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NATIONAL HEADS OF YORK RITE MASONRY
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General Conference Grand Royal and Select Master

Grand Encampment Knight Templar U.S.A.

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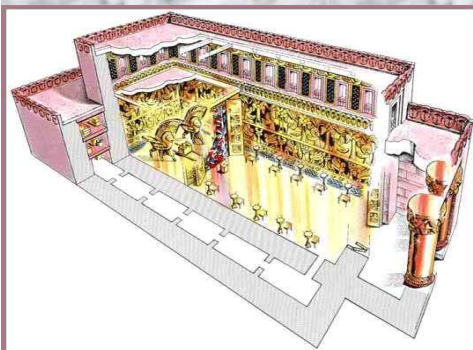
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A Capsulated View of Knight Templar

A Capsulated View of Knights Templar

My Brothers, Companion's, Sir Knights', ladies and guests: I shall attempt to present you with a capsulated view of the Knights Templar. A synopsis if you please for there are many volumes of in-depth research and accounts available for detailed reading and study.

Knights Templar and their Commanderies (i.e. akin to the Craft Lodge) are the completion or climax of the York Rite system of Freemasonry.

The York Rite of Freemasonry is composed of the Craft Lodge, the Royal Arch Masons' Chapter, the Council of Royal and Select Master's, and the Commandery of Knights Templar.

Knights Templar, sometimes called Chivalric Masonry, or the Commandery is definitely Christian in nature!

The actual historical Knights of the Temple were founded in 1119 A.D .. Many are the historical accounts of "The Poor Fellow Soldiers of Jesus Christ". Said Soldiers under went a few name changes until finally commonly called Knights Templar. Some of the accounts are factual or semi-factual, some are documented, some are not well documented, some are speculative, and some are pure fiction.

Reading the pre history of the events leading up to the formation of the Crusades and the subsequent Crusades themselves is a fascinating and intellectual and educational exercise. The subject is far too lengthy to deal with this (today) evening.

Allow me to take you on a very rapid over view of almost nine hundred (900) years.

On July 15, 1099 The First Crusade brought about the fall of Jerusalem which had been in Moslem control for quite some time. The Holy City now belonged to the Christian Crusaders, and all Christendom rejoiced. In Europe and England the zeal for pilgrimage soared anew. Crowds thronged and pressed forward to the Holy City. What the Christians found was, although Jerusalem was in Christian hands, the Moslems still controlled Palestine.

The highways and byways leading to Jerusalem were unprotected! The ferocity of the Moslems seemed to increase with the fall of the Holy City, and mutilated bodies and bleached bones of pilgrims soon became a common sight along the roadways. (Now, one does have to think about it from the indigenous inhabitants side of the fence.) To add to the vulnerability of the pilgrims, thousands of the Crusaders, their primary objective accomplished, returned to their own lands leaving the country side to the Moslems uncontested.

This was the circumstances that set the stage for Templary! A small band of Crusaders remaining after the conquest recognized the plight of the pilgrims and bound themselves in a "Holy Brotherhood of Arms", embracing a solemn compact to aid one another in clearing the

highways and in protecting the pilgrims through the passes and defiles of the mountains to the Holy City.

In 1119 A.D., nineteen years after the successful Crusade, these Poor Fellow Soldiers of Jesus Christ, as they termed themselves, were officially recognized and sanctioned by the Pope. They were given for their headquarters a building on Mount Moriah, the site of the former Temple of King Solomon. Consequently they became known as the Knights of the Temple, or Knights Templar. In 1139 A.D. they were favored with a Papal Bull by Pope Innocent II rendering them answerable only to him, and or his successors.

This was the era of chivalric ascendancy. Much as outstanding athletes receive, shall we say hero worship by some and the admiration of the public today, so did those Knights of old capture the hearts and the wealth of the public of their day. Their fame spread like wildfire. Rulers and Nobles hastened to be identified with the Knights Templar and presented gold, jewels, and property to the Order.

It is a matter of history that the warriors who fought for Christianity as Knights Templar had their vicissitudes, with more downs than ups on the battlefields through the centuries. However, their wealth and their prestige remained undiminished. On the contrary their treasury became too large to escape the notice of some financially embarrassed rulers, especially Philip the Fair of France.

He, Philip, with Pope Clement V (whom Philip pretty well influenced, documented fact) arranged for a convocation of the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, one Jacques DeMolay, and his officers at Paris. The convocation was held, but Grand Master DeMolay and the greater percentage of his officers never left as free men and to a great percentage, were eventually put to death. In 1314 A.D. DeMolay after long and hideous physical torture was burned to death at the stake for alleged heresy and dozens of other accusations. All Knights Templar wealth and property was seized. (There has been much speculation in regard to the fact that all wealth was seized, and what happened to the remaining Knights Templars at large.) It is difficult and confusing to read the copious treatises written to support or disprove the many theories of the disappearance of the Knights Templar and possibly a great deal of their wealth after the "Paris Affair". It is a fascinating and in depth study, but one without a conclusive documented trail or history. It is in the final analysis, therefore, rendered inconclusive theory.

We do know modern Freemasonic Templary as an adjunct to Freemasonry emerged in the early 1700' s. It exists today as the top ranking Order in the York Rite, which is a concordant/allied branch of Freemasonry. It requires membership in a Masonic Craft Lodge, a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, and in some jurisdictions a Council of Royal and Select Masters. (Washington State jurisdiction requires membership in the Council.)

The capture of the City of Jerusalem from the Seljuk Turks was accomplished on July 5, 1099. Hugues de Payens a French Knight and hero of the First Crusade chose to remain in Jerusalem after the capture. He and eight other French Knights then offered their services

to King Baldwin for the protection of pilgrims on Holy Journeys, the road ways they used, and religious properties. King Baldwin granted de Payens and his fellow Knights the area on the Temple Mount, which legend states occupied the very spot of the temple of Solomon. Hence "The Poor Fellow Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon"

Crusades:

Peter the Hermit generated the "People's Crusade" in 1095, which ended in complete disaster. The "First Crusade", 1095-6 and capture of Jerusalem in 1099. From 1097 to 1272 there were 8 major crusades and many minor crusades. Replacements for these crusades and occupying forces were constant. It was a matter of contentious engagement.

1. 1096 The "First Crusade"
2. 1147
3. 1189
4. 1202
5. 1218
6. 1228
7. 1244
8. 1270

1299 was the last time the Templars reached Jerusalem, but they could not hold for lack of support. Hattin: July 4th, 1187 One of the bloodiest battles of the crusades and a turning point to the down fall of the Christians in the Holy land. The fall of Acre in 1291 was the end of the Templars in the Holy land. In turn they were forced to retreat to: Cyprus, then Rhodes, then Malta. The Arrest of the Templars occurred at Dawn Friday the 13th of Oct. 1307. It was an action by King Philip IV & Pope Clement V. However, it was without the expressed and complete approval of Clement. An interesting story in its self!

Trial: It took (7) seven years to complete the trial. The Inquisition was at the hands of the Dominicans who had perfected their skills against the Cathars, and other groups which were mainly in Portugal, Spain, Northern Italy, and a few in Southern France. Confession was gained by torture.

Charges: There were no less than 104 articles brought against the Knights Templar. They can be reduced to six (6) categories. When rendered down most of the charges were duplicated and repetitive in one fashion or another. A review of the charges is another interesting exercise. It appears extremely few people if any outside France believed the charges, at least in total. Safe haven was given in many cases. Only after extreme pressure was brought to bear were the Templars subjected to the Inquisition in locations outside of France. Again confession was gained by torture. Many Rulers still defied Papal commands and limited the use of torture.

Grand Master Jacques de Molay was burned to death at the stake on a small island in the river Seine on March 18th, 1314. It is well known at his death de Molay cursed King Philip and Pope Clement V and called them to stand in judgment with him before GOD within forty days, and both died within the year. By what cause? Your theory is as good as anyone's.

It seems reasonable to suppose (speculate) the 'idea' of an Order like the Templars dated back to the time of the First Crusade, that the decision to found such was undertaken in the period of 1113 to 1115, but the 'fmmndation' actually took place after Easter 1119.

The Knights Templar were given official existence by "the Church" as an "association" of "Poor Knights of the Temple" at the Council of Troyes in 1128. Official status as a "Religious Order" came in 1139 by Pope Innocent II. This Papal Bull was titled "Omne Datum Optimum". This was accomplished largely through the efforts of "Bernard" the 'Abbot of Clairvaux' . Here again one has to study the complex scheme of things and family ties. Dissolving of the Order was by Papal Bull "Vox In Excelso" on March 22, 1312. Pope Clement V. The dispersing of Templar wealth (in many cases this meant land and properties) was by Papal Bull "Ad Providam" on May 2nd, 1312. Pope Clement V. Papal Bulls concerning the Knights Templar: There is a long list. I suggest in regard to this presentation one remembers the three of, creation, dissolving, and dispersing of their wealth.

Where did the Knights Templar go? There are several theories. I invite you to investigate some of the following.

1. Scotland
2. Nova Scotia
3. Portugal
4. Spain
5. Ethiopia
6. Central and South America
7. East Coast of North America
8. Switzerland (one of the newest theories---with some plausible suppositions)
9. An island in the Baltic
10. An order in France its self (Leads to present neo- Templar groups)
11. Melted into the Society of Freemasons in England and Scotland
12. What is your theory?

Copious hours can be spent in studying, researching, and developing a hypothesis in regard to the above.

One should consider, however, how the journey was accomplished. In some cases this was accomplished by land routes obviously. In regard to the theories of dispersing to lands beyond the seas they would have needed ships. This takes us then to the "Templar fleet". The Templars' empire expanded on the sea out of necessity. Money, man power, and various supplies in enormous volume were required in the East to sustain the Templar operation. There were heavy transport vessels and war ships for their protection. (Yes, these "Christian Knights" were engaged in 'Privateering' as well.) Documents from about 1207 on indicate the Templars had their own ships and were starting to build their own fleet. They eventually possessed their own ports and shipyards as well. The role of maritime warfare in Templar history is little acknowledged in general and seems restricted to "specialist's circles" at this time.

It all makes for an interesting, sometimes fascinating, and time consuming study in research.

As Napoleon once said "what is history but a fable agreed upon". "A Mythos in the Making". If something is repeated often enough people start to believe it. Documentation IS the name of the true game in research! We shall most probably never know for certain. Exactly when or where the original Knights Templar went (most probably widely dispersed) we shall never know. Exactly when or where the modern or present day Masonic Knights Templar originated is not known. It too is presently impossible, and most likely always will be, to determine with any accuracy. The absence of any authentic documentation renders it impossible to prove any organic connection. Whatever connection MAY exist is largely by the evolution of the "ideals" upheld by the original (actual) Knights Templar, rather than by way of any legitimate succession of authority coming down to our present day Masonic Knights Templar. What "TREASURE", object(s) or otherwise possessions) did the Templars have and or take with them after their arrest, dissolution, and disappearance from the obvious general scene? One again encounters a long list of theory in regard to this topic as well. Let's list a few.

1. Money and jewels
2. The "Ark of the Covenant"
3. The Head of John the Baptist
4. The Head of Christ
5. The Head of a Demon, in idol form
6. The True Cross
7. Scrolls of the True Religion
8. Various religious artifacts
9. etc., etc.

A paper could be presented on each of these theories. Other than a few brief verbal comments at this point let us move on.

It is at this point I would encourage you to read a book entitled "Living the Enlightenment" by Margaret Jacob. It is an excellent work concerning the social, economic, and philosophical climate of the sixteen and seventeen hundreds. It allows one to better understand transitions in thought and life during the time our fraternity as we know it today was formed. A must read for the Masonic student!

The activities of Chevalier Ramsey (England and France) and Baron von Hund (Sweden and Germany) were largely responsible for the amalgamation of the Templar/Freemasonry theory. Von Hund of course is known for the Rite of the Strict Observance. My personal opinion (and you are entitled to your own) is von Hund invented the Rite of the Strict Observance, and Ramsey embellished in like manner on some facts and Fraternal speculation. However, it is in large measure due to their actions the watershed of the so call "High Degrees" burst forth.

The Orders (not degrees) of Knights Templar conferred in Britain in the latter half of the 18th (1700' s) century were done so in a conclave (gathering of Knights templar, as in a "Lodge" of

Masons) of Sir Knights. It was not a conclave by "Warrant", but simply by the correct number of Sir Knights being present.

It is generally "supposed" The Knights Templar of the United States derived their origin from the three original Encampments in England being located at Bristol, Bath, and York. Baldwin claims existence since the return of Richard the Lion Hearted from the Holy land. It would be an extremely important claim if it could be proven! Speculation is also additionally advanced in favor the Irish military Lodges possibly having Encampments attached to them. However, by what authority and methodology the Orders were introduced into North America is not recorded or documented. Therefore such lineage is lost in obscurity and the mists of time. Theories also speculate additional introduction maybe via Masons returning from England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and other European countries. Are you confused and in the dark? Well so is everyone else. (Remember the "ideals" are the important thing!)

St Andrew's lodge in Boston is credited with having the earliest known "recorded" conferring of the Masonic Knights Templar Orders in the United States in 1769. Knights Templar took a prominent roll in George Washington's funeral. The Masonic Knights Templar and their Orders saw a rapid spread from 1780 onward in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, So. Carolina, and on across our developing Country. Towards the close of the eighteenth century the appearance of "organized Encampments" were noted in Charleston, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and other cities.

The year 1797 shows the first record of an established "Grand Encampment" (a general controlling head body) in Pennsylvania. It had a short life, but was soon followed by the Grand Encampments of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and New York. Massachusetts and Rhode Island was and is to this day the only dual Masonic Knights Templar Grand Jurisdiction in the U.S.A. General Grand Encampment was established June 21, 1816. It is now titled, "The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America". Said Grand Encampment is the controlling body for all "Grand Commanderies" (Jurisdiction) in the U.S.A.. Each State (Jurisdiction), with the exception of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, has a Grand Commandery with subordinate (local individual) Commanderies. Said Grand Encampment also controls Grand Commanderies in some other Countries. In the U.S.A. the Grand Encampment is organized into eight (8) Departments, or geographical areas. The Grand Commandery of Washington is in the Northwestern Department.

The petition for the Grand Commandery of the Territory of Washington was recorded on May 5, 1887, and was Constituted on June 2, 1887. (Which was done by "Proxy").

The original petitioning Commanderies were, Walla Walla #1, Seattle #2, Cataract #3, (Spokane), and Ivanhoe #4 (Tacoma). These Commanderies are still in existence!

SUGGESTED READING LIST

- The Templars and the Grail -----Karen Ralls
1. The Templars Knights of GOD -----Edward Burman
 2. The Rule of the Templars -----J.M. Upton-Ward
 3. The Warriors and the Bankers -----Alan Butler & Stephen Dafoe
 4. The Rise and Fall of the Knights Templar ----- Addison J Woodhouse /Milman J. Dafoe
 6. The Murdered Magicians-----Peter Partner
 7. The Templar Revelation -----Lynn Picket & Clive Prince
 8. A Pilgrim's Path -----John J. Robinson 9. Born In
Blood -----John J. Robinson
 10. Holy Blood, Holy Grail-----Baigent/LeighiLincoln (Careful)
 11. Rosslyn -----Murphy/Hopkins (interesting but,)
 12. The Forgotten Monarchy of Scotland -----HRH Prince Michael of Albany
 13. The Knights Templar in Britain -----Evelyn Lord
 14. Brethren in Chivalry -----Fredrick Smyth
 15. History of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar of the United States of America --
----- Francis J. Scully
 16. Crusades -----Catholic Encyclopedia (Hard to stay with but
very good) (internet accessible)
 17. Arab Historians of the Crusades -----Francesco Gabrieli (Look at the other
side of the issue)
 18. Islam and Freemasonry ----- The Short Talk Bulletin MSA
 19. Crusades -----A&E 4 set video tape series
 - 20.100 Years * Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Washington 1887-1987
 21. Dungeon Fire and Sword -----John J. Robinson
 22. Living the Enlightenment -----Margaret Jacob (A MUST READ)
 23. List your suggestions! ----- YOU