

Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.

I have to say that this paper has not turned out to be what I thought it would be, basically, because time and circumstance prevented me from running to earth as it were, the primary sources for information about the early history of the Order.

I believe there is a paper in existence given by V.III.Kt. R.K.W.Cooley in May 1994 on the occasion of the celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of Grand College, concerning its history to that date, the existence of which I did not discover until quite recently,

Whether this paper has been generally published within the Order I do not at this time know .the only reference I can find to it is in the year book of 1994, but I think research would also require reading the early records and minutes of the Most Worshipful The Grand Lodge of Ireland, which is located in Molesworth Street in Dublin and other Irish Masonic bodies such as the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Ireland the Supreme Council for Ireland and the Grand Council of Knight Masons. Historians as a bunch are a funny crowd and generally like to see for themselves original sources, however well others may interpret them or use them.

What has been found is that it appears that this degree had its foundation in Ireland where records exist of workings in the late 1700's. Where these records are, if they still exist, I am unable to say. The bodies mentioned in Ireland may be able to assist.

It is asserted and it seems quite reasonable that in the early days a group of Knight Templars, which is the ultimate degree necessary for membership of this Order and is the 6th Pillar of the Ceremony , from various craft lodges, joined to-gether

On the 15th May 1924 a Grand College of Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests for England was erected in New Castle on Tyne the location, of the foundation of Royal Kent, and so this Order withdrew from the control of the Allied Masonic Degrees.

This is all of the early history of the Order that I have available so there is a line of enquiry for someone who is interested,

My particular interest is in the degrees which form the basis of qualification for Membership and their relationship to degrees that I have already been through in Scots Masonry.

The Allied Degrees require a candidate to be a Mark Master in addition to Craft and Royal Arch but this Order does not, This rather perplexed me because the Mark Degree is a separate degree in England, this Order is administered in England and having regard to the fact that this Order requires the three degrees of Craft Masonry and that a Candidate has to be a P.M. for membership why is the Mark not required.

The explanation seems to be that, until 1855 when the first English Grand Mark Lodge was formed. the Mark did not as such exist as a separate degree. It is not a separate degree in Irish or Scots Masonry at this time, in both cases coming under the control of the respective Grand Royal Arch Chapters and being as it were the first degree of Royal Arch Masonry in both cases. So a Scots Chapter Mason joining this Order would know the Degree but an English one would not of necessity know it.

There is, I am assured evidence that a form of Mark Degree was extant in Scot and as early as 1599, the earliest English record of it was that it was introduced in a speculative body at Portsmouth on 1st September 1769 at Royal Arch Chapter 257 when Thomas Dunckerly made certain brethren Mark Masons and Mark Masters. But at this time I have no information on its early history in Ireland.

Perhaps it is of interest that the Scots Grand Chapter also controls the Royal Ark Mariner Degree and what in England is called Royal & Select Masters but in Scotland is called the Cryptic Council. These degrees do not exist as separate degrees in Ireland

Also of interest perhaps is that to obtain Grand Chapter Rank in Scotland one must have been a member of all three and have received the Chair Degree in all three.

Therefore in both Irish and Scottish Royal Arch Chapters if the Candidate is not already Marked the degree is conferred as the first degree in the Chapter. The Mark ceremony in the Scots Chapter being similar but not the same as the English Version. What it is in Irish I do not know never having seen it. In an Irish Chapter the titles of the various Officers appear to be different. He who we call Z being addressed as Eminent or Excellent King.

In Scottish Masonry the Mark Degree is permitted by Grand Chapter to be worked once a year in Lodges under the Grand Lodge of Scotland and it does not require it to be worked by an Installed Master. This is so because in Scotland it is considered to be an extension of the Fellow of Craft though it may only be conferred on Master Masons

Also the Z of a Scots Royal Arch Chapter at his installation Installed as a R.W.M.M.M. in full form

The degree of Knight Templar is required by this Order and I have often wondered why this is so, I suspect that originally in Ireland this Order was an extension of the Royal Arch taking Z onto a Priestly Order more Christian in content than the Royal Arch, from among those who had the Knight Templar degree. The earliest references to Masonic Knight Templar activity in the British Isles are to be found in Ireland

My authority on the subject claims that in most instances these rituals appear to have been worked under the authority of existing warrants of certain Royal Arch Chapters as Appendant degrees and it seems that the rubric of this Order, in transmission from Ireland into England, does not seem to have been altered in this respect, so that when the original Union Band was formed, it was from Knights Templar and so they worked the degree on their own kind, so continuing as part of Order, and perhaps,

this was why when Henry Hotham revived the degree in 1894 it was from a group of Knights Templars he was just carrying forward what he already knew as a requirement, Because by then both in England and in Ireland it was a separate Order from Royal Arch, the first Grand Conclave in England having been in existence since 1791.

But that is conjecture because in examining the Grand College paper on the Appendant Degree I came across a reference to a body the Irish Early Grand Encampment. The name Grand Encampment is used in connection with a Rite called the Rite of Baldwin of Seven Degrees Time Immemorial at Bristol. It is also used in respect of Early Knight Templar activity in England when in 1791 Thomas Dunckerly a name we have heard before in respect of English Masonry formed a Grand Conclave comprising seven Independent Encampments. Before this it was conferred as an appendant order in certain Royal Arch Chapter and this may well have been the practice in Ireland. I have found reference to this Irish Body not in connection with Knight Templar Masonry but in connection with the Ancient and Accepted Rite 33degrees, under what is now the Supreme Council for Ireland

As perhaps all of you know a Craft Lodge is set up some what differently in Scots Masonry to the set up in English. the Volume of the Sacred Law is on a pedestal in the centre of the Lodge and therefore candidates for all degrees from Initiate to Master take their obligations in the body of the lodge not at the Masters Pedestal, an Initiate does not become a member of the Lodge at his initiation, he does so on taking the degree of Master Mason and then only does he pay a test fee and is able to vote on the affairs of the Lodge as an E.A he remains silent, as an F.C he may express views but only under guidance, but not vote.

There is not in Scotland a form of ceremony for the three degrees laid down by Grand Lodge, each Lodge having and publishing its own to its members, the only requirement is that the Landmarks of the Order shall not be infringed. At a Raising the Hiram legend is worked in full.

pass words from one degree to the next are not given until the Candidate has been obligated in the degree, the candidate is instructed by the Junior Warden in the pass words, signs and words of the degree and is then examined in them in them by the Senior Warden and the Master, his conductor assisting him.

Officers of the Lodge are not appointed by the Master but all offices from Master to Steward are elective and it is not requisite that the Master elect shall have served in the Office of Warden though the reigning senior warden usually proceeds to the Chair, but the only requisite for the office of Master is that of Master Mason and the approbation of his Bretheren. All Officers are required to be obligated before investment

As I have said the Mark is the first degree of the Royal Arch both in Scotland and in Ireland and in the Scots Chapter it is not requisite that for the three Chairs of the Royal Arch a member shall have passed the Chair of a Craft Lodge usually Chapters require that a candidate shall have served as Principal Sejourner but as in the Craft all Offices are elective and the approbation of one's Companions is necessary.

The ceremony of this Order, if it is in its original form strengthens my conviction that this order was intended to be a form of priestly extension of the Royal Arch and to be Christian in its form. Which the Holy Royal Arch is not, and if the Knight Templar Order was an appendant order of the Chapter as as my authority asserts, it would strengthen that assertion.

What the regalia was, if it was different, would be of interest, because I myself believe, having regard to its similarity to the Knights Templar Regalia, only in effect replacing the warriors hat with a priests mitre, that the original ceremony was more or less in its present form, with the minor adaptations that we have known,

But, the mitre of a Kt.Priest is closer to a Bishops Mitre and the High Priest 's is near to that worn by Temple Priests, with the addition of the tail ribbons, however it is very like the early Mitres of Abbots who were not always Bishops. again the question why.

I have no answer.

My academic background is in Liturgy, Ritual, Biblical Criticism and Exegesis so that the scripture on which the ceremony of the Order is based is of great Interest. The basis seems to be the Book of Revelations, seven seals and seven pillars of wisdom but the effect of opening the seals is somewhat at variance with the actual Book of Revelations but that is of little moment.

The extracts from various Old and New Testament Books woven together is fascinating in that it has been done so well, to illustrate the point being made it often reads as if it had come from the one book.

To me it is of interest that the readings at the Opening and Closing are exclusively New Testament though as I have said this is not so during the ceremony and I am curious to know if there is any explanation for this, is it original or has the ceremony ever been re-written or adapted in time past.

A study of the Appendant Degrees conferred on a candidate at his Reception into the Order are of very great interest because firstly the explanations of them and also how and from where they came to us, to me raise a lot more questions than that which they answer and presuppose a greater knowledge of ancient rites than that which I possess, Some of the explanation refer to bodies of which I am a member but in these I do not know of them, so I shall have to ask about them elsewhere.

As the notes of explanation provided by Grand College, describe them as the Appendant Degrees of the Royal Kent Tabernacle of Knights Templar Priests, who seemed to collect Orders and degrees from all sorts of places this group seem in Masonic History to have a very interesting place As will be seen that whenever one tries to answer questions, look for causes, and seek explanation in Masonic Research each answer proposes another question. I know I have probably raised more queries than I have answered somebody somewhere may have already asked my questions and given answers. So the best thing perhaps is for me to close and go and see if I can get answers, thank you for your patience in listening .

An Analysis of the K. T. P. Ceremony

(after that set down by V.III.Kt.Pt. Major the Revd. R. H. Nesham, P.G.VI.P., A.G.D.C., 8/93)

The Order of K.T.P. is a progressive one. It is woven round the Seven Pillars (of WISDOM) and the opening of the Seven Seals on the Scroll as depicted in the Book of Revelation of St. John the Divine. Each Pillar leads to the next, and at each Pillar, when the seal is loosed, a Divine Wisdom is revealed to the Candidate in the same order as they were revealed to St. John, until finally the 7th Pillar is reached and the last seal opened.

The Candidate at :-

The 1st Pillar gives the knocks and sign of an Entered Apprentice who enters with FAITH, promises OBEDIENCE, and is sent forth on his journey with the light of PRAYER.

The 2nd Pillar gives knocks and sign of a Fellowcraft, enters with HOPE, promises to be TRUE, and is sent forth with KNOWLEDGE.

The 3rd Pillar gives knocks and sign of a Master Mason, enters the door of MERCY, promises to avoid DISPUTES, and is sent forth with a HOLY DESIRE.

The 4th Pillar gives knocks and sign of an Installed Master, (who is now a teacher), enters the door of UTTERANCE, promises LOYAL SECRECY, and is sent forth with PURITY.

The 5th Pillar gives knocks and sign of the Royal Arch, enters the door of SALVATION, promises to EMBRACE PURE RELIGION, and is sent forth with GOD'S WORD.

The 6th Pillar gives knocks and sign of a Knight Templar, enters the door of PERSEVERANCE, (having done periods of pilgrimage, warfare, penance and mortification), promises to WALK IN THE LIGHT, and is sent forth with PEACE.

The 7th Pillar gives one knock, no sign, enters the door of LIFE, promises to CONFESS JESUS CHRIST before the world, and is sent forth with JOY. "Enter with JOY into the Tabernacle."

It is therefore requisite that the Conductor names each Pillar (e.g. "This is the 1st Pillar" either before or after he tells the Candidate to give the requisite knocks - preferably before. The Pillar MUST read the scriptural passage in a meaningful way so that the candidate realises he is being passed on from one seal opening, with its REVELATION and facet of WISDOM, to the next. This can only be done if the Pillar himself knows exactly what he is doing. Often this is not the case for a listener can tell by the way the passage is read, that to the Pillar, what he is reading is all religious mumbo-jumbo. Often it is not until he has become the V.Emt. High Priest that a Pillar realises what it is all about.

I strongly think that the Candidate's passage round the Pillars should be done by candle light, with the main electric light extinguished or very dimmed. The Candidate's attention is then not distracted by others in the Tabernacle but is focused on each Pillar as he gets to it, and on the WISDOM that each Pillar propounds.

as a Union Band for the purpose of conferring the degree. Who they were, when this was and how they got hold of it I have not been able to ascertain, but there does not at that time appear to have been overall governing body to exercise control and guidance for the purpose of overseeing, that the degree was conferred in the same way everywhere and on each occasion.

In 1894 Henry Hotham then the sole surviving Knight Priest, created a nucleus of nine Sir Knights, from the Royal Kent Encampment of Knights Templar, into a Tabernacle [The Royal Kent] at Newcastle upon Tyne and this as far as I can ascertain came into being in about 1895. Choosing as he did nine seems to indicate that his memory of the structure of the rite was basically as we have it to-day, seven pillars, a keeper of the Inner Porch and an outer sentinel. The Royal Kent Encampment is a study in itself because its name comes up in connection with all sorts of degrees and orders.

To apparently digress slightly, The Grand Council of the Allied Masonic Degrees came into existence in 1879 to bring under its direction all Lodges of various orders who recognised no central authority and were not regulated by other major governing bodies. Initially this body controlled the degrees of St. Laurence the Martyr, Grand High Priest, the Red Cross of Babylon and Knights of Constantinople.

By 1897 the degrees of Grand Tiler of Solomon, one degree of the Secret Monitor, and The Order of Knight Templar Priests and its appendant Orders, under the title of the Order of Holy Wisdom, this order under its old title, had placed themselves under its jurisdiction.

Though it seems The Royal Kent Tabernacle, continued to confer these degrees, apparently under this bodies protection.