

The Hiram Key

- Reviewed by Northeasterly

It's always nice to say something good about a book. The Hiram Key, by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, is well written, keeps your interest and contains some novel and interesting ideas.

However, I was shocked that the authors had chosen to print, virtually in full, the ceremony of the Third Degree in Chapter 1. They justified this by saying that the *“United Grand Lodge of England considers only the means of recognition to be the protected secrets of the Order, and no one could falsely pass themselves off as a Freemason after reading this book.”* This book does not have a bibliography, but does have a rather sparse collection of footnotes where the authors have found some authority or other to back up a particular theory. It does not have a footnote justifying their claim about UGLE's view on revealing the secrets of the Third Degree. So I suppose we will have to take their word for it, just like most the rest of the book. It does make one wonder if the authors missed that bit about heiling, concealing and never revealing.

I would caution an Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft from reading this book, or at least the first chapter, until after they have taken the Third Degree. In my humble opinion, a candidate for Raising should approach the ceremony with a completely open mind unsullied by other's opinions, so that they can find their own meaning, and not somebody else's.

The early part of “The Hiram Key” discusses whether or not Jesus of

Nazareth was an Essene, and the part the early church played in covering this up. All interesting and intriguing stuff, but for me the jury's still out on this.

Another of the major themes of the book is that H. A. was the Egyptian Pharaoh, Seqenenre Tao II, and whose assassination was overseen by Joseph of the coat of many colours. Interesting theory, and to be fair to the authors they do admit that this claim started off with a niggles that turned into a hunch. They do offer some circumstantial evidence to back up their claim, but that evidence could be explained away by many other theories. Now I'm not saying that Seqenenre Tao II wasn't H. A. or that Joseph wasn't involved in his untimely death, merely that they haven't done nearly enough to prove it to me beyond a reasonable doubt.

It does have to be said that both authors have active imaginations, but their historical methodology does leave much to be desired. They postulate a theory and cherry-pick some evidence, usually circumstantial, obscure reference or conjecture to back it up. It does not seem to occur to them that the theory is not proven alone by that evidence; they have to show that that evidence cannot be explained by any other alternative theories.

In one chapter they state Upper and Lower Egypt each had a sacred pillar, and that these correspond to the two pillars familiar to Freemasons – it would have been great if their arguments held more water, or if they could cite some learned reference to back up their hypothesis.



Their conclusion: the ancient Egyptians were the first Freemasons. I'm sure that if you were to think long enough and hard enough, you could probably come up with convincing evidence that Stonehenge was built by a Freemason.

An entertaining read, but not to be taken too seriously, but don't take my word for it. Read it for yourself

“The Hiram Key” by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas published by Century (ISBN10: 0 7126 8579 0). Price varies depending on retailer: \$24.95 paperback from Dymocks, approx £8.00 + P&P from Lewis Masonic (UK) (www.lewis-masonic.com), or borrow it for free from the GLWA Library in Burswood Road, Victoria Park.

This book review is the opinion of the reviewer and should not be taken to be the opinion of the Grand Lodge of Western Australia.