

THE PRIESTLY ORDER (The History of the Order of The Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests or Order of Holy Wisdom from 1792 to 2002)

by Reg Cooley & Michael Knowles, with a foreword by James W. Turner, Grand High Priest

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There is no doubt this book will be of interest to many Knight Templar Priests. However there is little that is new in the book to the serious student of the history of this Order. The early Chapters simply being a regurgitation of various well-known papers and the latter Chapters being a regurgitation of Grand College Minutes so as to encourage sales from the far flung outposts of the former Empire. It is clearly helpful however to have all this material in one book but unfortunately there are a number of inaccuracies throughout the book, many of which should have been easily corrected at the proof reading stage. For example on page 30 it states, "The Joppa Encampment ... was known to have functioned up to 1865." It is well documented that the Joppa Encampment became dormant in 1845. Page 40 states; "The only Knight Priests who could admit a candidate were busy signing the Henry Hotham Proclamation in Moffat on 23rd March." The newly created Knight Priests made **no such signatures** on this Proclamation, as is shown later on page 223/4 and indeed as can be seen in the original in the John Sherwood Stevenson Library and Museum at Newcastle upon Tyne. Also "Investigation has shown that they could have returned to York on that day by train." The Order and the Royal Kent Preceptory from which all the newly created Knight Priests came from was based at that time in Newcastle upon Tyne and **not** York. Page 103 refers to "unofficial approaches to move the Order **back** to London." It is, of course, well known that the Order has never been based in London.

Other less obvious inaccuracies are on page 10 where it states "The Priestly Order is unique in that it is the only one which derives almost its entire ritual from Old and New Testament readings." Yet another Order, quoted frequently throughout the book, also derives almost its entire ritual from Old and New Testament readings! Page 28 states "Ne Plus Ultra" has long been recognised as the 30[•] in the A&A Rite and goes on to say "both then and now, is conferred only by the Supreme Council 33^{••}". Rose Croix Degrees were regularly conferred in Knight Templar Preceptoriums up until 1845 when the A & A Rite Supreme Council was newly formed in England. Page 36 states that the Grand College Register records the admission of William Francis Carmen and Ferdinand Fritz Schmitger on 3 September 1892 followed by five other Knights and goes on to query the accuracy of these records as they were copied at a later date from earlier records. Despite flagging up the doubt about the accuracy of the early records, page 221 goes on to state that in 1894 "Henry Hotham inducted six Knight Priests as Installed High Priests and three Sir Knights as members of the Order". Yet it is clear from a simple reading of the Proclamation shown on pages 223 and 224 of the book that it is six Past Preceptors of the Royal Kent Preceptory (who were **not** Knight Templar Priests), who were admitted as Past Grand High Priests and three members of Royal Kent Preceptory who had **not** been through the Royal Kent Preceptory Chair were only admitted as members of the Order. The statement on page 37 "It is not the practice in any Order in Freemasonry to admit people twice" further flagged up doubts about the accuracy of the early records. If the authors truly believed this then surely it should have alerted them to the errors on page 221? As it happens there are many well-known examples where admissions have been made twice, generally when the first admission has been deemed irregular for whatever reason, particularly in the days of the separate Antient Grand Lodge and Premier Grand Lodge.

Interestingly page xiii actually quotes a research source, namely the "History of the Knights Grand Cross of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem" that does not even exist! The Priestly Order does quote some other useful research sources on page xiii but more specific detail would have been helpful, e.g. for the various AQC volumes and the other Research Transactions.

