectified Scottish Rite as Templary as early as 1928, when the Great Independent Priory of Helvetia, *Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sante (C.B.C.S.)* (anglicized as Knights Beneficent of the Holy City or K.B.H.C.), from which the Great Priory received its charter, sought recognition from, and was recognized by, the Grand Encampment. Other Rectified Rite bodies exchanging recognition with the Grand Encampment include the Grand Priory of Gaules, France (C.B.C.S.), in 1985, and the Great Priory of Belgium, in 1991. In Europe, Knights Beneficent of the Holy City enjoy privileges of mutual visitation with Knights Templar, when their respective Priories are in fraternal accord. In England and Wales, Knights Beneficent of the Holy City are drawn exclusively from the ranks of Knights Templar. The Great Priory's own ritual acknowledges,

[The] order of the Knights of the Holy City is derived from the ancient general Order of Chivalry, the Order from which also several other religious and military orders are derived, most particularly that of the Temple, with which the Beneficent Order of the Holy City has the greatest affinity.

Since the Grand Encampment came into being on in 1816, Eminent Sir Knight Thomas Smith Webb and all Grand Masters have affirmed the existence of one Masonic, Templar Order in the United States, which is under the command of the Grand Encampment. Its *Constitution*, in Section 3, declares that the Grand Encampment exercises "supreme ... power and jurisdiction over the Orders of ... Knight Templar within the United States of America." This exclusivity was confirmed by the Concordat among the English-speaking Templar Orders, adopted at the 31st Triennial Conclave in Chicago in 1910 ("1910 Concordat"). Accordingly, as a Templar Order, the Great Priory of America can only operate lawfully under the sanction of the Grand Encampment.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Great Priory denies that the Rectified Scottish Rite is Templary and refuses to acknowledge the Grand Encampment's supremacy over Templary or to operate under its auspices. It should be noted, however, that the Great Priory has long sought recognition from the Grand Encampment, which can only accorded to other Masonic, Templar bodies, but has been unwilling to agree to reasonable terms that would make the desired recognition possible.

RECTIFIED RITE ISSUE CLARIFIED

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During the 68th Triennial in Minneapolis, a pamphlet concerning the Rectified Scottish Rite was made available to “assist” the voting delegates in disposing of two legislative proposals concerning the Great Priory of America, Rectified Scottish Rite Regime. While information contained in the document is factual for the most part, it is incomplete, at best, and much of it is irrelevant, even misleading. This paper seeks to furnish pertinent information which the pamphlet’s authors omitted and to correct some misconceptions concerning the controversy between the Great Priory of America and the Grand Encampment.

At the 65th Triennial Conclave in Alexandria, Virginia in 2012, the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America (Grand Encampment) declared the Order of Knight Beneficent of the Holy City (*Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sante*) or C.B.C.S. “a Masonic Templar Order ... unsanctioned or unrecognized by the Grand Encampment”¹ operating in the United States in violation of Section 3 of the *Constitution, Statutes, Disciplinary Rules, Standing Resolutions, Ceremonies, Forms And Approved Decisions Of The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America* which vests in the Grand Encampment

supreme legislative, judicial and executive power and jurisdiction over the Orders of Red Cross, Knight of Malta and Knight Templar within the United States of America [and] sole and exclusive power and authority to formulate and promulgate the Rituals covering the Rites, ceremonies and secret work pertaining to the several Orders, to be used within its Jurisdiction.²

Membership in such an unsanctioned or unrecognized Masonic Templar Order was declared to be

inconsistent with membership in the Grand Encampment ... or any of its subordinate Commanderies, Grand Commanderies, or their constituent Commanderies.³

Any Sir Knight who, from the date of adoption of the resolution, sought or retained membership in such an unsanctioned or unrecognized Masonic Templar Order was

¹ 2012 *Proceedings of Triennial Session LXV*, at Page 48

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

declared to be “in violation of his Knightly Vows” and deemed “to have renounced his membership in the Order.”⁴

The Resolution confirmed Decision No. 2 of Sir Knight William H. Koon, II, Most Eminent Grand Master, which he had issued May 24, 2010, which the Grand Encampment also approved and which remains settled, Templar law.⁵

Since the approval of Koon Decision No. 2 and adoption of the Standing Resolution, some Sir Knights have sought to justify their continued membership in the Great Priory of America, C.B.C.S., by denying that the C.B.C.S. is, in fact, Knight Templary. Their protestations cannot obscure what is so clearly revealed by the pertinent history which is laid out in the succeeding paragraphs.

At the 37th Triennial Conclave in Detroit, Michigan in 1928, the Grand Encampment Committee on Foreign Relations reported that “the Great Priory of Helvetia [C.B.C.S.] is functioning and has exchanged representatives with other Great Priors.”⁶ The Grand Encampment voted to extend recognition and exchange representatives with the Great Priory of Helvetia.⁷

At the 38th Triennial Conclave in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1931, the Committee on Foreign Relations reported that fraternal relations with the Great Priory of Helvetia had been established and that, on the recommendation of the Great Priory of Helvetia, Sir Knight Frederick Amez-Droz had been appointed the Grand Encampment’s Representative near the Great Priory of Helvetia.⁸ An invitation was extended to Prof. E. Rochat, C.B., C.S., Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master of the Great Priory and his staff to attend the Triennial in Minneapolis.⁹

In August 1934, the Great Independent Priory of Helvetia, Fifth Province, Order of the Temple (for the Francophiles, *Grand Prieuré Indépendant d’Helvétie V^{eme} Province Ordre Templier*) issued to the Great Priory of America, Priestly Order of the Temple (*Grand Prieuré d’Amérique, Ordo Sacerdotalis Templi*)¹⁰ letters patent for the formation of Commanderies and Prefectures of Knights Beneficent of the Holy City (C.B.C.S.) in the United States of America. A photograph of the original letters patent appears at Page 9. The Grand Encampment did not become aware of this action for several years.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, at Page 47

⁶ *1928 Proceedings of Triennial Session XXXVII*, at Page 303

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *1931 Proceedings of Triennial Session XXXVIII*, at Page 68

⁹ *1931 Proceedings of Triennial Session XXXVIII*, at Page 215

¹⁰ Voorhis, Harold v. B., *The Knights Templar Priests*, Revised 1968, at Page 7

At the 41st Triennial Conclave in Cleveland, Ohio in 1940, the Committee on Foreign Relations reported:

The Order of the Beneficent Knights of the Holy City is a Templar Order, several times reformed, notably at the conclaves of the Gauls (Lyons, 1778) and Wilhelmsbad (1782).

The Grand Helvetian Priory was made a Grand Independent Priory at the Conclave of Provinces at Basel in 1779.

Since 1828 it has formed by itself the Fifth Province of the Order. For more than a century it has been the only active center of the Reformed Scottish Rite.

The Reformed Scottish Rite is composed of six degrees: the three symbolic degrees of *Apprentice, Companion, and Master*; then a fourth symbolic degree, the *Scottish Master of Saint Andrew*. Finally two degrees of the Interior Order; the *Novice Knight* and the *Beneficent Knight of the Holy City*.

It is from the ranking Knights that are chosen the officers and members of the Scottish Directory, charged with the administration of the Grand Independent Helvetian Priory, as well as the members of the Prefecture Chapters.¹¹

Knights Beneficent of the Holy City (C.B.C.S.) was formed from Baron Karl Gotthelf von Hund's Rite of Strict Observance which claimed direct descendancy from the Order of Knights Templar:

They really wanted to receive that Occult knowledge which all of the knights of the order [Rite of the Strict Observance] believed the rulers possessed – the heritage of the Order of the Temple. While all of this seems nonsense to us, it was not to them.¹²

The Great Priory of America's connection to the Rite of Strict Observance is amply demonstrated by its Arms, an illustration of which, copied from its website, is on Page 10.

At the 44th Triennial Conclave in San Francisco, California in 1949, the Committee on Foreign Relations reported receiving correspondence from the Vice Chancellor, extending

the warmest fraternal greetings and wishes of the Most Eminent Grand Master of the Great Priory and the Swiss Brothers, call[ing] attention to the recognition by their jurisdiction of the Great Priory of England and Wales, the Great Priory of

¹¹ 1940 *Proceedings of Triennial Session XLI*, at Pages 317-318

¹² Bennet, Burton E., [The Rite of Strict Observance: Part Two – Templar History](#),

Scotland, and of Ireland, and the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada, as well as our Grand Encampment.¹³

At the 45th Triennial Conclave in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1952, the Committee on Foreign Relations reported the passing of Past Grand Master Andrew D. Agnew, Representative of the Great Priory of Helvetia near the Grand Encampment, and his replacement by Sir Knight Walter A. DeLamater, founder of our beloved Knights Templar Eye Foundation, then Grand Generalissimo of the Grand Encampment.¹⁴

At the 55th Triennial Conclave in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1982, the Committee on Foreign Relations, having consulted the Great Priory of England and Wales and the Great Priory of Scotland, recommended that the petition for mutual recognition from the Grand Priory of Gaules, France (C.B.C.S.), another creature of the Great Independent Priory of Helvetia (in 1935) be granted, being assured of the truthfulness of the Grand Priory's representation that it "does profess the Christian Faith and belief in the Holy Trinity" and is now '*working the Templar Rite of Freemasonry*.'"¹⁵ (emphasis added)

At the 58th Triennial Conclave in Washington, D.C., in 1991, the Committee on Foreign Relations reported with pleasure the recognition of The Great Priory of Belgium, together with The United Great Priory in New Zealand, The Great Priory of Western Australia, and the Great Priory of New South Wales and the Capital Territories of Australia.¹⁶

The Great Priory of Belgium, on its website, boasts:

The Great Priory of Belgium and its Prefectures in Australia maintain a friendly international working relationship with the majority of Great Priories of Knights Templar around the world. For many years now, a mutual right of visitation is in place. Members of the Great Priory of Belgium who hold the degree of Knight Beneficent of the Holy City can visit Knight Templar meetings of officially recognised Great Priories. In return Knights Templar of recognised Great Priories can visit meetings in the degree of Knight Beneficent of the Holy City in the Great Priory of Belgium and its Prefectures in Australia.¹⁷

How can one participate in a Templar Conclave unless one is a Knight Templar?

¹³ 1949 *Proceedings of Triennial Session XLIV*, at Page 580

¹⁴ 1952 *Proceedings of Triennial Session XLV*, at Page 58

¹⁵ 1982 *Proceedings of Triennial Session LV*, at Page 137-138

¹⁶ 1991 *Proceedings of the Triennial Session LVIII*, at Page 25

¹⁷ [International relations – Grand Prieuré de Belgique | Grootpriorij van België | Great Priory of Belgium \(gpbel.org\)](http://gpbel.org)

The Great Priory of America has purported to function as a Sovereign, Independent, Templar Order since its inception, declaring unabashedly in its *Ritual of the Supreme Degree of C.B.C.S.*,

The establishment of the Christians in Jerusalem gave birth to the Orders of Chivalry, and *tradition wills that we be connected with the one whose short but glorious existence we ... here sketch.*¹⁸ (emphasis added)

They refer, of course, to the Order of the Temple.

The nine Founders of this Order were: Hugues de Paganis, Geoffrey de St. Omer, Guilbert Norfolk, Philippe de St. Maur, Hildebrand Lavis de Scala, Jacques de Durfort-Duras, Martin de Rhodes, Guillaume de Gamache, and Hugues, Sire de Lusignan.¹⁹

These names are well known to our Sir Knights. Many of our Commanderies bear their names. Hugues de Paganis or Hugues de Payens was the first Grand Master of the Knights Templar.

In the beginning these nine Knights were homeless, but, in 1115, King Baudoin II gave them asylum within the walls of the Temple of Solomon, and in 1118, *they were called Knights of the Temple*. They lived on alms and gifts of the faithful; and for another nine years they limited their number to nine. Although descended from the noblest houses, their poverty was so great that a single horse served for two Knights. Later, wishing to recall these modest beginnings of their Order, they adopted a seal representing “a horse ridden by two Knights.”

In 1128, at the Council of Troyes, they were solemnly recognized by the Christian Church and received the White Mantle. St. Bernard gave them their Rule. In 1147, Pope Eugene added thereto the Red Cross. Ten years later, he gave them the right to possess land, and from that time their prosperity knew no bounds.

* * *

[The] order of the Knights of the Holy City is derived from the ancient general Order of Chivalry, the Order from which also several other religious and military orders are derived, *most particularly that of the Temple, with which the Beneficent Order of the Holy City has the greatest affinity*. That Order, as you

¹⁸ [Stichting Argus - Research into fraternities](#) *Knights Beneficent of the Holy City; Ameican C.B.C.S. Ritual*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

know, devoted itself to the defense of the Christian religion and the Holy Land against the Saracens who claimed their possession.²⁰ (emphasis added)

Since the Grand Encampment came into being on June 20 to 21, 1816, Eminent Sir Knight Thomas Smith Webb and all Grand Masters have affirmed the existence of *one* Masonic Templar Order in the United States, which is under the command of the Grand Encampment. The Concordat among the English-speaking Templar Orders, adopted at the 31st Triennial Conclave in Chicago in 1910 (“1910 Concordat”), confirms this exclusivity:

Each of the said contracting parties agrees not to recognize any other Templar organization or authority within the jurisdiction embraced by these contracting parties; each recognizing *the absolute and exclusive control of the other over all matters pertaining to the Order* within its exclusive jurisdiction.²¹ (emphasis added)

The Grand Encampment was content that the Great Priory of America continue to function as a Sovereign, Independent, Templar Order, operating under its own Constitution, conferring the Fourth through the Sixth Degrees of the Rectified Scottish Rite, to wit, Scottish Master of Saint Andrew, Squire Novice, and Knight Beneficent of the Holy City (K.B.H.C.), but with the sanction and under the protective umbrella of the Grand Encampment, since they are Masonic Templar Orders. That very arrangement exists in the United Kingdom. The Grand Priory of the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City of the Rectified Scottish Rite of England and Wales is administered out of Mark Masons Hall, as is the Great Priory of the Order of the Temple which received the patent for the K.B.H.C. from the Great Independent Priory of Helvetia in 1937 and has controlled it since. Indeed, members in the K.B.H.C. are drawn exclusively from the ranks of the Order of the Temple.

The qualification for membership [in the Rectified Scottish Rite] is to be an Installed Knight in the Knights Templar of at least two years standing.²²

The Great Priory would, of course, have to acknowledge the supremacy of Section 3 of the *Constitution and Statutes* of the Grand Encampment and the aforementioned Concordat and satisfy other reasonable conditions. Unfortunately, negotiations to bring about this result have not born fruit.

Regrettably, there are Sir Knights among us who have not only elected to retain their membership in the Great Priory of America, but who have induced other Sir

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *1910 Proceedings of the Triennial Session XXXI*, at Pages 173-175

²² *Statutes of the Grand Priory of of the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City of the Rectified Scottish Rite of England and Wales*, Article 2

Knights to become members. This is most troubling, since each of us, kneeling on the crossed swords at the Holy Altar, solemnly promised and vowed,

I will support and maintain ... the Constitution, Laws, and Edicts of the Grand Encampment of the United States of America, so far as the same may come to my knowledge and while within its jurisdiction.²³

Those Sir Knights cannot credibly claim ignorance of the Grand Encampment's clearly and oft-stated position in this matter. Koon Decision No. 2, declaring the Great Priory of America to be an unrecognized Templar Order was published in May 2010. It was ratified by the Grand Encampment at the 65th Triennial in August 2012 and remains settled, Templar Law. This information was published in the *KNIGHT TEMPLAR* in October 2010, May 2012, and, more recently, in January 2019 and 2020.

In disregarding their vows of Knighthood, they bring dishonor upon themselves and the Grand Encampment. Worse still, their flouting of the Grand Encampment's authority and the Grand Encampment's too-long forbearance in not decisively vindicating its position can only redound to the detriment of our valiant and magnanimous Order and erode its standing both within and without the Masonic fraternity.

²³ *Ritual of the Grand Encampment of the United States of America*, Issued 2019, at Page 121



The Letters Patent issued by the Great Independent Priory of Helvetia to the Priestly Order of the Temple for the formation of the Great Priory of America, August 27, 1934. Note that the Great Priory of Helvetia declares itself a “Templar Order” (“*Ordre Templier*”).



The arms of the Great Priory of America, C.B.C.S., copied from the Priory Website, greatprioryofamerica.ipower.com. These were not included in the pamphlet prepared by the Great Priory.