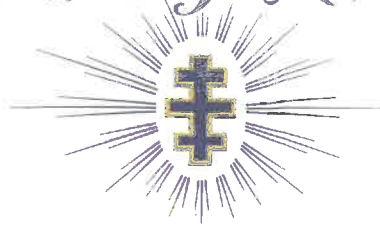


# Grand Encampment of Knights Templar



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## Decision Nos. 5-6, Series 2021-2024

November 10, 2021

**Background.** 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” 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*. The Resolution confirmed Decision No. 2 of Sir Knight William H. Koon, II, G.C.T., Most Eminent Grand Master, which he had issued May 24, 2010, with the concurrence of the Committees on Foreign Relations and Templar Jurisprudence, which the Grand Encampment also approved and which became settled, Templar law. 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. Because of events which occurred at the 68<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conclave last August in Minneapolis, including the adoption of a resolution to partially rescind the aforesaid Resolution No. 2, I directed the Committee on Foreign Relations to re-examine the status of the Rectified Rite in general, of which the C.B.C.S. is part, and the Great Priory of America, in particular.

Koon Decision No. 2 and Resolution No. 1 from the 65<sup>th</sup> Triennial reflected the state of affairs existing at the time. To better understand why, a review of history is in order.

At the 37<sup>th</sup> 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 Priories.” The Grand Encampment voted to extend recognition and exchange representatives with the Great Priory of Helvetia. We can only speculate as to the reasons for that recognition, as the Sir Knights who recommended and approved it have long since journeyed to the Asylum above. Perhaps, they did not fully understand the Rectified Rite and were simply following the lead of other Great Priories.

By 1940, the differences between the Rectified Rite and our Templar Orders were clearly understood by the Committee on Foreign Relations who, at the 41<sup>st</sup> Triennial Conclave in Cleveland, Ohio, reported:

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*.

This understanding did cause the Grand Encampment to reconsider or withdraw recognition from the Great Priory of Helvetia. The Grand Encampment would recognize other Rectified Rite Orders, the Great Priory of Gauls (France). in 1982, and the Grand Priory of Belgium, in 1995.

**ISSUE.** At the 30<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conclave in Saratoga Springs, in 1907, the Grand Master was requested to form a Commission to meet with other Commissions from the English-speaking Pories with a view toward establishing a Treaty of Amity or Concordat. The Parties were the The Religious and Military Order of the Temple Great Priory of Ireland; the Great Priory of the United Religious and Military Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta in England and Wales and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown; the Great Priory of the Religious and Military Order of the Temple in Scotland and Dependencies of the British Crown; the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada; and the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America. By the 31<sup>st</sup> Triennial Conclave in Chicago, in 1910, the Concordat (hereinafter the "1910 Concordat") was agreed, executed, and was ratified and recorded on pages 172 – 175 of the Proceedings. For this discussion, the key points are:

THIRD: That any preceptory or commandery working under a Charter granted by any one of these Governing Bodies [Parties] shall not confer the Orders recognized in that jurisdiction ... upon anyone not a Companion of the Royal Arch in regular standing in both Lodge and Chapter.

FOURTH: The Governing Bodies agree mutually to uphold and support each other ... . Nor shall they in any way recognize any body professing to be a Body of Knights Templar in any country which does not hold a Dispensation or Warrant from one or other of these Governing Bodies.

In short, the signatory Parties deemed the Royal Arch Degree essential to being a Knight Templar and covenanted that, if an entity were not created by one of them, it would not be recognized as Templary.

It is striking that the 1910 Concordat was so seemingly overlooked a mere eighteen years after its adoption. The 1910 Concordat has endured 111 years and has never been nullified. As a signatory Party, the Grand Encampment remains bound by its terms.

Declaring the Great Priory of America a Templar Order is contrary to our obligations under the 1910 Concordat for the following reasons:

1. They were not Chartered by any of the signatories of the 1910 Concordat; and
2. Possession of the Degree of Royal Arch Mason is not a requirement for membership in the Rectified Rite or the C.B.C.S.

In addition, to recognize the Great Priory of America would debase our standards for recognition, on account of the following:

1. Their conferral of Degrees, by their own admission, is, at best, sub-standard. They waited over 75 years before even considering degree conferrals. Their sister, Rectified Rite Orders consider the Great Priory of America little more than a supper club;
2. While they are recognized by Rectified Rite Orders created by Switzerland, they are not highly regarded within that Community; and
3. No Templar Orders have recognized them. Only their sister Rectified Rite Orders have done so.

Further, by recognizing the Great Priory of America, we would create the appearance of countenancing a Masonic Order which claims the Blue Degrees and risk offending Grand Lodges wherein we have working Commanderies and Grand Commanderies. We should also not afford the Great Priory of America credibility which they do not merit. They don't confer the Degrees with which they are charged in a manner in keeping with their sister Orders; they possess neither the *Profes* nor *Grand Profes*, hence, no spiritual center; and they are not highly regarded by other Rectified Rite Orders.

As for those Sir Knights who for the last decade have held membership in a supper club more sacred than their vows of Knighthood, they dishonor themselves and merit the opprobrium of their fratres who remained steadfast in their vows. That suffices.

**Decisions.** Based on the foregoing and the recommendation of the Committee on Foreign Relations, I have determined that the Great Priory of America is, in fact, *not* a Templar Order. Accordingly, I issue the following Decisions:

5. Koon Decision No. 2, adopted in 2012, being at variance with the 1910 Concordat, ought to be, and is hereby, rescinded; and
6. Recognition of the Great Priory of Belgium is hereby withdrawn, since they neither require the Royal Arch nor were formed by one of the signatories of the 1910 Concordat.

⚔ *Michael B Johnson*

Michael Burke Johnson, GCT  
Most Eminent Grand Master